

IS SICKNESS FROM GOD OR SATAN?

WHY DO GOD'S CHILDREN SUFFER?

You have heard the saying, "He jests at scars who never felt a wound." I remember when we gave up a precious little girl, who went to be with the Lord when she was very young. It brought great sorrow to our hearts and for a long time after she left us we were sad and lonely, even though we fully trusted our heavenly Father and knew full well that He had made no mistake, for God has never yet made one single mistake, even if the Bible does say, in Genesis 6:6, "It repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart." This was when and because "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5).

Is it a wonder that the afflicted man cried out, "Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; He fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not"? (Job 14:1 and 2). Also in the same Divine Message the man said, "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job 1:21). Then he added, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another: though my reins be consumed within me." (Job 19:25 to 27).

When we said "good-bye" to our precious little babe, we too said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." We are so weak and helpless when the Lord summons a dear one to leave this earth. But many Christians agree with Spurgeon, the man of God, who said:

"Not one shaft nor plague can hit
Until the God of love sees fit."

When the body of our beloved child was buried in the earth, we remembered the words of I Thessalonians 4:18, "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Turn right now to that wonderful Chapter, I Thessalonians 4:13 to 18, and read them with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, recorded in John 11:25 and 26; His glorious "resurrection" message spoken at the time that He wept with two of His disciples over the death of their brother whom the Lord Jesus loved in a very special way. Yes. God has a message of comfort for His "children of hope," when death visits their home.

For many, many months after our little one was taken away when I would read of, or hear of, the death of some little child, I would bow my head and pray for the parents and the loved ones, remembering the scar in our own hearts. In our sorrow, as we realize that in the midst of life there is death, we often wonder what it is all about. "Why life?" "Why death?" "Why man?" Why must we begin to die as soon as we are born into this world? When we think that more than seven hundred million people, who were alive one hundred years ago, are now dead, we say, "Will not some event happen to bring an end to death?" The answer in God's Book is "yes." "Behold, I shew you a secret; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment (an atom of time), in the twinkling of an eye." (I Corinthians 15:51 and 52) "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (I Corinthians 15:26). "By man (Adam) came death; by man (Jesus Christ) also the resurrection of the dead." (I Corinthians 15:21).

Until that glorious day of redemption, until that blessed moment, the death rate of the human race, the good, the bad and the indifferent, the babies, the youths, the middle-aged, and the old-aged, the rich and the poor, the saints and the sinners will continue to be one apiece, no matter whether we use physical remedies or rely upon psychic, metaphysical, religious, or Divine healing. The most consecrated saint is buried in the same cemetery with the vilest sinner. They go the way of all the earth until the Lord, Himself, shall appear for the rapture of His loved ones.

Until that day of redemption, God's children are sealed with the Holy Spirit. He is the assurance of their coming glorification—Ephesians 4:30 and Ephesians 1:13 and 14.

PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD

We read in Psalms 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." We might well ask, "Is the saint any more precious in the sight of the Lord when he is dying than when he is alive?" Again we might ask, "Is the saint not just as precious in the sight of the Lord when he is sick as when he is well, or when he is giving up his earthly tabernacle.

One of the last statements in the farewell message of the greatest of all saints is recorded in II Timothy 4:20: "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." If any saint of God ever had Divine authority and power to heal the sick, in the Name of the Lord, the Apostle Paul did. Years before he wrote this "good-bye" message, he had healed many sick people. But now he left a faithful saint of the Lord sick. "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick."

Soon thereafter that noblest of all Christians, Paul, departed to be with Christ. And note what he wrote not long before he died:

"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour; yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." (Philippians 1:21 to 24).

A little later Paul wrote:

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (II Timothy 4:6 to 8).

Paul's desire was to magnify the Lord by life or by death. (Philippians 1:20).

We do not know whether or not the sickness of Trophimus was unto death; or whether he recovered from that spell of sickness and then died with the same disease, or with some other. But finally he had to say with King David, "I go the way of all the earth." (I Kings 2:2).

But since Trophimus was sick, since Paul went to his death, many faithful saints have been sick and many faithful saints have died. Whether well, sick or dying, faithful saints should hear the words of Romans 8:30 and 32:

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

And believing this, they will join with Paul and say:

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28).

I was moved to write this message by a letter I received today from one child of God who is sick, and a telephone call today from another saint who is sick. This man of God called me by phone when I had just finished broadcasting the Word of God. I spoke of the change in God's program of healing and miracles after the close of the "Acts" period. This man wanted to know if I meant there was no hope for his recovery. He said he was praying, in faith, and others were praying for him. He said, "Do you not believe in Divine healing?" I replied, "I do not believe in Divine healers. I do not believe that Christian ministers today are able to heal the sick as the Lord Jesus and His apostles did when the Lord Jesus told them to heal the sick and raise the dead." (Matthew 10:8). But I gave him my own experience. I told him that I was sick for several years, and in agony much of the time. I had a good doctor. Then I went to Rochester, Minnesota, for an examination. I must admit that I was not very faithful in obeying the doctor's orders. Many saints were praying for my restoration to health. My prayer to my heavenly Father was, "Thy will be done." God doesn't make any mistakes. I am His child. I love the Lord Jesus Christ and endeavor to serve Him faithfully. My Father knew all about my case. I asked Him to raise me up to health, if it would be for the glory of the Lord Jesus. About that time a friend told me of a simple remedy that had cured the same malady with which I was afflicted. For several months I took that remedy. Within a short time I was well again. I have enjoyed good health since that recovery several years ago. In sickness and in health I believe the words of the Lord, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." (Hebrews 13:5). It was indeed my Father's will that I was restored to health. But some months ago I stood at the bedside of a gifted, fruitful servant of the Lord as he was dying. Thousands of saints were praying for him and had been praying for him for weeks. He was in great agony; but he had a triumphant death. He loved the Lord devotedly.

In one of Paul's later Epistles he wrote to one of the most faithful and spiritual saints whom he knew: "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." (I Timothy 5:23). Both Paul and Timothy were men of prayer. No doubt they both prayed earnestly for Timothy's recovery. They must have asked God to use the physical remedy which Paul had prescribed.

Every saint should carefully and prayerfully study and consider the words, "much more," used several times in the fifth chapter of Romans. Let us note one of them—"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, MUCH MORE, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (Romans 5:10). Yes, if the Father and Son so loved us when we were alienated sinners, how much more must be their love for us now that we are reconciled saints. But most Christians do not like Romans 5:3—"And not only so, but we GLORY IN TRIBULATIONS also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience." We do not want to glory in tribulation. Little do we seem to believe and live the truth of Romans 8:17 and 18—"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

The saint who wrote me today has a very serious illness. Just after I read his letter, I met a man who was truly a fine specimen of physical manhood. He is about six feet high, weighs about one hundred and ninety pounds, hale and hearty, with rosy cheeks, enjoying the very best physical health. He is an ungodly profane man, an enemy of all that pertains to Christ. He faithfully serves the devil. I immediately thought of the two cases. There was a time when there would have been a "why" in my mind; but not now, after knowing God's Word. Why is the child of God seriously and dangerously ill and the child of the devil in such splendid good health?

We shall consider this “why” in this message. Of course, God expects His children to use the good sense and judgment with which they are endowed, and to use physical remedies for physical diseases. It may be that many of God’s children, like many unsaved sinners, are sick in the body because they have given their bodies to sinful habits. But let no one tell you that, as a child of God, you are on a bed of sickness, or afflicted in body, because of your lack of faith. Some Christians teach that sickness is the mark of God’s displeasure because of the saint’s lack of trust and obedience.

For several years I visited a consecrated woman of God, a saint who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth. She was a spiritual and practical Christian. Each time I visited her she had to be brought to her couch in the living room, as she was pretty well crippled up. She suffered almost constant excruciating pain. She was so patient and uncomplaining. She would say, “My Father knows best.” There was always a smile through the pain. She told me that she had suffered physical agony for thirteen years. Many Christians had prayed for her recovery. She had prayed much and she was a woman of faith. Doubtless during those years when intercession was being made to the throne of grace for her recovery, many saints had been restored to health and strength in answer to prayer, but that dear saint was never relieved of her pain until one day she was absent from the body and present with the Lord. (II Corinthians 5:8). Surely she was able to say with Paul, “To depart and be with Christ is far better.” She had experienced II Corinthians 4:16: “Though our outward man perish, the inner man is renewed day by day.”

During the illness of this faithful saint, I went to a tent-meeting one night. Several thousand people were in the audience. Many were there through curiosity. The preacher had advertised many miraculous healings. There was a large number of sick and maimed, some with bandaged wounds and outward physical ailments. The religious preacher was a “healing” evangelist. He had advertised that many Christians had been instantaneously healed of sundry diseases in his meetings. He claimed that his healings were more successful in his tent-meetings than in the hospitals where there were plenty of sick people. The preacher told his hearers that Jesus Christ bore their sicknesses in His body on the cross at the same time that He bore their sins. He said, “If you will look first to Christ and Calvary for the healing of your soul, then you may expect and receive physical healing by looking, in faith, to the same Christ and the same Calvary.” Many of the maimed and halt and afflicted accepted the proposition, so they first went forward with the group that went for soul salvation and from there they transferred to the group that went forward for the preacher’s healing ministry. Of course, any who were already saved went directly for physical healing. Call it fraud, swindle, making merchandise of poor unfortunate, deceived human beings, or what you will, but I witnessed that night a sad spectacle. Nearly two hundred afflicted people went forward. They were in earnest. They believed the preacher. Some of them were suffering pain. They were more than willing to make the bargain with God, “I’ll trust the Lord Jesus for my soul, if you will get me out of this physical predicament.” With the exception of one woman, who praised the Lord vociferously, all of the victims—for victims they were—went away not the least bit improved. But the preacher had a big crowd, and big collection in the plates. The hearts of those disappointed people must have been filled with doubt, for they must have reasoned, “if the Lord Jesus died for our bodies, for our physical ailments, and faith in His redemptive work has not brought us cure for our bodies, then it is doubtful if faith in His redemptive work will bring us soul salvation.”

The same religious healing evangelist is still carrying on his fraudulent healing program, still deceiving the poor cripples and afflicted who are trying to find relief in his healing scheme. This man knows that when the disciples of the Lord Jesus were healing the sick, they were also

raising the dead, being delivered from jail by angels in visions and trances, speaking with tongues, walking on the water, pronouncing blindness and death sentences upon people, and performing divers miracles. During that same “Bible” period, they were told to sell their houses and lots and give their money away. (Luke 12:33, Acts 2:41 to 44, Acts 4:34 and 35). But, O, how little common sense people, even intelligent people, seem to exercise in spiritual matters! How gullible they are! There are so many fanatical and deluded religious people. They are sincere, but sincerely wrong. And what a crime it is to take religious advantage of some person who is the unfortunate victim of some physical ailment! How ungracious to use a public healing meeting for personal advantage!

DIVINE HEALING-PAST AND PRESENT

We do not mean, in any way, to discount or minimize God's omnipotence or God's interest in his children. Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without God's knowledge and observation. The statement is in God's infallible Word, “The prayer of faith shall save the sick.” (James 5:15).

Read carefully Philippians 2:25 to 27; see how the prayer of faith saved a faithful saint who was sick “nigh unto death.” God had mercy on Epaphroditus and postponed his home-going. Epaphroditus was a faithful, fruitful, energetic servant of the Lord, and according to the Record, when God had mercy on him, He had mercy of the saints who needed the ministry of Epaphroditus. It is such an obedient saint, doing the will of God, who can know assuredly that all things work together for his good.

In II Kings 20:21, we read that King Hezekiah slept with his fathers. In the beginning of this chapter, we learn that Hezekiah was sick unto death. God's servant said, “Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live.” Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed unto the Lord. Hezekiah wept sore. What happened? The Lord said, “I will add unto thy days fifteen years.” (II Kings 20:6).

Since the days of Hezekiah and Epaphroditus, many saints have cried unto the Lord and God has heard and answered prayer and postponed their home-going. If you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you know that God does hear and answer prayer. If you are well and strong, pray that God will keep you well and strong and add some more years to your life. But be sure you use those years in faithful service for the Lord. You and I know that sinners, as well as saints, are enjoying health by the grace of God. If you are sick “nigh unto death.” remember the experiences of Hezekiah and Epaphroditus and pray much to God, if you really feel that your testimony is needed here on earth, if you have the leading of the Holy Spirit always saying to God from a sincere heart, “Thy will be done.” But do not forget the words concerning faithful Trophimus. “Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.” (II Timothy 4:20).

I referred to the home-going of our little child. She was sick for several weeks. Attending her during her illness was one of the outstanding physicians in this country. He was a specialist for diseases of children, with a national reputation. He was a consecrated spiritual man of God. When he told us that he had done all that he could for the sick baby, he said, “Let us get down and pray.” As he was leading us in prayer, we saw a Bible in his pocket. He was a man of faith. He was an elder in one of the most spiritual congregations in his city. More than one hundred faithful saints in that congregation were praying for the recovery of that little child. But God did not add fifteen years, or fifteen weeks, to her life. God knew best.

Some years later, another precious daughter in our home was very seriously ill. When I returned from a trip the doctor, who was the best we could get in the city, met me at the door with tears in his eyes. He said, "I have done my best; but that wasn't good enough. She is very low; you and the family be prepared for the worst." We were affiliated with a group of godly men and women. We asked them to pray much. They did. Now after twenty years, that daughter who was sick "nigh unto death" is a physical director in a high school. If this is Divine healing, all Christians believe in Divine healing.

But intelligent students of the Word of God know that we are living under God's economy of grace and that God's servants are not ordered or expected to perform miracles as they were performed by the Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples during the years spent by the Lord and His apostles on the earth.

Immediately some will ask how about John 14:12—"Greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto My Father." We shall explain this in this message when we consider the healings of Christ and His apostles. But let us ever keep in mind the Holy Spirit's instructions, "rightly dividing the Word of Truth."

Not long ago I visited a ten year old boy in the hospital. He was sick unto death. His incurable disease had reduced him to skin and bones. He looked up into my face with a faint smile and said, "I do want to be back in my Sunday School class and hear about Jesus." I said, "Do you love Jesus?" He said, "Of course I love Jesus." The very expression on his thin face and the tone of his voice proved that there was a real love for the Saviour in his little heart. A few moments in the room with that little lad who loved Jesus would convince any one that he had a corruptible body. There was a redeemed soul in a body of humiliation. Within forty hours that little saint left his body. Although he was too young to understand the truth of II Corinthians 5:1, he was included in the "we." Note the verse:

"For we know; that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

When I was leaving the hospital that day, a man asked me a very interesting question. He said, "Pastor, will you explain why it is that so frequently some unsaved person passes out of this life peacefully and with little physical pain right up to the moment of death whereas some faithful, consecrated Christians suffer untold agony to the very end of their illness?" Of course, he admitted that there is no general rule and that many Christians die peacefully, fearlessly, and with little pain.

I answered the man's question with a brief exegesis of Romans 8:18 to 25: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him Who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, AND NOT ONLY THEY, BUT OURSELVES ALSO, WHICH HAVE THE FIRST FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, EVEN WE OURSELVES GROAN WITHIN OURSELVES, WAITING FOR THE ADOPTION, TO WIT, THE REDEMPTION OF OUR BODY. For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it."

"The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain." When the sinner, who is a part of this groaning, travailing creation, hears and believes God's saving gospel he receives the end of

his faith, the salvation of his soul. (I Peter 1:9). At the same time, the believes is sealed with the Holy Spirit Who is the earnest of his inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. (Ephesians 1:14). “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” (I Corinthians 6:19).

“Now He which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” (II Corinthians 1:21 and 22).

Now think of the saved person’s predicament, a redeemed soul in a dying, corruptible body. That person is sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30). He has passed out of death into life. (John 5:24).

Note the testimony of such a person:

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.” (Philippians 3:20 and 21).

“For which cause we faint not: but though our outward man perish (rot thoroughly), yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” (II Corinthians 4:16).

Hear again Romans 8:23—“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

The body of the believer is a body of humiliation. It is decaying thoroughly, as his inward man is being daily renewed. He groans within himself waiting for the day of redemption, the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven for the redemption of his body. Then he will have a new, incorruptible, glorified body like the glorified body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

SATAN - SIN - SICKNESS - DEATH

Perhaps you have read the last verse of the first Book of the Bible:

“So Joseph died, an hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.” (Genesis 50:26).

Joseph lived to a ripe old age. He was one of the noblest men who ever lived on this earth, but his body finally reached the coffin and the grave. Millions had gone to their death and their grave before Joseph. Since the days of Joseph, many millions have been placed in coffins. Among those who have gone to their graves have been murderers, thieves, drunkards, adulterers, and hardened criminals. For them, God’s Word is plain, “It is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27).

Among those who have died since Adam brought sin and death have been some noble and valiant saints of God. Many of them gave up their bodies after much physical suffering. Many of them died as the Lord’s martyrs. So far as their bodies were concerned, corruption was the experience of saints and sinners alike. But the saints will not come unto judgment after death. (John 5:24 and Roman, 8:1).

Let us see how the human race is divided according to I John 5:19—“We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one.”

Again. I John 3:10—“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.”

What a difference? “Of God,” and “lieth in the evil one”; “the children of God” and “the children of the devil.” There are some nice respectable religious people who do not like such plain Bible statements. But in John 7:43, it is definitely stated concerning the Lord Jesus Christ: “There was a division among the people because of Him.” Then we read in Galatians 3:26: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.”

In Ephesians 2:12, we are told that the individual, who is without Christ, is without God, having no hope in the world. Then in I Timothy 1:1, we are told that the Lord Jesus Christ is our hope. By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the believer is begotten unto a living hope. (I Peter 1:3 to 6).

Note again Hebrews 13:12 and Hebrews 10:10— “Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate.” ‘ By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

Every one who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, unto the saving of the soul, is sanctified. Every sanctified one is a saint. So the human race is divided into believers and unbelievers; saints and sinners; those who have a hope and those who are without a hope; those who are of God and those who lie in the evil one. The greatest of all Christians, the Apostle Paul, said that the Lord Jesus sent him to preach to sinners,

“to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.” (Acts 26:18).

CHRIST CAME TO DESTROY SATAN’S WORKS

We read in I John 3:8:

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

Then note Hebrews 2:14 and 15:

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Is not all sickness, as well as physical death, the result of sin? Did not Jesus Christ come to destroy Satan’s death power? Did not Christ come to destroy sickness?

Note Christ’s own act in Matthew 8:16 and 17:

“Where the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils; and He cast out the spirits with His Word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.”

And some quote with this, I Peter 2:24:

“Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed.”

Note also Exodus 15:26—Psalm 103:3—Matthew 4:23 and 9:35—John 14:12—Acts 5:15 and 16—Hebrews 13:8 and I Corinthians 12:9:

“If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put

none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee.”

“Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; Who healeth all thy diseases.”

“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.”

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.”

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father.”

“Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits; and they were healed every one.”

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.”

“To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit.”

HEALING BY CHRIST AND HIS DISCIPLES

There is a division among Christians as to the interpretation and application of the Scriptures which we have quoted. Sometimes there are unpleasant controversies among saints over the doctrine of spiritual or religious healing of physical diseases. Many earnest zealous Christians, who are sure they have been healed, by the Lord without any physical remedy, are also sure that Divine healing, as practiced by the Lord Jesus and His apostles, could be, and would be, perpetuated or duplicated by Christians today, if it were not for the lack of faith and spiritual living.

Let us understand their arguments, which seem to be logical as well as spiritual. When the Lord Jesus healed the sick and afflicted, in Matthew 8:17, He said:

“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.”

“Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” (Isaiah 53:4). (Now note Matthew 8:16 and 17).

All Christians quote the fifty-third chapter as God’s sure word of prophecy concerning the Lord Jesus Christ bearing our sins on the cross. Does it not seem, then, from the teaching of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 8:17, that He also bore our sicknesses on the cross? Then, in Isaiah 53:5, we read “with His stripes we are healed.” This is also the message of I Peter 2:24. Does this mean our soul healing, or our body healing? Most Christians say “our soul healing.” But others say both “soul healing” and “body healing.” They argue that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever and that it was He Who said to His disciples, “Verily, verily. I say unto you. he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father.” (John 14:12). After His resurrection He told His disciples to evangelize everywhere and believers would be saved, and they would lay hands on the sick and they would recover. (Mark 16:15 to 18). Then to members of the Body of Christ was given by the Holy Spirit the gift of healing. All of this looks very much as though Christian

ministers have been negligent, if not disobedient, in teaching God's truth concerning the healing of the body. Think of the healing by Peter in Acts 5:16, "all the sick were healed."

Did not Paul say to Christians, "follow me as I follow Christ." And note carefully Acts 19:11 and 12:

"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons. and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them."

Is the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit less powerful or less interested in the sick today than during the days of Peter and Paul? What's the matter with Christians and Christian preachers today? Why are they not doing the greater works of miracles which Christ promised? Why are not the signs of Mark 16:17 and 18 following?

I was invited to preach in a gospel hall some time ago. Just as I was dismissing the assembly, a very lovely, spiritual, religious lady moved a table to the exit door. On that table were a number of little handkerchiefs, but no aprons. Several people took handkerchiefs and each gave the lady twenty-five cents. She asked me to buy one and told me that one of God's prophets had blessed those handkerchiefs. She told me that many sick saints had been healed of their physical infirmities by rubbing the blessed handkerchiefs on their bodies. She quoted Acts 19:11 and 12. That dear lady was sincere. She did not want to miss any blessing that God has for His children.

Many Christians are asking why the church elders are so faithless and disobedient concerning their plain duty, in James 5:14 and 15: "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

Why do not the sick Christians call for the elders? Anointing the sick with oil is Scriptural. Christians should be Scriptural. Why then do they not anoint with oil?

Note how the Lord Jesus healed the blind man. "He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes. and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash; and I went and washed, and I received sight." (John 9:11).

In many cases of healing, Christ and His apostles put their hands on the sick.

Now if we, as Christians, are to perpetuate the healing miracles of the Lord Jesus, how are we to know when to use handkerchiefs, when to use aprons, when to use clay, when to use oil, when to use just our hands, or when to ask the sick to pass in our shadows and be healed, as in the case of Peter in Acts 5:16.

After we have considered all of these Scriptures, unless we have God's Scriptural explanation, we will be perplexed when we learn that Paul wrote more than one-half of the Books of the New Testament Scriptures, and although he repeatedly emphasized the great fact that the Lord Jesus died for our sins, he never once intimated that Christ died for our diseases. On the other hand, he said, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish (rot thoroughly), yet the inward man is renewed day by day." (II Corinthians 4:16).

"In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." (II Corinthians 11:27).

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." (II Corinthians 12:10).

Then note Galatians 4:13 to 15:

“Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.”

Why didn't the Lord heal Paul?

PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH

In Galatians 4:13 Paul referred to his infirmity of the flesh. It would seem from Verse 15 that Paul's eyes had something to do with his infirmity of the flesh. However, after reading of Paul's experiences, his terrible sufferings, recorded in II Corinthians 11:23 to 30, we wonder that he had left sufficient physical strength to carry on his very heavy ministry. Note Verse 30: “If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities.” Perhaps you know some person who has been drawn very close to the Lord, who has received some very rich spiritual blessing because of serious illness or some other physical misfortune, and they have truly gloried in their infirmity.

But let us read in II Corinthians 12:1 to 10 how, when and why Paul received his thorn in the flesh. We quote Verse 7, “Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.” Personally, I do not know just what Paul's thorn was. It may have been some physical affliction. He certainly was physically afflicted. When we read that Paul's thorn was the messenger of Satan, we think of Job's experience with God and with Satan. Read this interesting story in the first two chapters of the Book of Job, in the Bible. Note Job 1:9, 11 and 12: “Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought.” “But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face.” “And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power.”

Again Job 2:4 to 6: “And Satan answered the Lord and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.”

After reading this we should carefully consider with Paul his statement concerning Satan in II Corinthians 2:11. “We are not ignorant of his devices.”

In writing to those same Corinthians concerning some of their fellow church members who were guilty of a very sinful act, Paul wrote: “Deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” (I Corinthians 5:5).

In this same Epistle the Holy Spirit led Paul to write concerning some of the church members at Corinth who were very carnal in their behavior when they came into the assembly to take the bread and cup at the Lord's Table. Note the Divine judgment for their carnality, because they partook unworthily: “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (die).”

After reading all of these Scriptures, we are still asking the question, “Is sickness from God or from Satan?”

Well, let us read several statements made by the Lord Jesus Christ while He was on earth. Note first Matthew 10:28 to 31.

“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

Now note Luke 13:16:

“And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom SATAN HATH BOUND, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?”

Then let us read the Holy Spirit’s testimony concerning the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus, recorded in Acts 10:38 to 40:

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power: Who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil: for God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; Whom they slew and hanged on a tree; Him God raised up the third day and shewed Him openly.”

Then note again the statement in I John 3:8 with Hebrews 2:14 and 15:

“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.”

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He (Christ) also Himself likewise took part of same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Then note II Timothy 1:10:

“But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality (incorruptibility) to light through the gospel.”

Of course, we know that if there had been no sin, there would have been no death. “The wages of sin is death.” If there had been no serpent to beguile Eve, perhaps there would have been no sin. You may say, “What’s the use of ‘iffing’?”

Sin and death abound on every hand. As to physical death, many die by accident. Many die because they inherit a physical malady from their diseased parents. But most people die after some kind of sickness. If there had been no sin, there would have been no sickness, and as Satan is responsible for sin and death, he must be responsible in the same sense for sickness.

If Jesus Christ died to destroy Satan’s death power, did He not also die to destroy Satan’s “sickness” power? Now, God’s answer is II Corinthians 4:16, Romans 8:23, and II Timothy 1:10:

“We faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”

“But ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption to wit the redemption of our body.”

“But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel.”

I break in here as just this moment I received a telegram telling of the death of a very spiritual consecrated woman. Much prayer has gone up to the throne of grace in her behalf, as she has been sick for many months. Now she, too, is absent from the body and present with the Lord. When the Lord appears on the day of redemption, this dear saint, with all the saints who

have fallen asleep in Jesus and with all the living saints, will receive that body of glory described in Philippians 3:21.

Eternal life and incorruptibility are in the gospel. When the sinner believes God's Word and receives God's Son, he passes out of death into life; he receives the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul. (John 5:24, I Peter 1:9). That sinner may be dying with some dreadful disease at the time he experiences this inward transformation and within a few days, a few hours, or a few moments, he may put off his earthly tabernacle. He has received eternal life, but not incorruptibility. Death will be swallowed up in victory; mortality will be swallowed up of life when the Lord Jesus shall come to redeem the corruptible bodies of His saints. (II Corinthians 5:4, I Corinthians 15:54).

Until that blessed, glorious moment when Christ, Who is our life, shall appear, the death rate of the human race will be one apiece. Physical death is no respecter of persons. Saints and sinners at all ages will go the way of all the earth until the moment the Lord Jesus shall come for His own.

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS OF NAZARETH

As we consider the healing ministry of the Son of God during the years of His earthly ministry let us think of three statements:

“Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.” (Acts 2:22).

“Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.” (Romans 15:8).

“But I have greater witness than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me.” (John 5:36).

Then let us carefully study Luke 7:19 to 22 with Isaiah 35:4 to 6:

“And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou He that should come? or look we for another? When the men were come unto Him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto Thee, saying, Art thou He that should come? or look we for another? And in that same hour He cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind He gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.”

“Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.”

Then note the following statements in Mark 1:14 and 15:

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.”

With these statements, let us study the following verses:

“And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew Him.” (Mark 1:32 to 34)

“When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.” (Mark 2:5).

“But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (He saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.” (Mark 2:10 to 12).

“When he had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.” (John 9:6 and 7).

“Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when He had found him, He said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him.” (John 9:35 to 38).

“And as He entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when He saw them, He said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God. And fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And He said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.” (Luke 17:12 to 19).

Then note what the Lord did by His apostles, Peter and Paul, after His death.

“There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.” (Acts 5:16).

“And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. “ Acts 19:11 and 12).

From the Scriptures quoted, we learn some very interesting facts.

1. We learn that John the Baptist referred to Jesus Christ as the “One Who Should Come.” For four thousand years the human race waited the advent of the Redeemer promised in Genesis 3:14 and 15. For centuries Israel waited for God’s visit to earth, their Divine Human Redeemer, Immanuel—Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 35:4 to 6.
2. According to Isaiah 35:4 to 6, Israel’s God, King and Messiah would come, performing miracles of physical healing.
3. The Lord Jesus performed many miracles of healing in the presence of the disciples of John the Baptist to answer John’s question, “Art Thou He that should come.”
4. In II Corinthians 12:12, we learn that miracles were the signs or credentials of an apostle. An apostle means “one sent.” So Christ said that He was performing miracles that Israel might believe that the Father had sent Him, that He was the Father’s

- Apostle. (John 5:36). Note Hebrews 3:1: "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."
5. In Acts 2:22 we learn that Jesus of Nazareth was put on display as God's Man in the midst of Israel in the land of the Jews (Acts 10:39) by miracles and signs. Note John 20:30 and 31: "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this Book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."
 6. Note in Mark 1:14 and 15 and 34 that when the Lord Jesus began His public ministry at the age of thirty, He announced Israel's Messianic kingdom at hand, for the King had come. Christ preached the gospel of the kingdom. The King was to come performing miracles. So the Messiah performed miracles to prove that He was Israel's promised Messiah and King.
 7. Note carefully the full program which the Lord Jesus gave to the twelve apostles in Matthew 10:5 to 8 and 23. They were not to go to Gentiles; only to Jews. They, too, were to preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Son of man might come before they had gone over the cities of Israel. (Matthew 10:23). They were instructed: "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons." If, because of the ministry of the Lord Jesus and His apostles, we are to expect miraculous, Divine healing for the sick, we should likewise expect the dead to be raised.
 8. The case of the palsied man in Mark 2:4 to 10 is different from the other cases where Christ healed the sick. In this particular case, Christ dealt with the man's soul and his sins before He healed his body. Before Christ said to that sick man, "Take up your bed and walk," He said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." So far as the Record is concerned in nearly every case of physical healing performed by Christ, the individual received physical healing before receiving Christ for the salvation of the soul. So when you hear Christians say, "Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever," and therefore Christians should heal diseases today in His name, call their attention to the fact that they should heal the unsaved as well as the saved and not say that the individual's soul must be saved before he can expect physical healing.
 9. In studying the healing miracles of Christ, of the Twelve, and of Paul, we learned that physical healing was not limited to certain diseases, but all manner of sickness was healed. This included the blind, the deaf, the limbless, the lepers, the dumb, and the paralyzed. Note also, with the exception of one or two cases, all healings performed by Christ and His apostles were instantaneous. Read the words, "And immediately" and "straightway."
 10. Note in the case of the healed lepers, only one of the ten turned back to glorify God. That one was saved. (Luke 17:19). Then note that hours after the blind man of John 9:1 to 7 was healed, Christ met him and said, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" He answered and said, "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" Then Christ revealed Himself and the healed man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped him. (John 9:35 to 38). In Acts 5:16, we learn that Peter healed all that were sick. There is no mention that any of them were Christians. Certainly, when Paul healed those people on the isle, as recorded in Acts 28:8 and 9, it was not a case of healing Christians. They were heathen.

11. Now let us consider Christ's message to the Twelve in Mark 16:14 to 18. There we read that Christ said, "Go ye into all the world." He said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" and "signs shall follow them that believe." The fact is, that the Twelve remained in Jerusalem. (Acts 8:1, Acts 15:1 to 18). They preached to Jews, with the exception of the case of Cornelius. Note carefully Galatians 2:9. Paul assumed the responsibility for preaching to the creatures in the world outside of the land of the Jews. (Colossians 1:6 and 1:23, Acts 22:17 to 21, Romans 15:16 to 24, I Timothy 2:4 to 7, Romans 11:13). But Paul did not preach to Gentiles "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." He said plainly, "Christ sent me not to baptize." (I Corinthians 1:17). We quote Galatians 2:9: "And when James, Peter and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the Gentiles and they unto the circumcision (the Jews)." Reconcile this with the great commission of Matthew 28:19 and 20.
12. James wrote to the twelve tribes. (James 1:1). James was a minister of the circumcision. Galatians 2:9). James said that Gentile Christians should not be troubled with some religious ceremonies which Jewish Christians should observe. (Acts 15:19, Acts 21:25). Inasmuch as there is not a single record that any Gentile was anointed with oil or that any Gentile apostle had any Divine right to impose hands, we should not anoint Gentile Christians with oil and Gentile Christians should not lay hands on any one in the name of the Lord for any spiritual purpose or reason.
13. Note Paul's words to Timothy in Paul's last Epistle: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. (II Timothy 2:2). Did Paul instruct Timothy to lay hands on the sick? Read I Timothy 5:23: "Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often sicknesses." How inconsistent Timothy would have been had he tried to heal others without a physical remedy while he was using such a remedy for his own ailment. Yet we see on every hand religious people, themselves using false teeth, eye glasses, hearing devices, claiming the gift of healing mentioned in I Corinthians 12:8 to 11.

Now note I Corinthians 12:8 to 11:

"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."

We have called your attention to the fact that the Corinthian saints were the least spiritual and faithful of all the Christians to whom Paul wrote. But it is in the Epistle to these carnal saints that all of the "sign" gifts are mentioned. Note we call them "sign" gifts. They lived during the "sign" age. That age passed away. Most Christians say it passed away gradually. Some say that it suddenly stopped when the Book of Acts closed; that is, when Paul reached Rome and pronounced God's judgment of Acts 28:25 to 28.

Have you ever read a book called, "The Silence of God"? It was written by an intelligent spiritual student of the Scriptures, Sir Robert Anderson. Presently we shall quote from this splendid book Mr. Anderson's answer to the question:

WHERE ARE THE SIGN-GIFTS?

When we read in I Corinthians 12:28 that God set some in the church with the gift of healing, we ask what became of that gift?

THE EXPLANATION OF DR. C. I. SCOFIELD

Dr. C. I. Scofield was an able, spiritual expositor of the Word of God. Many students have been helped by the study of Dr. Scofield's pamphlet, "Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth." However, at the time Dr. Scofield wrote that pamphlet and the notes in his Reference Bible, he did not have the light on the Book of Acts that came to him several years later when he gave his unqualified endorsement to a message written by one of his Christian friends.

The Moody Bible Institute has for years been responsible for the printing and distribution of the pamphlet written by A. E. Bishop, entitled "Tongues, Signs and Visions Not God's Order for Today." Dr. Scofield gave his unqualified endorsement to Mr. Bishop's message. And in order to further the sales of the booklet, the Colportage Association has printed his unreserved commendation on the first page. It has been because of Dr. Scofield's endorsement that so many have been sold. Therefore, the teaching of Mr. A. E. Bishop concerning the sign gifts, tongues and healing, was the teaching of Dr. C. I. Scofield, in the year 1920.

On page 17 is found this statement:

"There is no foundation in the Word of God for the prevailing popular doctrine of 'Divine Healing'."

On page 19 is found this statement:

"A careful study of the Epistles, especially of the latest Epistles of Paul, which give the normal course of the church during the present dispensation, would dismount all from their hobbies, eliminate the last vestige of Judaism from their lives."

On page 5 is found this statement:

"After repeated study of the Epistles written after Paul's arrival at Rome, I am convinced that in them is found a curative teaching for all the present-day delusions and fanaticisms found among many of the most sincere saints in the church."

On page 15 is found this statement:

"The sign gifts of I Corinthians 12 were operative only during the Book of Acts period."

This is the intelligent, Scriptural answer to all the wild, fanatical healing delusions of the day, and the answer to the question, "Why were those sign-gifts exercised by the carnal saints in Paul's day whereas they are not to be found among the most spiritual consecrated saints in this signless age of grace?"

SIR ROBERT ANDERSON

Sir Robert Anderson for some years has been considered, by other spiritual and able Bible expositors an exegete of unusual ability and he has been quoted frequently by Fundamentalists, in support of their teachings of 'Premillennialism' and 'Dispensationalism.'

I here quote several statements from Sir Robert Anderson's book, 'The Silence of God.' He has the only Scriptural explanation of the absence of signs in the Church of Christ today.

"My contention is that the Acts, as a whole, is the record of a temporary and transitional dispensation in which blessing was again offered to the Jew and again rejected."

“As indicated in these pages, it gives the clue to the right understanding of the Acts of the Apostles—a book which is primarily the record, not, as commonly supposed, of the founding of the Christian church, but of the apostasy of the favoured nation.”

“It has been further argued that, so far as their evidential force was concerned, the ‘Christian miracles’ were for that favoured people ‘of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.’ And if this be well founded we shall be prepared to find that so long as the kingdom was being preached to Jews, miracles abounded, but that when the gospel appealed to the heathen world, miracles lost their prominence, and soon entirely ceased.”

“There were no miracles seen by Felix, or Festus, or Agrippa; and as already noticed, when Paul stood before Nero the era of miracles had closed. The miracles of Acts 28:8 and 9 are chronologically the last on record, and the late Epistles are wholly silent respecting them.”

“The Word of God is our guide, and not the experience of fellow Christians; and when this is ignored the practical consequences are disastrous. The annals of ‘faith-healing,’ as it is called, are rich in cases of mimetic or hysterical disease, but about the spiritual wreckage due to failures innumerable they are silent.”

“An appeal to ‘the Christian miracles,’ it has been urged, so far from solving the mystery, serves only to intensify it. The purpose of the miracles, moreover, was to accredit the Messiah to Israel, and not, as generally supposed, to accredit Christianity to the heathen, and therefore, as Scripture plainly indicates, they continued so long as the testimony was addressed to the Jew, but ceased when, the Jew being set aside, the gospel went out to the Gentile world.”

NO LANGUAGE MIRACLES TODAY

“Miracles in the sense in which the present-day gift of tongues cult craves for miracles, have ceased. There have been none since the apostolic age. Not a single case has ever been heard of in which any representative of the modern ‘Pentecostal’ or ‘tongues’ movement has ever been empowered to preach the gospel in a foreign language. The teaching of the New Testament concerning tongues has nothing in common with the facial distortions and unintelligent twitchings and mutterings of the ‘gift of tongues’ movement of today, with the unseemly and often indecent orgies of hysterical laughter and screaming! God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints ‘Take heed that no man deceive you’.”

Surely God has in His Book His own Divine principle by which His children can be guided in interpreting, appropriating and applying the Scriptures. It would be well if every Christian would read a book by Sir Robert Anderson to which he has given the title, “The Silence of God.”

Whether or not we consider Sir Robert Anderson somewhat extreme as to when the body of Christ began, we may well profit by his statements concerning the cessation of signs and miracles after Paul reached Rome.

THE MOODY MONTHLY WHY PAUL DID NOT HEAL HIS SICK FRIENDS

Some time ago an article was printed in “The Moody Monthly,” explaining the absence of signs in this age of grace. We quote from that article:

“As there were no miracles in Jerusalem after the stoning of Stephen, there were none in Rome after that solemn ‘Ichabod’ had been pronounced by the Apostle. For the age of miracles

was past, with the dispensation to which they belonged; and the Apostle himself entered upon the life of faith beneath a silent heaven. Such is the character of this Christian dispensation for ours is the blessedness of those who have not seen but yet have believed.”

“That explains why the Apostle Paul performed no miracles in Rome, did not even speak in tongues. During his first imprisonment in Rome his ‘brother and companion in labor,’ Epaphroditus, lay ill but he exercised no special gift of healing upon him but simply depended upon the mercy of God to restore him to health again (Phil. 2:25 to 30). When on the journey to his second imprisonment another of his beloved friends became very ill, his brief statement concerning him is ‘Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick’ (II Timothy 4:20). When Timothy, his ‘own son in the faith,’ was feeling far from well, all the great apostle could do was to send him a simple medical prescription, very likely suggested by Luke who was with him at the time (I Timothy 5:23). There was a time when a handkerchief carried from his person brought healing and health to the sick (Acts 19:12). But that dispensation was ended.”

“It is only as we understand the dispensational character of the inspired Book which marks the transition period between the gospels and the setting aside of Israel, that we can understand the mystery of the silence of God in this dispensation of grace. All the attributes of God have been fully vindicated and manifested in the person and work of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. God is silent in this age of grace because in the gospel He has spoken His last word of mercy, and the day of wrath is not yet (Hebrews 1:1 to 3; Hebrews 2:1 to 3). The Divine lever for raising men from the dead in this dispensation, is not supernatural signs, or gifts of the Spirit, but the gospel of Christ. Romans 1:16.

IS PHYSICAL HEALING IN THE ATONEMENT?

We have referred to some Christians who teach that Christ died on the cross for the sickness of the body, as well as for the sin of the soul. They call this “healing in the atonement.” Those who teach such a doctrine refer more to the experiences of the healed people than they do to the Scriptures. They generally quote Matthew 8:16 and 17, and I Peter 2:24. Note these verses:

Jesus healed all that were sick, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias, the prophet, saying Himself took our infirmities and BARE our sicknesses.”

Christ also suffered for us—“Who His own self BARE our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed.”

In the first place, let us note the difference in the two Greek words, translated “bare.” In Matthew 8:17, the word is “bastazo.” The word in I Peter 2:24 is an entirely different Greek verb, “anaphero.” This word “anaphero” is used in Hebrews 9:28 where we read that Christ appeared once in the end of the ages to put away sin, by the sacrifice of Himself; “So Christ was once offered to BEAR the sins of many.”

The word “bastazo” used in Matthew 8:17, is used in Galatians 6:2 where Christians are told to “BEAR” one another’s burdens. It is used also in John 12:6; John 16:12; Luke 14:27; Romans 15:1. If you will read these verses you will see the difference between Christ bearing the sicknesses of His people when He was here with His Kingdom gospel and program, and Christ bearing our sins on the cross.

Secondly, we have referred to the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ revealed to the Apostle Paul His spiritual program for this age. The Apostle Paul was led by the Lord to write about

one-half of the Books of the New Testament Scriptures. Many, many times in Paul's writings we are told that Christ died for our sins, but never once did Paul even intimate that Christ died for our sicknesses. If Paul believed that healing was in the atonement, he would not have written Romans 8:23 and II Corinthians 4:16 or II Timothy 4:20 or I Timothy 5:23.

Let us bear in mind that "atonement" was not a Pauline word. It is true we find the word "atonement" in Romans 5:11, but it is a mistranslation. The word should be "reconciliation."

Some man of God has truly said, if it were true that the healing of the body results from faith in the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ as does the healing of the soul, incorruptibility could be experienced by the believer without the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we learn in Philippians 3:20 and 21 that the bodies of saints will continue to be bodies of humiliation until the Lord Jesus comes. Until then believers will groan within themselves, waiting for the day of redemption, for the redemption of their bodies.

THE CASE OF EPAPHRODITUS

Let us read of this case of elective healing: "He (Epaphroditus) longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." (Philippians 2:25 to 29).

Now note verse 30: "Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me."

Not many Christians are sick unto death because of faithful service for Christ. But this man was. "God had mercy on him." This is all so different from the healing miracles during the "sign" age; that is, from the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth in the midst of Israel until the day Paul, in Rome, spoke to a company of Jews and pronounced God's awful judgment upon them. (Acts 28:25 to 28). During the "sign" age, the Lord Jesus and His apostles healed all manner of sickness. It is quite interesting to study in the Book of Acts the miraculous works of Peter and of Paul, and to see that the Lord enabled Paul to duplicate every miracle that Peter performed. They were the signs of an apostle. (II Corinthians 12:12).

Epaphroditus was healed by God in answer to prayer. No prayer ever reaches God that is not on the grounds of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ which was shed on the Cross of Calvary. In this sense, all answered prayer is in the atonement.

The people whom Christ raised up from sickness and from death later on died with the same disease or with some other disease. And until the Lord appears for the redemption of the bodies of His saints, the death rate will continue to be one apiece for all alike.

I think you will agree that where physical laws are obeyed, sinners are just as healthful in their bodies as are saints.

The devil uttered much truth when he said, "All that a man hath will he give for his life." (Job 2:4)

There are literally thousands of human beings who have been swept into some Satanic vagary and delusion to the eternal destruction of their own souls because they have received some imaginary metaphysical healing of a real malady or a real cure of some imaginary physical disease. In the light of II Corinthians 11:13 to 15 and Luke 13:16, we can well believe that many have sold their souls to Satan for physical healing. With one or two exceptions, every Satanic cult of the day offers religious metaphysical healing of the body to their poor deluded victims.

Let us remember the case of Epaphroditus who was raised up by God's mercy in answer to prayer, also the case of Trophimus whom Paul left at Miletum sick, and Timothy whom Paul instructed to take a physical remedy for his oft sicknesses. Let us pray earnestly, fervently, with faith, for God's saints who are sick, but let us advise them to seek the best physicians and the best physical remedies and believe Romans 8:28 along with Romans 8:23.

I have known of many cases where saints have been restored to health in answer to prayer. But when we know God's program for this age, we shall know that all sinners who are alive and well are enjoying life and health by the grace of God.

Pastor O'Hair added lesson: number one, from his "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ." We have not included this message with this booklet. "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ" is included in this collection of his writings.