

Title: Lessons from Sickness
Text: Matthew 8: 14-17
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Matthew 8: 14: And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw [Peter's] wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. 15: And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them. 16: When 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: 17: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses.

Sickness is a fact of life. We all experience sickness on a regular basis. But at times, we or a loved one become very sick with a serious disease. What is the Lord's lesson in causing a believer or our loved one to experience sickness?

Proposition: This passage teaches us a few lessons about sickness, one of which is preeminent above all others.

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NOT IMMUNE

Matthew 8: 14: And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw [Peter's] wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.

First, we learn that God's saints are not immune to bodily sickness.

Peter was an apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ. That means, like each of God's saints, like each true believer here, Peter was elected unto salvation by God our Father. He was chosen by God the Father in Christ and blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ. He was set apart and made holy for God himself in Christ. All this was done by God the Father in Christ before the world was made. This was true of the apostle Peter and it is so of each sinner that God saves. Every true saint of God was chosen by God the Father, while God passed by many.

He was redeemed from the curse of the law and righteous in Christ Jesus his Surety. Before as yet Christ shed his blood, like all God's elect, Peter was under the blood of *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*. Before as yet Christ shed his blood, like all God's elect, Peter was righteous in the LORD our Righteousness. Now, Christ has shed his blood for all God's elect and he by himself purged our sins, he by himself redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us. So like all true saints, not only was Peter chosen by God the Father, he was redeemed by Christ his Surety.

Then Peter was born-again by the Holy Spirit of God. As an apostle, he was irresistibly born of the Spirit of God when Christ himself called him to be his apostle. All those God chose, Christ redeemed, and each shall be born-again by the Holy Spirit of God in irresistible grace and power.

Yet, for this man whose salvation was entirely of the Lord, God sent sickness to one of his dear loved ones—*his mother-in-law was laid up with a debilitating fever*. That teaches us that God's people are not immune to sickness. And our loved ones are not immune to disease simply because they are the family of one of God's elect.

All men are susceptible to sickness, disease and death as a result of our fall into *sin and death* in the garden in Adam. If anyone claims to have no sin, there is one sure and certain way they are proven wrong—they get sick.

All physical sickness is the consequence of sin. That does not mean all sickness is God's punishing an individual for sinning. God sent Job leprosy simply to teach Job and God said there was none like him that avoided sin. It simply means all sickness is the result of us all being sinners in our flesh.

There was no sin and death before Adam sinned therefore there was no sickness. But since we were all in Adam we sinned and death passed upon us. And since we are all born of Adam's corrupt seed, we are all sinners. Therefore, we are all susceptible to physical sickness and we shall all die physically.

So God's people and our loved ones are not immune to sickness simply because we are God's people. All are sinners in our flesh, all get sick and all die.

CHRIST ALONE

Matthew 8: 15: And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them. 16:...he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick.

Secondly, we learn that Christ alone is able to cure bodily sickness.

Knowing Christ alone is able to cure bodily sickness, it does not mean that we should not go to an earthly physician. The same way Christ works through his preacher and the word preached to heal his people spiritually, Christ is able to work through a physician and the medicine to heal a person physically. It is not unfaithfulness for a believer to use an earthly doctor and earthly medicine. It is absurd not to do so.

God is absolutely sovereign over all things. That means God is able to use means. He is called *the Lord of hosts* because everything he made is *the host* which is at his disposal to use to accomplish his will.

So when a person is healed physically, if you look beyond all the secondary means, the way a person is cured is as real as our text—“*[Christ] touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.*”

Just before this text, Christ was not even present when he healed someone.

Matthew 8: 5: And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, 6: And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. 7: And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. 8: The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. 9: For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this *man*, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*. 10: When Jesus heard *it*, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. 11: And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. 12: But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 13: And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, *so* be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.

So Christ, from his throne in heaven, does not have to be physically present, he does not have to physically touch, he can speak the word and cure our physical sickness. This is how he heals us through the gospel. The word is made effectual in the sinner, when Christ speaks the word in our hearts.

God our Savior has appointed an hour in which we all shall die—but not one second before or after. Christ is sovereign over microscopic things the same as he is sovereign over great things: he sends the sickness, controls the sickness and removes the sickness. He is the first cause behind all the secondary causes, who is able to speak and make us be cured of the disease.

GOD USES SICKNESS

Matthew 8: 16: When 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:

Thirdly, we learn that God sometimes uses sickness to draw his elect to Christ.

Physical sickness was the reason that many came to Christ. Word spread of what Christ had done that day: he healed the leper, then the centurion's servant, then Peter's mother-in-law—all in one day. Hearing Christ was able to heal, they brought their loved ones to Christ. There is a beautiful picture of the preaching of the gospel in that: the Lord had gone up into the mountain and preached his sermon. Then, he came down and healed all these people. Christ has gone up to his mountain in glory. From there Christ preaches through his watchmen. Then he comes down in Spirit and heals his elect through the word preached. When he has done so, he makes us willing to minister to the needs of others like Peter's mother-in-law who got up and ministered to others.

John 6: 37: All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out...44: No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

We know God is pleased to use only the foolishness of preaching to save his people. This is declared in the word and it is always the case in scripture with each one God saved. But to bring his lost child under the gospel and prepare them to listen to the word-preached, God sometimes uses things like physical sickness. Or if there is one he already has under the gospel, he may use physical sickness to make him experience the doctrine of total depravity and thus bring him to Christ. Or for a believer, he may use physical sickness to turn us from some distraction and bring us to Christ's feet, just as he will one day use sickness to bring each of his elect to him in glory forever.

Sometimes, the Lord used sickness to teach *the one who was himself sick*, as he did with the leper. But often, the Lord used sickness of a loved one *to teach the one who came to him on their behalf*. The nobleman in John 4: 46, came to Christ saying, "Sir, come down ere my child die." Unlike the centurion, he thought Christ had to be present to heal. Christ said, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." As he was going down, his servant met him and said, "Thy son liveth." He asked what time he was healed. "And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house." The sickness of his child was not for the child, but for the father and other of God's elect in his house.

When we have a sick loved one, we ourselves ought to pay attention. It may be that Christ has given a loved one sickness, to teach us ourselves. It may be the Lord is strengthening the love between fellow members of his church through another member of the church-family being sick. The Lord may strengthen love between a believing husband and wife through the sickness of a child in their home. Sometimes the Lord is softening our hearts through a sick loved one.

One old preacher wrote, “[I] would not be half the man [I am] but for [God giving me a] sick child; [my] tendency is towards aggressiveness, sternness, harshness...but that little sick child has softened [me], and been like a benediction upon [my] life...Afflictions do not spring out of the dust: do not be impatient with them; we need something to soften this hard life.”

But in all those who came, the point is this: they all were made to come to Christ, “*When the even was come, they brought unto him many [that were sick].*” Every trial, every sickness is given to the believer for one reason: to bring us to Christ’s feet.

Brethren, whatever the trial, whether you or another bears it, go to Christ, go directly to Christ and pour out your need to him!

THE PREEMINENT LESSON

Matthew 8: 16:...and he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick: 17: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare *our* sicknesses.

The preeminent lesson in sickness is Christ.

Note, it says, “*Himself*” did this—JESUS CHRIST personally did this. It is the Person of CHRIST, as God-Man, we are to behold here.

Then notice, himself “TOOK our infirmities, and BARE *our* sicknesses.” “Took”, according to the Greek Lexicon means: to take *upon* one’s self, to take *to* one’s self, to *make* one’s own, in order to carry away, to remove, take away—“*himself took our infirmities.*” “Bare” means “to put upon one’s self, to bear what is burdensome, to carry on one’s person, to bear away—“*himself bare our sicknesses*” Like a man takes a heavy load upon his shoulder and bares it away, Christ “*himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses*”

But how was this the fulfilling of Isaiah’s prophecy?

Isaiah 53: 4: Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. [indeed he was on the cross] 5: But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

Isaiah spoke of Christ taking to himself and bearing our transgressions and iniquities—our sin. He spoke of Christ being smitten of God and bruised because he bore our sin for us. As the apostle Peter said, *1 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.* So how was this fulfilling Isaiah’s prophecy?

One, this fulfilled that prophecy in that it foreshadowed Christ taking and bearing our sins which causes our sicknesses. As real as he took and bore our sicknesses off us onto himself and away, so he took the sin of his elect, bore it and its punishment and took our sin away.

Two, it was proof of his power and ability to take and bear our sins in his own body on the tree. Natural men think it is harder to take and bare away our sicknesses than it is to bear away our sins.

Matthew 9: 5: For whether is easier, to say, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*; or to say, Arise, and walk? 6: But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.

Men, naturally, would say it is easier to say "*thy sins be forgiven thee*" because we cannot see if it is done. Natural man thinks it far harder to say "*arise and walk*" because natural man can see if that was done. So by doing what man deems greater, it is proof that Christ can do that which man deems easier. Though putting away sin is really the greater.

Sadly, men argue that Christ was not really made sin because they cannot see how it was done. That is why men did not believe he could forgive sin. To show them he had power to forgive sin he did that which is impossible for men to do or to even figure out, he removed sickness. God is able to make him sin even when feeble minded maggots cannot comprehend how he could literally do so and yet he remained faithful in his own heart.

Christ was able to take and bare sickness because he covenanted to go to the cross and bear the sin of his elect that caused the sickness. He can say *thy sins be forgiven thee* because he took the sin and bore it away and erased the crime from the record books by being made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

Three, in healing their sicknesses, it teaches us that Christ has sympathy toward his elect in the sickness he sends because he knows the feeling of infirmities and the temptations caused by our sin which causes the sickness. Many say that "*he was touched with the feeling of our infirmities*"—in that he ONLY *felt sorry for us*, so healed our sicknesses. Yes, he was touched this way.

Yet, far greater, he was *touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and tempted in all points like as we are, when in his own body, he actually bore the sin that causes infirmities, though he himself never sinned*. When he said, "*The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak*" he knows it by experience. And better than we because he knows what it is to have no sin

So there is sympathy in our Savior, who sends sickness and death OR healing and life as he sees fit to the people he loves. He knows by experience the feeling of what we suffer and he alone is able to effectually give us exactly what we need to comfort us and keep us secure in faith that is in him.

What have we learned about sickness from this text?

One, God's elect, redeemed, regenerated people are not immune to sickness.

Two, Christ alone is able to heal our sickness: he can heal the greater sin-sickness so he can heal the lesser physical sickness.

Three, Christ is able to use physical sickness to draw us to his feet. If you or a loved one is sick go to Christ!

Four, Christ took our sickness and our sins that caused it. So he knows! We have such a great High Priest seated in heaven who has sympathy for us, ready to help, able to comfort because he knows by experience what we suffer and knows what we need.

Hebrews 4: 14: Seeing then we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. 15: For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16:

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Our healing is not taking away physical sickness; our healing is Christ!

Amen!