

God Heals The Wounded Soul

Acts 3:1-16, Trinity Sunday III

June 24, 2007

Beloved of the Lord....Which is more important, the body or the soul? Which would you rather have, a body which was healed, or a healed soul? Many in our world today go to great lengths to have a perfect or healthy body. Women and men alike are often consumed with outward appearances that they spend great hours at the gym, or spend small fortunes on plastic surgery. Man by his own sinful nature is extremely vain and consumed with physical health and beauty. Man will always look outwardly on the body, but what thought does he give for the soul?

Jesus said, "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" What good is a healthy body, if the soul perishes in hell? Our bodies, their condition or shape, matter very little, for "all flesh is grass." Jesus teaches the soul is of greater importance than the body. And which would you rather have, healing of body, or healing of soul? The only doctor that can heal the soul is the Great Physician, Jesus Christ! Only God can heal the wounded soul. Our lesson today is about a lame man, a helpless cripple that had to be carried about by friends. Jesus miraculously healed that body, but more importantly, Jesus healed his soul. Let us therefore hear God's Word today and know that only God has power to heal the wounded soul.

I. The wounded in body. We begin today with two apostles, Peter and John, who went in to the temple to pray. At the gate named Beautiful, there lay a lame beggar. All his life, even from birth, his legs were without strength, never to move. As a child he could not walk and play with the other children. As an adult he could not earn a living but had to beg just to get by.

Often we see such heart-wrenching cases today, and we wonder why? Why would God allow an innocent child to be born lame? The sinful heart of man always blames God for such things, as if God has played a cruel joke upon mankind. But God is not the author of evil, nor is He the source of sin! Sin, and its dreadful consequences was brought into this world by our first parents, Adam and Eve. Their sin was passed on to their children and "a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit." Man's inward spiritual corruption is often reflected outwardly in the body. Sickness, disease, aging and death are all the fruits of sin. Ah yes, but what about this child? "Why did God allow him to be born lame, while others are not?" But here we answer, "We don't know! God hasn't told us! God doesn't tell us everything! Sometimes God's will is hidden!" God's will and purpose are often hidden from man. While it is in God's power to permit certain children to be born healthy, and certain children not, His will and purpose are

often hidden from us. And if He doesn't tell us, we don't need to know! It is enough to know that all sickness and disease in the world is the fruit of man's sin. Nor should we try to penetrate beyond the wall of God's hidden will. Man's reason and intellect cannot penetrate the hidden will of God any more than a feather can penetrate a brick wall.

Not all of God's will is hidden however. God through His holy Word found in our Bibles reveals much to us about sickness and disease. For example, sometimes God uses sickness and disease to punish people. For example, sexual diseases are a punishment from God for those who despise marriage. When the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant in the Old Testament, God "smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts." I Sam. 5:9 Emerods were boils and ulcers on the surface of the skin. But God also uses disease to punish other sins. In second Chronicles we are told of a wicked king named Jehoram, who led his own people into idolatry. God condemned him through Elijah saying, "Behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: And thou shalt have great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day." 2 Chr. 21:14-15 The Bible is filled with examples of God punishing the wicked with disease. Yet we should remember that when God punishes, it is ever His hope that people repent of their sins, and turn to the Lord.

But what about God's children? Why does God at times allow His own believers to have disease or other bodily difficulties? Does God punish His own children? Here we should distinguish between punishment and chastening. While God punishes the wicked out of hatred and anger against the sinner, God does not work in the same way with His own children. God does not punish His children, but chastens them out of love. To chasten is to correct for the purpose of change. Chastening then is a fatherly discipline, done out of love, "for the purpose of training, educating, and making a person better" (Neipp). The Bible says, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" Therefore when Christians suffer, they ought not to think that God's wrath is burning against them and that He is taking some cruel pleasure in seeing them suffer. That is what the devil wants us to think. Rather when we are chastened or afflicted with bodily suffering, we ought to remember this is a sign of God's love. It is for our own good. God is only helping us to serve and follow Him better for His own glory.

One problem we have when suffering, is that we FEEL God no longer loves us. When we suffer bodily our flesh says, "See, God does not love you at all, see how you suffer?" But when we suffer, does God want our faith to rest upon our feelings or should our faith rest upon God's

Word? Shouldn't faith rest upon the promises of God in spite of our feelings? For God's Word says, "We shall through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God." Here then is what we ought to do.....when we suffer in our body as children of God often do. We ought to say to our sinful flesh, "Though I feel terrible, weak, and heavily burdened, though my body suffers so, my Lord Jesus teaches me this is a light affliction, and it is a sign of His love. I will therefore trust in God's Word, and not my own feelings or emotions which often deceive me. Christ Jesus is my Rock, my fortress, and my salvation.....He is the very Son of God who has justified me before my heavenly Father. And His Word, His Gospel Word tells me all my sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake. Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. Therefore if God permits me to suffer in my body, so be it, it must be for my own good! By His grace, I am still His sheep, His lamb, and I will accept this affliction as a sign of His fatherly love."

God, out of love, often grants us wounds in our bodies in order to strengthen the faith of our soul. When we suffer in our bodies, we ought to think of God's answer to the apostle Paul, who also suffered in his body. Paul's heavenly Father said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." It is often God's desire to teach us that the healing of our body is of secondary importance to the healing of our soul.

II. The name of Jesus heals the wounded soul. Thanks be to God, there is perfect healing for our soul, through the wounds of Jesus Christ, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." It is by His stripes we are healed, by His wounds of the cross that the wounds of our soul are healed. By His name alone there is perfect healing, nothing wanting, nothing hurting.

In the case of the lame man in our lesson today, we see that Jesus healed both body and soul. Let us first consider the body. When the beggar looked upon Peter and John, expecting to receive money, Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted *him* up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength." A great and wondrous miracle had been performed! By the power of God, by the name of Jesus Christ, the poor and frail and helpless body of the man was healed! By the power of God the lame could now walk! The lame was no longer lame! "He leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God." Not only did he walk, he was leaping and jumping around joyfully like a child! He entered the temple and thanked God, and came out again holding and hugging Peter and John before the eyes of the people! His happiness and excitement could not be contained! He praised God from whom all blessings flow!

Brethren, do you see yourself in this picture! Do you see the spiritual healing of your soul? Just as the lame man's body was healed by the name of Jesus Christ, so is the healing of our soul! For it is not by the power of man that our soul is healed! It was not the name of Peter and John which healed the lame man, but the name Jesus of Nazareth! Peter said, "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" Man does not have the power to heal the body or soul. Neither Peter nor John had any righteousness of their own, nor do we have any righteousness of our own! But there is one name, there is one God-man who has perfect righteousness, well able to heal, namely Jesus Christ THE RIGHTEOUS! "His name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

Here then is how we obtain salvation, by faith in HIS NAME! The lame man who was healed already had faith before he was healed. Though his body lay wounded on the ground without strength to walk, his soul within trusted in the name of Jesus Christ. So though his body was wounded, his soul had already been healed by Christ. And now Christ, and the holy name of Jesus Christ, granted healing also to his body. Jesus healed both the body and soul of this lame man. "His name, through faith in His name, hath made this man strong." Dearly beloved, whatever the condition of your outward body, isn't it the name of Jesus Christ which makes you strong? Indeed if we but have faith in His remission of sins, isn't our soul healthy and strong! When you see the glorious picture of the lame man who rises and stands up, walking and leaping and praising God, please see and understand this is a picture of you, the believer, the child of God. What does it matter if outwardly our bodies suffer? What does it matter of outwardly we are even made lame and unable to walk? Inwardly, by the grace of God, there is perfect soundness in our soul which is clothed and covered with the righteousness of Christ! It is the name of Christ that heals the wounded spirit! By faith in His name indeed were are made whole, and perfect and righteous in God's eyes! Though our outward man perish, our inward man is renewed day by day! "He makes our sorrowing spirit sing." He is the "light of my soul, my joy my crown." "He makes the wounded spirit whole." May our gracious God renew, strengthen, and heal the wounded souls of all here gathered today. His grace grants perfect healing. Though we are but lame and wounded men outwardly, inwardly we are walking and leaping and praising God. Amen.