

Jesus and Physical Problems

Does Jesus Heal Today?

Mark 8:22-25

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Wesley J. Gabel

Bethany Church

Several years ago, my secretary was sick and not improving. Despite medication, she suffered fever, exhaustion and aches. I don't remember all the symptoms. She was in the office because of pressing work. I wanted her to go home, but she was in the middle of a task and would not leave. If I remember correctly, she asked me to pray. I don't think I offered. If I did, it was only as a courtesy. It is the polite thing to do. It is polite and appropriate for ministers to pray for their coworkers when they're sick and hurting. We had worked together many years. She had been in my healing classes and so she had faith. I didn't. I preferred to pray for people with high blood pressure, ulcers, or hearing loss rather than the flu because I had better results with them. I may have even delayed praying for her. Eventually, I placed my hands on her and prayed for her while she sat in front of the church computer. When I pray, I often ask people how they feel after prayer. I do so, so that I get a better grasp on what God is doing and what I need to do. This time, I didn't ask because I assumed nothing happened. My secretary, however, gave me an evaluation. "I feel better," she said. "You better get home as soon as you can," I responded. She did not follow that advice. She stayed all day. Two years later at a special service where we invited testimonials of healing, she got up and shared about

that day. She said that the moment I prayed for her, the fever left, the aches stopped, her energy returned, and there was no relapse. For two years I assumed nothing unusual happened, not realizing what unfolded in front of my very eyes.

That kind of skepticism and unbelief hampers a lot of us. Indeed, the disciplines of medicine and psychiatry have no role or use for Jesus, and if we fully embrace those perspectives, we expect a pretty limited ministry from Jesus. Talk about Jesus as physician, and we think of souls. Talk about divine healing, and we think of spirit and emotions. Last week we considered how human beings are a unity of body and soul. Did you know that the word “psychosomatic” is the combination of two Greek terms *psyche* meaning soul and *soma* meaning body? Some research indicates that as much as eighty percent of human illness and suffering is psychosomatic. Eighty percent of physical ailments and pain are routed in maladies of the soul. It is much easier for us Western materialists to believe that faith in Jesus can bring healing to that kind of malady. Healing of strictly physical problems is harder for us to believe. That is why so many of us hesitate to share our physical needs and complaints with other believers. We think of Jesus as physician of the soul and by extension occasionally physician to the body, but we seldom turn to Jesus with any persistence when it comes to purely physical problems. We may ask for prayers, but we rarely seek and embrace the continuation of Christ’s healing ministry through other believers. If little happens when a team prays with us, we don’t go back to them like we would a doctor. We struggle to believe what the Bible teaches, that God heals through the ministry of believers spiritual *and physical problems*.

In the eighth chapter of Mark, some people brought a blind man to Jesus. He took the man away from his village, and then put his own spit on the man’s eyes. After laying

hands on the man, Jesus began to evaluate. He asked, "Do you see anything?" The man could see light, but his vision was blurred and unfocused. Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes again and his vision was fully restored. Was this blindness psychosomatic? Do you really think that the power of suggestion or some inner healing restored the man's vision when he was anointed with spit? I don't think that's likely. It is even more unlikely for a man who was born blind in the ninth chapter of John. Jesus made mud packs with his spit, applied them to the eyes, and the man went to a pool and washed. There his sight was restored. How can one suggest that blindness from birth is psychosomatic? Indeed, the discussion about this healing was that this man was blind from birth. In Luke 17, ten lepers were restored from leprosy in just a few minutes. How could the power of suggestion or any inner healing account for that? In the seventh chapter of Luke, Jesus enters a village called Nain when there is a funeral procession. Jesus touches the coffin and commands, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" The man sits up in the coffin and starts talking. Could that be psychosomatic? In the eleventh chapter of John, Lazarus is dead for three days and lying in a tomb. When Jesus says, "Lazarus, come out," he does. That is not psychosomatic. That is not the power of suggestion or some inner healing. Neither is it in Acts 3 when Peter and John healed a man who was crippled from birth, or when Peter commanded a dead woman named Tabatha to get up in Acts 9, or when a young man fell to his death from a perch three stories high and was returned to his parents alive by the Apostle Paul.

The authority that Jesus had and shared with his disciples was not merely spiritual. Why would it be limited to the spiritual if God created the heavens and the earth? Indeed, that authority extended to nature when Jesus stopped a storm, withered a

tree and multiplied food. We in the west may have difficulty believing that Jesus heals physical problems, but the biblical record is clear. The authority that came with him, the kingdom that came with him liberates people physically. One day, when he returns, that liberation will be complete. But now it is an ongoing war.

There is a parallel to our situation in World War II. Historians believe that the decisive moment in that war was the successful invasion of the European continent on D-Day, June 6, 1944. That is when liberation began. It took 11 more months to secure the final victory in Europe. Those months saw the most intense fighting and the greatest number of casualties. They occurred as allied forces liberated farms, village and cities. Were any of them completely secure? No, there were setbacks. That struggle reveals our struggle. We are in an intense time, a time when Jesus and we, his disciples, are employed in liberating humanity from forces of evil that occupy our world. That means we attack every hold they have on humanity, including body and soul. Physical healing is part of our divine mission.

In our Scripture lesson today, Jesus led the blind man out of the village Bethsaida to heal him. Why did he go to that trouble? After the healing Jesus warned the man not to go back there. Why? The greatest hindrance Jesus faced was the opposition that flowed from unbelief. Unbelief brought accusations, arguments, persecution and paralysis. It hindered people from seeking healing and it halted Jesus and his disciples in their ministry of healing. Unbelief caused Bethsaida not to welcome Jesus' ministry. Unbelief makes us fear, avoid and even oppose Jesus' ministry too. Are we a people where Jesus and his ministry are welcome? Do we act in faith or are we hindered by unbelief? Is there a Bethsaida hindering you from fully embracing Jesus?