

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON SICKNESS AND HEALING

Why am I sick?

Why haven't I had instant healing from God by now?

Why must I go through this suffering?

What possible profitable purposes could God accomplish as a result of this pain?

Today much is being communicated in the Christian world (as well as secular) about the matter of healing. Every Christian has the responsibility to be faithfully studying the whole counsel of God on every subject to know what is right. Genesis to Revelation is the progressive revelation of God and His truth to His children. I believe the Bible teaches that miraculous, instantaneous healing was a "sign" gift. From the very beginning of God's dealing with man, before His people had a Bible to carry with them, much supernatural phenomena took place in order to establish and prove that the message and messenger were really from God. Therefore, when God communicated to His people, that message of truth was many times confirmed and authenticated by "signs", wonders, healing, and miracles of different sorts.

Think about the burning bush, the rod, the 10 plagues, the parting of the sea. They served a purpose, but are no longer needed today. When was the last time you followed a cloud or pillar of fire to church or work. Or how about the purpose of Elijah's healings, floating axe heads, dreams, angels delivering God's messages, visions, audible voices, fire from heaven, prophecies of destruction of cities (all 100% accurately fulfilled)? Or what about the virgin birth taking place in Bethlehem and the entire fulfillment of over 300 prophecies at that time by Christ? Look at Christ's miracles - every one who came to Christ was healed permanently (not sick again 2 days later or back in wheel chairs like today's "behind the scenes" facts that are never broadcasted). As you think about that, ask also, "Where are all the other supernatural manifestations as previously mentioned? Why would just one of the "sign" gifts be in existence and the others not? It would only be consistent with God to have it all here or none of it! They have fulfilled their purposes.

Yes, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, but this process of revealing Himself and the divine truth is not. It's very obvious that all the supernatural phenomena existed for a purpose - to authenticate the man and the message as being from God! It was no longer needed when divine revelation was permanently recorded in written form for man. In Heb.1:1-2, it reads that God spoke at various times in many different ways in the past, but now has spoken (past completed action) through His Son. Jesus Christ is the culmination of God's progressive revelation - the Apostles simply carried out the proclamation and explanation of the doctrinal significance of the Gospel in fulfillment of John 14:26 and 15:13, in which Jesus was speaking personally in context to His disciples. Therefore, when the Book of Revelation was given, because of the way it ends (22:18-19), along with the completion of the original canon (unanimously accepted and confirmed historically by early church Fathers), there was no more need for supernatural confirmation of the message from God. The Word of God stood as completed.

DOES GOD HEAL TODAY?

The answer most assuredly is yes, of course God heals today, but not in the instantaneous fashion as during the Apostolic era. In fact, it is only through God's grace that anyone is restored to proper health and strength. So the question that is really being asked is, "Does God heal everyone, all the time, today through those who claim to have the gift of healing?" The answer to that is, no!

First of all, God has not even always done that in the past. Look at the very Apostle Paul who had exhibited the gift of healing many times. He could not even heal himself (2 Cor.12:7-18) so to speak. Nor did instant healing take place in the life of Timothy (1 Tim.5:23). Paul told him to use a little wine for medicinal purposes. This happened towards the end of Paul's life when the gifts of healing and other supernatural expressions of God's power were not as frequent. This was because the Bible was coming more and more to its entirety (as explained previously). God did not always heal then, nor does He today! You may ask, "Well then, what is the "gift" of healing" that some claim to have that we see today?" My only response to that is that we must look at God's guidelines, for then we will know what is from Him and what is not from Him. Read, at this point, Deut.18:21-22 and write basically what it says: You'll know it's of God when (1) It's consistent with all of Scripture.

(2) It's happening exactly as it's been stated.

Now, look up Deut.13:1-3, 9-10, and write down what this basically teaches about those who were not 100% accurate all the time!

God didn't and does not treat this matter lightly. As we observe the healings and miracles Scripture records for us, we see a definite purpose as well as a variety of methods used in each situation. This is not the case we find today. Did the apostles ever set up tents or use special gimmicks where people came to be healed? They preached the Gospel and stressed repentance of sin, faith and commitment. They didn't have people "line up so they could get from Jesus." If you observe the true apostolic gifts of miracles and healings, and then notice the Biblical context, it will be evident that what we see today is not from God's established guidelines as revealed during the Apostolic Era. Look up the following verses and notice the purposes for miracle sign gifts:

Ex.9:13-16

Jn.2:11,23

Jn.20:30-31

2 Cor.12:12

Heb.2:3-4

Acts 5:12

At this point let's examine this matter of sickness and healing. Much of the sickness that we experience is brought on by ourselves. For instance, medical doctors are convinced that 50% of their patients are sick because of not dealing with stress and pressure properly. It's proven that our own mind can bring on sickness: think sick - be sick. Sinful responses to circumstances such as fear, nervousness, or anger will cause intestinal problems, ulcers, heart palpitations, and various other diseases. (Read "None of These Diseases" by Dr. S.I. MacMillian. If we are doing too much, not eating properly, or not getting the proper rest, our body begins to break down and becomes susceptible to common colds, the flu, and other sicknesses.

Now, let's examine the causes of sickness and disease that Scripture gives:

1. Man's original sin (Gen.3:16-19), our glorified body is not 'til we get to heaven.
2. Man's actual sin (2 Kings 5:27; 2 Chron.21:12-19; Micah 6:13; 1 Cor.11:28-30).
3. Satan's afflictions (Job 2:6-7; Lk.9:39; 13:16; 2 Cor.12:7-10).
4. God's sovereign will (Jn.9:1-3; 2 Cor.12:7-10; Jn.11:4; Deut.28:59-61; 32:39; Hosea 6:1; Acts 12:23; 2 Sam.12:13-15).
5. Approaching death (Gen.48:1).
6. Accidents (2 Kings 1:2).

7. Wine (alcohol) (Hosea 7:5).
8. Despondency (Prov.13:12).
9. Exhaustive work (Dan.8:27).
10. Love? (Song of Solomon 2:5).
11. God's judgment (2 Chron.21:14-19).

Therefore, there are three basic reasons for sickness, illness, or disease:
(1) The consequences of sin and/or irresponsible living (2) To bring death (3) To bring glory to God (for example Job, the blind man of Jn.9:1-3, Paul in 2 Cor.12:7-10, and even Joni Eareckson). When sickness is to bring glory to God, the Scripture indicates that it is entirely out of anyone's hands to heal except God. To "demand" that God heal someone is arrogance, because we do not know the sovereign will of God. Also, to "demand" or "command" healing, as is so often done today, is of supreme ignorance. It is contrary to the manner in which the very Son of God taught us to pray (Matt.6:9-13), and the way He Himself prayed, "Not my will, but Thy will be done!" We need to submit all that we pray to the will of God and to the Spirit who intercedes according to God's will (Rom.8:26-29). His Word is His will. We must also base what we pray on the Word of God (1 Jn.5:14-15). Notice in these verses the only conditions upon which God will answer our prayer. (Incidentally, these verses will be the most helpful verses in this matter of praying for healing).

- 1 Jn.3:22
- 1 Jn.5:14-15
- Rom.8:26-27
- Mt.26:39

In the study of Scripture on the matter of healing, it is observed to be a result of: (It is to your benefit to read the verses).

1. Intercession (Num.12:1-15)
2. Repentance (1 Kings 13:1-6)
3. Prayer (Js.5:14-15; Acts 28:8-9)
4. Use of means (1 Tim.5:23; Lk.10:34; 2 Kings 20:7; Isa.38:21; Prov.17:22)
(Medicine! It is foolishness to ignore doctor's orders!)
5. Faith. (Num.21:8-9; John 4:46-53)
6. Miracles (I Ki.17:17-23; Matt. - Acts)
7. God's mercy (Phil.2:25-30)
8. God's Word (Ps.107:20)
9. Power of God (Gen.20:17-18; Ps.103:3)
10. Power of Christ (Matt. 4:24; 8:16; Jn.20:30-31)
11. Apostolic gift to authenticate and confirm new revelation from God.
(II Cor.12:12; I Cor.12:9; Heb.2:3-4; Acts 5:12; Matt.10:1-8)
12. Rev.22:2

In the understanding of sickness, suffering and healing, Joni Eareckson has written two excellent books about what God has taught her through being a quadrapalegic (being paralyzed from the neck down). "Joni" and "A Step Further" would be available through any Christian bookstore.

If you are experiencing sickness you should very definitely examine the causes as previously stated and identify those which may apply to you, and act appropriately in light of what the Scripture says. Since we are human, in a sinful world, we aren't immuned to the sickness and diseases around us. It's a part of life! Scripture gives certain factors that are conducive to good health such as:

1. Proper exercise (I Tim.4:8) a daily schedule (I Cor.14:40)
2. Proper food (Acts 27:34) nutrition, vitamins (Dan.1:8-17)
3. Temperance (self control) (Jer.35:5-8)
4. Obedience (Prov.4:20-22; Eph.6:2-3; Ex.20:12)
5. Cheerfulness (Prov.17:22)

6. God's will (Jn.9:1-3)
7. Praying for it! (3 Jn.2)

If you are suffering from sickness or disease because of sin or irresponsible living, read:

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| Ps.32:3-5 | Js.5:14-15 |
| Ps.51 | |
| 1 Jn.1:9 | 1 Cor.11:28-32 |
| Prov.28:13 | |

If you are suffering from sickness to bring glory to God, then you must realize that your response is what will demonstrate God's truth through you. Discover God's purposes in the following verses:

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| Js.1:2-5 | Phil.4:4-9 |
| Js.1:12 | |
| 1 Cor.10:13 | 1 Pet.4:12-19 |
| 2 Cor.12:7-10 | |

(Notice all that God wants you to experience through this test of faith!)

1 Thes.5:18

* We do God's will by an act/choice of our will not our feelings! *

HOW CAN I PERSONALLY BENEFIT FROM THIS?

Over the past several years of my ministry as an Assistant Pastor, it has been my privilege to visit many shut-ins, people in the hospital, and those suffering from various illnesses. The more I'm aware of what God has done and can do through suffering - the more I'll benefit spiritually and be more equipped to minister to others! The following are some suggestions I would like to share with you, to hopefully answer the questions: "Why am I suffering from this sickness?" "Why do I have to go through this?" "Why am I in the hospital?" or "What does God want to teach me through this?" It may be:

1. To give us opportunities to witness (1 Pet.3:15; Phil.1:12).
2. To draw us closer to God (Psalms) or back to God (Ps.119:67). Are you even a child of God? If you're not sure, read these verses right now. (Jn.1:12; 3:16; 3:36; 5:24; Rom.3:10; 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 2 Cor.5:21; 1 Jn.5:11-13; Rev.3:20; Eph.2:8-9).
3. To experience deeper trust and dependence on God (Psalms) (2 Cor.1:809; Job 13:15)
4. To test your faith and response (Js.1:2-4); Mk.4:17).
5. To expose your heart attitudes (Deut.8:2-6; Ps.17:1-5 and other attitudes - Job 2:9).
6. To search and examine your life (I Cor.11:28-30).
7. To broaden your perspective on life, God, the ministry of others.
8. To teach patience (Rom.5:1-5), the quality of steadfast endurance (II Tim.3:11; 4:5).
9. To teach contentment (Phil.4:1) (1 Tim.6:6).
10. To glorify God (to make Him known) (I Cor.10:31).
11. To cause you to seek and know God experientially (Hos.5:15).
12. To get you to pull away from all distractions and the business of life, and rest awhile (Mark 6:31).
13. To focus your undivided attention on Him.
14. To be healed and not take health or _____ for granted.
15. To allow God to speak to you through His Word and others in the church.

16. To equip you better to minister to others (II Cor.1:3-7). Some of the most beautiful hymns, poems, and books ever written have been penned by those who have experienced the greatest suffering!
17. To conform you to the image of Christ (Rom.8:28-29).
18. To expect and experience God's working in your life.
19. To find His grace and strength to be sufficient (II Cor.12:7-10).
20. To accept God's sovereignty and purpose in your life. (Jonah; Jn.9:1-3)
21. To see Him work all things together for good (Rom.8:28).
22. To build and strengthen your faith in God. (I Pet.1:6-8).
23. To intensify your prayer life and experience answers to prayer (Psalms).
24. To rejoice and give thanks to Him for all things (Psalms).
25. To purify your life (II Cor.7:9-11; Isa.48:10).
26. To produce humility (II Cor.12:7-10; II Chron.33:12; 1 Pet.5:6-7).
27. To demonstrate the power and works of God (Jn.9:1-3), and reveal His sympathy (Isa.63:9).
28. To know His power (II Cor.4:7-11) and faithfulness (Ps.34:19-20) and Him! (Phil.3:10)
29. To find your sufficiency in God (II Cor.3:5).
30. To focus on eternal truths (II Cor.4:16-18) (Joys of heaven, Rev.21).
31. To find inner strength (II Cor.4:16-18).
32. To discipline your life (correction/guidance) (Heb.12:1-15).
33. To give meaning and experience to spiritual knowledge (Psalms 119:67, 71.)
34. To get God's truth off the pages and into your life.
35. To broaden and sharpen the testimony of your life message. (Job 42:1-6).
36. To intercede for others (I Tim.2:1-2).
37. To make the most of your time (Eph.5:16).
38. To teach you how to live for the Lord (and die for the Lord) God's will (Ps.119:71; Isa.26:9).
39. To show the angelic realm (and demonic powers) God's salvation and grace (Job 1; I Pet.1:10-12).
40. To reveal a special purpose for you and your family, church ... (Joni Eareckson).
41. To learn obedience (Heb.5:8).
42. To instruct the believer in the holiness and sovereignty of God's character and purpose (Job 42:5-6).
43. To manifest the fruit of the Spirit (II Cor.4:11; Gal.5:22-23; Jn.15:2).
44. To appropriate God's wisdom, the ability to skillfully apply God's perspective to our living (Js.1:5-8).
45. To provide the opportunity for rewards (Js.1:12).
46. To vindicate the character of God before Satan (Job 1:6-12).
47. To sing praise to God (Eph.5:19; Acts 16:25; Ps.145-150) start singing! against our feelings, of course - God's given us music so we can get emotionally involved with worshipping our God.
48. To come forth as gold (Job 23:10).
49. To walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor.5:7).
50. To accept it without questioning God, God never told Job "WHY"! (Job 38-41).
51. To give others in the Body of Christ opportunity to minister appropriately (2 Cor.1:11).
52. To discover that we aren't to live for ourselves (Rom.14:7-8; Phil 2).
53. Because we live in a sinful, fallen world (Rom.8:18-25) expect sickness.
54. So we can long for heaven! (Rev.21; Isa.65: 17-25) and our glorified body! (1 Jn.2:3; 1 Cor.15:42-58).
55. So that death may come (Heb. 9:27). The necessary doorway to heaven! Only "in Christ" can you "defeat" death! (1 Cor.15:54-57).

List your own. I've exhausted my resources at this point! Take note of what God teaches you about Himself, others, yourself, His word ... God is righteous which means He can only do the right thing, that which is best for those who are called according to His purpose and for those who love Him. The overall purpose which brings Him glory in our lives is our sanctification (setting us apart from this world to His Word and

service, spiritual growth, maturity, process of character development, conforming to the image of Christ ...). We must cooperate with God in this process in everything that comes into our lives. By our submission and obedience to His will. Then we will experience abundant joy and victorious living in the presence of God (Ps.16:11).

I trust that from this study you have observed the tremendous amount of Scripture that pertains to this subject. It is very much to your benefit to look up each reference so that you will understand the progressive flow of what I want to clearly get across through each statement I've made. Reread this over and over again and ask God to build these truths into your life. Be open and yielded to submit your responses, feelings and attitudes to what He has in mind for your growth and His glory. We have so much of God's Word that our focus should be on His truth and promises, not merely opinions or speculation. God's Word is clear when studied in the context of the whole counsel of God. Below is a list of verses that will hopefully bring comfort to all those children of God who are facing afflictions, sickness, trials, or sufferings.

Sources of Comfort:

God	2 Cor.1:3-4; Isa.40:1; 61:1-2; Ps.86:17; Ps.142:1-7
Christ	Matt.9:22; 11:28; 5:4; 2 Cor.1:5
Holy Spirit	Acts 9:31; Jn.14:16,26
The Scriptures	Rom.15:4-5; Ps.119:50; 2 Tim.3:14-17
Christian Friends	2 Cor.7:5-7; Matt.25:34-40; Acts 12:5
Prayer	Heb.4:16; 10:22; Ps.116:4; Ps.25, 27, 34, 62

Other Suggested Scriptures to Read:

Psalms 4, 9, 16, 23, 25, 27, 30, 31, 34, 37, 40, 41, 42, 46, 50, 55, 56, 62, 91, 103, 116, 126, 139

Isa.40; 41:10-17; 43:2 59:13

John 14:1-6; 8:11-39, 9:14-23; 11:33-36; 12; 14; 15; 1 Cor.10:12-13; 1 Cor.15:1-58
2 Cor.1:3-7; 4:6-18; 5:1-9; 14-21; 6:4-10; 7:4-7; 9:8; 11:16-31; 12:5-10

Heb.2:9-18; 4:12-16; 7:25-27; 8:1-2; 10:19-25; 11:1-12:3; 12:5-15

James; 1 Peter; Philippians

The Word of God IS the power of God - pray it into your life and into the lives of others! Take the time to develop your spiritual life through worship, praise, prayer, the study of the Word, even ministering to others by phone or letter. Buy up every opportunity to share your faith!

Recommended Reading;

"A Severe Mercy" - Sheldon Vanauken
"'Til Armageddon" - Billy Graham
"None of These Diseases" - S.I. McMillan

"Where Is God When It Hurts", Phillip Yancy
"Joni", Joni Eareckson
"A Step Further", Joni Eareckson
"For Those Who Hurt", Charles Swindoll
"The Problem of Pain", C.S. Lewis