

## **Does God Want Me Healthy?**

You've heard it before: "God wants you healthy. Full physical health belongs to the believer." Some say, "I refuse to admit I have symptoms; I just positively confess my healing. If I admit I have symptoms, I'm giving in to the devil. When I have no faith, I receive no healing. Healing already belongs to me because of Calvary; I just claim what is mine. If you are sick, it's the Devil and you are giving in to Him." This doctrine is not very new, and it rules the lives of thousands, if not millions, of Christians.

Tragic stories abound of people who refused to go to doctors because they thought it showed unbelief and consequently died. Scores of hurting, abused believers exist who go to churches where their physical ailments cause them to be ostracized, criticized for having no faith, for some secret sin in their lives. They themselves wrestle with God, "why are you torturing me? If you want me healed, show me what I'm supposed to do!"

What is the Bible's Perspective on sickness and healing?

The basic fault of much error in teaching about sickness and healing today is the thinking that sin and sickness are almost the same thing. We know that sin entered at the fall, and so did disease and suffering. And so the logic is: if Jesus died to take away my sin, then He also died to take away my sickness and suffering.

But there is a fundamental flaw in that logic. Sickness and suffering are results of the fall of Adam, but they are not the cause of the fall of Adam. Jesus died and rose to deal with the cause of Adam's fall, sin, not primarily all its effects of disease, sorrow and suffering.

I Corinthians 15:1-4 makes this very clear: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:" Christ died for sins, not for sickness.

I Peter 2:24 is often quoted by those who believe in healing in the atonement: "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." But notice three things: Firstly, the context is speaking of the atonement, the forgiveness of sins. Why would he suddenly throw in a clause about physical healing? It's totally out of place in the context. Secondly, the Greek words are important, they indicate the writer meant an action once done in the past, the aorist tense or 'point action', 'ye have been healed.' Peter is not referring to an ongoing, continual healing that occurs consistently. Thirdly, Peter is quoting Isaiah 53:5, a chapter where Messiah's atoning work for the people is the theme, not sickness or healing.

Jesus did not die for our sickness, because sickness is not what broke the relationship between God and us. Sin did so -- rebellion to Him. The penalty for rebellion is

death, and so is the cure. Jesus did this on the cross, and then consummated it by rising again to complete and confirm the atonement. Suffering and sickness were by-products of Adam's sin, but they were not morally evil in themselves, nor are they ever said to be in Scripture. You'll hunt in vain for a single verse in Scripture that says that physical disease is a moral evil like sin. Sin is rebellion to God! How can a germ be a willful rebel to God? It's like saying that every time a cheetah kills a buck, it is sinning, because that was not originally God's plan. God has adjusted this world for its fallen and cursed state. Someday the lion will lie down with the lamb, but if anyone tried to tame lions to be lamb-lovers by using incantations in the name of Jesus, they would be fools. Suffering and sorrow are part of this present world.

God Himself feels great sorrow over mankind, and that is not an evil emotion, for God is not capable of evil. Sickness is definitely an unnatural thing in God's created world, but that does not make sickness a morally evil entity. Instead, it is like the thorns that God promised Adam on the day of the fall. Thorns were surely not part of God's plan for Eden, but they became part of His plan for a cursed world. Are thorns evil? No. But they remind man that he lives in a cursed world, a fallen state, and we await true, everlasting redemption in the world to come. Romans 8:22 speaks of this: "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

Consider that Satan sometimes uses his power to heal people through black magic, shamans and so on. Therefore, if sickness was always part of Satan's plan, then isn't his kingdom divided when he grants power to heal? Let's not be simpleminded when it comes to the nature of sickness.

Furthermore, consider that suffering, which these teachers claim is not meant for the child of God, is in fact the lot of every true child of God. Philippians 1:29: "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;". Hear Paul in Phil 3:10: "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the **fellowship of his sufferings**, being made conformable unto his death". Or hear Peter: I Pet 2:21: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps."

Suffering is not an ungodly evil that God does not wish on His children. It is, in fact, the path which Christ walked and the path which He calls all true believers to follow as well if they are to know true communion with Him. It has many uses to a sovereign God, and to say that He does not want His children to suffer is a wildly extreme and unbiblical statement. It is biblical to say, that in line with God's compassionate character, He does not want us to unnecessarily suffer, for suffering has a purpose in His plan.

Let us then address the question, "Why do people get sick?"

1) Because of the effects of Adam's sin.

Sickness, and more specifically, physical death, are direct results of the fall. Sickness, disease, death, disorder and decay are now part of our lives. They are not morally evil, moral evil is the rebellion by a freethinking moral creature created in the image of God against the commands of God. Disease germs are not little rebels, nor are they agents of Satan, anymore than the dust that collects on your car is morally evil. They

are merely reminders that this world is winding down, it is cursed, we should not make it our place of final hopes and dreams, but long for the perfected world. There, in Revelation 21:4, we read, “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” If that belongs to us now, why does Hebrews instruct us to live like the heroes of faith, looking forward to that city, knowing we have no continuing city here?

- 2) Because God sovereignly chooses to do so for His reasons. Exodus 4:11: “And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD?”

When Adam sinned, God did not destroy the earth and create a new heavens and a new earth. He instead began working a plan which would glorify Him far more, the defeat of sin through His own Son. God uses what we have brought upon ourselves, even our choices, as well as the effects of the fall, suffering, sin, sickness, sorrow and even death for His purposes. God uses sickness in people’s lives. It’s like suffering , God uses it wisely to purify and perfect his saints. “But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle *you*.” 1 Pet 5:10. How He does it, when He does it , why He does it belongs to His sovereign and wise will.

Part of understanding this is then to pray for God’s will when asking for a healing. Some have been so bold as to say we must never pray ‘If it is your will’, because that is a “faith-killing statement”. In fact, Scripture explicitly states in I John 5:14, James 4:15 and Matthew 6:10 that that is exactly how we are to pray. When we understand that God sometimes uses sickness in the lives of His children, we must pray, if it is Your will, heal me. Imagine for a moment if when Job was being afflicted someone had pitched up and said, “Job, I confess your healing. Be healed!!” Imagine if God had allowed that. Would that have accomplished His purpose in Job’s life? No! The sickness served a specific purpose, to teach Job a deeper humility, trust and knowledge of the God he already loved. We pray for God’s sovereign will to be accomplished, whether it involves healing or not. It is one of the most blessed things, that God says ‘no’ to some of our requests. Imagine where you would be, who you might have married, what you might be doing, if God had said ‘yes’ to all your requests, even in your younger, reckless and immature days.

Let us also add that it is unfair and unbiblical of those who teach that God always wants you healthy and your sickness is your own fault to so cover themselves. If you get healed, they take the glory, pretending to give it to God. If you don’t get healed , it’s your fault -- you didn’t have enough faith. If the healing is all up to my faith, why then in Mark 9 did Jesus heal the demon-possessed son of the man who said with tears in verse 24: “And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”? Indeed, our faith is not in our own faith, or in the power of our words, but in God’s power and desire to heal us. That’s why the leper came to Jesus in Matthew 8 and said “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth *his* hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean.” It was Christ’s will, that is why it happened.

We submit to God’s will, because He sovereignly heals whom He wants to, when He wants to. It is in this that we have faith.

A third reason why we have sickness in our world is

- 3) Because of Satan. Sometimes, disease is a result of demonic attack on us. Job is an example. But take note, Satan could afflict Job so, only with God's permission. Satan does not have the right to afflict you with any disease, as a believer, which God does not allow. Therefore this too, falls under God's sovereignty. You can trust, that if God allowed it, He's in charge of it, will use it, and will heal it in His time according to His will.

A fourth reason why we sometimes experience sickness is

- 4) Sin. I Cor 11:30: "For this cause many *are* weak and sickly among you, and many sleep". Paul said that sinning believers at Corinth were sick because of their abuse of the Lord's table. And God does sometimes use sickness to discipline His children.

But that is not always the case. Read John 9:1-3: "And as *Jesus* passed by, he saw a man which was blind from *his* birth. <sup>2</sup>And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him"

Don't pair up sin and sickness till you have some sort of cause and effect relationship like some spiritual law of the universe. God allows very righteous people to be sick, and it has nothing to do with their sin. Job is a perfect example. He was not in sin. God's own estimation of him was: "a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil". God allowed Satan to afflict him with disease. His simple-minded friends were like some believers today: "You wouldn't be sick if there wasn't sin in your life. It's your sin. Repent, and you'll be healed" But we know, from our eagle-eye view, that it wasn't sin, and God says to them Job 42:7: "And it was *so*, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me *the thing that is right*, as my servant Job *hath*."

Seeing this, we can see that God does not always want me healthy. In fact, He often wants me to suffer to purge me. We don't often say it as bluntly as that, but the Bible bears it out: God permits and allows suffering for a greater design. And to say that God never wants me sick, and it's out of His will, is to create a God in my own image who answers to me, and does not fit with the God of the Bible.

What about healing? If God sometimes allows sickness, why does He heal? Isn't this a contradiction?

Again, God heals sovereignly. It is on His terms, in His time. No one commands Him, or uses a so-called law of faith to claim what is theirs, healing comes from Yahweh Ropecá, the Lord who heals thee. He is a compassionate God, and He does want to minimize our suffering. Note, not eradicate sickness in the present life, for it has a purpose, but minimize it and lessen it out of His loving and compassionate heart. Jesus healed till His human frame was beyond exhaustion, He loves to heal and help.

But remember, God heals according to His plan. Jesus' healing was not to uplift the general health of Palestine; He healed to draw attention to His Person, and His Words.

He always drew attention to His Word through the miracles. He never healed for the sake of healing. Likewise when Peter healed the man outside the Temple in Acts, He did so to draw a crowd, to which he preached salvation through Christ.

In fact, Scripture actually has three periods of great miracles. In between those periods, there really is a virtual silence with regards the miraculous. One was Moses and Joshua, the second was Elijah and Elisha and the third was Jesus and the Apostles. All three periods ushered in new Scriptural revelation. God does signs for very specific purposes.

God heals according to His plan. He is far more concerned for your spiritual health than your physical. Matthew 10:28: “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.” Matthew 5:29 “And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.”

God will not heal the physical if it will disturb or conflict with His plan for the spiritual. He will heal when it will accomplish beneficial things in the spiritual, but the spiritual will always take precedence.

As we mentioned last time when looking at the prosperity gospel, a faulty view of the believer's position leads some to say sickness is out of the will of God for believers. But Scripture doesn't bear them out. Scripture is filled with examples of godly believers who were afflicted, not because of a lack of faith. Epaphroditus was sick nigh unto death according to Philippians 2:27. Why didn't Paul just heal him? Why did Paul instruct Timothy to drink a little wine for his stomach's sake? Why didn't he tell Timothy to just confess his stomach's healing? 2 Timothy 4:20 says Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus. Why didn't he heal him? Indeed, why didn't Paul just heal himself of his own thorn in the flesh in 2 Corinthians 12? Well, he gives the reason “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” He saw, God has plans in sickness, and God is sovereign anyway.

When you get sick do two things: pray for healing, and go to a doctor Isaiah 38:21: “For Isaiah had said, Let them take a lump of figs, and lay *it* for a plaister upon the boil, and he shall recover.” Clearly, the prophets were not against using medicine. Matthew 9:12 shows us Jesus regarded going to a doctor as part of life: “But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick”

Going to a doctor is not nullifying your faith; it is a reasonable, rational faith that trusts God to heal in everyday, normal situations, using the means He has provided. Believe that God's sovereignty extends to the doctor's wisdom, to the many medicines available, to finally His power to make your body respond. Why can't He just heal me instantly without going to the doctor? For the same reason He doesn't brush my teeth for me, tie my shoelaces or miraculously mow my lawn. For the same reason He doesn't instantly remove all your problems. Some things you can do for yourself. Some things he has provided for in natural ways. God will have very specific reasons for using supernatural means when there are natural means available.

Jesus' miracles generally all involved situations, people and circumstances where no natural solution was available or working.

You live in a fallen world and He wants you to live in it, take the knocks and the bumps like everyone else, but do so with the Spirit of Christ showing the world that while you have the same problems they do, you have a supernatural peace and joy in them.

Does God want me healthy? Spiritually, all the time. Physically, it depends on His plan for you spiritually at the time. Sickness is not sin; it is a result of Adam's sin. God allows sickness in His sovereignty. He also heals in His sovereign way according to His plan. Let us not follow the errors of some who have denied God His sovereignty in our lives and who teach that the believer has a birthright of perfect physical health. Let's be truly biblical about this and follow God through a fallen world in a Christ like way.