

Why do people get sick?

Healing Then & Now:

Luke 5:17-26

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One day during a pastoral prayer, a woman fidgeted in the pew. Her back pain was intense. No adjustment to her position offered relief. She was about to stand up and leave when I asked each worshiper to reach out, touch the person next to him or her, and ask God to personally bless them. The man sitting next to her put his hand on her, and it immediately gravitated to the spot on her back where the hot, fiery pain was most intense. As I allowed a few quiet moments for individuals to pray silently and as I prayed aloud, she felt a coolness enter her back. The inflammation left, her muscles relaxed and the back pain retreated. She later told me that her chiropractor was impressed.

When I told a clergy friend what happened, he “psychologized” it. He had difficulty believing that such raw, divine power could be experienced today, especially when one so human as me was leading the service. I could not imagine why he would think that way if he believed what Jesus said after Judas left the Last Supper. According to John’s Gospel, Jesus said:

Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.
(John 14:11-13, NIV)

As I read this statement by Jesus, I see at least two important truths. *First, Jesus expected his disciples to see his miracles and understand that God the Father was in Jesus working.*

Second, he expected anyone who has faith in him – the preacher, the mechanic, the farmer, the housewife, the secretary, the retiree – to perform the miracles he had been doing and do even greater miracles. Is it clear to you that Jesus expected this? Although Jesus walked on water, silenced a storm and multiplied food, his most frequent miracles were healings. **Is it clear to you that Jesus expected his healing ministry to continue, expand and become even more dramatic with his followers?**

Some people might think that the gift of medicine is the fulfillment of Jesus' expectation. However, Jesus expected that anyone who has faith in him would do greater things than he, not just people who go to medical school. Jesus also understood that people would use his name and give him opportunity to bring glory to his Father. He taught that the name *Jesus* would be key to the answer, and the result would expressly honor God.

Now, I have not yet matched or exceeded Jesus' results in miracles and healing. This is not a statement of humility, but of fact. If in Jesus' name, I performed greater works, it would bring him and our heavenly Father glory. It would not make me special. I would simply illustrate his promise: "*anyone who has faith in me*" will do this.

I believe that there are two reasons why I haven't matched or exceeded Jesus' in healing miracles: (1) my unbelief and (2) my lack of understanding. Similarly, there are two reasons why I have experienced some success in healing ministry: my faith and my understanding. The Scriptures make it clear that we are to grow "*from faith to faith*" (Romans 1:17) and be guided by the Holy Spirit "*into all truth*" (John 16:13). We are to grow up into Christ "*in all things*" (Ephesians 4:15), "*attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ*" (Ephesians 4:13).

Now, isn't it a sin that I don't fully believe Jesus' words? Can I admit some people may *remain sick or injured* because of my unbelief and my resulting ignorance? If some people

remain sick because we Christians don't fully believe Jesus' words, why do people get sick in the first place? Jesus revealed that reason in the healing event described in our Scripture lesson.

One day the power of the Lord was present for Jesus to heal. Some men brought their paralytic friend to Jesus, by making a hole in the roof of a house and lowering him down to Jesus. Jesus saw all this and spoke to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven." Jesus didn't mention what the sins were. The paralytic didn't confess them. Jesus chose to forgive them. The religious elite came unglued. How could a mere man forgive sins? Jesus asked them whether it was easier to declare sins forgiven or tell the paralytic to get up and walk. I suspect that most of his audience had forgiven someone at some time, but how many had ever made a paralytic walk? Jesus concluded:

That you may know the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sin... Get up, take up your mat and go home. (Luke 5:24, NIV)

Jesus associated the instantaneous healing of the paralytic with the forgiveness of sins. This doesn't mean that all sickness comes from our own personal sin. I've prayed for children suffering fetal-alcohol syndrome from their mothers' drinking. I've prayed for a 21-year-old girl crippled by a drunk driver. Our soldiers suffer harm because of the sins of nations. We all suffer from the curse of death and its work because of Adam's sin. However, the curse grips our lives in different ways: through personal sins, family sins, neighborhood sins, national sins, and international sins. Scripture reveals that food we eat can be defiled. The land we live on can be defiled. However, when Jesus ascended into heaven, he sat down at the right hand of God to advocate for us. Why? The devil gets permission to attack us with sickness and misfortune through sins. Innocent Job, for example, would have never been attacked if Satan had not pointed to sinful tendencies in humans. Jesus, however, can intervene because he paid for our

sins. He desires to apply his work to our situation. As the earthly body for his Spirit, we express his forgiveness and healing. According to Jesus, what we bind on earth is bound in heaven. What we loose on earth is loosed in heaven. What we forgive is forgiven. What we do not forgive continues to bring suffering and judgment.

Why do we get sick? The curse of sin and judgment! What did Jesus do? He died for our sins that the judgment might be removed and the works of the devil destroyed. As Jesus overrules the claim of evil, people are released from their bondage to sin and its consequences. Thus in the gospels and the book of Acts, Jesus and his followers loose or free people from the evil one's grasp on their health, their provision, and their circumstances. Peter summarized it for the Gentile Cornelius and his household:

You know what has happened... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him. (Acts 10:37-38, NIV)

Jesus called his followers to implement everything he taught. He gave his Spirit to repentant believers so that the gracious rule of God (his kingdom) would evict the harsh rule of evil. Are you ready to see God's kingdom come and evict the harsh rule of evil today? Are you ready to experience divine healing and be an instrument for it to happen to others?

TODAY'S PROCEDURE:

- 1. Address fear (Sin-sickness statement) & environment of love and faith**
- 2. Corporate Confession**
 - a. Our unbelief and resulting ignorance**
 - b. Release of new faith and fresh understanding**
- 3. Corporate Healing**
 - a. Pray for neighbor**
 - b. Invite Spirit to impart name and subject**
- 4. Corporate Reporting**
- 5. Personal Ministry of Healing**