

TROPHIMUS I LEFT SICK

by Donald Gee

A theological study exploring why Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus, arguing that miraculous healing gifts belonged primarily to evangelistic contexts rather than general church ministry.

13 Chapters

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Trophimus I Left Sick

Part 1

Donald Gee was an English theologian who helped the A/G's author much of their fundamentals. When the abuses of the "Healing Revivals" came to his attention he wrote a booklet with his thoughts about divine healing. It wasn't too popular in 1952 but it is a very good treatment of the subject of divine healing.

This book has been out of print for a very long time. One of my professors made me a photocopy of it and I'm going to transcribe it into this forum for everyone to read. I believe you will be blessed by this book.

Trophimus I Left Sick

Our Problems With Divine Healing

Forward:

This Booklet is written by one who believes in Divine healing for others who believe in Divine healing.

It is dedicated to that large number of men and women all over the world who have come to the author with their personal problems concerning Divine healing.

An increasingly strong desire has been expressed that some of the things said in intimate conversations might be published in printed form.

This booklet is the result. It is published with diffidence, but with the earnest hope that it may be of help to good and honest hearts. The glory of God through the truth, as the writer has been given to see the truth, is the only ultimate object.

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

Donald Gee

"Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick."

(2 Tim. 4:20)

Trophimus was an Ephesian Christian who became one of the missionary team that accompanied Paul during his last journeys. Most probably he was converted during that notable period when "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks 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 19:10-12)

When Paul eventually left for Macedonia and Greece, Trophimus and Tychicus, another Asian, accompanied him. They returned with the apostle by way of Troas, where Trophimus must have been present on that memorable Sunday night at the breaking of bread service when Eutychus fell down from the third loft, and was taken up for dead but restored alive by the apostle. Not many days later, while the ship stopped at Miletus (or Miletum), Paul called the elders of the Church at Ephesus to meet him there, and Trophimus might quite likely have been in his home-town. But he journeyed on with the determined apostle all the way to Jerusalem, and it was the presence of Trophimus with Paul in the streets of the city that gave credence to the rumour that Paul had polluted the temple by taking into it his gentile companion. (Acts 21:29) So Trophimus unwittingly became the excuse for the mob that led to Paul's arrest, with such grave consequences. It seems unlikely that Trophimus accompanied Paul on the voyage to Rome. It must have been on a later and final journey, during Paul's brief period of liberty between writing his first and second letters to Timothy, that he left Trophimus at Miletum sick.

These details given in the book of Acts are interesting. For our present purpose they possess significance in connection with Divine healing because they prove that Trophimus had seen quite often an outstanding ministry of the miraculous and been intimately associated with the Christian missionary who exercised it with notable success and pentecostal power.

Notwithstanding all that, Paul had left Trophimus at Miletum sick. Why? He would be bold who would suggest that Paul must have lost his power to heal the sick in the Name of the Lord Jesus: or that Paul had forfeited the gift and calling so long and conspicuously enjoyed: or that Paul was backslidden. We have no evidence at all to that effect, for, to the contrary, while stranded in Melita on the voyage to Rome, Paul had exercised the gifts of healing with great power and freedom. (Acts 28:8-9)

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Part 2

Neither can we doubt Paul's personal desire that such a faithful fellow-labourer should be healed, rather than left behind sick. The apostle's concern for Epaphroditus in a similar case, and his deep relief when "God had mercy on him" revealed Paul's love for his helpers if by any chance sickness laid one of them low. (Phil. 2:25-30) If it could have been possible for Paul's prayers to heal Trophimus we may feel sure he never would have left him sick. To attribute it to lack of personal willingness on Paul's part is monstrous.

An important principle seems to be illustrated here that the gifts of healing and working of miracles (1 Cor. 12:9-10) have their true sphere in evangelism rather than among the saints. The Church makes a profound mistake when she tries to use such spiritual gifts for herself rather than for others. Miracles of healing are signs to follow them that believe as they preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:17-18). Their efficacy to attract and convince the indifferent and the unbelieving appear again and again in the Scriptures. Our faith in Divine healing accompanying evangelism on the line of "sign-gifts" as a gracious possibility for our own day, and until the end of the age, has been remarkably vindicated by bold and faithful preachers whose huge meetings have provided the impressive answer to those who wonder how men can still be attracted to hear the Gospel. Healings do not necessarily convert; they do not necessarily produce repentance unto life; they never take the functions pertaining to the Word, and the Word alone; but they DO attract men to at least hear the life-giving Word.

Evangelism is their true sphere, whether in the first century or the twentieth, and not a general healing ministry within the churches. Many of our problems of Divine healing arise because we do not understand this. Disciples crowd into evangelistic campaigns and line up with the sinners and the curious and the needy wordlings to seek a share in the Divine mercy to such. None with any sympathy for these sufferers in body will criticize them seeking relief by any means. Sometimes God does graciously make them a sign to unbelievers by bestowing upon them a miracle of healing that all can see. But we think that all who have had experience with great evangelistic and Divine healing campaigns will have noted that the majority of outstanding miracles of healing occur upon those attracted for the first time: and not upon faithful members of churches and "chronic" cases among Christians.

Moreover, Paul not only left Trophimus sick at Miletum—he did not secure relief from his own physical infirmities by means of his undoubted spiritual gifts. There are poignant references to his own physical weaknesses and infirmities and to those of Timothy his dear son in the faith (Gal. 4:13; 1 Tim. 5:23). Paul did not relish his weaknesses and infirmities of the flesh; he prayed to be delivered from them, and his ultimate glorying in them was a remarkable spiritual victory that was of a high order of grace (2 Cor. 12:9-10). In the case of Timothy he advised special dieting as an alleviation. The significant thing is that neither for himself, nor for those who were members of his missionary band, did he practice Divine healing through supernatural gifts of the Spirit though he was richly endowed with the same in his evangelistic ministry.

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Part 3

Closer attention to these suggestive facts might throw light on some of our problems of Divine healing when we see those greatly used in healing others unable to get healing for themselves. There need be nothing inconsistent in that when we see deeply enough. Indeed perhaps there is something profoundly true and necessary. Our Lord wrought no miracles for Himself. And the servant is not above his Master. Trials and afflictions and weaknesses and infirmities in the flesh of His faithful missionaries and evangelists today are not instances of “failure” in Divine healing; rather they may be marks of sharing that very travail and heavy price that the work of pioneering in the Gospel usually entails. The sheer physical strain can be immense, and there is plenty of evidence in the New Testament that Paul and his companions found it so.

Epaphroditus was not the last messenger of the Gospel who “for the work of Christ was nigh unto death.” Broken health is the price many have paid. It is to be avoided as much as possible by using wisdom, by taking precautions, and above all by keeping in the will of God and not attempting things beyond our personal calling. God had mercy on Epaphroditus, who apparently overworked to make up for the “lack of service” of others (how often this occurs!), and God still has mercy in like circumstances. But the price has to be paid. And sometimes to the “last full measure of devotion.” If there has been failure, it has not been failure in Divine healing. Perhaps we shall understand in That Day that there is no failure at all, but only a deeper principle at work than receiving the physical deliverance that our weak hearts always crave and judge to be the will of God.

Was there some failure in Trophimus that necessitated Paul leaving him at Miletum sick? Had Trophimus been guilty of some disobedience to the Divine will? Or did Trophimus simply lack faith?

Those who want, somehow or other, to fit in this verse about the illness of Trophimus with their own doctrines of Divine healing are tempted to assert that he MUST have failed somewhere. But that is the worst possible way of interpreting the Scriptures. There is nothing whatever in the statement, or in its context, to suggest anything spiritually or morally wrong about Trophimus. Assumption here is completely gratuitous.

Part of the unfortunate manner in which faith in Divine healing sometimes has been sincerely promulgated by strong-minded personalities is this continual suggestion that failure to get healed is rooted in some deep spiritual failure in the one who is sick. This attitude has added mental suffering to physical suffering, and in extreme cases turned belief in Divine healing into a scourge rather than a privilege, and a burden rather than a relief. That it possesses an element of truth need not be denied. Even in natural healing the patient has responsibilities. But to hold a doctrine of Divine healing that acts like a lash upon the heightened susceptibilities of the weak and sickly, surely comes near being a travesty of compassion with which our Lord viewed the multitudes of sick folk that crowded around Him on earth.

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Part 4

Let there be confession of all known faults; let there be humble prayer for light on any hindrance to healing that obedience can remove; let faith be strengthened by the promises of the word of God and the testimonies of those Divinely healed; but let all this be done in love. And all the time beware of the wiles of the “accuser of the brethren,” (Rev. 12:10), knowing that Satan will add affliction upon a child of God unless he is resisted by the truth as it is in Jesus. If no apparent reasons for failure to receive supernatural healing are made clear to the conscience or mind of the sufferer we have no recourse but to leave the case in the hands of our Heavenly Father—without condemnation of ourselves or others. Let our “Trophimus” be held blameless, though left sick, until we know as we are known.

Trophimus was sick. That simple fact is stated without comment. The Bible is a salutary remedy for morbid or extreme doctrines that refuse to see life clearly and as a whole. When it records the miraculous there is a restraint and simplicity that constitutes a hallmark of veracity. It is we who in the heat of our controversies, or our mere carelessness in reading, frequently miss the consistent and solid background of the normal in the Bible. And the background of the early Christians was perfectly normal as far as universal human experience is concerned.

Something tremendous had happened in their souls, and they knew it. It had all been made possible for them through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. They were born from above, and their bodies had become the temples of the Spirit of God. Their preaching of Christ was confirmed with signs following, and their meetings were marked by supernatural manifestations of the Holy Ghost. They confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims with a citizenship in heaven. But their teachers exhorted them to be diligent in fulfilling all the regular and normal duties of home and family life, of social and business life, of earthly citizenship and moral obligation (E.g.—Col. 3:17 – 4:1). They knew our common human laughter and tears, strength and weakness, poverty and plenty, labour and rest, sunshine and shadow. They married and were given in marriage. They bore children, and knew the pang of bereavement when those they loved died—only they were taught to regard that as falling asleep in Jesus, and they were given a blessed Hope (I Thess. 4:13-18).

It may seem ridiculous to have to assert the plain fact that sooner or later all those early Christians of whom we read in the New Testament died. The miracle by which Peter restored Dorcas to life (Acts 9:40) was not repeated indiscriminately, if at all. Loved ones were not continually being raised from the dead, however deep the sorrow and great the loss to the local church.

We may, if we choose, imagine that the vast majority who did not become martyrs simply died in their sleep, or faded away through sheer old age, or in some other dreamy way just slipped painlessly out of this life into the life which is to come. Perhaps it was so. The idea is attractive. Only, if it is true, those early Christians had an abnormal experience in dying that they did not have in living. To most ordinary men and women death comes in the end through some physical failure from which they do not recover—a sickness proves fatal, because of impaired powers of physical

resistance through advanced years. It is a strain upon credulity which the New Testament is not in the habit of imposing upon us to imagine that it was quite otherwise with the early Christians just because they were Christians.

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Part 5

It is perfectly natural in all of us to shun disease and death, and our fears and distaste make us eagerly grasp at a doctrine that offers us immunity. For similar reasons there are many Christians who love the doctrine of what is usually called the “Rapture” far more because it holds out to them the thought of escaping death than for the genuine rapture of seeing His Blessed Face. Doctrines of Divine healing that leave almost no place ideally in the life of the Christian for physical pain and infirmity often are grasped at with avidity, but this is wishful thinking which neither Christian experience, nor the Bible when sanely interpreted, can transmute into sound doctrine that will stand the strain it is inevitably called upon to bear in practical living. No wonder we are surrounded with our “problems of Divine healing.” We make them for ourselves by formulating imperfect doctrines.

It is helpful to expect health, and always a sufficiency of strength to do the will of God, and live for His glory. The Christians in the Bible were not a crowd of sickly folk, always seeking prayer for bodily healing. Neither were their local assemblies little more than Divine-healing clinics. We have a right in Christ to expect the blessings of a salvation that has a place in its sanctification for the body as well as the spirit and the soul (I Thess. 5:23). A healthy body is an immense blessing which we believe Christians may justly claim and cherish for the service of love to God and man.

Physical health is frequently a matter of obeying simple and natural laws of health, such as wise eating and drinking; sensible clothing; sufficient fresh-air and exercise; proper hours of sleep; a good balance of work and recreation; freedom from personal worrying; etc. To attend to these matters is our part in true sanctification of the temples of the Holy Spirit. Our Heavenly Father will help us to achieve the abnormal only when we have absolutely no alternative in fulfilling our duty but to temporarily break the laws of health. There come times when risks have to be taken; when sleep has to be denied; when unsuitable food has to be eaten; when we have to temporarily overwork; and when personal anxiety and care can scarcely be avoided without being wrongfully unnatural. To trust in God THEN to be preserved in health is the privilege of His children; but to abuse ordinary rules for a healthy body when there is no need so to do is sheer presumption, and we need have little surprise if we are permitted to suffer accordingly. Divine healing gives us no privilege to presume.

And it is fanatical to rule out all place for possible sickness, and ultimately, if God so permit, a sickness unto death. It is stated with perfectly plain speech that in the end that great prophet of the Old Testament, Elisha, was “fallen sick of the sickness whereof he died,” (II Kings 13:14) and the context gives not the slightest indication that he had failed spiritually. The rather he seems full of spiritual and prophetic energy to the end. But in the manner of the end of his earthly life he was, in striking contrast with his predecessor, entirely normal and as all other men. We who live in this dispensation may wish to have an exodus like Elijah rather than Elisha, but wishes and doctrines are different matters—or ought to be.

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Part 6

Did Trophimus call for the Elders of the Church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the Name of the Lord, that he might be raised up from his sickness (James 5:14-15)? If Paul could call for the Elders of the Church at Ephesus to come to him at Miletus for a very different purpose, there would have been no difficulty in them making the same short journey in answer to an appeal from Trophimus. Perhaps he did call, and the Elders did anoint him. Only we are not told that. And apparently Paul had not heard of his healing when he wrote to Timothy about his sickness.

The well-used passage in James' epistle lays down a clear injunction as to what Christians ought to do if they fall sick. (Incidentally it recognises sickness as a possible contingency among believers.) They are to make a spiritual approach to the matter. Their first call should be to their spiritual leaders rather than their medical advisers. There is to be prayer, and a sacramental anointing with oil that has no medical value or purpose. A prayer of faith is called for to "save the sick," and the reference in the context to Elijah's prayer for rain (James 5:17-18) indicates that spiritual intensity may be necessary. Divine healing through anointing and prayer is no light matter to be engaged in casually or perfunctorily. Connected with it is a most searching reference to forgiveness of sins, and a mutual confession of faults accompanied by mutual prayer for healing. The ministry of the Elders does not stand alone; it is only a part of the ordinance.

The whole passage in James has been cheapened by being used far too promiscuously. It does not teach an appeal by the Elders to the sick to come and be prayed for; it does teach an appeal by the by the sick to the Elders. And it means those who are seriously ill, not those with trivial and minor complaints that have not hindered them attending the meeting of the local church. The word literally means "without strength" or "exhausted." It is used in connection with Lazarus, and Dorcas, and Epaphroditus, all of whom were "deadly sick." Such have to be visited because the sickness is grave.

Anointing with oil is not "extreme unction" for the dying; it is a ministry to preserve and lengthen life through Divine healing. But it ought to be exercised with gravity in cases of serious need, and it would seem more suited for the privacy of the home and sick-chamber than the parading in public of prayer for the minor or intimate complaints of the bodies of believers, sometimes to our embarrassment. If reverence is strengthened for this sacred ordinance it will tend to increase faith in its efficacy and respect for the Elders who perform it.

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Part 7

A gracious promise crowns the instruction in James—"The Lord shall raise him up." It is unthinkable that such a word could find a place in the New Testament without a blessed fulfillment being a commonplace among Christians. They fell sick like other men—but they were healed by the Lord. Their answers to their many other prayers on the other matters found a counterpart in answers to prayer for healing also. We too, can glory in the many, many Christians today who can testify to similar grace in receiving Divine healing directly from the Lord in answer to prayer, and often after obedience to this scriptural admonition to ask the local Elders to anoint them with oil and pray over them in His Name.

Yet a complete doctrine must take into account the whole counsel of God revealed in His word. It is our common weakness to give little or no attention to passages of Scripture that fail to support our favourite doctrines. It is so here. If ultimate healing from the Lord came to Trophimus as we are told it did come to Epaphroditus then it must have been delayed. Perhaps there WERE some spiritual conditions that Trophimus needed to fulfil, but we ought to tread very carefully in making the slightest insinuation. Paul suggests none, although he did so quite plainly in the case of the many weak and sickly among the Corinthians (I Cor. 11:30). Apparently also, Dorcas had not called for the Elders at Lydda (Acts 9:38) to pray over and anoint her with oil—unless their ministry failed to prove efficacious, or unless we take the extreme view that her death was deliberately ordained by God to allow Peter to perform the miracle. Paul did not seem to seek the assistance of the ministry of any Elders to anoint him for his own infirmities, and in the case of Timothy he advised carefulness of diet rather than prayer. If we wish we can assume that in the healing that came to Epaphroditus the Elders at Rome had prayed for him, but we are not told anything about it. Finally we must remind ourselves once more, at the risk of repeating the obvious, that sooner or later those early Christians all died. No observance of James v. 14-17, however scrupulous, ultimately prevented the course of nature. So it is clear that its application must have SOME limitations. If we were more willing to recognize that we might dispose of some of our "problems of Divine healing."

Should Trophimus have "claimed" Divine healing? In asking this question we approach what will be the crux of the matter for many devout and sincere believers, and we must seek wisdom to tread carefully lest we injure faith.

Preachers of Divine healing usually stress that healing should be "taken" or "claimed" in the Name of the Lord without any question as to it being the will of God to heal. That is regarded as settled beyond any shadow of doubt, provided that one who is sick is prepared to confirm to certain plainly set forth conditions. Any querying as to the will of God to heal is treated with merciless suspicion as harbouring doubt and unbelief, and the candidate for healing is exhorted to refuse it any place in the heart or mind. Let us admit at once that this attitude has helped many. Faith involves an act of the will, and a trust in the substance of things hoped for, and acceptance of the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). Faith has to "take" healing as a right to be claimed in the Name of the

Lord whatever the outward appearances may be. There is something splendid about this and genuine miracles of Divine healing have rewarded such unwavering faith, even after a protracted battle. But for those weaker in faith and in personality it can prove very difficult and disheartening and baffling. Such an attitude imposes a tremendous burden if there is not a personal faith ready to assume it, come what will.

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Part 8

A doctrinal basis for the conception of Divine healing as being unquestionably in the will of God for all has been provided by most Pentecostal denominations in their official statements of faith. It takes the form of the doctrine that Divine healing has been “provided for in the Atonement” (British Assemblies of God). The American Assemblies of God add the helpful words “and is the privilege of all believers.” The Elim Churches state it slightly more ambiguously as they say—“We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Healer of the body, and that all who will walk in obedience to His will can claim Divine healing for their bodies.” This stresses conditions to be fulfilled “obedience”, but carries the same thought of a “claim.” That an important and powerful truth is embodied in these statements, with their scriptural reference to Isaiah 53:4-5 interpreted on the authority of Matt. 8:16-17, few will deny who love the message of full salvation in Jesus’ Name. But that it needs the wisdom which only the Spirit of Truth Himself can give in its application seems equally evident. To assert that healing for our bodies rests upon an identical authority with healing for our souls in the atoning work of Christ our Saviour can involve serious problems of personal faith and confidence for those weak in faith if, and when, they see manifest cases where Divine healing, though “claimed” has not been received. It is idle to blind ourselves to the fact that such cases exist. True faith refuses to blind itself to the truth, and persistent sickness can be a very unwelcome and stubborn truth.

The doctrine of Divine healing for the body in the Atonement reaches its maximum value when physical sickness is the result of our personal sin. In such a case it brings unspeakable relief to the sufferer to see that the blood of Christ purchases not only pardon for sin but deliverance from its evil results in the body—“the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” Taken very literally by multitudes this has helped them much, and enabled them to have faith to be healed. God be praised!

Fervent preaching of the Atonement occasionally neglects the accompanying truth that sometimes Divine love and wisdom permit a measure of suffering as a result of sin, in order to teach us to sin no more, and make us love righteousness and hate iniquity. The classic example is David, who, though pardoned for his iniquity, had to suffer for the rest of his life because of it (II Sam. 12:13-14; 13:31; 25:14, etc.). A doctrine of Divine healing in the work of the Atonement must consistently leave a similar place for permitted sickness as a method of Divine love and wisdom for purposes of chastisement. The regarding of sickness as a chastisement (i.e. discipline) from our Heavenly Father has undoubtedly been much overdone, and has been made an excuse for a whole lot of rank unbelief and worse, but it is folly to deny all truth in an attitude towards sickness that Christians experience through the ages has consistently sustained. Nevertheless, whenever discipline has fulfilled its purpose its necessity ceases. Recognition of sickness as a method of Divine chastisement does not destroy a true doctrine of Divine healing, the rather it strengthens it.

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Part 9

In the case of Paul's famous "thorn in the flesh" there was no removal, but only a satisfying explanation (II Cor. 12:7-9). It was not chastisement, but rather a stern preventative against spiritual failure that would have ruined his further ministry. It was an entirely extreme and exceptional case, and ought never to be quoted except by those who dare to conceive of themselves as in like peril of soul through the abundance of their revelations. Where are they?

The doctrine that since sickness is in the human race as a result of the Fall the atoning work of Christ provides full deliverance here and now is attractively logical. The precise measure of our present deliverance from all the effects of the Fall, whether in soul or body, is a matter upon which there must be careful discrimination. Some "Holiness" doctrines seem to have gone a little astray here, and a parallel fallacy attacks doctrines of Divine healing. Thank God that for the eternal future there is no question of our perfect redemption; and we have it now potentially in Christ.

It is in the personal application to the individual Christian who happens to fall sick that our doctrine of sickness as the result of sin can be most shockingly misapplied and misinterpreted. To hastily attribute personal sickness to personal sin was the precise folly of Job's three friends that drew upon them the anger of the Almighty. Many cruel things are still being said on similar lines by hasty and dictatorial exponents of very imperfect doctrines of Divine healing. Usually they are those who have suffered little themselves, or else have had just one experience of Divine healing on just one line, upon which they base all their ideas. It is only in the broadest sense that we can teach that sickness in the human race stems from sin in the race. In the case of many faithful believers in the Lord Jesus Christ it would seem more correct to regard them as innocent victims of our common human frailties until the atoning work of Christ comes to its glorious consummation in the fullness of the Kingdom of God.

Extravagant claims for immunity from physical weakness and pain here and now are corrected by noting such words as those used by Paul in Romans 8:16-25 and II Cor. 5:1-5. Although Christians have the "first-fruits of the Spirit" they still groan within themselves "waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of the body." Such passages effectively dispel the airy and fanatical claims of some that they are enjoying even now their "resurrection bodies." The scriptural truth is that the choicest saints on earth still have times when they "groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." The teaching of these passages is not a claiming of Divine healing from the cause of the groaning or sighing consequent upon infirmities of the flesh, but rather having the comfort of hope that there is a fuller life, and a better body (a "building" rather than a "tent") waiting for us in the life to come.

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Part 10

The doctrine that deliverance from sickness, by Divine healing, is provided for in the Atonement is securely based upon a scriptural foundation, but it needs interpreting in the light of the whole of the Word of God. To apply it indiscriminately and blindly is to plunge multitudes of good people into most grievous problems. It is significant that the Epistles do not apparently apply it to the problem of present human sickness and infirmities of the flesh, not even in James 5:14-16, where the work of the Atonement can only be assumed as a basis for the prayer of faith. Our problems of Divine healing impose upon us the responsibility for a courageous and frank examination of the applications we make of our doctrines, even though we need not question the basic facts laid down in our statements of faith. Intellectual dishonesty forfeits the guidance of the Spirit of Truth.

The unexplained sickness of Trophimus, and all unexplained sickness among Christians, brings us at last to the ultimate problem of pain in the Universe. We cannot deny it. We cannot contract out the Universe as we find it, even after the supreme historical fact of Calvary. It remains one of the final mysteries of existence as we know it at present that God, who is Love permits pain.

The Bible offers no easy explanation. The wiser among our teachers never pretend to offer us more than a partial solution of the problem. It is there and we cannot escape it. The Bible does teach that our Heavenly Father uses pain for loving purposes of discipline. The Bible comforts us with the promise that a time is surely coming when there will be "no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." (Rev. 21:4). Above all things the Bible reveals that God in Christ Himself suffered pain, and in some mystic way still suffers with us. For we are told that "though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." (Heb. 5:8) It is true that except for weariness caused through journeying (John 4:6) our Lord seems to have enjoyed perfect health when on earth. But since He suffered pain of a deeper nature we believe that our High Priest knows the feeling of our physical infirmities also (Heb. 4:15). Any doctrine of Divine healing that professes to leave no place for pain in the present order of things is palpably too shallow to be true. It may have a passing appeal to the thoughtless. It cannot stand up to the strain of life as it really is in God's Universe. It produces artificial and unnecessary problems by refusing to face the one true problem. For the genuine problem of pain there is at least the genuine comfort of truth. For our false "problems" there can be no true comfort at all.

It seems in the final analysis that we make our own problems of Divine healing because of our inveterate tendency to push any truth revealed to us to extremes. It has become a truism that almost all error is a truth pushed too far. In Divine healing we have glimpsed through the grace of God a glowing and saving truth.

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Part 11

The Church owes a debt she never can repay to those brave pioneers who have loved not their lives even to the death that it might become established once again as part of the Gospel. And an equal debt is owing to those denominations that have made bold to include a declaration of their faith in Divine healing in their tenets, and then have gone on to teach and practice the thing among their adherents. Not only have we already gained tremendously in these things, but blessed be God the advance continues.

If it be asked wherein this truth has been pushed to an extreme, it might be suggested that in the first place we have erred by refusing any place in our doctrine, or at least a very insufficient place, for the sovereign will of God. To ask for Divine healing without any accompanying “nevertheless not my will but Thine be done” seems to pose an attitude out of keeping with every other right attitude we take in prayer.

And in the second place we seem to have unreasonably refused any place for physical healing to be ministered to us in the will of God except by entirely supernatural and miraculous means. It is necessary to express ourselves with great carefulness on this point, for it touches the devotion and zeal of many choice fellow-believers. Their accepted corollary for their faith in Divine healing seems to have been a firm repudiation of the use of any natural “means” of healing whatsoever as inconsistent with faith. The help of medicine or surgery, and the assistance of doctors or nurses, has been frowned upon and denounced in the strongest terms. Some of these earnest souls have literally died for their faith because they refused to compromise in the matter. Let us honour their magnificent consistency even if we feel compelled to question their sound judgment.

For other of us it seems reasonable to trust God for the healing of our bodies in a way that does not necessarily and arbitrarily rule out any thought of the Divine providence and love being ministered to us through human intermediaries, and by means of naturally acquired skill in the art of healing. Our faith in God in other matters, such as, for instance, provision for all our need, has not precluded us from seeing the hand of our Heavenly Father in the ministry of human channels—even of the ungodly. To demand an absolute miracle every time we fall sick does seem to many of us to border upon presumption.

We can appreciate that in the establishing of a testimony to God’s supernatural healing power for His children, apart from the use of accepted natural means of healing, it has been necessary for some of His children to deliberately refuse all resort to those means. In no other way could such a testimony be demonstrated. But to turn this personal calling into a radical doctrine for the Church is a vastly different and a serious matter. To teach that all Christians who believe that there is a place for Divine healing are backslidden and failing in faith unless they take an extreme attitude against resort to “means” for healing is to place upon the majority of true children of God a yoke they are not able to bear. Multitudes who subscribe to a denominational tenet expressing official belief in Divine healing do, as a matter of fact, have recourse in their times of need for healing and relief from pain to various natural remedies, and to the skill of the medical profession.

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Part 12

To relieve the conscience of a quite uncalled-for sense of failure and inconsistency would be a profound service to many sincere Christians who hold mental and spiritual integrity as of highest importance. If a radical doctrinal position is found to be untenable in practice it calls for proper modification or revision. If it is considered necessary to retain it in its verbal form for the sake of a Testimony, then an honourable place must be allowed for those who are prepared to subscribe to it with a reservation of their right of private judgment in its precise application to themselves.

If it be true that trust in God as the Healer of His children automatically shuts them off from all the manifold and merciful means of healing which medical science now makes universally available, then the doctrine of Divine healing embodies a doubtful "privilege." But our Heavenly Father is no such Tyrant when His own fell sick, and His children know how to gratefully give Him the glory when they are healed in any way that His providence sees fit.

A saner doctrine of Divine healing, or at least a saner application and proclamation of the truth, would go a very long way towards solving most of our problems in the matter. We make our own problems because the Almighty does not always do what we, in our haste or our imperfect ideas, think He ought to do. And only a doctrinal position that experience makes tenable can retain the willing loyalty of those who profess it, and save them from the morally damaging denial in practice of that which they affirm they believe in theory. The practical denial of "Divine healing" in practice by multitudes who still profess to believe it as a tenet of their faith calls for honest examination and a more perfect expression of what we truly believe.

It may well be that in the bald statement that Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletum we have one of those intentional assertions of the Bible intended to keep us from extremes. The apostle who manifested when in company with this friend and co-worker such outstanding miracles of healing also faced the mystery of sickness among his intimate associates. To such mysteries he had only one answer—"Now I know in part; but then shall I know even as I am known." In those great believing words is the eternal triumph of faith, and hope and love. It still at times has to be said to the Lord, "he whom Thou lovest is sick." The final answer here, and hereafter, will be provided by One who is the resurrection and the life. Those who have found the Living Christ to be here and now the Healer Divine have found a pearl of truth which none shall take away from them. But in enshrining their experience into a doctrine they need to be guided by the full revelation in all the Scriptures of truth, lest haply they say even of God, the thing that is not right.

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