

Christ Jesus: the Lord over healing

Thoughts about the tension between the sovereignty of God and the reality of (chronic) illness

Ephesians 1: 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

Overview:

1. Healing is based on the finished work of Christ both in creation and on the Cross
2. Jesus Christ heals in various ways
3. Healing is for the whole person
4. We have responsibilities in relation to our health
5. Why are some not (yet) healed?
6. Areas of tension in relation to healing
7. Resolving the areas of tension

1. Healing is based on the finished work of Christ both in creation and on the Cross

1.1 He created all things out of nothing

This includes healing powers in creation. Heb 1: 2, Heb 11: 3

These healing powers can be placed into two large categories: usual and unusual.

1.2 He bore our iniquities and our diseases

This happened when He died on the cross in our place, Isaiah 53: 1-12; Lk 22: 19; Heb 10: 5, 10, 12

1.3 Through His resurrection the power of sin and disease has been broken

Peter 2: 24; 1 John 3: 8 b

2. Jesus Christ heals in various ways

He has revealed Himself to be the Healer of His covenant people already in Old Testament times, Ex 15: 26 If you will diligently listen to the voice of Jehovah 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 Jehovah-rapha (Jehovah who heals you).

The New Covenant is even better, Heb 10: 9 and Heb 12: 18-24

2.1 Jesus Christ our Law-giver: Prevention = preventive healing:

Live according to His laws, precepts and ordinances.

Proverbs 3: 7-8 Be not wise in your own eyes: fear the Lord and depart from evil. It shall be health to your navel, and marrow to your bone.

- Healthy living: exercise, water, rest, fresh air, food (inc. vitamins, anti-oxidants)
- Healthy family life ==> healthy personality development ==> dramatic decrease in the number of people who need psychotherapy and psychiatric treatment
- Avoidance of extra-marital sexual intercourse ==> no venereal disease
- Isolation of those with infectious diseases ==> it will not spread to others
- Avoidance of theft ==> dramatic decrease of victims of violent crime

2.2 Jesus Christ our Creator: Creational healing:

2.2.1 Created resistance against disease

- immune system against infections (mother's milk, post-exposure immunity, vaccination)
- protection against cancer cells

2.2.2 Created usual healing powers

- recovery from infections
- restoration after trauma
- psycho-somatic interaction (T-cells and touch in children)
- placebo effect

2.3 Jesus Christ our Master: Stewardship of usual medicinal healing powers:

As part of God's mandate to rule over creation and to subject it, Gen.1:28. Also Ex.15:25; 2 Kings 20: 7; Isaiah 38: 21; 1 Tim 5: 23.

- means of biological origin: plants / animals, e.g. digitalis, antibiotics produced by bacteria, animal tissue
- means of mineral origin, e.g. trace minerals, mineral salts, gold, iodine
- means of synthetic origin, e.g. synthetic digitalis with less side-effects than the plant-product

2.4 Jesus Christ our Sovereign King: Miraculous healing through God-approved unusual healing powers:

A miraculous healing takes place through the use of God-approved unusual powers, it is complete and it happens instantly.

- the ministry of Jesus Christ was full of such miracles
- miraculous healing also took place in Old Testament times, e.g. Naaman, 2 Kings 5
- gifts of healings, 1 Corinthians 12: 9. God still works in this way whenever it suits Him, also in the health field. Most university-trained healthcare workers have too great a reticence in trusting God for a miracle. Some Christians want God to do a miracle each and every time. We have no right to decide for God when He is to do a miracle and when not.

2.5 Jesus Christ our Saviour: Mercy-healings through the use of God-approved unusual and/or creational usual healing powers

A mercy-healing is an unusual healing, but it is not immediate and it might not be complete. It is unusual in the sense that it takes place much faster than usual and / or that a condition that usually does not heal is at least partially restored to health.

Frequently, it is not possible to analyze exactly how Jesus Christ has healed a person.

The important matter is that we give Him the credit, whether it is a miracle, a mercy-healing or an ordinary healing because of usual creational healing powers. Frequently mercy-healing follow on the following types of prayer (although miracles may also happen in answer to such prayers):

- prayer by the local church leaders, James 5: 14-15
- faith of interested friends, Luke 5: 17-26
- a cry for help from a needy individual, Mk 5: 25-34; Ps 30: 3

3. Healing is for the whole person

Any type of healing influences the whole person

Biblical concepts:

shalom = peace, prosperity and well-being (it includes the concept of health)

sodzo = salvation in the broadest sense, includes healing

therapeuo = healing. Used mostly regarding the healing ministry of Jesus

iaomai = healing. Used mostly regarding the healing ministry of Jesus

3.1 Predominantly spiritual healing:

* forgiveness of sin

- Mk 2: 6 Your sins are forgiven

* new life (regeneration)

- Jo 1: 12-13; 3: 3-7.

3.2 Predominantly psychological healing:

* restoration - Ps.23: He restores my soul

* death to self - crucified with Christ, delivered from the guilt of sin and delivered from the slavery to sin so that I am free to serve God as He wants me to, Rom 6.

* renewal of the mind, Romans 12: 1-2.

* comforting: removing pain/grief and replacing it with His peace, John 15: 26.

3.3 Predominantly core healing:

(heart is the core of the inner man, of spirit and soul together)

* healing and binding up, Ps 147: 3 He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds; Luke 4: 18

* deliverance, Ps 146: 7; Isaiah 61: 1-2

* He raises us up when we have been bowed down, Ps 146: 8

3.4 Predominantly physical healing:

* Bodily healing, Acts 3: 8 the lame "entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God."

* Raising from the dead, e.g. Lazarus as described in John 11

4. We have responsibilities in relation to our health

4.1 We need to come to God for new life in our spirit

4.2 We need to obey and love the Lord unconditionally

4.3 We must not do those things forbidden by Him.

4.4 We must prevent sickness by living and eating healthily.

4.5 We must prevent the spreading of infectious diseases

4.6 We must pray for the sick and for their family

4.7 We must take care of those who are sick
Care of ourselves and of others.

We need to find a good balance between the voluntary (unpaid) and professional (paid) care of the sick.

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5. Why some are not (yet) healed

5.1 Wrong attitude or motives will lead to unanswered prayer, Ps 66: 18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

5.2 Un-confessed sin, 1 Corinthians 11: v 29, 30; John 5: 6, 14. Sins to watch out for: bitterness, Heb 12: 15; un-forgiveness, Ephesians 4: 31 - 32. Also self-pity: Do you really want to be healed or do you enjoy the attention? Some use illness as a means to manipulate others.

5.3 Ignorance: Not having been taught fully about God’s provision in Christ

5.4 Disobedience : You know what the Lord wants, but you do not do it. If Naaman did not wash himself seven times in the Jordan, he would not have been healed, 2 Kings 5: 12-14

5.5 Unbelief : James 5: 15 ‘the prayer of faith shall save the sick’; Mark 6: 5-6 ‘and He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And He marvelled because of their unbelief.’ Over-awareness of our feelings frequently cause a wavering faith, James 1: 6.

5.6 Trusting the healers rather than the Lord; wanting the healing but not the Healer, 2 Chronicles 16: 12 “And Asa in the thirty-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.”

- 5.7 Not submitting to God and His will, rather than the attitude described in 1Jn 5: 14
- 5.8 Influence of the evil one, Luke 13: 16 And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for 18 years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?
- 5.9 Illness unto death, Hezekiah
- 5.10 Refining of the faith of the sick person - Job
- 5.11 Refining of the faith of family, healthcare staff, etc.
- 5.12 For the sake of God's Name and glory - Job, Blind man John 9: 3
- 5.13 Discipline of the Lord - 1Cor.11:29-30
- 5.14 Sometimes we do not know - do not decide too quickly that the Lord is not giving an answer to our questions.

6. Areas of tension in relation to healing

- 6.1 Not all people will experience physical healing here and now, but healing of soul and spirit remains possible in many instances where physical healing does not take place.

C Area of tension: physical healing versus psycho-spiritual healing

Even the people miraculously healed by Jesus became old and died.

C Area of tension: The victory obtained by Christ on the Cross versus what we experience thereof in everyday life.

- 6.2 Healing is not always possible, care is!

C Area of tension: cure versus care; healing versus nursing.

- 6.3 We need to provide Biblical spiritual care of the dying as an integral part of palliative care

We need to share the Gospel with those who do not yet know Jesus Christ. We have a unique message of life and hope for the dying.

After a Christian has died, he is healthier than he has ever been during his life!

C Area of tension: life before death versus life after death; here and now versus eternity

- 6.4 We need to seek the Lord's will for each sick person and act accordingly. This does not happen because we are too busy. We also need to consider the sovereignty of God.

C Area of tension: God's will versus man's will

6.5 We have to walk wisely and trust the Lord steadfastly as we work in the health field.

C Area of tension: Overconfidence versus over-cautiousness

6.6 Jesus Christ is the Lord over healing. Let us know and honour Him thus.

C Area of tension: fatalism versus shamanism

Fatalism can sound ever so spiritual. When Job declared that the Lord had given and the Lord had taken, it was powerful faith expressing his deep conviction that the Lord is in sovereign control and that He knows best - but Job was no passive fatalist. The rest of the book of Job testifies to that. In the end he was miraculously healed! Today many use Job's words without the faith content as a flimsy front for their own unbelief in God's ability and willingness to do miracles.

Shamanism includes the technique of visualization (the use of unauthorized unusual powers in the spiritual realm to influence the visible realm; man takes the initiative; man decides what is to be the end result; man creates and gives contents to the visual picture; man invokes the unusual powers; unusual powers get involved in some way; these unauthorized powers bring about the effects).

7 Resolving the areas of tension related to healing

How do we deal with these areas of tension? Here are some practical guidelines:

7.1 Learn to walk with God, as Enoch did, Heb 11: 5

Keep on turning your heart towards God whenever there is even the shortest break in your activities. For example, as you walk from one patient to the next, as you wait for someone to answer the phone, as you take the lift.

Practice the presence of God in this way. Start today and keep on until your spirit, mind and feelings have been disciplined into the habit of turning your heart towards God the whole day long. It takes at least six months to one year of consistent self-discipline before it actually becomes part of your life.

Do not let anyone or anything keep you from learning to do this.

As we walk in prayerful dependence on the Lord, He will give us the wisdom we need exactly when we need it, not beforehand.

7.2. Regularly apply James 4: 7 'Submit to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.'

Teach your patients to do the same. How?

- First of all, take a spiritual history to find out whether they know Jesus Christ personally as their Lord and Saviour. Eternal life is more important than time-bound health, Matth 16: 26.

- Secondly, let them make a total surrender of their whole life and of their health to the Lord.
1 Samuel 3: 18 He is the Lord, let Him do what is good in His eyes. Also see Ex 4: 11; Deuteronomy 32: 39. God blesses the righteous and the unrighteous through grace, Matthew 15: 30; 3 John 1: 2. These blessings include healing. We do not deserve any blessing, because of the Fall. Yet God showers us with so many blessings in His mercy.
- Thirdly, take time to confess sin, 1 Corinthians 11: 30. Let them take a time of quiet before the Lord, asking Him to show them whether He thinks some sin is involved, Psalm 38: 4, 8, 16; Psalm 41: 5. It might be helpful to go through the list of reasons why people are not healed mentioned earlier on in this message. If the Holy Spirit convicts them, they need to confess and repent of those sins. This can be done silently, since it is primarily a matter between them and the Lord. Sometimes it might be necessary for the person to confess the sin out loud as part of the humbling before God, James 5: 16.
- Do they have a burning desire to be healed by the Lord? John 5: 6.
- Are they willing to testify about what the Lord has done for them? John 9: 25.
- Will they give all the glory to God? Acts 3: 1-16; 14: 8-17.
- If, after they have gone through the above points, the Lord convinces them that He wants to heal them, let them come to the Lord with a specific request for healing as guided by the Holy Spirit, Jeremiah 17: 14; Luke 11: 9; 18: 40-42.
- If, after they have gone through the above points, the Lord convinces them that He does not want to heal them, let them come to the Lord with a specific request as guided by the Holy Spirit, Jeremiah 17: 14; Luke 11: 9; 18: 40-42.
- Thank and praise the Lord by faith for answering the prayer, Matthew 21: 22; Romans 4: 19 - 21.