

Sunday, January 15th sermon: "False Teachings about Healing – It is Never Promised for this Life"

Preached at the Lord's Table at Grace Bible Church in Greenwood, MS,  
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Matthew 8:14-17; 1 Peter 2:21-25

It is a false teaching, that God has somehow promised His people divine healing in this life from every illness.

This false teaching causes a disruption in trust in the truthfulness of the Bible, since obviously God does not miraculously heal most of His loved ones today.

Even worse, some of these false teachers claim falsely that Christ died on the cross to purchase our miraculous physical healing in this life.

Thus, the false teaching of the promise of divine healing is propped up with a viciously false doctrine of Calvary.

There is no doubt that God does heal. He "forgives all our iniquities, and heals all our diseases." Anytime we are healed of a sickness, it's the Lord's ultimate doing, though it is usually not miraculous in nature.

God heals most often through the physical mechanisms He placed in His creatures. Our skin closes up over time when we are cut; our immune system kicks in to overwhelm infections; bones knit by the mechanism God gave our physical bodies.

All of these are healing from God! They are astounding, and we ought never take them for granted!

Sometimes, God directly interposes by miracle to divinely heal His people.

We are commanded to give thanks to God in everything, and whether by direct miracle, or medical treatment, or the routine operations of the nature God has created in us, we ought to give thanks to Him whenever we are healed.

No doubt Jesus miraculously healed a host of people, and raised some of them from the dead, and sometimes He gave to His disciples the power to heal miraculously. After Pentecost, His apostles and others carried out notable healings on their command, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

At one point, Peter's mere shadow falling across sick people raised them back up to health. Luke describes how God wrought "special miracles" through the Apostle Paul, and many were healed by the carrying of cloths to them which Paul had touched.

We should pray for divine healing! No doubt God does miraculously heal some people today!

But miraculous healing is not promised by God to all who seek it at this time.

Amongst Pentecostal and Charismatic persons, this pernicious false teaching has taken hold. One woman recently stated: "Jesus has already paid for ALL our sicknesses and diseases when He paid for our sins at the cross. If you are born again, you are healed. . . . stop insulting God by not studying His word and wasting His time asking for something He has ALREADY done for you. . . ."

This false teaching is supposedly supported by Isaiah 53:4 – "surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows," and Matthew's statement that when Jesus miraculously healed people during his ministry, that was in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

Of course, Isaiah 53 is about Christ's bearing our sins, and being punished by God for them in our place.

But these texts do not state that Christ died in order to physically heal us, or that He purchased our healing from physical disease in this life on the cross.

Rather, through the incarnation, Jesus participates in our griefs and sorrows, and sympathizes with us, and used His power to heal during His ministry. These ministry healings are simply not connected with Jesus' death, and in fact, preceded His cross-work.

We know that many believers pray in faith for healing in this life, and are never healed. On top of that, we all die one day.

Those who believe in this false teaching are forced to deny reality in several ways.

First, some of them will deny being sick! They will insist that Christ has already healed them, physical facts to the contrary.

Next, they will blame the poor sick believer for having too weak a faith.

Third, they actually deny that most believers die of illness one day. They do not acknowledge that all deaths are the result of sickness, or trauma, or violence.

They deny the obvious truth, that death is the ultimate result, in most cases, of fatal illness to which the body finally succumbs.

Thus, this false doctrine leads people to speak and behave in an emotional and irrational manner.

But worse, this false doctrine causes them to question their own faith. If healing was really purchased by Jesus, just like He purchased our pardon

from our sin, and if we are not healed, then perhaps His purchase of our pardon is also defective!

How can anyone know whether his faith is sufficient unto forgiveness of sin, when his faith is not sufficient for healing?

Of course, God gives us faith. It is not something that we gin up in ourselves. God saves people with the weakest of faith who call upon Jesus!

Jesus Himself used healing as a metaphor for repentance and forgiveness of sin, when He invoked the image of the physician to heal those who are sick. Christ Himself came to call sinners to repentance.

Isaiah 53 never promises that Jesus took away all our physical ailments. Rather, it teaches He took away our guilt and our sins, in His Own body, and that God crushed Him for those sins.

Nowhere in Isaiah 53 is there a promise of healing for physical ailments.

Rather, there is a promise that we are justified by Christ's death for us.

When Peter cites Isaiah 53 in 1 Peter 2, "by His stripes we are healed," it is not in the context of physical healing at all. There is no mention of physical healing in all of 1 Peter.

Rather, Peter is explaining that Christ bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we are now dead to sins, and alive unto righteousness!

By His stripes we are healed, is then explained: we had gone astray like sheep, but have now been returned to our Shepherd.

The healing is a spiritual healing of believers from disobedience against God, and going our own way apart from God.

We know we are healed by Christ's wounds, because we have been returned to Him from our rebellious and disobedient ways.

Jesus Himself spoke of how His sheep hear His voice, and follow Him, and can never be lost again. This He accomplished by laying His life down to save His sheep.

There are several instances where God's people were not healed, and clearly in these instances, nobody was surprised or told they had too little faith.

Jesus refused to heal Lazarus when word was sent that His beloved friend was sick. Then, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, that His people might believe in the power of Christ to raise from the dead.

The faithful Dorcus died, but Peter raised her from the dead.

Epaphroditus, Paul's beloved encourager, was sick nearly unto death, but God healed him.

Paul had to leave Trophimus behind, because he was sick.

The Apostle John wished that Gaius might prosper and be in health.

The very apostles who had worked miracles of healing early on in their ministries, did not seem at all surprised when believers fell sick.

It is clear that the church and the apostles did not expect nor rely upon any promise of divine healing for believers in the first century, nor in subsequent periods of time.

In fact, Jesus Himself proclaimed that His brethren would sometimes be sick, and that it is a good thing for His people to visit their sick brethren, because Jesus treats such compassionate acts as having been done to Himself personally, as their King!

In reality, sickness and death are the results of man's fall into sin. They are part of God's judgment for Adam's sin as well as our own.

Just as Christ's death does not mean that His people will never die physically, so too His death doesn't mean that we will never be sick, or that we are entitled to claim healing by His death, in this life.

Instead, there is this glorious truth: that Christ's death saves us from physical illness, and dying, not in this life, but at the resurrection!

These false teachers seem not to grasp the true reason for Christ's death. Jesus didn't need to die to get the power to raise people from the dead, or to heal the sick. He always has that power, because He is the creator of all life to begin with!

But Jesus did have to suffer and die on the cross to redeem us from God's judgment for our sin.

And when Jesus died to justify His people, that empowered the resurrection of His people from the dead.

Christ's death is why, one day, He will change our vile bodies, and make them like unto His glorious body.

Paul describes this glorious resurrection of our bodies into spiritual bodies, and the change that will take place in the bodies of believers who are alive when Christ comes back one day.

Thus, the physical resurrection and change one day, is our only iron-clad promise of ultimate, perfect, physical healing. That promise was certainly paid for by Jesus when He died at Calvary to save us from our sins.

The problem was never Christ's mechanical ability to heal the sick or raise the dead. Rather, the problem was the justice required to do so.

The extent of this healing of all things for God's people is best seen in Revelation 21, where we are told, God will wipe away all our tears, and there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain!

Then, and only then, the former things are passed away, and Christ finally makes all things new!

We must beware not to destroy faith by preaching false promises of divine healing in this life.

But worse than that, such teaching is a twisting of the Gospel, a false Gospel, that turns our gaze away from the proper purpose of Christ's death to save His people.

His purpose always was, to take away our sin, to redeem us from destruction, to make the resurrection of our bodies one day a matter of our right, as Christ's justified people!

Rather than being diverted away to a pursuit of something God never promised, and falsely calling that the Gospel, we need to gaze upon our Savior, and understand clearly what He has actually done for us, and what one day He has assured us He will perform for us.

For truly, Jesus promised us this: that He will raise us all up, at the last day!