

KEEPING YOUR HEALING

an article by Praying Medic from Facebook

Because I often receive questions from people who experience healing only to have the symptoms return, I've written this note to share my observations on the issue of whether we can do anything to 'keep' our healing.

Maintaining healing is a highly controversial subject. The controversy stems from the belief by some, that it is not necessary or even possible to 'maintain' healing that comes from God. Some believers look at the bible and see no suggestion that people had to maintain their healing. From this they conclude that it's neither necessary nor possible to do it. In this note we'll look at what the bible says about whether we have a responsibility to keep our healing. I'll also share a dream I had on the subject and we'll look at some personal experiences I've had.

In the time that I've been involved in healing, I've met people who have experienced healing, only to have the symptoms return. I've also experienced this myself. So have many of my friends who are used by God to heal others. Roger Sapp, who has prayed with over 25,000 people for healing, estimates that 25% of those who are healed experience a return of symptoms in a few days. The evidence seems to indicate that losing the effects of healing is a real phenomenon, even if we don't completely understand the mechanism of it.

The Big Picture

I'd like to take a big- picture view of healing and discuss some related issues, before looking at the issue of keeping our healing. There are four different perspectives or 'wills' we must take into account if we hope to understand the things that affect our healing. The first perspective is the will of God. We know that the will of God is that we would all be healed. Jesus delivered and healed all who sought it. None were turned down. As long as they were willing to be healed, He was willing to heal them. If healing does not manifest, we should never assume that God doesn't want us healed. There are other things to consider that result in failed healing.

We must also consider the will of the enemy. Jesus said the enemy comes to steal, kill and destroy. (John 10:10) The will of the enemy toward us is sickness and death. One reason God would have us heal the sick and raise the dead is that the enemy is out to kill and destroy as many of us as possible. Opposition from the enemy is what prevented the disciples from healing the boy who had a mute and deaf spirit and suffered from epilepsy. (See Matt 17:14-17 and Mark 9:17) One of the obstacles to healing is demonic opposition that has not yet been removed. Again - if healing does not manifest, don't assume God doesn't want the person to be healed. Consider the possibility that a demon is opposing the work of healing.

Finally, we must consider the will of family and friends and we must consider the will of the sick person as well. When a loved one becomes sick, one of our natural reactions is to want them healed. Knowing we have a commission to heal the sick, some of us spring into action and begin praying and commanding them to be healed. Sometimes it happens, sometimes it doesn't.

I recently received a prayer request from a friend who desired to have a relative healed. Before

praying, I asked if they knew whether or not the sick person wanted to be healed. (She had not asked yet) The next day she wrote back, sadly informing me that this person, who is a Christian, is also a Baptist and did not believe in healing nor did he expect to be healed. I've been presumptive and tried to get people healed who likewise, did not want to be healed and as you can guess, they weren't healed. God doesn't force healing on those who will not receive it. Another obstacle to healing is the fact that not everyone wants to receive it.

Healing and Grace

I'd like to discuss healing as a part of the work of God's grace. Healing is sometimes a gradual process, like the rest of God's work in our lives. From the first day we believe in Christ as our savior, changes begin to take place inside of us. Although we are immediately given the righteousness of God, our conduct doesn't immediately become righteous. The transformation from rebellious sinner to obedient son or daughter is a process called *sanctification*. How quickly it happens is determined by our cooperation with the Spirit God as He works to change us into the heavenly image God has in mind. The more we resist the work of God's grace, the longer it takes. Over time, God's grace transforms us into the image of His Son. The Apostle Paul said that salvation is an act of God's grace:

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, not of works, that no one should boast."
(Eph. 2:8)

The word 'saved' in this verse is the Greek word *σώζω* (*sozo*), which means to save, preserve, protect, heal or make whole. This verse shows that healing is one of the ways in which God's grace operates in our lives. The work of God's grace, both in salvation and healing is a process that is being worked out as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit as Paul also told believers:

"...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." (Phil 2:12-13)

Salvation, though it is immediately available to all who desire it, takes time to be brought to fulfillment. God's desire is to bring sanctification, but His grace can be resisted by us, delaying its completion. Healing, because it is also a work of grace, can be resisted in the same way. God's grace toward us for healing is always available. We can obtain it immediately. But the changes in our body, spirit and soul can take time. God's plan for healing can be resisted by both us and by the enemy which may result in a delay or loss of our healing.

Some Christians have been taught that if we, as the ones praying, have the right kind of faith, people will not only be healed, but remain healed. They believe that a return of symptoms indicates weak faith on our part. They believe this because there is little mentioned in the bible about those who were healed having to maintain their healing, with the exception of the passage above. They see healing only as a product of their own faith and authority, which releases the power of God. They reject the idea that the sick person has any part in being healed or keeping their healing, putting all the responsibility for healing on the one who is praying.

I'd like to address the absence of biblical comments on healing, but first let's look at the absence of biblical comments on salvation, since it is more extensively covered in scripture and better

understood by most of us.

The narrative passages in scripture tell us that people were added to the church at different times. An example is when approximately 3,000 were added to the church on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:41) We know these people were 'saved'. But what isn't revealed is that all these believers who were saved on that day, would wrestle with the realities of their salvation for the rest of their lives. Some would wonder from time to time if they were really saved. Some would struggle with rebellion against God in different areas. Some may have even walked away from God before their death. The details of how their salvation was worked out is for the most part, absent.

For the same reason that many of the details of salvation are left out of the bible, the details of healing of various people is also missing. If these details would have been included, we may have read about some of the same things we're experiencing today. The absence of details concerning people who were healed by Jesus and the disciples doesn't negate the possibility that they had problems we have.

If people who were saved, did not manifest the realities of their salvation, do we conclude that the evangelist they met didn't preach the gospel with enough faith to maintain the salvation of the new converts? Of course not.

This is essentially the question we have about keeping our healing - is it right (or even biblical) to believe that when people fail to keep their healing, it's because the one who prayed with them didn't have enough faith to keep them healed?

For the same reason that it is not the responsibility of the evangelist to assure the the continued work of salvation in the believer, it not the responsibility of the healer to maintain the health of the one who is healed. The one who is healed must cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing their healing to completion.

The Dream

The dream that I had was about people who were being treated at a hospital for different diseases. As they were healed, they left the hospital and had to make a decision. They had to either leave their account with the hospital open or they had to close it. Those who kept their account open could continue discussing their disease or injury as long as they wanted to. They could return for another round of treatment and discuss the progression of the sickness with a doctor or make payment arrangements for further treatment. These people always became sick again.

The other group decided to close their account with the hospital after being healed. They were not allowed to come back for follow up appointments. They didn't talk about their disease or even think about it after being healed, except to testify once in a while about their healing. This group never again became sick once they were healed. This was the content of the dream.

The dream shows us two mindsets or two types of people and how they view and respond to healing. One mindset is focused on sickness and the process of treating it. The other mindset is focused on health and healing itself.

The bible does have a few things to say about how we might keep our healing, so let's have a look at them. There was a man who had an infirmity for 38 years who was healed at the pool of Bethesda. After he was healed, Jesus caught up with him and shared these words of warning:

“Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, “See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.” The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.” (John 5:14-15)

In looking for keys to keeping our healing, some point to the fact that Jesus told the man to sin no more, lest something worse would come upon him. This implies that sickness can be the result of sin and that healing might be maintained if we avoid sinful behavior. I can't see any reason to dispute this. Since Jesus was the one who healed this man and Jesus warned him that he might become sick again if he didn't avoid sin. The return of his symptoms would not be a result of inadequate faith on the part of Jesus. It was the man's responsibility to keep his healing and there is a similar responsibility for us today.

The Testimony

Notice that the man went to the Jews and testified about his healing. In the dream that I had, those who remained well, were those who testified about their healing. Could our testimony of healing contain a key to remaining healed?

One problem that many of us have is that we love to testify about our sickness. We complain and grumble and tell everyone we know about how bad our disease is. Some of us believe that our ability to put up with our illness proves something about our character. Much of our complaining is an attempt to gain sympathy from others. And most of us refer to our condition with terms like “my diabetes” or “my cancer”. We've seen previously that life and death are in the power of the tongue. (Proverbs 18:21) Our words are a reflection of our thoughts. Our thoughts flow from the things that we meditate on in our hearts. That which we focus on we talk about. And that which we talk about we empower. It's our tongue that holds the power of life and death and it may hold the power to keep us healed. Our words reveal that at times, we take possession of our diseases and acknowledge ownership of them. Once we take ownership of something, getting free of it can be a difficult process.

Some people I've asked to pray with have confessed that they didn't want to be healed because they would lose their disability check. Others choose to remain sick because it gives them attention and sympathy. When we use sickness to obtain something we want, we become dependant on what it provides.

Whether it brings money, attention or the opportunity to obtain pain medications, some of us are accustomed to a lifestyle of sickness. We expect to have doctor's appointments for the rest of our lives. Cal Pierce noted that our health care system is more like a disease maintenance system. It becomes the thing around which our world revolves. Some of us are so dependant on this lifestyle that we fear what life would be like without doctor visits and medications. Those who allow sickness to become their lifestyle are doomed to remain sick no matter how many times they are healed.

In the dream that I had, those who continued a lifestyle that focused on sickness always became sick again. Those who refused to talk about sickness kept their healing. Their words and the fact that they refused to focus on the sickness helped them keep their healing. I'm convinced that the key to keeping our healing is a matter of what we choose to focus on and what we talk about.

Honoring The Body of Christ

There is one more section of scripture we might examine to learn how to maintain our healing. In 1 Corinthians chapter 11, Paul addresses several things, one of which is sickness and premature death. He begins the discussion in verse 17, with an observation about the behavior of believers toward one another:

“But in the following instructions, I cannot praise you. For it sounds as if more harm than good is done when you meet together. First, I hear that there are divisions among you when you meet as a church, and to some extent I believe it. But, of course, there must be divisions among you so that you who have God’s approval will be recognized!” (1 Cor 11:17-19 NLT)

Paul continues his list of complaints against their behavior:

“When you meet together, you are not really interested in the Lord’s Supper. For some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing with others. As a result, some go hungry while others get drunk. What? Don’t you have your own homes for eating and drinking? Or do you really want to disgrace God’s church and shame the poor? What am I supposed to say? Do you want me to praise you? Well, I certainly will not praise you for this!” (Verses 20-22)

Paul then describes how the Lord passed on to him the celebration of the breaking of bread and drinking the cup in remembrance of His death. (Verses 23-26) He then adds this observation:

“27 So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. 28 That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup. 29 For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God’s judgment upon yourself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died. (Verses 27-30)

It would be easy to assume that Paul was referring to how believers viewed the Lord Jesus when he said they should honor the ‘body of Christ’ when they eat the bread and drink the cup. But I don’t believe that’s what he was referring to. In this passage, two different terms are used. He refers to “the body and blood of the Lord” in verse 27, and “the body of Christ” in verse 29. Paul often referred to the body of believers, or the church as “the body of Christ”.

In this passage Paul was telling the church that their behavior toward one another (the body of Christ) was the reason some had become sick and died. Remember, his complaint against them was division, quarreling and selfishness. As he brings the discussion to a close he again emphasizes their behavior toward one another:

“So, my dear brothers and sisters, when you gather for the Lord’s Supper, wait for each other. If you are really hungry, eat at home so you won’t bring judgment upon yourselves when you meet together.” (Verses 33-34)

Paul ties the judgment that some had received (sickness and death) to their practice of not waiting for others to eat. He actually said that sickness and premature death were a result of not honoring other believers.

My Experiences

One night as I went to bed I developed sudden pain in my lower back that radiated down the back of my left leg. I’d never had this type of pain before, but I knew from transporting hundreds of people with these symptoms, it was consistent with a herniated lumbar disc. The pain was severe and for a moment I panicked, thinking I’d done something to injure my back.

As I thought about the pain, I remembered that God had been speaking to me about pain returning after healing. This was a new concept as I’d only been praying with people for about a year. On a hunch, I took the position in my mind that the pain was not a herniated disc, but an imitation of that pain, caused by a demon. I told myself repeatedly, “I do not have a herniated disc”. I commanded the spirit to leave and for the pain to leave as well. After ten minutes of warfare the pain was completely gone. But it returned 20 minutes later. When it returned I repeated the same process and had my wife stand in agreement with me. After another ten minutes of warfare, the pain was gone. But 20 minutes later it returned. This went on for two hours. Each time we did warfare it would leave, only to return. Finally, I was so exhausted I had to go to sleep, even if the pain was still there. I decided to rebuke the spirit one more time and command it not to return. When I went to sleep the pain was as bad as it had been all night. I awoke in the morning to no pain and it never returned again.

I learned a great deal from this experience. I learned that we can have the symptoms of a condition that perfectly mimic the condition itself, with no actual injury or disease process in our body. A demon can create a near perfect imitation of a real medical problem. I also learned that a key to victory over the enemy lies in what you believe and what you say. I refused to believe or admit that I had a herniated disc, even though the symptoms I had felt exactly like it. I also learned that although we might see complete removal of the spirit and symptoms once, it doesn’t mean they won’t return. And if they do, the strategy that worked the first time can be used again as often as needed until the spirit realizes we aren’t going to allow it to afflict us. I’ve taken these principles and taught them often to people that I’ve seen healed since then.

In 2010, I had a chance to help my sister in law obtain healing for an occluded artery in her leg. She had poor circulation in her leg for many years. Her foot was always cold and numb and her doctor had been considering placing a stent in the artery to keep it open. One day, I asked if she wanted to be healed and she said 'yes'. I commanded the artery to be open and the circulation to return. She didn’t feel anything different until the next morning, when she woke up with a warm foot that had normal sensation and circulation. She was beaming with joy. Later that day, her foot became cold and numb and with a worried heart she asked me what happened.

I sat her down and explained that healing and sickness are a battle between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness. Like it or not – healing is warfare. God wants us to be healed and the enemy wants us to be sick. She immediately understood. I told her that the enemy brought the symptoms back to convince her she wasn't healed and that all we needed to do was push back a little and do some more warfare. I commanded her leg to be healed again and in a few minutes the circulation returned. I told her that all she needed to do was to resist the enemy's tactics if it happened again. "If the symptoms return, command them to leave". With a smile of understanding she confidently maintained her healing and she's had normal circulation since that day.

My sister didn't want to continue the merry go round of sickness. She wasn't getting sympathy from anyone. She received no financial benefit. She didn't dwell on how her ability to endure the condition proved that she had great character and strength. She received no gratification from it whatsoever – she wanted it gone for good. Once she was healed, she chose to close her account.

She and many like her will be healed and stay healed, because they earnestly want no part of their condition. Once it's gone, they don't imagine what will happen if it returns. Fear that our sickness will come back is a trap many of us fall into. Fear is a tool of the enemy. When we are healed, we are given a taste of God's power and love. The bible says,

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." (1 John 4:18)

When we fear the return of our condition, we do so because we doubt that God has really healed us or that He is able to keep us healed. We may also doubt that He truly loves us. Fear and doubt about God's goodness allow the enemy to bring sickness back. This is why we must close our account with sickness and choose never again to entertain these thoughts.

Roger Sapp made this observation about keeping our healing:

"I prayed about this matter and felt that the Lord told me that because I was getting them healed on the basis of my faith rather than their faith, this was creating this situation.

In other words, I knew how to stand in faith and receive a healing for them but they didn't know how to stand in faith to keep it. Whatever is received by faith in Christ, must be maintained by faith in Christ. When a symptom arose, they quickly doubted that they were healed and didn't maintain it. So today, we spend more time getting them to believe for themselves, helping them deal with their doubts and teaching them what to do if a symptom returns...which is to do the same thing that they did to receive the healing. They had to believe that the healing belonged to them before they received it. They had to believe that Christ had purchased it for them at the cross. Nothing has changed if they have a symptom, they must believe that the healing still belongs to them despite a symptom because of what Christ has done. What causes someone to receive...faith in Christ as Healer...is what causes them to maintain. Today, I think that we have a lot fewer people losing their healing."

In summary, there are a number of things we can do to maintain our healing. One is to treat others,

particularly those in the body of Christ, with respect and honor. Another is to avoid sin. It seems good to occasionally testify about our healing instead of testifying about our sickness. From personal experience, I would add that we should refuse to entertain thoughts about sickness returning and instead fix our thoughts on God's goodness. Another key is to resist the tendency to take ownership of the condition by referring to it as "mine". And occasionally, if the symptoms return we might need to command them to leave. We must continue to believe after we are healed, that Christ is still and always will be our healer. Once we are healed, we must make a choice to either close our account with sickness or leave it open. The choice we make will determine the degree to which we keep our healing.