

Solemn Covenant

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We have already considered the Scriptural grounds of the doctrine of healing by faith in God. The practical question next arises: How can one who fully believes in the doctrine receive the blessing and appropriate the healing?

Be fully persuaded of THE WORD OF GOD in this matter. This is the only sure foundation of rational and Scriptural faith. Your faith must rest on the great principles and promises of the Bible, or it never can stand the testing of oppositions and trials which are sure to come. You must be sure that this is part of the Gospel and the redemption of Christ that all the teachings and reasonings of the best of men could not shake you. Most of the practical failures of faith in this matter result from defective or doubtful convictions of the Divine Word. The writer may be permitted to mention the case of a lady who had fully embraced this truth and accepted Christ as her Healer. She was immediately strengthened very much both in spirit and body, and her overflowing heart was only too glad to tell the good news to all her friends. Among others, she met her pastor and told him of her faith and blessing. To her surprise, he immediately objected to any such views, warned her against this new fanaticism, and told her that these promises on which she was resting were not for us; but only for the Apostles and the Apostolic age. She listened, questioned, yielded, and abandoned her confidence. In less than one month, when the writer saw her again, she had sunk into such depression that she scarcely knew whether she even believed the Bible or not. If those promises were for the Apostles, she argued, why might not all the other promises of the Bible also be for them only? She was invited to spend a season examining the teaching of the Word of God. The promises of healing from Exodus to James were carefully compared and every question calmly weighed, until the truth became so manifest, and its evidence so overwhelming, that she could only say, "I know it is here, and I know it is true, if all the world should deny it." Then she knelt and asked the Lord's forgiveness for her weakness and unbelief, renewed her solemn profession of faith and consecration, and claimed anew the promise of healing and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. From that day she has been restored and blessed with all spiritual blessings; until the very pastor who caused her to stumble has been forced to own that this is the finger of God. But the starting-point of all her blessings was the moment when she fully accepted and rested in the Word of God.

Be fully assured of the WILL OF GOD TO HEAL YOU. Most persons are ready enough to admit the power of Christ to heal. The devil himself admits this. True faith implies equal confidence in the willingness of God to answer this prayer of faith. Any doubt on this point will surely paralyze our prayer for definite healing. If there be any question of this, there can be no certainty in our expectation. A mere vague trust in the possible acceptance of our prayer is not strong enough to grapple with the forces of disease and death. The prayer for healing, "if it be His will," carries with it no claim for which Satan will quit his hold. This is a matter about which we ought to know His will before we ask, and then will and claim it because it is His will. Has He given us any means by which we may know His will? Most

assuredly. If the Lord Jesus has purchased it for us in His redemption, it must be God's will for us to have it, for Christ's whole redeeming work was simply the executing of the Father's will. If Jesus has promised it to us; it must be His will that we should receive it for how can we know His will but by His word? Nay, more, if Jesus has bequeathed it to us in the New Testament, which is simply HIS LAST WILL, then it is simply one of the bequests of our Brother's will, and all questions of will should end. The Word of God is forevermore the standard of His will, and that word "has declared immutably that it is God's greatest desire and unalterable principle of action and will to render to every man according as he will believe, and especially to save all who will receive Christ by faith, and to heal all who will receive it by similar faith. No one thinks of asking for forgiveness "if the Lord will." Nor should we throw any stronger doubt on His promise of physical redemption. Both are freely offered to every trusting heart that will accept them. A very striking case recently occurred to the writer's observation. A lady, quite prominent in Christian work, had been prayed with and anointed for healing. She returned in a few weeks saying that she was no better. She was asked if she had believed fully. "Yes," she replied, "I believed that I should be healed if it was His good pleasure, and if not, I am willing to have it otherwise." "But," was the reply, "may we not know God's pleasure in this matter from His own word, and ask with the full expectation of the blessing? Indeed, ought we to ask anything of God until we have reason to believe that it is His will? Is not His word the intimation of His will, and, after He hath so fully promised it, is it not a vexation and a mockery to imply a doubt of His willingness?" She went away, and the very next morning she claimed the promise. She told the Lord that now she not only believed that He could, but would, and did remove the trouble. In less than half an hour it had wholly and visibly disappeared--and it was an external tumor of considerable size, about which there could be no imagination or mistake. There is much subtle unbelief often in the prayer, "Thy will be done." That blessed petition really expresses the highest measure of Divine love and blessing. No kinder thing can come to us than that will. And yet we often ask it as if it was the iron hand of a cruel despot, and an inexorable destiny.

Be careful that you are yourself RIGHT WITH GOD. If your sickness has come to you on account of any sinful cause, be sure that you thoroughly repent of and confess your sins, and make full restitution as far as in your power. If it has been a discipline designed to separate you from some evil, at once present yourself to God in frank self-judgment and consecration, and claim from Him the grace to sanctify you and keep you holy. An impure heart is a constant fountain of disease. A sanctified spirit is in itself as wholesome as it is holy. At the same time do not let Satan paralyze your faith by throwing you back on your unworthiness, and telling you that you are not good enough to claim this. We never can deserve any of God's mercies. The only plea is the name, merits, and righteousness of Christ. But we can renounce known sin, we can walk so as to please God. We can judge for ourselves, and put away all that God shows us as wrong. The moment we do this we are forgiven. "If we judge ourselves, we should not be judged." "If we confess our sins; He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Do not wait to feel forgiveness or joy, but let your will be wholly turned to God, and believe at once that you are accepted, and then draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having your heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and your body washed with pure water. It is quite vain for us to try to exercise faith for ourselves or others in the face of willful transgression and in defiance of the chastening which God has meant we shall respect and yield to. But, when we receive His correction; and to turn to Him with humble and obedient hearts, He will graciously remove the hand of pain, and make the touch of healing the token of His forgiving love. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another,

and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."Often our sickness is but a moral malady contracted by our getting on Satan's territory. We cannot be healed until we get out of the forbidden place, and stand again on holy ground. So that this question of our personal state, while not a condition of healing, is a very important element in it. The great purpose of God in all His dealings with us is our highest welfare, and our spiritual soundness. To the suffering Christian, therefore; there is no better counsel than the old exhortation, "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord. He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. The Lord is good to those that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him."The writer would illustrate this by again referring to an actual incident: A member of his own family was suddenly attacked with a violent and dangerous illness. It was a little child, so young as to make it certain that it could not be on account of any fault or sin of its own. Amid violent convulsions all human remedies were quickly dispensed with, and the case presented to God in prayer and anointing. Immediate relief was given, but the trouble was not wholly removed, and again that night a very threatening relapse occurred, and the prayer of faith seemed met by a dreadful cloud of hindrance. At once it became deeply impressed upon his heart that something was seriously wrong on the part of some member of the family. Earnest search was made, and at length it was found to be indeed so. One person had greatly sinned and covered it. But now a deep and thorough confession was made, and the wrong solemnly made right in God's sight, and His forgiveness sought and claimed. Then all the burden rolled away, and the innocent sufferer was instantly healed, and the next morning rose with the most marvelous health and buoyancy, and has not been seriously ill since.

Having become fully persuaded of the Word of God, the Will of God, and your own personal acceptance with God, NOW COMMIT YOUR BODY TO HIM AND CLAIM HIS PROMISE OF HEALING in the name of Jesus by simple faith. Do not merely ask for it, but humbly and firmly claim it as His covenant pledge as your inheritance, as a purchased redemption right, as something already fully offered you in the Gospel, and waiting only your acceptance to make good your possession. There is a great difference between asking and claiming, between wanting and taking. You must take Christ as your Healer--not as an experiment, not as a future, perhaps, but as a present reality. You must believe that He does now, according to His promise, touch your life with His Almighty Hand, and quicken the fountains of your being with His strength. Do not merely believe that He will do so, but claim and believe that He does touch you now, and begin the work of healing in your body. And go forth counting it done and acknowledging and praising Him for it. It is a good thing to prepare for this solemn act of committal and appropriating faith. It ought to be a very deliberate and final step, and in the nature of things it cannot be repeated. Like the marriage ceremony, it is the signaling and sealing of a great transaction, and depends for its value upon the reality of the union which it seals. Before we take this step we ought to weigh every question thoroughly and then regard them as forever settled, and then step out solemnly, definitely, irrevocably on new ground, on God's promise, with the deep conviction that it is forever. This gives great strength and rest to the heart, and closes the door against a thousand doubts and temptations. From that moment doubt should be regarded as absolutely out of the question, and even the very thought of retreating or resorting to old means inadmissible. Of course, such a person will at once abandon all remedies and medical treatment. God has become the Physician, and He will not give His glory to another. God has healed, and all human attempts at helping would imply a doubt of the reality of the healing. The more entirely this act of faith can be a complete commitment, the more power will it have. If you have any question about your faith for this, make it a special matter of preparation and prayer. Ask God to give you special faith for this act. All our graces must come from Him, and faith among the rest. We

have nothing of our own, and even our very faith is but the grace of Christ Himself within us. We can exercise it, and thus far our responsibility extends; but He must impart it, and we simply put it on and wear it as from Him. And this makes the exercise of strong faith a very simple and blessed possibility. Jesus does not say to us, Have great faith yourselves. But He does say to us, Have the faith of God. That is better. God's faith is all sufficient, and we can have and use it. We can take Christ for our faith as we took Him for our justification, for our victories over temptation, for our sanctification. We may thus sweetly rest in the assurance that our faith has not failed to meet the demands of the promise, for it has been Christ's own faith. We simply come in His name, and present Him as our perfect offering, our plea, our faith, our advocate, our righteousness, and our all; and we simply and utterly receive for Christ's sake our very faith itself, nothing but simply the taking of His free gift of grace. Thus come and claim His promise; and, having done so, believe according to His word that you have received it.

ACT YOUR FAITH. "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk." Not to show your faith, or display your courage, but because of your faith, begin to act as one that is healed. Treat Christ as if you trusted Him, by attempting in His name and strength what would be impossible in your own; and he will not fail you if you really trust Him, and continue to act your faith consistently and courageously. But it is most important that you should be careful that you do not do this on anyone else's faith or word. Do not rise from your bed or walk on your lame foot because somebody tells you to do so. That is not faith, but presumption. He will surely tell you to do so, but it must be as HIS LORD; and if you are walking with Him and trusting Him you shall know His voice. Your prayer, like Peter's must be, "Lord, bid me come unto Thee on the water" and He will surely bid you, if He is to heal you; but in this great and solemn work, each of us must know and see the Lord for himself.

BE PREPARED FOR TRIALS OF FAITH. Do not look always for the immediate removal of the symptoms. Do not think of them. Simply ignore them and press forward, claiming the reality, at the back of and below all symptoms. Remember the health you have claimed is not your own natural strength, but the life of Jesus manifested in your mortal flesh, and therefore the old natural life may still be encompassed with many infirmities, but at the back of it, beside it, and over against it, is the all-sufficient life of Christ to sustain your body. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." But "Christ is your life;" and the life you now live in the flesh you live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved you and gave Himself for you. Do not, then, wonder if nature still will often fail you. His healing is not nature, it is grace, it is Christ, it is the bodily life of the risen Lord. It is the vital energy of the body that goes up to the right hand of God; and it never faints and it never fails those who trust it.

IT IS CHRIST WHO IS YOUR LIFE; Christ's body for your body as His Spirit was for your spirit. Therefore do not wonder if there should be trials. They come to show your need for Christ and throw you back upon Him. And to know this, and so to put on His strength in our weakness, and live in it moment by moment, is perfect healing. Then, again, trials always test and strengthen faith in proportion as it is real; it must be shown to be genuine, so that God can vindicate His reward before the whole universe. It is thus that God increases our faith by laying larger demands upon it, and compelling us to claim and exercise more grace. "As an eagle stirreth up her nest" and tumbles out her young in mid-air to compel them to reach out their little pinions, and train them to fly, so God often pushes us off all our own props and confidences to compel us to reach out the arms and wings of faith. But for the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham never could have attained, as he did, to the faith of the resurrection.

USE YOUR NEW STRENGTH AND HEALTH FOR GOD, and be careful to obey the will of the Master. This Christ-given strength is a very sacred thing. It is the resurrection of the Life of Christ in us. And it must be spent as He Himself would spend it. It cannot be wasted on sin and selfishness; it must be given to God, "a living sacrifice." The strength will fail where it is devoted to the world, and sin will always bring bodily chastisement. We may, ordinarily, expect to be in health and prosper even as our soul prospers. Nor is it enough for us to use it for ourselves; we must testify of it to others. We must tell it to the world. We must be fearless and faithful witnesses to the Gospel of full redemption. Often the testimony will have to be given under the most trying circumstances to persons who will most proudly scorn it. But the Master commands, and the church needs, that the whole counsel of God shall be declared.

My Solemn Covenant. Thus let us claim, and keep and consecrate this great gift of the Gospel and the grace of God. And now "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray to God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."