

Eternity Daily Bible Study

(A ministry of Eternity Christian Fellowship)

Walking In The Spirit - 74

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Topic: Why Isn't Everyone Healed?

Date: 18th November 2009

Yesterday's post on suffering got a response raising the 'thorn in the flesh' issue and by implication the question: 'Why isn't everyone healed'

The Thorn In The Flesh

2 Corinthians 12:1-10 LITV .. (7) *And by the superabundance of the revelations, that I not be made arrogant, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan, that he might buffet me, that I not be made haughty. (8) Beyond this I entreated the Lord three times, that it depart from me. (9) And He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Therefore, I will rather gladly boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may overshadow me. (10) Because of this, I am pleased in weaknesses, in insults, in dire needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for the sake of Christ. For when I may be weak, then I am powerful.*

a) The context is one where Paul's revelations are contrasted with the 'revelations' of the false apostles, this theme runs throughout 2 Corinthians and is brought to a peak in the previous chapter (2 Corinthians 11). Just before our 'thorn in the flesh' passage Paul details his sufferings and struggles and persecutions on behalf of the gospel. He concludes chapter 11 by saying that he boasted in those weaknesses (persecutions)

b) The stated reason for the thorn in the flesh being given to Paul was because of the 'super-abundance' of the revelations given to him, in order to keep Paul from being exalted. This is a not something I (or most Christians) could claim about our illnesses. We are not apostles and we do not have a 'super-abundance' of revelations from the Third Heaven.

c) The phrase 'thorn in the flesh' is a Greek idiom like our expression 'a right pain in the neck' - and it refers to people, not to illnesses. The Bible refers to people who are opponents of God's people and the gospel as 'thorns' in the following verses: Numbers 33:55, Joshua 23:13, Judges 2:3, Psalms 118:12, Ezekiel 2:6, also unjust judges are called thorns in Micah 7:4 the wicked are called thorns in 2 Samuel 23:6 as i apostate Israel at its peak of wickedness in Isaiah 33:10-14

d) The 'thorn in the flesh' is described as a messenger ("angelos") of Satan, literally 'an angel of Satan'. Of the 188 uses of the Greek word "angelos" in the Bible, 181 refer to angels and seven to messengers. In all these cases "angelos" refers to 'beings' (human or divine) and not to objects or diseases. We cannot change the meaning of the word on this one occasion.

The "angelos" may have been a high level demonic opponent or a human being who was driven by Satan to oppose Paul at every turn (e.g. Alexander the coppersmith – 2 Timothy 4:14).

e) The result of the 'thorn in the flesh' is not sickness but 'buffeting' (2 Corinthians 12:7) the word means 'to hit with the fist' and indicates physical beatings, trouble or harassment– that is physical blows of some sort. The outcomes include: *weaknesses, in insults, in dire needs, in persecutions, in distresses*. It accords well with Paul's imprisonments, beatings, stonings and so forth because of trouble stirred up by his various opponents.

f) Paul asks for 'removal' and not for healing. We ask for trials and circumstances to be removed and illnesses to be healed. Paul is asking for a change in circumstances of some sort. The word remove is 'aposte' (from which we get 'apostate' and it means 'one who turns away'. Paul is asking God to make the person turn away from harassing him. It is 3rd person singular active subjunctive 'that he might be removed from me'.

g) The word for weakness in 2 Corinthians 12 is used just a few verses earlier (2 Corinthians 11:30) to summarize all of Paul's various trials in ministry (2 Corinthians 11:23-33) – and all of the weaknesses Paul lists are beatings, persecutions and narrow escapes from danger. In fact if 2 Corinthians 11:23 – 12:10 is considered as one passage / theme then it makes a whole lot more sense (we find the same themes of boasting, weakness and persecution in these adjacent verses). Also the particular lexical form of the word for weakness used in 2 Cor. 11:30, 12:9 and 12:10 is the same: "astheneiais" and this tends to mean 'vulnerability' or "stumbling" rather than actual physical sickness. Sickness is generally rendered by the alternative form "asthenes" .

h)The reason for the 'thorn' is to keep Paul humble and useful for God. Paul was by nature ambitious and competitive. His excelling beyond his countrymen (Galatians 1) and his frequent athletic and military metaphors are evidence of this. Paul's humility would be the opposite of the swelling boastfulness of the false prophets described in the previous chapter (2 Corinthians 11). God was not allowing Paul to be an 'empire-builder' but was keeping him lowly and humble where he would be spiritually safe. The constant hindrances and frustrations and harassment kept Paul from expanding and thus getting too proud.

h) The weakness did not hinder God's power but became an avenue for grace to flow to many. Paul was going to have a powerful ministry despite the persecutions – just not a vainglorious one in the human sense. How is God's power perfected? This is key. If God's power was perfected by people being ill then Jesus should not have healed anyone. But He did heal people, and if God's will is done on earth as it is in Heaven then none would be sick (because there are none sick in Heaven). Jesus did heal illness but He did not stop persecution, nor did He promise His disciples an easy path through such persecution. God's power is perfected in us when we love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (Matthew 5:44-48).

So Paul's thorn in the flesh was a demonically inspired opponent of the gospel who arranged persecutions and hindrances at every turn and kept Paul from having a ministry that was vainglorious in the human sense but which was unable to prevent the power of God working through Paul for the salvation of many.

So Then Why Isn't Everyone Healed?

Illness, especially chronic unhealed illness is a terrible thing that deserves compassion and relief. Any loving Heavenly Father would want His children healed. So why doesn't it happen? First of all we have to realize that healing in the name of Jesus is bitterly opposed by Satan because it brings so much glory to God. Healing is a spiritual battle at every turn which may require prayer and fasting (as in the case of the epileptic boy).

The thing to remember is that God does want you to be healed. God is a loving Father who wants His will done on earth as it is in heaven – and in Heaven no one is sick. Jesus healed all who came to Him, of all their diseases. Do not think that God might want you to suffer in sickness so that you can be humbled.

God wants everyone saved from sin, delivered from demons, healed of their sicknesses and living holy and righteous lives in Christ as they declare forth the love of God. But we don't see that, because of the unholy Satanic opposition to every manifestation of faith and godliness. Just as your salvation was opposed and your sanctification is opposed and your deliverance is opposed so your healing is opposed.

Healing occurs best under an 'open Heaven' that is during revival such as the Jerusalem revival (Acts 2-5), the Samaritan revival (Acts 8) and the revival at Ephesus (Acts 19). Healing occurs least in an atmosphere of unbelief such as Jesus found at Nazareth (Matthew 13:58, Mark 6:5,6).

The secular humanist rationalist mindset of much of Western culture means that we struggle to have faith for healing. In other cultures healing is more common because it is easier for them to believe.

We also need to understand that the good things of God are far from automatic. God wills many things that do not happen on earth, or which happen far too infrequently. The spiritual, social and moral conditions of this world bear enough testimony to that! God's promises are only fulfilled through faith:

Luke 1:45 ASV *And blessed is she that believed; for there shall be a fulfillment of the things which have been spoken to her from the Lord.*

In my experience the seven things that most hinder healing are:

- 1) Lack of faith particularly in the ones praying e.g. the ministers/elders involved
- 2) Abiding sin, unforgiveness, resentments, rage and bitterness, grieving the Spirit
- 3) Hindering spirits, spiritual oppression and darkness, keeping idols, curses etc.
- 4) Avoiding disappointment by not really praying or not investing much in praying
- 5) A few people identify with their sickness and don't want to be healed
- 6) Lack of spiritual authority. The battle is not engaged fiercely enough or long enough. Command prayer is not used.
- 7) Lack of deep compassion. Healing flows when spiritual compassion flows in power.

By correcting these seven things (as much as we can) we will see more healing. We will probably not see 100% healing but we will see more healing. And that will be a good thing. Also lack of healing is also a subset of the question of unanswered prayer and I have found 18 biblical reasons for unanswered prayer and posted them in a brief online article at: <http://www.globalchristians.org/articles/unansw1.htm>

Blessings,

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