

## SABBATH THOUGHT 2022-02-12—HEALING

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

The last couple of weeks began with several prayer requests going out for the brethren in this area. Believers are impacted by those in the Body of Christ who are suffering, but it is particularly felt when you know them personally. As it says in Scripture, “If one member suffers, all the members suffer with him...” (1 Cor. 12:26). This is a remarkable statement by Paul because the Greek word for the second “suffer” is *sumpascho*, which literally means to “experience pain jointly or of the same kind.” This is more than just empathy—it literally means that we ourselves experience a kind of suffering when our brothers and sisters suffer.

Feeling these things when we hear of others who suffer is how God’s agape love works. God changes our hearts so that we see our brethren, and even the world, as He does—“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life” (John 3:16). God wants us all to have a heart like His and changing our hearts is His greatest work in us! I cannot imagine the depth of compassion, empathy, and love in God’s own heart such that He IS love (2 John 4:8, 16). Think about that. We can easily recognize God’s power; but, above all else, He is love. Love is the basis for everything He creates, all that He thinks, and the works that He does. More amazing is that WHAT He is, is what we are to BECOME! This is how “God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28).

God tests us all through suffering so He can know if we will obey Him under duress. Christ set the example of suffering (1 Pet. 2:21). Why did He suffer? “He learned obedience from the things that He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8). Through the sufferings of the cross in obedience to God (Phil. 2:8), He was “perfected,” as it says in the next verse. The Logos as God was PERFECTED! How can God be made more perfect? Through the experience of being human, Jesus knows what it is like to be in this weak, physical body (Heb. 4:15). When we suffer, it is for exactly the same reason—to be perfected (1 Pet. 5:10)—only it is in the opposite sense. Jesus learned what it is like to be human and we are learning to become like God. Of suffering, there is a scripture that is quite revealing:

1 PETER 4:1 Consequently, since Christ has suffered for us in *the* flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind because **the one who has suffered in the flesh has finished living in sin.**

How is it possible that we are “finished living in sin” through suffering? Paul answers the question in the next scripture:

1 PETER 4:2 *To this end: that* **he no longer live his remaining time in the flesh** to the lusts of men, **but to the will of God.**

None of us wants to suffer, but God wills it for our perfection—to become like Him. That is our motivation to willingly suffer unto Him. When we suffer, God examines our hearts! We know that our remaining time in this body of flesh is being used by God to perfect us. To that end, Jesus Christ is living in us (Gal. 2:20), so we are striving to no longer live in the lusts of this life.

God healed *every one* of those in this area who were sick! Some had been sick or ill for weeks but their recovery started within hours after the prayer requests went out (maybe immediately, but it takes some time for the word to spread). There have been numerous examples of this recently. Without any great heavenly fanfare of singing or trumpets, God healed them. After such things, we need to remember to give thanks to God, especially those who were healed. We should remember every time God blesses us, heals us, and provides for us. For such things, let our hearts and prayers offer all honor, praise, worship, and glory to Him!

One aspect of healing that I used to ponder is the correlation between God's healing and the help of a physician. Jesus Christ never condemned physicians even though that was the view of many in times past. In fact, He likened Himself to one when He said, "Those who are strong do not need a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Mark 2:17). Also notice Luke 4:23.

However, human physicians obviously have limitations. I grew up in a family of physicians—my father and both my grandfathers were physicians, and my mother was a registered nurse. Luke 8:43-44 is the story of the woman with the issue of blood. She spent her life savings on physicians who were unable to cure her. Upon touching the robe of Jesus, she was completely healed. My father can still recount those patients that he lost and cases where physicians are helpless still exist today. One brother in Christ was so sick that the hospital told him they could do nothing for him and that he would die. A few hours after the prayer request went out, he had improved so significantly that the hospital sent him to therapy instead, and then home!

I think that we have entered into a new era of medical care over the last couple of years. Regardless of your personal thoughts about COVID vaccines and treatments, no one can deny that federal interference with physicians and hospitals has reached unprecedented levels. Never before in the history of this country have government agencies so vehemently advocated or proscribed medical treatment options for doctors. Add to this the fact that COVID testing that has become, for lack of a better term, a distraction. There have been a cases where people have gone to a hospital for something other than COVID and a positive test redirects the medical response away from the original problem.

The overall result is that people have lost trust and confidence in the medical system. But, perhaps, it is also provoking believers to have more faith and turn to God. God can heal without medical intervention—He has done it for me several times. I also know that physicians can help with the healing process. There are also naturopaths, osteopaths,

acupuncturists, chiropractors, etc. who have successfully helped people. The question is do we trust in God and call upon Him even as we pursue medical intervention?

There is a difference between curing and healing. Curing a disease eliminates all evidence and effect of it. Healing is a condition of being made whole. It attends to the mind and heart in addition to the body. Physicians do not cure anything—the body takes care of that—but they can help stimulate the body. But only God can heal.

There is a reason that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was both the stripes of His body as well as His shed blood. The blood covers our sins and washes us clean. However, unless we are also healed of the source of the sin—the lusts of the heart and mind—the sin can return. Jesus Christ endured the terrible physical torture in His body while He was yet alive so that His body, represented by the Passover bread, would apply for the healing of our hearts and minds and body.

Some of those who were sick recently were under the care of a physician who did their best to help. However, it was not until God got involved that the healing began. Did the physician make the wrong diagnosis or use ineffective interventional medications? Probably not, since most medical treatments are based upon knowledge of having successfully treated similar cases in the past. While they were not immediately *cured*, God obviously initiated the healing. For those who had not been to a physician as well as those who had, GOD made the difference. This should be a reminder that we should always call upon God's healing power whether we visit a physician or not.

Also, believers should not think that going to a physician demonstrates less faith in God. As I mentioned, Jesus never disapproved of physicians. When telling the story of the good Samaritan recorded in Luke 10:30-35, He mentioned the Samaritan used wine and oil to dress the man's wounds. He then took the injured man to an inn where he "took care of him" until he was healed. There is no mention of God's intervention. Jesus Christ obviously expects us to do whatsoever we can in this life, including when sickness or illness occurs. And God gave us bodies that can deal with disease, illness, and injury.

Jesus Christ told us to preach the gospel of the kingdom. It is a commanded work. Is there anyone who would say that our work of preaching the gospel to the world happens without God's power and blessing behind it? Is not every baptism a miracle of GOD working in the mind and heart of a person and drawing them unto the truth? All of us have experienced the opening of our minds. The fact is that none of us could understand the Word of God until He removed the veil of blindness and deafness that was upon us.

And so it is with healing. A physician can help and we can do things to target the physical problem but God is the one who heals. Without His intervention, there might be no healing and, perhaps, no cure either.

Our physical bodies are an incredible creation of God, able to recover from many things. Physicians can provide an additional help for injuries, sickness, and illness. However,

without God, even a simple wound or cold could lead to unnecessary suffering or death. This is not to say that those who died of a sickness or illness lacked faith or did not pray to God. Quite the contrary, because we all are appointed once to die (Heb. 9:27) and there is a time when each of us will die regardless of how great is our faith. Abraham and David are obvious examples.

But faith is required to receive healing (Mat. 9:29). Can we say that someone who has the faith to be healed has less faith than others if they see a physician? No, because faith is for God's *healing*, the physician can only assist a person's body to *cure* itself. The physician does nothing except enhance the miraculous abilities of the body. All too often, I think, we tend to draw a line between a physician and God when it comes to our physical health. They have completely different roles: God is our healer and a physician can help our bodies recover.

An example of the roles of God and a physician are similar to our leaders. God is the Great King (Mat. 5:35) and ultimate authority in the universe, but He also establishes human rulers to carry out His will:

ROMANS 13:1, 4 Let everyone be subject to the higher authorities because there is no authority except from God; and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God; ... 4 For he is a servant of God to you for good. ...

He gave us leaders for our good. We all answer to someone: a boss, the tax collector, police or law enforcement, a judge, etc. Problems can occur, though, when we fail to involve God. The same is true with our healing. Always take your supplication to God and, if necessary, ask the brethren for prayers or an elder for an anointing.

Have you ever considered that "God Himself has placed certain *ones* in the church [with] gifts of healings" (1 Cor. 12:28)? I would guess that most of those who have the gifts do not even realize it. Thankfully, when a prayer request goes out, they are among those who are praying. That is not to say that the other believers who pray have no influence with God. Most of us are like the woman who relentlessly petitioned the unjust judge (Luke 18:1-7). In particular, notice the reason He gave the parable: "[Jesus Christ] also spoke a parable to them to show that **it is necessary to pray always, and not to give up.**" The prayers of the brethren ARE effective. All of them. They are prayers in faith, humility, sincerity, and love. They all matter because we all suffer when members of the Body of Christ suffer.

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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