

A Kind Inquiry

by James Smith

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual health and provides a guide for examining one's spiritual state and seeking remedies for spiritual sickness.

Scripture: 2 Samuel 20:9, Psalm 41:4, Psalm 107:20, Proverbs 4:23, Isaiah 53:5, Jeremiah 17:9, Hebrews 12:13, James 5:16, 1 Peter 2:24, 3 John 1:2

Topics: "Spiritual Health", "Christian Community"

Description

James Smith preaches on the deceitful nature of kind words from cruel hearts, using the treacherous act of Joab towards Amasa as an example. He emphasizes the importance of spiritual health over physical health, highlighting the need for Christians to inquire about each other's well-being in a genuine and loving manner. Smith delves into the spiritual relationship among believers, encouraging self-examination to ensure a healthy spiritual state by assessing desires, speech, prayer life, affections, and actions.

Transcript

"Joab said to Amasa, 'Are you in health, my brother?' Then Joab took Amasa by the beard with his right hand to kiss him. Amasa was not on his guard against the dagger in Joab's hand, and Joab plunged it into his belly, and his intestines spilled out on the ground!" 2 Samuel 20:9-10

Kind words often proceed from cruel hearts. Hatred is frequently covered with deceit. This was the case with Joab, and with many others since his day.

But a bad man may furnish us with a good text, and what was wickedly used at first--may be kindly employed by us now.

HEALTH is a great blessing, therefore we inquire very frequently about each other's health. There is the health of the body, and there is the health of the soul; and however important the first may be, the latter is much more so. We will dismiss Joab and his treachery, and use his words with an honest heart, and a kind intention.

"Are you in health, my brother?"

Let us consider,

First, A Near Relationship. "My brother."

Naturally, all men are brethren, for we are all one man's sons. We all descended from one parent, Adam. We have one father--and one God has created us. We should therefore, be interested in each other's welfare.

But there is a spiritual relationship; in this the children of God alone are interested--but all are alike interested in it, Christians constitute one great family.

They are born of the same parents. Born of the Spirit: born of one God.

They are all brought up in the same home. The church is God's family residence. Here his children dwell. Here they feed. Here are babes, young men, and fathers.

They are all taught in the same school. The world is but a school-room. God himself is become their master. His word, his ministry, and his providence are their teachers. Truth, truth respecting God and themselves, are the lessons they have to learn.

They are all put to the same business. The one thing they have all to learn is to glorify and please God. They are all learning this, and by and bye, they will not think, or speak, or act--but simply with a view to glorify the Lord.

They are all enriched with the same blessings. Chosen in Christ. Called by grace. Justified from all things. Sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Adopted and owned as children. Supplied with every needful good. Protected from all real dangers. Appointed to everlasting life. "All things are theirs."

They are all dignified with the same honors. They are the sons of God. Heirs of God, and joint heirs with our Lord Jesus Christ. They are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. They are the temples of the Holy Spirit, and the bride of the Lamb.

They are all destined to enjoy the same inheritance. They are begotten again to a lively hope, to an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, which is reserved in heaven for them.

Thus the people of God are one. One holy, happy, honored family. All believers are brethren. As, therefore, I move about among the Lord's people I may ask, "Are you in health, my brother?" Here is then,

Secondly, A Kind Inquiry.

When we look around us in the world, we see that many are sick, and some appear ready to die. Reader, are you a Christian? If so--then you are my brother. Allow me then to ask with all a brother's love, "Are you in health, my brother?"

May I examine you for a moment or two?

Let me feel your pulse. Desire is the pulse of the soul. If your desires are carnal, or if they are going out strongly for worldly things, more strongly than for the things of the Spirit--then you are not in health. You are feverish. But if your desires are going out after God, for his presence, his power, and the manifestations of his love--it is a good sign. Hear the language of a soul in health. "As the deer pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God!" "When shall I come and appear before God." Again, "O God, you are my God; early will I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh longs for you, in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water; to see your power and

your glory, so as I have seen you in the sanctuary. Because your loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise you." Here is health--good sound health. The pulse beats regularly, it beats for God, for holiness, and for heaven.

"With my soul have I desired you in the night, yes, with my spirit within me, I will seek you early." This was healthy. God in Christ is the great object of desire, and when we are spiritually healthy our desires go out after him, and ascend to him; nor can we ever be satisfied but as we enjoy his presence and his love.

Let me examine your tongue. The state of the tongue generally betrays the state of the heart. A clean tongue, that speaks truth, that talks of Jesus, whose utterances are loving--indicate a healthy state of soul. But the yellow tongue indicates a jealous, envious, and complaining state of mind, and is a proof that we are out of health. When the tongue is brown and furred with slander, evil speaking, and misrepresentations, there cannot be good health. So if it be white and coated with levity, foolish talking, jesting, and exaggerations, there are evidences of disease.

We have heard of white lies--but no lies are white in God's eyes. Every lie is black--as black as hell. "Therefore, putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor." There are filthy talkers, who profess religion--but in such, religion can have little power, and its presence at all is very questionable. Therefore said Paul, "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth--but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." Whatever the tongue utters--proceeds from the heart, and shows its true state and condition, if the utterances are honest.

May the Lord grant unto all his children the clean tongue, that we may abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness, and talk of all his wondrous works.

Allow me now to listen to your lungs. I must use my stethoscope a little. When the lungs are healthy, we breathe freely. Prayer is the breath of the Christian soul. If, therefore, we breathe with difficulty, or labor for breath, there is something wrong. When we complain that prayer is a task and a burden, or when we feel it to be a dry duty--we are out of health. My brother, is prayer a delight? Do you prize prayer-meetings? Do you rejoice when prayer is proposed where you are? Do you pray regularly? Do you pray constantly? If our health is sound, we shall be breathing out our desires, wishes, wants, woes, fears, praises, and thanksgiving, as we walk along the way, as we work at our callings, as we lie sleepless on our pillows, and as we sit in our habitations. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."

I must now lay my hand on your heart. If you are healthy--it will beat with regularity, and send out its crimson currents without interruption. I must listen. Ah, well, yes, it will do. It beats Jesus, Jesus, Jesus; heaven, heaven, heaven; holiness, holiness, holiness; useful, useful, useful. If the heart beats for Jesus, for heaven, for holiness, for usefulness--there is good health there. But if it beats for wealth, worldly honor, creature applause, or carnal pleasure--it is diseased.

Christians should be Christlike. Like Jesus in their preferences, dislikes, pursuits, and aspirations. Redeemed by him, united to him, risen with him--they should resemble him. "If you then are risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth; for you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." The Christian really is--as his heart is. The heart is the seat of life, the home of Jesus, the habitation of the Spirit. As the heart beats--the life will be. Therefore the wise man exhorts us, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

I would now ask a few questions, to ascertain more clearly the state of my brother's health.

How is your appetite? Are you hungering and thirsting after righteousness? Do you regularly feed on and enjoy the bread of life? Do you daily drink of the water which Jesus gives? There is bread enough in our Father's house and to spare. Yet we have sometimes to ask our brethren, "How is it, that you being a king's son, are lean from day to day?" Your Savior's invitation is, "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." And the testimony of the prophet is, "Therefore with joy shall we draw water the out of wells of salvation."

If you want gourmet dishes, if you must have sweets--if you cannot feed upon and be satisfied with the plain wholesome food of the Gospel--then you are not well.

How do you rest? Can you lie down on the bed of God's promises, and enjoy the sleep of the laboring man, which is sweet, whether he eats little or much? Can you calmly lay your weary head on the pillow of your Redeemer's peace? Do you rest quietly on your Savior's finished work for your acceptance with God? Do you rest on God's faithful providence for all your temporal supplies? Is your soul in a state of repose, realizing the fact, "You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you." Or, are you tossed and tumbled about with doubts, fears, and painful misgiving? Nothing conduces to health like good settled rest--the sleep of God's beloved ones. Happy is the man who casts all his cares upon his God; who reposes on the Covenant love and faithfulness of the Most High God; who carries out David's exhortation, "Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself because of the man that prospered in his way, because of the man that brings wicked devices to pass."

Is your head cool? Some professors are very hot-headed, and many others have brain fever. But a cool head indicates health. Can you think calmly and deliberately on God's Word? Can you reflect on God's past dealings with gratitude? Can you survey your present circumstances with contentment? Can you look forward into the future with a lively hope? Rashness, haste, hurry, confusion of ideas, and perplexity occasioned by the lack of careful examination into circumstances, are evidences of too much heat in the head.

Don't wrap up the head too much! Some wear a cap five times double, and some thicker still; is it any wonder the head is heated, if covered and compressed in such creed caps as these?

Brother, let your head is fanned by the fine breezes of the everlasting hills, and be occasionally cooled by bathing in that "river, the streams whereof make glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High."

How are your eyes? Can you see things that are invisible? Are they often directed to the hills from whence your help comes? Do they look not on the things that are seen--but the things which are not seen, because the things that are seen are temporal, while the things that are not seen are eternal? Can they discern between things that differ? Between the law and the gospel? Between the flesh and the spirit? Between the commandments of God and the traditions of men?

If the eye is healthy--it will look to Jesus, it will trace out the footsteps of the flock, it will look for, and urge us to hasten to, the coming of the day of God.

How is your hearing? Can you hear and distinguish the Shepherd's voice? Jesus tells us, that "when he puts forth his sheep, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him--for they know his voice: and a

stranger will they not follow--but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers." The church of old could distinguish the voice of Jesus from all others, therefore she cried out, "It is the voice of my Beloved, behold he comes!" If the ear is open to God's Word, if it tests the teachings of others, distinguishing between truth and error, between Christ and Antichrist, between the world and the church--it is tolerably healthy.

The man in health says, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak, peace unto his people, and to his saints--but let them not turn again to folly."

Are your limbs warm? They should work for Jesus. The feet should run in the way of God's commandments. One in good health said, "I made haste and delayed not, to keep your precepts." My brother, cold hands and cold feet show a disordered system! If your hand is stretched out to help the fatherless, to relieve the widow, and to assist the poor; if your feet are employed in visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and comforting Christ in his members--they will be kept warm and healthy.

Some are so much in this cold world, that they are chilled and frost-bitten; and others nurse themselves so much by the fire of self-indulgence, that they are afraid of every breath; and both are comparatively useless, being in a very unhealthy state.

Activity is necessary to health. Outdoor exercise and labor is most beneficial. Therefore the Master says, "Son, go work today in my vineyard." Put your hand to the plough-and do not look back. So will the promise be realized, "Even youths will become weak and tired, and young men will fall in exhaustion. But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint!" They shall be in good robust health.

Observe, spiritual sickness is very common. We are like Paul's Corinthians, to whom he said, "Many are weak and sickly among you!" Numerous spiritual maladies are apparent in God's church.

One has an excess of bile--which appears in bitterness, wrath, and clamor!

Another has the tumor of pride--and swells with conceit and self-will!

A third has the vertigo of inconstancy--and manifests his giddiness by wandering from place to place, or from creed to creed!

Another has the pleurisy of envy--and is always in pain because others prosper!

And another has the cramp of covetousness--and twists into all shapes and forms before he will part with his money!

Another has the fever of intoxication--and is always longing for the wine-glass!

Others have the epilepsy of fear--and are all their life-time subject to bondage.

But where shall I end? For the diseases are almost endless! Therefore I may well put the question, "Are you in health, my brother?"

Appearances are often deceitful. What we take for the bloom of health--may be the fever of disease. Many who are declining, imagine that they are quite well; others imagine that they are speedily recovering.

Multitudes are dying of a slow cancer--but alas they themselves know it not! The difficult breathing, the unsteady walk, the irregular appetite, the confidence they express respecting their health--are sad symptoms that they are declining. These are the most difficult to convince of their danger, their own feelings deceive them, so that while others see clearly the danger they are in--they do not suspect it themselves.

Health is very important. Important for our enjoyment. Important in order to the performance of our work. Important in every point of view. Therefore we should never trifle with it--but daily pray that we may prosper and be in spiritual health. The neglect of health is dangerous.

If treated early on--disease may perhaps soon be conquered! But once deeply rooted, the eradication is difficult. Never neglect the health of your soul, my brother. The physician is at hand! You may apply to him at any time. His service is gratis. He never administers a painful remedy without necessity. Therefore go to him, whenever you have suspicious symptoms, and cry, "Examine me, O Lord!"

The REMEDIES are at hand.

There is the warm bath of blood
and the cold bath of truth.

There are the leaves of the tree of life
which are for the healing of the nations.

There is the famous balm of Gilead.

There is the true pool of Bethesda.

There is a remedy for every disease!

There is a sovereign cure-all for every disorder!

Restoration to health may be enjoyed.

There are no incurable cases in God's family. The great physician says of every case, "I will cure it--and bring it health! I will heal you of your wounds--and will restore unto you the abundance of truth and peace."

His advertisement is headed, "Come and Be Healed!" and it is sent into all the world, and is to be made known to every creature. He cures today and tomorrow; he is always open. His advice is gratis. His medicines are gratis. His remedies are gratis. His attendance is gratis. So that no one need suffer long. He says to each of us--as to the poor man at the pool, "Will you be made whole?" If we appear suspicious, he will ask us the question, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"

If we are satisfied of his ability--but are afraid that he is not willing--he says, "Do not be afraid--only believe." And, when we cast ourselves upon his mercy, as the poor man did, crying, "Lord, I believe--help my unbelief," he will take us by the hand, lift us up, and heal us!

Or if, like the leper, we cry with our whole heart, "Lord, if you will--you can make me clean!" He will say, "I will--be clean!"

Reader, are you in health? If not--go to Jesus, go to Jesus, go to Jesus at once! He will heal you perfectly, freely, and forever!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/james-smith/a-kind-inquiry/>

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