

SABBATH THOUGHT 2024-07-27—FAITH & HEALING

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Faith and healing are very personal and individual experiences that are as varied and unique as are the people of God. Most have experienced or, at the very least, heard of or witnessed dramatic healings directly by the hand of God. They are personal reminders that renew the soul when the weariness of this world weighs upon us. They are also a source of inspiration and hope for others. What greater encouragement is there than seeing evidence that God is pleased with a sinner who repents and dedicates their life to Him.

Miracles seem to abound in the early years of a Christian's new life but as the years go by, discouragement can arise when prayers seem to go unanswered. That is not to say that God abandons His people. While heavy afflictions are common to flesh and blood, Christians have a greater hope because of this promise:

JAMES 5:14-15 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And **the prayer of faith will save the sick**, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

But where is the hope of that promise for those who suffer year after year? There are several reasons, not the least of which is that those who take up their cross¹ SHALL be subjected to trials by fire:

1 PETER 4:12-13 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the **fiery trial which is to try you**, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that **you partake of Christ's sufferings**, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

Another is that God tests those who are His children in order to demonstrate His strength in them:

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9-10 And He [*God*] said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that **the power of Christ may rest upon me**. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For **when I am weak, then I am strong**.

Trials and afflictions prove the hearts and minds of all who stand in the hope of eternal life. They are also life changing experiences, as in the case of Job, whereby God perfects the saints:

¹ Matt. 10:38.

1 PETER 5:10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after **you have suffered** a while, **perfect**, establish, strengthen, and settle *you*.

What is the relationship between faith and healing? Many would say they are directly related—healing is according to faith. Read the story of the two blind men:

MATTHEW 9:27-29 When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, “Son of David, have mercy on us!” 28 And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, “**Do you believe that I am able to do this?**” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.” 29 Then He touched their eyes, saying, “**According to your faith let it be to you.**”

They were healed because they *believed* Jesus was ABLE to heal them. Notice, however, that they had faith *prior* to coming to Him. Their faith also existed *before* the Holy Spirit was given so these two blind men stood out. I think that was the motivation for Jesus to heal them especially in light of this story:

MATTHEW 13:54-58 When He [*Jesus Christ*] had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, “Where did this *Man* get this wisdom and *these* mighty works? 55 “Is this not the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? 56 “And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this *Man* get all these things?” 57 So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.” 58 Now **He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.**

Jesus did some works but not many because they did not have faith. It does not say He COULD not do mighty works but He DID not do them. It was a CHOICE not to do mighty works. People were healed in those days because they had faith BEFORE the Holy Spirit was given. Miraculous healings were universally recognized as proof of GOD. Jesus said, “the very works that I do bear witness of me *and* that the Father has sent me.” (John 5:36). **Healings validated the faith of people and proved Jesus was from God BEFORE the Holy Spirit was given.**

God will not intervene *without* faith but today people have the Holy Spirit in them. So, does a lack of healing today mean a lack of faith? No! Those with the Holy Spirit ALREADY have faith:

ROMANS 12:3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as **God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.**

Faith is more than believing in God or that He can heal. It is the basis for salvation because remission of sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is by FAITH! Baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit are by FAITH! A covenant with God for eternal life is

by FAITH! Without faith sins are not forgiven, baptism is just a bath, laying on of hands is a pat on the head, and a covenant is empty words.

Everyone with the Holy Spirit already has faith so why does God withhold healings today? Healings in the days of Jesus Immanuel was proof of God. Those with the Holy Spirit already have faith and believe in God so physical healing is not the concern—the priority is spiritual *salvation*.

1 PETER 1:6-10 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been **grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.** 10 Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace *that would come* to you,

There are healings today but simply having faith does not guarantee them. The other reason involves *works*. Would the two blind men have been healed if they had not sought out Jesus? No. They believed He could but they had to *ask* Him in person. That was no simple task because they were BLIND. Could you find a stranger by navigating through a town while blind? That was surely faith by works! Measuring faith by miraculous healings ignores works of faith²:

JAMES 2:14-20, 24, 26 What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what *does it* profit? 17 Thus also **faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.** 18 But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and **I will show you my faith by my works.** 19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! 20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that **faith without works is dead?** ... 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only. ... 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without works is dead** also.

James presents the case that God expects the saints to actually *supply* a brother or sister the food and clothes they require. Faith without works is dead but works are a two-way street. Those with the means and opportunity to provide for the needs of others are doing good works but that those who have needs must do their own WORKS by ACCEPTING the help that is offered.

Faith requires works AND works require faith. Who prays for God to provide their daily food but then refuses to go to the grocery store to get it? Is going to the

² Also 2 Thess. 1:11.

store showing a lack of faith? No! Then why would it be a lack of faith if help comes from another person—converted or NOT—rather than God Himself? After fasting 40 days and nights, Jesus was famished³. God did not miraculously fill His belly but rather sent angels who ministered to Him and likely brought physical food. Is there ever a case where God just miraculously filled someone's belly instead of providing *physical* food? Think of the manna, Elijah fed by ravens⁴, or the Corinthians sending food to Jerusalem during the famine⁵.

Asking God to intervene but refusing someone who is willing and able to help could be preventing and rejecting GOOD WORKS of faith! Why should faith be measured only by those things which God Himself does? Agape love, faith, and good works are ALL required for salvation and all come from God but they have to be RECEIVED as well. Good works are not just something done FOR others, they are also RECEIVED by others! Good works and faith are bound together and so, too, are giving AND receiving. Good works cannot exist unless a person has the means and opportunity and someone else has a need.

God made the body to HEAL itself but only to a certain extent. If someone is seriously injured, the body may not heal without a doctor who will cleanse the wound, sew it up, and bandage it. The Good Samaritan did not kneel down and pray for the injured man to be made whole. He cared and provided for him. Does God suspend the laws of the universe to move a mountain when asked by someone with faith as a mustard seed⁶? That would be like asking God to temporarily suspend gravity to get on the roof to avoid buying a ladder. Accepting help only from God might be rejecting His help altogether.

It is always God who CHOOSES if, when, and how help comes. All miracles are WORKS of God. So, too, is help from others—converted or NOT—they *begin* as works of God who inspires others to their own works. God is always involved in our works. Keeping the commandments of God are by WORKS of faith! Overcoming sin is by WORKS of faith! Becoming agape love is by WORKS of faith! Would any of these be possible without God? Jesus said, “with God all things are possible” (Matt. 9:26) “to him who believes” (Mark 9:23). Without *works* no one can keep the commandments, sin cannot be overcome, and love will not grow. Likewise, healings require WORKS of faith. Even prayer is a WORK of faith:

ROMANS 15:30 ... **strive** together with me in **prayers** to God ...

COLOSSIANS 4:12 ... always **laboring fervently** for you in **prayers** ...

JAMES 5:16 Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and **pray for one another, that you may be healed**. The effective, **fervent prayer** of a righteous man avails much.

³ Matt. 4:2.

⁴ 1 Kgs. 17:4.

⁵ 2 Cor. 9.

⁶ Matt. 17:20; 21:21; 1 Cor. 13:2.

Fervent literally means energetic or full of *energy*, which is the noun form of the verb *work* (Gk. *ergon*). The absence of healing, though, does not reflect a lack of faith or works. Notice what Jesus Christ prayed:

MARK 14:36 And He [*Jesus*] said, “Abba, Father, **all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me;** nevertheless, not what I will, but what You *will*.”

ALL things are possible with God and perhaps there was another way to offer salvation to mankind; however, God the Father wanted Jesus Christ alone be the name of salvation and have that glory and honor. So, Jesus had to suffer:

HEBREWS 5:7-8 ... in the days of His flesh, when He [*Jesus Christ*] had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him **who was able to save Him from death,** and was heard because of His godly fear, & though He was a Son, yet **He learned obedience [submission] by the things which He suffered.**

There are cases of faith without works as evident when someone refuses the help God provides through others. Hopefully, this is done out of ignorance since the alternative is dead faith. But many have faith WITH works who suffer trials and afflictions even though they are not healed. Their works are manifested in prayers and supplications, anointings, aid from doctors, taking medication for pain or other symptoms, etc. These works are amazing and incredible proof of their abundant and enduring faith with WORKS. Those with living faith are a praise to God the Father and a reflection of Jesus Christ's own sufferings:

HEBREWS 5:9 And having been perfected, **He [*Jesus*] became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him,**

In contrast to the days of Jesus Christ who physically healed those with faith but without the Holy Spirit, the issue today is spiritual salvation. Do not measure faith by healings. No one has the Holy Spirit without faith. Truly, those who suffer trials and afflictions, grow in agape love, continue in the faith of Jesus Christ, and are doing or receiving good works will be recipients of the eternal salvation authored by the Savior of mankind—whether or not they were healed in this life!

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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