

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA

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Scripture: Various

"Why Aren't All the Saints Healed?" (part 1)

AN ALL TOO OFTEN ASKED QUESTION

I would like to address a question that I am sure we have all asked at one time or another. Why doesn't God heal our Christian loved one or friend? One can phrase it another way, "Why aren't all the saints healed? " Recall a "saint" in the Bible is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Have you ever asked yourself that question? Many of you know that my younger brother, Adam, went home to be with the Lord six years ago after an 18 month battle with cancer . He had cancer as a teenager and though he was healed the first time, he got a different kind fifteen years later that ended his life on earth. He was a strong Christian but lost his battle with cancer.

Jim Wheaton, longtime member and building engineer went home to be with the Lord earlier this month after a 14 year battle with cancer. We had prayed for him numerous times. Many here remembered him in their daily prayers. But he never experienced complete physical healing.

And then what about a more public figure, little Hunter Kelly, the son of Jim and Jill Kelly, who was born with the rare Krabbe disease? Though Jill came to faith during her son's illness and many prayed for Hunter he too lost his battle with disease at the age of only eight.

And then on a not as serious note, Fr. Commins while in Israel in 1999, was supernaturally healed of nerve pain in his right leg which made it very difficult for him to walk. It was a miracle and yet he still had to have knee replacement surgery a year later and even last year undergo neck surgery to deal with his arthritis. Many people prayed for him, but he still had to endure more pain and suffering. So why instant healing on the one hand, but additional sickness on the other?

These are legitimate and relevant questions. And we find the answers in God's Word. While we can't understand all the reasons, if we are going to begin to be able to answer this question, "Why aren't all the saints healed?" we need to go to the Word of God.

Now before I go any further let me say three things that I am convinced of when it comes to healing. First, I totally believe that God miraculously heals the sick and that His ultimate desire is for each of us to be made whole – body, mind and spirit. In fact, "to heal" literally means to restore that which is broken and to make whole that which is incomplete. It is the Lord's ultimate goal and we are to work towards that goal. Second, I believe that it is God's will and plan to use doctors and medicines to bring healing to the sick. We are to work towards bringing healing to the physical world by physical means. And third, I believe that it is not always God's will to heal us physically in the here and now. Did you hear that? It is not always God's will. How can I say that?

GOD'S WILL IS NOT ALWAYS PHYSICAL HEALING

We prayed for my brother, we prayed for Jim Wheaton, many prayed for Hunter Kelly, but none of them were healed physically, were they? Now how do we know it was God's will that they were not healed?

The Bible says in **1 John 5:13-16**: *"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. **14**This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. **15**And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him."* In other words, if you are a follower of Christ when we ask the Lord for something He will accomplish everything according to His will. My friends that is a promise. The truth is God can heal at anytime, but often He chooses not to heal in the short term.

Something else I would like to say by way of introduction concerning the question why aren't all the sick saints healed? Many times the first thing people think of when they get seriously ill is what did I do to deserve this – especially if they are walking with the Lord. Am I being punished? Why am I being singled out? Why did I get stuck with the short end of the stick?

The Bible highlights time and time again that when we get sick it's usually not because we haven't been spiritual or we have committed a specific sin or we don't have enough faith. Of course, if one is abusing their body and not taking care of themselves certainly that can lead to illness but concerning most illnesses, this is usually the exception not the rule. But that's not what we are talking about here - we are talking about the saints - believers trusting in Christ who get sick for no apparent reason.

THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL AND OTHERS

Do you remember the Apostle Paul? There was no greater man of faith in the Bible. God did incredible things through Paul. God brought thousands to Christ through Paul, God built churches through Paul, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul healed the sick and raised the dead, yet, do you know what he wrote in **2 Cor. 12:7**? He is speaking of God showing him great visions and bringing him into heaven and yet he writes, *"Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! **8**Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. **9**And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. **10**Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.*

Paul writes that he has what he calls a *"thorn in the flesh."* Actually, in the Greek, the phrase, "thorn in the flesh" is a figure of speech that literally means to be impaled by a stake. Paul had some sort of debilitation that he couldn't get rid of. Most scholars believe it was an illness that was noticeable to the public. And he had it for a long time, fourteen years. It was not something that had come up over night. And Paul writes that three times he'd asked God to take it away but three times the answer had come up no.

So here is Paul a great spiritual giant and yet he was a man by his own admission who had some

sort of illness. Now, why wasn't Paul healed? Was it because he was weak in the faith? No, he was strong in the faith. Was it because there was sin in his life? No, his heart was pure. Was it because he was out of the will of God? No, he was walking hand and hand with the Lord.

Let me give you another example. Have you ever heard of Trophimus? We find him in **2 Timothy 4:20**. Paul says concerning his dear brother, *"I left Trophimus sick in Miletus."* Now, Paul had the gift of healing, but it's clear that God didn't allow Him to heal everybody. I'm sure he wanted to heal Trophimus but he said I left Trophimus at Miletus sick.

And then do you remember what Paul told young Timothy? In **1 Timothy 5:23**. Paul told this devoted young leader, *"Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses."* Timothy was suffering from a chronic stomach condition. And so Paul was telling him to take some wine and put it in your water to cut down the alkaline content because of his stomach condition.

Let me give you one more example, this time from the Old Testament in **2 Kings 13:14**. Let's hear what happened to one of the greatest prophets that ever lived: *"Now Elisha was suffering from the illness from which he died."*

Now, why did Elisha die? Was he in sin? No, he was right before God. In fact, if you read this scripture you'll find he was in perfect communion with God and even on his death bed, before Jehoash, King of Israel, he made one of the most remarkable prophesies in all the Bible. And yet here was a man of God, a great prophet, who got so sick that he died.

You see the Scriptures are abundantly clear, you can be right with the Lord and still be sick. That's why it's a very dangerous thing for us to point our fingers at someone who is sick and say you must not be right with God or you wouldn't be sick. Of if you had more faith you wouldn't be sick. St. Paul was sick, Trophimus was sick, Timothy was sick, Elisha the prophet got sick and died. Were these men sick because God was not pleased with them? Were they sick because they did something wrong? No, they were sick because we still live in a fallen world and we are all subject to the curse. And despite this, God was using sickness to work out His perfect will for their lives.

THREE KEY PASSAGES

Now if we are going to understand the reason for sickness and the purpose of sickness, we need to look at three more Scriptures. We will look at three key passages, albeit quickly.

Please turn with me to **Is. 53: 4-6**: *Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. **5**But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.*

Sickness is the result of the fall and the subsequent curse on creation. Jesus broke the curse. He took our sin and punishment. We find healing in Him. But that healing first comes when we recognize who He is, who we are as fallen human beings, and why we need Him. This is the starting point. But just

as Jesus suffered we too will not be immune from having to suffer.

Now please turn with me to **Mark 2:1-12**: ***1**When Jesus had come back to Capernaum several days afterward, it was heard that He was at home. **2**And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room, not even near the door; and He was speaking the word to them. **3**And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. **4**Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. **5**And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” **6**But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, **7**“Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?” **8**Immediately Jesus, aware in His spirit that they were reasoning that way within themselves, said to them, “Why are you reasoning about these things in your hearts? **9**“Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven’; or to say, ‘Get up, and pick up your pallet and walk’? **10**“But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—He said to the paralytic, **11**“I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home.” **12**And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this.”*

Notice the emphasis Jesus places on the forgiveness of sins. He declares to the paralyzed man that his sins are forgiven before he heals him. In fact, Jesus heals the man to show that He has the authority to forgive sins. He is not a mere man but the Son of Man, the Messiah, God's chosen one and God in the flesh. But more important than the physical healing, it is the spiritual healing that Jesus offers that makes the difference.

Finally, let's look at **James 5:13-16**: *Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. **14** Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; **15** and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. **16**Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.*

Again we see what is the first concern of the Word when we are sick - forgiveness of our sins. It is God's way of assuring us that when we turn to Him in faith and acknowledge our need for Him we can be assured of his grace and mercy and love. He will be working for us. Recall **1 Jn. 1:9** that *“if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

Do you see the foundation for all healing? It is to be in right relationship with God and that means to be in right relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. If we let Him, God will use our sickness to change us from the inside out. He will use it to change others and to glorify Jesus Christ.

That is the overarching purpose of sickness. It is why God most often times does not heal us physically right away. He will use His power over the curse, over death, disease, and decay to transform us spiritually – in our hearts, in our soul, in our spirit. He will use it to transform others. He will use it to bring glory to Jesus Christ, *if we let Him*.

And as I will share specifically next week, that's exactly what happened in the case of my brother Adam, Jim Wheaton, Hunter Kelly and Fr. Commins. Let's pray...