

12/29/24 Christ Fellowship

“Will God Heal Me?” – 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

I want to ask a question but please don't respond out loud this time. If you could go back to Israel some 2000-plus years ago when Jesus was walking physically on this earth and healing hundreds or thousands of people and you had His attention, for what kind of healing would you ask? For some of you, that is probably an easy question. Maybe you have cancer or some other disease and you would ask Jesus to heal that in you. Maybe, though, you don't have a disease but you might ask for better eyesight or relief for your aching back or for more hair or a slimmer body. Hmm...wonder why those came to my mind. Anyway...

The very first time I ever preached was at a nursing home. My sister was there to play the piano and we sang a few songs and then I asked for prayer requests. Now, let me just warn you that if you ask for prayer requests in a nursing home, prepare to be there for a while. Everybody had some issue, some problem that needed to be healed and also, they don't mind telling you every detail, no matter how personal or embarrassing. Just be warned.

But if you could ask Jesus for just one thing to be healed, what would you ask for? And then, what do you think He would say to your request? All through the gospels we read that Jesus healed person after person and I don't know of any time that He ever told the person no. He healed everybody that asked. Some He healed by speaking the words or by making mud or by putting His hands on them or any number of other ways. One lady even got healed by just touching the hem of His garment. So, obviously, it wasn't a difficult thing for Jesus to do.

So, that obviously begs the question, “*Why doesn't He heal you today?*” I know you have prayed about it. Did He use up all His power back in the day? Did He just love the Israelites and doesn't love you? Are you not good enough? Is your faith not strong enough? Are you not praying correctly? Is He giving up on this generation? Maybe He is just mad at you for some sin you committed. Maybe...He just doesn't care.

Before we go any further, let me make clear what I mean by “heal”. I understand that when we, as believers, get to Heaven there will be no more disease; no more sorrow, no more tears, no more cancer or heart disease or high blood pressure. There's not even going to be toe fungus in Heaven. No more problems, no more tears. I'm not talking about being healed by dying and going to Heaven. I want to know because you want to know, is God going to heal my physical body? Is He going to heal my mind; my depression; my anxiety

and if not, then why? Because He used to do it and He still does it for some people. Why not me? Don't try to tell me you haven't thought about it.

To start us off answering as many of those questions as we can, I invite you to turn to **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**. I'm no expert on the subject but I have scripture and I have some good commentaries that help me understand the scriptures and that's all I really need. I have supplemented that with some other books but ultimately, we will see what scripture has to say about our healing.

Now, when I asked earlier what you would ask Jesus to heal you of, how many of you thought you would ask Jesus to heal you of your pride, your lying, gossiping or lusting? Probably not many. Asking God to heal you of your sin is not a very popular prayer. But what do you think God is more concerned with, your comfort or your sin? Do you think God would be more inclined to heal your diseased body or your diseased heart and mind?

In **2 Corinthians chapter 12**, Paul expresses that God is more concerned with the inner character than the outer comfort. In the verses prior to this, Paul tells of being transported to Heaven and seeing and hearing things that he was not allowed to tell. He must have seen things that we couldn't even understand; wonderful, beautiful things like we will see when we get to Heaven.

Now, just think about what would happen to you if you had been shown such things like no man on the planet has ever seen before. We don't know why or how or when but God chose to reveal some things to Paul that He has never revealed to anybody else. What would be the almost inevitable result? Pride. God knew that seeing such things would be more than any man could handle without becoming proud. So, what does God do? Let's read it in **verses 7-10 of 2 Corinthians 12**.

Because of these surpassingly great revelations, therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Now, there are some things we know about this situation of Paul's and some things we don't know and that could actually be said for the subject of divine healing itself. We know that God can heal. We have seen it even in this church but we have also prayed for some

people to be healed and God has chosen not to. Did we not say the right words? Did we catch God on a bad day? Or...is He just sovereign and chooses to heal who and when He wants?

The absolute wrong way to interpret scripture is to read somewhere that God healed somebody of something in some way and to say that because God healed them, He has to heal you. Or to say, like in Paul's case, that God didn't heal him, so He won't heal you. God doesn't work that way. It's sort of like what Belinda told me one time about trying to make a toddler go to sleep. What works one day, doesn't work the next. I'm not comparing God to a fussy toddler. I'm saying don't try to make God do anything or try to put Him in a box that says because you did it this way, you have to always do it that way.

God tells us in **Hebrews 4:16** to *“approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”* We know that God loves us and protects and provides for us and wants to help us and we know that prayer works but Paul prayed three times for this thorn to be removed and God chose not to remove it.

Now, one of the things we don't know is what this thorn in Paul's flesh really was. He said he was given a thorn, a messenger of Satan, to torment him. That word “thorn” in the original Greek is “skolops” and could mean anything from a small piece of what we would call a sticker or a slice of wood all the way up to something that would impale the body like a spear or javelin. There is no end of the speculations as to what Paul was referring to here. I have dozens of commentaries on this and it was fascinating to read what some thought it may be that was afflicting Paul.

Some say it was his eyesight or back problems or any number of diseases. Some say it was a sin issue, maybe lust or something else. But most agreed that they didn't know and I agree with those that say it doesn't matter. In fact, I'm glad we don't know because almost all of us can now relate to what Paul is saying because almost all of us have some thorny issue or problem in our lives that we wish wasn't there.

The apostle acknowledges that the thorn in the flesh ultimately was given to him from God just like God did with Job in the first two chapters of that book. (MacArthur page 400) Yes, it was a messenger of Satan and “messenger” could be translated as an angel or a demon. Well, we know it had to be a demon and so we see that God can and will use even Satan and his demons to accomplish God's will and it was God's will that Paul have this thorn. This is not saying that Paul was possessed by a demon but he was tormented or buffeted by it.

We have talked lots of times about how, whether you want to believe it or not, God can and will cause bad things to happen to accomplish His will. Sometimes He just allows them to happen. Sometimes He uses the consequences of our sin. Sometimes it is His idea and He uses things we can't imagine or don't want to imagine like God did with Paul in this passage.

God is sovereign over EVERYTHING, even Satan and the other forces of evil and sometimes He uses them as a tool to accomplish His will and sometimes it is God's will that we suffer. In **Acts chapter 9**, we see the story of Paul's conversion back when he was still Saul. In **verses 15-16** God tells Ananias to go get Saul because *"I will show him how much he must suffer for My name."*

Now, I thought God was love and if God is love then how could it be His will that we suffer? Well, I did some research – I googled it – and I found some fascinating scriptures. All I did was google "God wants you to prosper" and I was rewarded with thousands of websites to prove that point.

I'll stick with just the scriptures they used to "prove" that God wants you to prosper, not just spiritually but materially as well.

Psalm 35:27 says, God *"hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant."*

Psalm 84:11 *"No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly."*

John 10:10 *"My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life."*

2 Cor. 8:9 *"though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."*

Now, for the so-called ministers and preachers, the apostles and bishops and expositors and whatever other title they want to give themselves as they twist God's Word to "prove" that God wants you to be healthy and wealthy, especially if you tithe to their church, I wish they could have met my friend Paul here! What do you think Paul would tell this old boy who says that God wants your bills paid and for you to be healed of all your infirmities?

Does God still heal? Absolutely! Will He heal you? I don't know. Oh, my word! I said it. I said the words no preacher, no speaker, no minister is ever supposed to say if he ever wants to pastor a mega-church or have a mega-audience. Well, I don't care and I would rather preach the full council of God to twenty people who want to hear it until Jesus comes than to a thousand that want their ears tickled.

If God will heal you if you say the right words and have enough faith then why didn't God heal Paul? If words can heal then why didn't Paul say them? Why didn't God heal nearly all of the apostles who were martyred for Jesus? And speaking of Jesus, what about Him? No home, no money, and murdered on a cross even after He prayed that God the Father would take this cup from Him. And did you notice that when Jesus stopped doing miracles and stopped healing and stopped providing the crowds with food that the crowds left?

I know this is not a popular teaching. It never has been. It wasn't popular when Jesus and Paul preached it and it's not popular today. But it is truth. God can heal but there is nothing you can say or do that will force him to do it. You can't manipulate Him with words or prayers or fancy dances or by giving gifts.

Do you ever get those things in the mail from something like the Publishers Clearinghouse that say you can win a brazillion dollars and all you have to do is buy a magazine subscription? But if you look at the fine print it says that your odds of winning are not affected by buying anything. Well, I'm always skeptical of those things. I always think there is somebody at the home office that opens that mail, sees you are not buying anything and throws your entry in the trash.

Well, God is not that way. Donating to the church won't get you healed. I know. That's another crazy thing for a preacher to say. How are we ever going to raise enough money for that church Lear jet? But God never promises to heal you, no matter what you do or say or give. Do you know what He will do though? Look at **verse 9** again. *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you..."*

Grace. What is grace? Webster basically says that grace is not getting what you deserve. We are saved by God's grace. We deserve hell but our belief in God through His Son Jesus means we get grace to go to Heaven. But what did God mean when He told Paul that His grace was sufficient. Was He saying, "No, Paul. I'm not going to heal you but I will give you just enough to make it through this without giving up?" No, that would be helpful but that doesn't do grace the justice it deserves. (No play on words intended there.)

Romans 8:35-37 says, *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37No, in all these things we are **more than conquerors** through him who loved us."*

Grace is not just being able to get through sickness or hardship. It's not just being able to conquer it. It is being more than conquerors. Being more than a conqueror means that like

Paul, our affliction actually stops being our master and starts becoming our slave, actually working for our good and for the good of God's Kingdom. But surely that's only for Mr. or Mrs. Superchristian, right? Maybe Paul was able to pull that off but surely not you.

Some of you may remember praying for my friend Robert Miller several years ago. Robert was a dear friend of mine and he was diagnosed with a brain tumor. There were churches all over the country and actually all over the world praying for Robert including this one. He was a godly man and had a beautiful, loving wife and a couple of kids that thought he hung the moon and he was just fun to be around, even after his diagnosis.

I remember every time I called him or he called me or every time I saw him, he would always ask me, *"How can I pray for you?"* That became his thing and it wasn't fake. He sincerely wanted to know how he could lift me up in prayer and then he would do it right then over the phone or in his driveway, wherever we were. But then as his tumor got bigger, Robert was able to meet more and more people.

He met a lot of doctors and nurses but he also met people in the community who heard about his struggle and would start being his friend on Facebook or go see him in the hospital. He even met some semi celebrities as his case became more popular. And what do you think Robert would ask every single one of them? *"How can I pray for you?"* And what are these people going to tell a dying man? *"Oh, I'm not interested in what you have to say. I don't think prayer works. There's no God."* If nothing else they would listen politely because he was a dying man.

Because Robert had a brain tumor, he got to witness to and pray for probably hundreds of people that he never would have had the chance to even meet otherwise and because he did, God blessed him to the very end with His grace. But there was an end for Robert and there will be an end for you unless Jesus raptures us before then. We are all going to die. Something is going to get you. If God does heal you today, you are still going to die of something else someday soon. I don't say that to be a bummer. I say that to encourage you to be more than a conqueror in this life. Death will conquer you someday somehow. It does everybody. Our goal shouldn't be to be a conqueror over death necessarily but instead to be more than a conqueror in this life.

Look at **verse 9** again. Paul says that God told him that *my grace is sufficient for my power is made perfect in weakness.* *Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.* "

I read somewhere this week, *“What a happy people God’s people ought to be, when a curse becomes to them a blessing! If the thorn be a blessing, what must the blessing itself be?”* There is, of course, nothing wrong with praying and asking God to heal you. You should and we do that around here all the time and often God is merciful and gives that healing but as the three Hebrew boys said (and we like to paraphrase often around here) *“We know God can and we know God will but even if He doesn’t, still we will praise Him!”*

We will praise Him because he deserves it and because He is worthy and because hopefully we know that sometimes God allows us to continue in our suffering, not because He is doing something *to us* but because He is doing something *for us* and *through us*. And what He is doing is showing us His boundless, unmerited grace; grace that does more than just barely get us through but actually allows us to be more than conquerors with blessings pressed down, shaken together and running over.

We can all do that; we can all have that because of our faith. Not faith in ourselves or in medicine or doctors, even though those are blessings from God. But our faith is in our Savior, our Healer, our Lord, Jesus Christ. In the next chapter, **chapter 13 of 2 Corinthians**, Paul tells the church in Corinth to *“examine yourselves to see if you are in the faith.”*

Music

“Examine yourselves” to see if you truly are a believer, a follower, a disciple of Jesus. It’s not about being a follower of Paul. It’s not about being a Baptist or Methodist. It’s not about being baptized or tithing or teaching Sunday School. Examine yourself and see if your life has changed since you have met Jesus. It won’t always be easy. In fact, you may have to suffer for the name of Jesus but it will be worth it. It will be worth it in this life because He brings peace and joy even in the difficult times, even when you suffer. But scripture says that there is an eternal life in Heaven for those who truly believe.

Ask God to forgive you of your sins. Repent of those sins and turn away from that old lifestyle and ask Jesus to be Lord of your life today. Do it right now as the music plays.