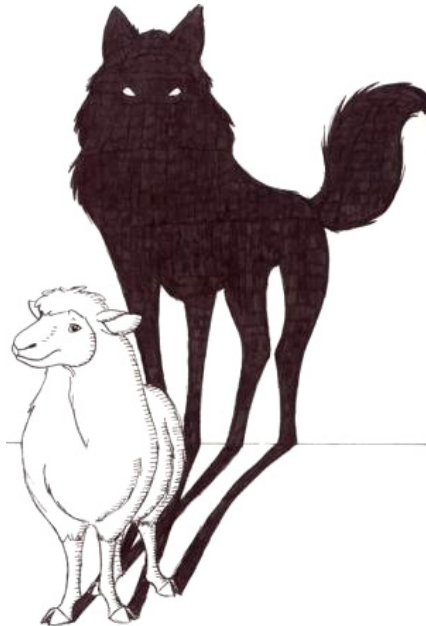


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False Teachings in the Church (Part I – Faith Healing)



*.... I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith
that was once for all entrusted to the saints. Jude 1:3 NIV*

Reviewed by: Dr. Lambert Duncan

False Teachings in the Church

Isaiah 53:4-5 (NIV) “⁴*Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.* ⁵*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*”

Matthew 8:16-17 (NIV) “¹⁶*When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick.* ¹⁷*This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.’ ”*

Galatians 3:10-13 (NIV) “¹⁰*All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written; ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’* ¹¹ *Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’* ¹² *The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, ‘The man who does these things will live by them.’* ¹³ *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Curse is everyone who is hung on a tree.’ ”*

In the November 23, 1984 issue of Christianity today, the teaching of a popular preacher named Rev. Hobart Freeman was mentioned. The article went on to say that according to Rev. Freeman, God is obligated to heal every sickness if a believer’s faith is genuine. Faith he says, must be accompanied by “positive confession,” meaning that believers must “claim” their healing by acknowledging that it has taken place through “positive confession.” In a book written Rev. Freeman (*Positive Thinking and Confession*) he said, “We must practice thought control. We must deliberately empty our minds of everything negative concerning the person, problem or situation confronting us.” Rev. Freeman taught that after healing is claimed, symptoms of illness or injury that remain are to be viewed as deception from the devil. If death occurs or someone did not get healed after making a positive confession claiming their healing, it was either due to God’s discipline or a lack of faith on behalf of the one making the positive confession. In addition, Rev. Freeman believed that to continue to take medicine after claiming or “positively” confessing healing for your body is not following your faith with the corresponding action. Instead, he believed that if genuine faith were present, it alone would be enough and would take the place of any medicine(s) taken to cure or manage your illness.

Sadly, Rev. Freeman taught his congregation, “Faith Assembly” these teachings. As a result of following his teachings on healing, it has been estimated that 90-100 members of his church have died as a result of “claiming their healing” instead of taking the available, life saving medicine(s) for a cure or management of their illness. Eventually, because of his erroneous teaching on healing, Rev. Freeman was charged, and rightly so, with aiding and abetting these deaths by what was described as

“negligent homicide.” However, two (2) weeks before his court date, Rev. Freeman died. The cause of death was said to be bronchial pneumonia and congestive heart failure complicated by an ulcerated gangrenous leg. Sticking to his faith, Rev. Freeman had refused the medical treatment that probably would have saved his life. Because of his faith, he refused to allow the bandages to be removed from his gangrenous leg so his wounds could be cleaned, which to him was a lack of faith.

As bizarre as Rev. Freeman’s teaching sounds, it did not die with him. Unfortunately, there are many churches today either teaching the same thing Rev. Freeman taught, or a watered down, or slightly different version of it to their congregations. Because of this teaching, many unsuspecting Christians are currently suffering or have died from illnesses that are usually easily cured and/or controlled with medicine. Now let me be clear, God is, and always has been a healer, there is no disease or sickness he cannot cure. However, the fact is, God does not heal everybody. Why? Nobody knows for sure. What’s even more disturbing to me is the fact that in some churches, when the saints confess their healing and don’t get healed, they are told it was due to their lack of faith or some secret sin. As a result, some walk away from God thinking he does not exist or does not love them. Others believe Christianity and/or divine healing is false because they were not healed.

While it is true that some sickness is a result of sin, it is also true that some sickness has nothing to do with the sin of the individual that is sick. Consider the following:

- In 1 Corinthians 11:29-30 (NIV) we read, “²⁹ *For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.* ³⁰ ***That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.***” In addition, the idea that some sickness was a result of sin was believed by the Jews in Jesus’ day. In John 9:1-2 (NIV) we read, “¹ *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?’***”
- In John 9:3 (NIV) Jesus responds to his disciples question, “Who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?” we read, “***‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.’***”

The Bible cannot be clearer on the subject of sickness as it relates to sin. Sometimes sickness is because of sin, as seen in 1 Corinthians 11:29-30, and sometimes its not, as seen in John 9:3.

One of the proof texts used to support the idea that Christians should not be sick is Isaiah 53:5 (NIV), which says, “***But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.***” Sadly, I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard this passage quoted in prayer for the sick. However, the student of scripture notices immediately that this passage is not talking about physical healing at all. When I hear this passage used to suggest that Jesus died to guarantee our physical healing, a few things come to mind that lead me to believe otherwise. Consider the following:

- Isaiah says that Jesus (the Messiah) was “**pierced for our transgressions**” and “**crushed for our iniquities.**” It should be noted that he never said anything in this verse about “sickness.” “Transgression” and “iniquities” (sins) are spiritual matters.
- The word “healed” (Hebrew, raphah) in Isaiah 53:5 more often than not, is used to convey spiritual healing, not physical healing. For example, Jeremiah 3:22 (Amplified) uses “raphah” for spiritual healing, there we read, “*Return, O faithless sons, [says the Lord, and] I will heal (raphah) your faithlessness.*” Psalm 41:4 (NIV) uses “raphah” for spiritual healing, there we read, “*I said O Lord, have mercy on me; heal (raphah) me, for I have sinned against you.*” (See also from NIV, Hosea 14:4, Isaiah 19:22)
- Peter is the only New Testament author to quote Isaiah 53:5. However, he uses it in a spiritual context. In 1 Peter 2:24 (NIV) we read, “*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*” Notice, Peter never mentions physical healing in this passage, only spiritual healing. Is it possible that Peter left out physical healing in this passage? I don’t think so!!
- Nobody in the New Testament is found saying, “By his stripes you are healed” when praying for the sick. Can they all be ignorant to what Isaiah really meant in Isaiah 53:5? I don’t think so!!!

In Isaiah 53, physical healing is in fact mentioned in verse four. There we read (NIV), “***Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted.***” However, the physical healing mentioned here in verse four is a prophetic reference to Jesus’ healing ministry and not a guarantee of physical healing for Christians. A quick look at Matthew chapter eight, verses sixteen through seventeen will prove beyond doubt that it is Jesus’ healing ministry Isaiah 53:4 is referring to. In Matthew 8:16-17 (NIV) we read, “¹⁶ *When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick.* ¹⁷ *This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.’*” So it’s clear then, Isaiah 53:4 refers to Jesus’ healing ministry, there is no way to twist what is recorded in Matthew 8:16-17 to make it teach something different.

Another proof text used to support the idea that Christians should not be sick is Deuteronomy Chapter 28 compared with Galatians 3:13. It is said by some that since Galatians 3:13 (NIV) says “*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us....*” Christians should not suffer any of the curses mentioned in the law. In Deuteronomy Chapter 28, which is part of the law, we find in verses 60-61 (NIV) these words, “⁶⁰ *He will bring upon you all the diseases of Egypt that you dreaded, and they will cling to you.* ⁶¹ *The Lord will also bring on you every kind of sickness and disaster not recorded in this Book of the Law, until you are destroyed.*” However, the “curse” Paul is referring to in Galatians 3:13 is not the curses from Deuteronomy Chapter 28. Galatians 3:10 (NIV) sheds light on the subject, there we read, “***All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the***

Book of the Law.’ ” Obviously then, the curse Paul is referring to is the curse of having to live up to God’s requirements in our own strength by obeying the law. Thank God we are saved by grace through faith and not by the works of the law.

To further expose the error that Christians are not supposed to be sick or that they can by faith and positive confession, claim their healing, I submit to you the following, you be the judge:

- Sickness in the New Testament

If Christians are not supposed to get sick or if they have the ability to, by faith and/or positive confession, claim their healing, we should see evidence of it in the New Testament. Remember the saying, “If it’s new, it isn’t true; if it’s true, it isn’t new.” Here’s what the New Testament reveals:

1. Paul – (The author of at least 13 of the 27 New Testament books, mightily used by God to establish churches) says, in Galatians 4:13-14 (NIV), “¹³ *As you know, **it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you.*** ¹⁴ *Even though **my illness** was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Jesus himself.*” Where do we read Paul saying, “By his stripes I’m healed?” Where do we read Paul saying, “I claimed” or “confessed” my healing?
2. Timothy – (Paul’s son in the Gospel and successor after his death obviously a man of faith) In Paul’s letter to Timothy, he gives him some advice for his frequent stomach problems (illness), In 1 Timothy 5:23 (NIV) we read, “***Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.***” Why didn’t Paul tell Timothy to “claim” his healing or “by his stripes you are healed” or “you’re sick because of sin or lack of faith?”
3. Trophimus – (A Christian man that accompanied Paul on his journeys at times) Paul, the great man of God, records in 2 Timothy 4:20 these words, “***Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus.***” How could Paul have left Trophimus sick without telling him to “confess” his healing or “by his stripes you are healed?”
4. Epaphroditus – (Christian brother, fellow soldier and messenger sent to take care of Paul’s needs) Paul sent Epaphroditus back home to Philippi because he got ill and almost died. In Philippians 2:26-27 (NIV) we read, “²⁶ *For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard **he was ill.*** ²⁷ ***Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him,...***” Why didn’t Paul encourage his audience by saying Epaphroditus “claimed” his healing instead of saying “God had mercy on him?” The fact is, the whole idea that we as Christians are guaranteed health because of Isaiah 53:5 or the idea that we can by faith “claim” healing is nowhere found in the New Testament, it’s just plain error. The truth of the matter is that God can and does heal whomever he chooses and however he chooses, even through the use of medicine.

In closing, I read a story (this is my version) about Larry and Lucky Parker who believed their “faith” and “positive confessions” was better than the insulin their diabetic son Wesley needed for his survival. The Parker’s, by faith, withheld the life saving insulin from their son and predictably, he went into a diabetic coma. The Parker’s knew, based on what they heard from faith healers, that they could not make a “negative confession” and admit their son was in a coma despite the clear fact that he was. So they continued to “positively confess” his healing. Needless to say, like Rev. Freeman and the 90-100 of his members, their son Wesley died. However, the Parker’s did not lose their faith just because their son had died, they simply conducted a resurrection service for him instead of a funeral service, believing God would raise their son from the dead. Eventually, both parents were tried and convicted of manslaughter and child abuse.

Despite the teaching of today’s faith healers, there are instances in the Bible where the person being healed didn’t even have faith to be healed, but were healed. (Matthew 8:2-4, the Leper; Matthew 8:14-15, Peter’s mother-in-law; Mark 3:5, the man with the withered hand; Luke 14:3-4, the man with dropsy; John 5:13, the impotent man; and Acts 3:1-8, the beggar at the gate.)

Unfortunately, there are many sincere Christians caught up in the web of deceit from popular faith healers who teach they are guaranteed healing because of their faith, positive confession and what is taught in Isaiah 53:5. As a result of this error, some Christians are denying their symptoms, their doctor’s reports/findings and are suffering from illnesses that are either curable or managed with medicine, surgery, etc., thinking that God must heal them because of their faith and the alleged promises from the Bible. However, symptoms are our body’s way of telling us something is wrong. It would be foolish as well as dangerous to deny the “tell tale” symptoms of severe chest pains, shortness of breath, sweating and nausea, out of the fear of making the “negative confession” – “I’m having a heart attack.” Whether you confess it or not, you’re probably having a heart attack and without medical treatment you will die.

So I say to my brothers and sisters in Christ, go get those symptoms checked out; don’t ignore them as deception from the devil, your body is telling you something is wrong. Listen to your doctor(s). If you’re not comfortable with his/her recommendation, get another opinion. Lastly, take your medicine!!! Nowhere in the Bible are we told not to take medicine. The wine Paul told Timothy to drink was for medical use (1 Timothy 5:23). If the Christian is not supposed to take medicine for their illnesses, Paul was wrong in telling Timothy to drink wine for medicinal purposes. Of course Paul was not wrong, the so-called faith healers and false teachers of our day are wrong to tell or suggest Christians not take life saving medicine; this teaching comes from the evil one. It’s ok to believe God to heal you, but until your doctor says you are healed, keep taking your medicine.

God Bless,
Pastor D. M. Duncan

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