

Sickness And Disease

To say that mankind has been struggling with sickness and diseases since the earliest days of our existence would be an obvious understatement. And that struggle has now been so accentuated during these past two or so years with most everyone on the earth enduring some of the worst sufferings that we, in our modern day can imagine. The sickness and death brought on by the Covid19 Pandemic has kept most all our minds focused on little else.

But here, as we'll read in a moment, though these people's sicknesses and their diseases were not as widespread, their pain and their sufferings were just as real and just as difficult for them as it is now for us in our day.

And while the anointed purpose for which the Lord Jesus had come to this earth had almost solely to do with the scourge of sin and the sinful condition of men's souls, the compassion that was a part of His heart and soul also compelled Him to reach His loving hand into these people's lives and to bring them relief from their physical sufferings.

Folks, God truly is the very essence and reality of "love". And "compassion" towards those who are suffering is a part of that essence of love. And again, compassion for the eternal souls of men was Jesus' first concern, but compassion for their pain and suffering seemed to come closely behind. Love is just that way.

And also, as the saying goes, "people need to know that you care, before they will care what you know". And as Jesus demonstrated compassion towards their pain and suffering, they then more readily accepted the truths of the gospel that He preached to them.

Follow along with me as I read these words here in Luke chapter 4 and we'll witness the compassion that came out from the heart of God. Listen, beginning in verse 38.

³⁸Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. ³⁹So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them.

⁴⁰When the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. ⁴¹And demons also came out of many, crying

out and saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of God!" And He, rebuking *them*, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ. (Luke 4:38-41)

Here in these words, we are given a foretaste of what the next three years of Jesus' ministry to the people would be like.

As He would go about preaching and teaching the gospel, there seemed always to be a continual flow of those who were sick, diseased and crippled, all wanting and needing to be healed.

And that is a natural desire within all of us, because who among us wants to continue in pain and suffering if we know that there is a remedy that's available to us.

And also in those days, there was very little other help available for even the most common of illnesses and diseases. Doctors were in limited number and there is no mention of hospitals even being a concept.

In contrast, you and I, in our day, are greatly blessed with options all around us, doctors, hospitals, prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications. And the handy availability of it all has its very excellent side in that we can quickly find relief from many of our daily sufferings.

But folks, there can be a difficult side to that handy availability. Consider for a moment, how for many, health and healthcare have become a major priority in their lives, and perhaps inordinately so.

With the daily bombardment of information and warnings of potential threats, many of us have become consumed with the need to keep ourselves healthy.

Our thoughts are held in the grip of keeping those "key indexes" in line, our cholesterol, our blood pressure and our blood sugar levels. We watch our diets, and we take so many, many pills.

We refuse to tolerate even the most minor of pains. And with most of our healthcare being paid for by our employer's group insurance or by Medicare, we don't hesitate to visit our doctor. And invariably, the doctor will suggest that we have some sort of tests done. And then, when the healthcare process kicks into gear, it can go on and on and on.

Folks, may I make a strong statement that surely does not apply to all, but does seem to apply to many people today, and it is that, "Our attention to our

healthcare has, in itself, become a “national epidemic”. The preoccupation with illness and potential illness consumes the lives of so many of our people, especially those of us who are getting older. And it seems that our health is all that we talk about.

And surely, such preoccupation is not a good thing, because preoccupation can and does often develop into dependence and even a kind of “bondage”.

And if that is taking place in your or my personal life, may I say to us very strongly that God does not want it to be that way. God does not want you or me to have any form of bondage to the ways and to the provisions of this world.

But then most people will ask . . . Are we to just ignore our pain and ignore the warning signs of impending health problems? Does God intend that there be at least some experience of suffering in our lives? Is there something good that can come from our physical and emotional sufferings? What is the “balance” that should be kept in our response to our healthcare needs?

Folks, I don’t know if there will ever be a simple answer to all those questions. But I do know that just as with all the other matters of this life, as believers in Christ, our best answers to such questions as these about our health will best be found within the words of these scriptures.

And yes, when it is necessary, we really should go to our earthly physicians. But we should also seek to understand about those times when we should simply go to the other physician, our “Great Physician”, the Lord Jesus. He has answers and He even has cures that you and I won’t know about until we truly begin to seek His face and seek His “healing touch”.

For the remainder of our time today, I would like for us to take a careful look at what these scriptures reveal to us about sickness and diseases. And I would like for us to ask the Holy Spirit to give us some fresh insight into where our suffering comes from and what God would have us to do about it.

A first and simple question is, “Are all of our sufferings, our sicknesses and our diseases simply as our doctors tell us, from germs we picked up from some source, even perhaps from the air we breathe? And also, maybe, as the geneticists tell us, a result of some malady passed along to us from past generations through our DNA?”

And the answer is that yes, those things are common causes of our sufferings. But may I also add that these scriptures reveal to us that there are also other

factors at work, causes that can come to us out from other realms of existence other than these natural realms, sickness and diseases that can flow out to us from the “spiritual realms”?

And yes, I know that those words are a bit “spooky” to us, and not easily believed and accepted. But folks, those things are spoken about often within these scriptures.

And most of our credible “Bible Scholars” will agree that while yes, all sickness, illness and diseases do eventually seem to manifest their suffering within the physical realms, many of those woes have their origins, their beginnings first from within the “spiritual realms”, as a direct result of man’s fall into sin, that sin has brought with it a whole host of physical problems and mental disorders.

When Adam and Eve lived there in the Garden, they were perfect in every way. As they worked, they did not toil. And because they did not toil, there was no suffering from exhaustion or from tired and sore muscles. They didn’t even sweat from a long, hard day’s work.

We know that that was so from reading the words of Genesis chapter 3, and especially as we note the changes that took place after Adam and Eve fell into their sin. Listen to these words in Genesis 3, that tell us about not only the origins of sin, but also about the origins of sicknesses and diseases.

These words tell about the events that took place just after Adam and Eve had disobeyed God and eaten of the forbidden fruit. This is Genesis 3, beginning in verse 9,

⁹Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where *are* you?”

¹⁰So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.”

¹¹And He said, “who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?”

¹²Then the man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.”

¹³And the Lord God said to the woman, “What *is* this you have done?”

The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

¹⁴So the Lord God said to the serpent:

“Because you have done this,
You *are* cursed more than all cattle,
And more than every beast of the field;

On your belly you shall go,
 And you shall eat dust
 All the days of your life.
 15 And I will put enmity
 Between you and the woman,
 And between your seed and her seed;
 He shall bruise you on the head,
 And you shall bruise him on the
 16To the woman He said:
 "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception.
 In pain you shall bring forth children.
 Your desire *shall be* for your husband,
 And he shall rule over you."
 17Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your
 wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying,
 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed *is* the ground for your sake.
 In toil you shall eat of it
 All the days of your life.
 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,
 And you shall eat the herb of the field.
 19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread
 Till you return to the ground,
 For out of it you were taken.
 For dust you *are*,
 And to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:9-19)

Here in these words, we see the beginnings of most all of the ills that beset each of us today, from emotional problems to physical problems.

Note first, the beginnings of our emotional problems, stress, fear, guilt and shame. Verse 10,

10So he (Adam) said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid
 because I was naked; and I hid myself." (Genesis 3:10)

Our world is filled with the harmful effects of emotional sufferings and the guilt that comes from having done things wrong. And our world is also filled with no end of the "fix-it" doctors who will counsel you and me and write us prescriptions for drugs to cure us, none of which seem to really work, at least, not well.

Here also, are the beginnings of the refusal to be personally accountable for our wrong behavior. Listen!

¹¹And He (God) said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

¹²Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

¹³And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?"

The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (Genesis 3:11-13)

The moment that Adam and Eve chose to eat from that tree of the knowledge of good and evil, their souls became corrupt with a sin nature. And a sin nature causes us to shift the blame for our conduct onto others. And our doctors and our therapists are quick to tell us that that is OK, that it really is not our fault. It is someone else's fault.

And because of that, we seldom ever deal with our sins through repentance, leaving us burdened down by sin, guilt and shame. And the physical damage that can come as a result of emotional suffering from our sin and guilt and shame, though it may not be as visible, is every bit as damaging as an injury or a disease. It can even become completely debilitating to us.

And here also in verse 16, we see the beginnings of even more physical suffering, verse 16.

¹⁶To the woman He said:

"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception;

In pain you shall bring forth children;

Your desire *shall be* for your husband,

And he shall rule over you."

¹⁷Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it':

"Cursed *is* the ground for your sake;

In toil you shall eat of it

All the days of your life.

¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you,
And you shall eat the herb of the field.

¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread

Till you return to the ground,

For out of it you were taken,

For dust you are,
And to dust you shall return." (Genesis 3:16-19)

Physical toil and suffering, sweat, sore muscles, pain in childbearing, and the multitude of other miseries that beset each of us each day is a direct result of sin having entered into our lives.

But we must know this also. These words speak a strong and clear message to us that our suffering has a very intentional spiritual purpose within it. Note that these words are a clear rebuke for sinful behavior and are intended to bring Adam and Eve, and consequently you and me, to repentance for sinful behaviors.

So, in that sense, while it is still painful, we should not despise our suffering, because it has an excellent redeeming purpose within it. Repentance, simple, but earnest and complete repentance can be the most powerful healing balm ever imagined. And I recommend it highly for each of our souls.

So then, with that being said, may we ask ourselves the question, "Are some of the illnesses, the diseases, the sufferings that I endure today a direct result of some personal and intimate sin that I have committed?" And the answer is, perhaps yes, sometimes they are, but not always.

Yes, if I drink heavily or take drugs, then the sufferings that come from those behaviors are surely directly related. Even my overweight condition is probably very often, my own fault.

And yes, our emotional responses to guilt and shame for sins that we hold onto and have not repented of and have not surrendered to Christ, they can bring on all sorts of emotional and physical sufferings.

And there are numerous other "self-inflicted" sufferings like those.

But unfortunately, also, there are many illnesses and diseases that come from the effects of other people's sins. I have no doubt that as people in businesses combine in their efforts to produce products for a profit, then pollutants and toxic mixtures and poisons of all kinds get put into our air and into our drinking water and food. And you and I are helpless victims of their carelessness and thoughtless greed.

So then, as you and I get sick and encounter diseases in our personal lives, we can probably assume that it is a result of some combination of all those

possibilities, some from genetics, some from our own misdeeds, and some from the misdeeds of others.

And you and I are no different from those who were brought to Jesus that day for His healing touch. Jesus could have sent them away, but He didn't. He healed them.

And that should be a special message to you and to me. We must not allow ourselves to live in a state of fear, hearing those pharmaceutical ads on the television that describe some possible terrible illness and supposing ourselves to have that illness. And from there, rushing to our doctors to get in line for a whole host of tests and procedures, voluntarily placing ourselves under the bondage of all those fears. Perhaps God has another purpose in that special pain we feel and wants you to spend some time with Him about it first.

Let me close by repeating this warning that I just gave. God does not want you or me to ignore real and serious symptoms, but neither does He want you and me to be in bondage to the worldly systems, no matter how good those worldly systems seem to be. Our health and our healthcare systems and providers are good, yes. But they also have the potential of becoming a strong and demanding "idol" within our daily lives.

And so, while yes, some of our symptoms may be very real, sometimes we are simply responding to a "spirit of fear". And God does not want you and me to live with a spirit of fear. Write these words of 2 Timothy 1 indelibly upon your heart.

⁷For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

Let's pray.