

# THE ANATOMY OF HEALING

## Does Jesus Heal Today?

Genesis 2:7; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

February 24, 2002

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Twenty-three years ago, Norman Cousins, wrote a book called *Anatomy of an Illness*. Cousins was the editor of *The Saturday Review*. In the early 1960s he suffered from a serious degenerative disease. His book recounted his negative reaction to some of the conventional medical treatments and his unorthodox journey back to health. His path included lots of laughter and fun mixed with a healthy diet, a healthy attitude and healthy actions. While parts of the medical community embraced his story, others remained skeptical questioning his original diagnosis among other things. What Cousins' book and experience did was open a wider discussion of what impacts our health and what impacts our healing. Although some strict materialists may believe that human beings are simply biological machines, most people acknowledge that we are more than dust in motion.

In the past two decades, many doctors have been frustrated because they realize that they are treating symptoms rather than illnesses. They surgically remove parts, medicate systems and treat organs of the body, but they can't effectively address the causes that affect those parts, systems and organs. They see how attitudes and lifestyles depress the immune system, raise blood pressure, clog arteries, create ulcers, produce arthritis and so on. They see people dripping in tension and stress. They observe the

torture in patients' eyes and voices. They know that whatever is affecting those souls are also affecting the bodies, yet they lack the time and tools to truly see their patients cured.

Cousins' book stirred discussion, and discussion is necessary because the anatomy of humanity is more complex than what some people will admit. In the account of creation, God formed Adam from the ground. He was biological. He was a carbon-based creature. In Genesis 2:7 Adam's form came from the ground, but God breathed the breath of life into him and he became a living soul. In other words, Adam is related to all other creatures in form or in body. He is physically related. However, he is different in that God breathed his own breath or spiritual nature into him. Elihu, the young companion of Job, declared that it is this spirit in a person, this breath of God that gives each person understanding (Job 32:8). King Solomon wrote that the spirit of a person is the lamp of God. It is the instrument of God within our bodies that exposes our hidden selves (Proverbs 20:27). In other words, human beings are more than biology. We are spiritual and we are physical. We are souls and we are bodies. We are a unity of the two. The Apostle Paul inferred that as he blessed the Thessalonians:

***May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*** (1 Thessalonians 5:23, NIV)

Paul prayed that the believers may be made utterly holy, through and through. He prayed that the spirit, soul and body be kept blameless. Some might argue that Paul sees us as three parts, but Jewish believers focused on two. The term *spirit* emphasized our connection with God, but was not considered to be a separate entity from the soul.

Whatever the case, the Bible emphasizes that we are a unity, not various parts. In the

Bible people sin, not just the soul. In the Bible men and women die, not just bodies. In the Bible people get sick, not some aspect of them.

One day Jesus was teaching in a home. Four men climbed up on a roof with their paralyzed friend. They made a hole in the roof and let the man down. There was Jesus teaching and all of the sudden a stretcher was dangling above him. Can you imagine Jesus? He's talking and then he notices that his listeners are looking up. He stops, looks up and watches the stretcher descend. I can see a smirk develop. It had to be comical. Can you imagine the jokes flying with the homeowner? I'm sure Hebrew humor was different than ours, but I can think of some English puns. I can see someone point up at the ceiling and say: "Holy!" When the paralyzed man on the stretcher reached the floor, Jesus' attention turned to him. This incident is recorded in Matthew 9:1-8, Mark 2:1-12 and Luke 5:17-26. The Bible says that when Jesus saw the faith of this man's friends, he said, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Why did Jesus do that?

We know nothing of the history of this man? We don't know if a muscle disease, a nerve disease or some kind of accident paralyzed him, but we do know that Jesus addressed his guilt. Jesus was not making a point to the crowd. He was making a point to the man. Only after Jesus spoke of forgiveness did he become aware of what the others were thinking and then discussed what authority is necessary to forgive and heal. Jesus was saying that the authority is the same. "What is easier to say," he asked, "'Your sins are forgiven' or 'Get up and walk!'"? Isn't it easier and lower risk to say, "Your sins are forgiven"? Who can tell what happened? However, when you tell a paralytic to get up and walk, the whole world learns whether you have that authority or whether you are a fraud. "So you can know what authority I have," Jesus said, "watch." He turned to the

paralyzed man and said, "Get up and walk," and the man did just that. He got up and began walking.

The point for the crowd was Jesus' authority to forgive sins, but the point for the man was that his problem was guilt. Some how guilt and the paralysis were related.

That is not unusual. Often, guilt, bitterness, long-term anger or fear impede the healing process, depress the immune system or directly lead to some illness.

Some years ago a woman suffering from chronic stomach disorders and arthritis sought prayer for healing from her pastor. As the pastor began praying, he received the insight that she was bitter. He asked her if she was feeling hostility, anger or bitterness toward someone. He then felt led to ask if she was feeling that way toward a sister. The woman stiffened up and said, "No, I haven't seen my sister for sixteen years." The pastor pressed, "Are you sure you aren't upset with her?" The woman admitted, "Years ago, my sister married a man I loved, then later divorced him. I cannot forgive her for that." The pastor challenged her. "If you don't," he said, "'your bones will waste away,' just as David complained his did when he kept silent about his sin of adultery with Bathsheba." The woman agreed to write her sister a letter forgiving her and asking to renew their relationship. She did so immediately but failed to mail it for several weeks. In those weeks her health deteriorated to the point that she felt she was going to die. Then she remembered the letter and somehow summoned the strength to drive to the post office and mail it. The moment she dropped the letter in the mailbox she felt immediate relief, and by the time she arrived home she was healed completely of her condition.

The soul and body are a unity. When there is disruption in one part, there are difficulties with the other part. When the soul is sickened by sin, the body eventually

follows. Likewise, when the body is attacked with injury or illness, the soul is affected. People get depressed from illness and injury. They feel distant from God. Anxiety grows. Problems multiply. The tempter hits us when we are weak. He attacks our bodies and works on our souls. God's liberation encompasses soul and body, and since we are a unity, ministry to our bodies affects our souls, and ministry to our souls affects our bodies.

The Bible teaches the interrelationship between body and soul. Scriptures see strength drawn from joyfulness and guilt sapping energy. Solomon wrote:

***A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.*** (Proverbs 14:30)

All throughout Scripture, there is this interrelationship. In the gospels, an unclean spirit robs a young boy of his hearing and speech (Mark 9:25-27). Another spirit causes a woman to walk bent over for eighteen years (Luke 13:11). The oppression of the soul has biological consequences, but so does the liberation of the soul.

One day a man limped into my church with a badly injured ankle. He had witnessed some of the incredible healings we were experiencing, and he was reluctant to go to the doctor. He was afraid that it would show a lack of faith. His reluctance seemed so shortsighted and foolish. God is the author of reason and wisdom. Why wouldn't we go to his children who have developed medical understanding? Why wouldn't we return again and again if we don't get relief? At the same time, why are so many hesitant to go again and again as needed to Jesus and his body the church for prayer and healing? Isn't our reluctance to seek healing through the ministry of believers just as foolish, just as shortsighted and just as dangerous? Jesus won't just address your symptoms and your condition. He will heal you as a person. That's what we all need.