

Melva's Corner

YES, I BELIEVE IN HEALING!

Part I

June 27, 2005

Bible Text: Luke 6:18-19 Luke 9:1, 2

Central Truth: “Do you want to be made whole?”

Saints, you guessed it. A new series begins, “Yes, I Believe in Healing.” Let’s start by looking at the healing miracles in the New Testament. The woman with a high fever suddenly left her bed and waited on her guests; the paralyzed man stood, picked up his bed and walked home. The blind man strode away from his begging place, his sight restored; a frantic demon-possessed man was found sitting quietly, clothed and rational. With power and authority Jesus rebuked disease and commanded evil spirits to leave their victims. People came to Him in faith, ‘Say the word and my servant will be healed.’ A woman timidly touched the edge of his garment, believing. ‘Your faith has healed you,’ He said. ‘Go in peace.’

The news about the Healer spread and great crowds came ‘to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch Him, because power was coming from Him and healing them all’ (Luke 6.18-19).

Jesus gave His disciples ‘power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and He sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick’ (Luke 9.1-2). ‘In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk,’ said the apostle Peter and the crippled man jumped to his feet and began to walk. ‘Lord, stretch out your hand to heal,’ prayed Peter and John and the sick were healed.

Doctors cure, but God heals and this distinction is important. I believe that healing is much more than the removal of symptoms, however welcome that relief might be. To understand the distinction, consider the common problem of toothache. To have

that gnawing pain removed is a wonderful release but it is at best only of temporary benefit unless the decaying process that causes the pain is also halted and its effect remedied. Until this happens the tooth will be left in a weakened state and will one day crumble. The ache can be cured by various means but it is all too likely to return unless there is considerable remedial work done on the diseased tooth. The sufferer may also need to alter his habits if he is to prevent a similar problem recurring in the future. It's no use having only the necessary fillings; he ought to stop chewing so many sticky candies, eat more apples, and otherwise modify his previous practices.

Cure is removal of the pain, healing is about removing the origin of the pain and altering the habits that encouraged it to grow. It is concerned with remedying the disease in our very beings and may include a reversal of disease processes, putting right that which has gone wrong over the years. It reaches to the depths, the core, the very essence of our being and changes us so that we cannot be the same again. The practice of medicine cannot renew a person, it can only repair or restore function; but healing changes him. Unless we are prepared for **change**, prepared both to be **changed** and to **change** our ways if necessary, it is no use looking for healing. The penetrating and pertinent question, 'Do you want to be made whole?' gets to the heart of the matter. Unless that invalid (John 5) had been prepared to face a different sort of life, prepared to **change** and to begin to do for himself things which he had formerly left to others, he would not have received his healing.

The **change** that is necessary for healing can be instantaneous, which is miraculous. On other occasions the time normally required to achieve change is speeded up but it sometimes takes place almost unnoticed over a period of time. Speed is not the important thing; to become whole and healthy is the goal. In this age of instant everything, from coffee to cookers, our concept of healing tends towards the 'instant' variety. In our impatience for the end product we discount and devalue the idea of a process which is **changing** us and which in turn requires us to alter in response to the **changes** which are being worked out within us.

When ten leprosy patients were cured they all lost their symptoms completely, yet only one can be considered as healed (Luke 17). Only one was **changed** in his inner being so that he could not rest until he had gone back to express his gratitude. He had to

acknowledge the wonderful **change** that had taken place. The other nine were cured of their symptoms but not healed in their total being. They returned to pursue the same way of life they had always followed. Their illness was an interruption to their life-style but, compared to the tenth man, it was clearly a missed opportunity.

Even minor ailments can be an opportunity for healing in this deeper sense because they are an invitation to **change** from the style of life that gave rise to them to a healthier manner of living. Aspirin is an excellent anodyne for headache; it cures the pain but it does nothing to prevent a recurrence. Sometimes aspirin alone is insufficient but there are also times when the sufferer may also need to stop what he is doing in order to rest for a while, perhaps having to retire to a quieter place before the cure is effected. If while doing so he reflects on the likely area or areas (they are frequently plural) of stress and tension in his life that have culminated in this headache on this particular day, and is prepared to modify many of his actions, reactions or attitudes that have made him so tense, then he is open to being healed.

Headaches and many other disorders that are symptomatic of inner stress occur because of the build-up of tension within the person, and, if recognized at all, this tension will probably be blamed on overwork or other pressures from sources outside the person. Removing or lessening these outside pressures often provides a degree of immediate relief but long term release from the tendency to get into stressful situations will only come if the inner drive propelling a person into that particular way of life is dealt with. For instance, many people are workaholics. They either cannot delegate or, if they do, they will then take on two new responsibilities for every one they shed. This tendency to persist in trying to pour two liters into a one litre bottle afflicts many of us and shows itself in various ways but always the root of the problem lies in early, and by now quite unconscious, attitudes and beliefs. A common source is the inner, deeply buried belief that, 'I am only accepted, and therefore only loved, when I am good and live up to the expectations of . . .' This can lead to an almost compulsive need to succeed, to a fear of failure in any form, or to a life-style of intense rivalry. This latter problem is compounded by the competitiveness that rules in many schools and is continued in a large number of the sporting and recreational activities of adulthood.

Cure is the removal of such symptoms as tension headaches, compulsive work patterns and destructive competitiveness; whereas healing has a broader and deeper function and aim. Inner healing, the specific aspect of the larger concept with which I am most familiar, concentrates on dealing with the hidden roots from which these disorders arise. In theory this may be likened to a steady process of dealing first with the roots just under the surface. When those are cleared away bigger and deeper ones become apparent and as those in turn are dealt with even deeper ones are discovered and finally removed. In practice it is neither as rational nor as orderly as I have stated here.

There are many and various ways in which God sovereignly releases people from crippling, negative beliefs, attitudes and emotions, and in so doing He takes them into a profound transformation of their relationship with Himself. This can be a purely private, entirely personal event, either sought after or sometimes occurring spontaneously during a time of worship and devotion. Although this may take place when the person is alone with God, it is more likely to do so in a corporate gathering, especially during a Communion Service that is bathed in prayer. The presence of others seems to facilitate healing, and often 'it is necessary for one or more to be actively engaged in the healing process, and to minister in various ways at different times in this personal but accompanied journey into the individual's past with all its hurts, hang-ups and hang-overs.

Particular wounds or attitudes are dealt with as they emerge into consciousness, or as they become evident in dreams, through behavior patterns, by 'following the feelings' wherever they may lead, and by observation of eloquent body language. Events are not therefore dealt with in the chronological order of original occurrence but as they become accessible through one or another means.

The language of a person's bodily posture and a knowledge of likely emotional responses both contribute to an understanding of where to look for the root of the problem. For example, more was revealed through the body than by the words of the man who said he was content to remain single and to go on supporting his widowed mother but whose jaw visibly tensed whenever she was mentioned. Another man, deliberately sent to a different school than the one attended by his friends, and in other ways prevented

from associating with them, asserted that these events had not affected him. Later he came to realize how these arbitrary parental decisions coming on top of his earlier experiences had colored his reactions to other people over the years, and had distorted his idea of himself as a person.

These important languages of the body and of the emotions can be studied, understood and utilized but they are by no means the only or the best tools that we have. The use of such spiritual gifts as a word of knowledge, wisdom or discernment is crucial. We need to seek them from the Holy Spirit and to exercise them with faith, boldness and discretion in the pursuit of inner healing.

It is the memories of feelings rather than the accurate, objective facts that are important in inner healing. Sometimes it is the ability to feel again the feelings one repeatedly experienced in earlier years, and at others it is the re-enactment of the impact made by a particular experience that opens the door for the healing of those bad times. When they are recalled and relived there is the opportunity for Christ, who is timeless, to enter into those felt experiences and by his presence in them to restructure the memories. In this way the person becomes released from their negative effect, free now to grow, free to develop his personality without the restraint of those earlier wounds.

It is the dimension of prayer and the exercise of sovereignly distributed Spiritual gifts given for the occasion that enables healing to occur in ways and at levels quite inaccessible to secular therapies. Many therapies can uncover past wounds, unravel complexes and accurately discern the inner plight of people, but none known to me have the power to undo the past, to transform the tangled web woven deep in a person's history and to remake an injured personality - in short, to redeem the person. To pretend that they can is presumptuous, but to discard them because of their limitations is surely equally unreasonable.

I believe we need to work for a truly functioning partnership of all that modern medical practice has to offer, utilizing sound psychological principles and working with the rich, though often neglected, resources of the Body of Christ.

One of the crucial factors in healing is the ability and the intention to forgive. Most of us know that if we want to be forgiven we must

forgive others. 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive others' is in the universal family prayer. It is also true that if we want to be healed we must forgive because until we do so we will be hanging on to strong emotions that harm us both physically and psychologically. Until we are unable to acknowledge and deal with anger, resentment and bitterness towards others we ourselves will suffer. These powerful emotions, when locked up inside us, cause tension which results, among other things, in muscle spasm as well as an upset in the finely tuned chemical regulation of body and mind.

When we say, and mean, that we have forgiven someone for the hurt they caused us but still go tense at the mention of their name then our body is betraying our lack of true forgiveness. It seems that there are several stages to work through before this healing state can be achieved. Our initial reaction to an inner injury is likely to be either a denial of feeling hurt at all or a declaration of forgiveness that remains at head level only. It does not involve the heart and therefore does not heal. When we get over the denial and acknowledge the hurt, we also need to admit to the anger, hostility, bitterness or other feelings it arouses in us. Having admitted to that, we are then likely to go through a stage of bargaining in our minds with the one who has injured us. We say, 'If only he will admit he's wrong, then I'll forgive him', 'If she will say sorry then I'll talk to her again', 'If he will stop drinking (smoking, swearing, staying out so late) . . .' This 'if shows how conditional is our attempt at forgiveness. If we persist in facing the full impact of the hurt, and can acknowledge our own responsibility to respond with unconditional acceptance of the person who hurt us, then we are almost there.

Forgiveness is not complete until relationships that had been broken by injury are repaired. When there is this reconciliation the individuals concerned are released into a new freedom with one another and within themselves. Forgiveness that is healing does not consist of overlooking, forgetting or excusing an action but in facing what has already occurred, accepting the consequences and carrying on in those very circumstances.

Indeed, sometimes people find illness less of a problem than health, especially if they have had that illness for a long time and have become used to the way of life which it imposes. They soon find that they are required to do more for themselves and to take

on more responsibilities when they are well. Being able and willing to accept the proper demands of life is one of the necessary outcomes of healing. This, together with suffering so often involved during the process of healing and the time taken to grow into wholeness, are aspects of health that are generally unwelcome and disregarded.

If people are to be able to take on the responsibilities that come with healing, they need the care and encouragement of friends who will stay with them in their journey into wholeness. The best environment for healing is the local church when it is really being a caring body of believers who can accept the dark side of people, and accompany them in their distress, instead of trying to manipulate them out of it prematurely. We need to combine acceptance of the person where he is on his own journey at this moment with the expectation that he can **change** and that healing him is within the power today of our sovereign Lord God.

Many Demonic forces are concerned with the cure of symptoms, and in particular we must note that spiritual sources other than the divine may be called upon. When this is done true healing will in fact be hindered rather than helped because occult and psychic forces are opposed to the holiness of God. Beware! Those who invoke them, or receive their help, are led away from, rather than led into, the wholeness of God. The current upsurge of interest in these psychic and occult forces in the pursuit of health is a measure of our failure, as Christians, to 'preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick' as Jesus specifically commanded His disciples.

Today, the more we seek to understand ourselves, the more complex we discover our natures to be. On the one hand we are human machines, motivated by a computer of incredible complexity, on the other we are jellies of wobbling emotions and feelings. The problem is that so often, for various reasons, we overload - part of the machine cuts out, and in various ways it affects the stability and running of the whole.

In some instances what is needed is a withdrawal into the healing power of God's creation. The Psalmist observes, 'The heavens declare the glory of God and the vault of heaven proclaims his handiwork' (Psalm 19.1). And again Paul writes, 'Ever since God created the world, his everlasting power and deity, however

invisible, have been there for the mind to see in the things he has made' (Romans 1.20).

God's restoring power can be discovered in 'the being still and knowing' (Psalm 46.10). In the stillness of creation we absorb something of the orderliness and harmony - the rolling hills, the beautiful green of early summer, the buzzing insects, the granite rocks, all speak peace and healing to our souls if we but stop and listen.

However, there are areas of the mind which don't go away by being still in the creation. These are the areas which have been hurt by bad experiences in the past.

We reap what we sow, but it is also true that we reap what others sow.

The mind is indeed like a computer and registers our experiences of life. It records the rejections, abuses, and hurts of our early years that now cause us to behave irrationally in certain areas of our personalities. A girl from an extremely wealthy home was overwhelmed with feelings of rejection. It seems that her mother hadn't wanted her and during her pregnancy had had a nursery built on to the home, so that when the baby came it was put immediately into the hands of a nanny. She could never remember a time when either her father or mother had ever shown her any affection. She was scarred and a padlock was placed on that emotional trauma area of her mind.

When the Holy Spirit comes, he initially breaks the padlock, pulls back the iron bars, and allows the hidden, unresolved hurts to emerge into the daylight. It is into this situation that the Holy Spirit comes, like oil, seeping into every cavity and nook.

For a person who has been deeply hurt, this process can continue at various intervals over a period of many years. This is why the Body of Christ is needed for support and encouragement.

Because of traumatic experiences in the past, our minds react in certain preconditioned ways in the present. I had a door in my home many years ago that because of the damp weather, had warped and only opened half way. My mind was so conditioned, that even after I had it repaired, for a period of time I still only

opened it halfway. I was free to act differently but my mind needed, through a conscious act of my will, to be re-programmed.

When seeking God's healing, problems may be caused by the tendency to slip back into old reactions after the obvious initial freedom. At such times we are tempted to think that maybe nothing happened to us after all, and that the supposed healing was an illusion.

At this time we need to draw upon the Word. The word of God is 'like a lamp to our feet and a light to our path' (Psalm 119.105), and the promises of God are to be trusted. It is often helpful to copy out a Scripture such as Philippians 4.8.

In writing about the Lord's Supper (I Corinthians 2.30-31), Paul suggests that the wrong use of Communion can lead to weakness, illness, and even death. How much, more than will the right use lead to wholeness of life. I always encourage people to seek the continuing healing of Christ every time they take Communion. A man was telling me recently that he had had an unresolved wrong attitude towards his mother which went back as long as he could remember. Because of this he was experiencing the beginnings of a stomach ulcer. He asked Christ to break into the situation and testified that the ultimate healing came over a period of time through Communion.

I going to end this message now, but there is so much more to come. As the Holy Spirit reveals, I will share it with you.

Memory Text:

**“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path”
(Psalms 119:105)**