Sin, Sickness, and Healing - Watchman Nee - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2010/12/21 7:46

From "The Spiritual Man" by Watchman Nee

SICKNESS

Sickness is a common occurrence in life. For us to know how to keep our body in a condition which glorifies God, we first must know what attitude to take towards sickness, how to make use of it, and also how to be healed. Because sickness is so prevalent we cannot avoid having a serious lack in our life if we do not know how to deal with it.

SICKNESS AND SIN

The Bible discloses a close relationship between sickness and sin. The ultimate consequence of sin is death. Sickness lies between sin and death. It is the sequel to sin and the prologue to death. If there were no sin in the world, there would be neither sickness nor death. Had not Adam sinned, sickness would not have come upon the earth: of this we can be most certain. Hence as with every other woe, sickness was ushered in by sin.

Human beings are made up of two natures: the non-corporeal and the corporeal. Both suffered from man's fall. The spirit and soul were damaged by sin and the body was invaded by sickness. The sin of the spirit and soul together with the sickness of the body attest that man must die.

When the Lord Jesus came to save, He not only forgave man's sin but also healed man's body. He saved bodies as well as souls. From the outset of His ministry He healed man's sickness; at the conclusion of His labor He became a propitiator on the cross for man's sins. Behold how many sick people were healed by Him during His earthly days! His hands were ever ready to touch the sick and raise them up. Judging both by what He Himself did and by the command He gave His disciples, we cannot help but see that the salvation He provides includes the healing of sickness. His is the gospel of forgiveness and healing. These two go together. The Lord Jesus saves people from sins and sicknesses that they may know the love of the Father. In reading the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles or the Old Testament, we continually witness how healing and forgiveness run parallel to each other.

We all know Isaiah 53 forms the clearest chapter in the Old Testament on the gospel. Various places in the New Testament make reference to this particular chapter when the fulfillment of its prophecies concerning the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus is in view. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed (v.5 ASV). It tells us in unmistakable terms that both the healing of the body and the peace of the soul are accorded us. This is made even plainer when we consider the two different uses of the verb "bear": "he bore the sin of many" (v.12) and "he has borne our griefs (Hebrew: sicknesses)" (v.4). The Lord Jesus bears our sins; He also bears our sicknesses. Because He has borne our sins, we need not bear them again; in like manner, since He has borne our sicknesses, we need no longer bear them either. Sin has done damage to our soul and body, so the Lord Jesus saves both. He saves us from sicknesses as well as from sins. Believers today can offer praise with David: "Bless the Lord, 0 my soul; and all that is within me, blest his holy name! . . . Who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases" (Ps. 103.1,3). What a shame that so many Christians can utter but half a praise for they know but half a salvation. It is a loss to both God and man.

Let us note that God's salvation would not be complete if the Lord Jesus simply forgave our sins but did not heal our sicknesses too. How could He save our souls and yet leave our bodies to be tormented by infirmities? Did He not stress both while He was on earth? Sometimes He forgave first and then healed; at other times, just the reverse. He does according to what man is able to take in. In perusing the Gospels we find that the Lord Jesus performed more healing than any other works, because the Jews at that time seemed less able to believe in the Lord's forgiving them than in the Lord's healing (Matt. 9.5). Christians today, however, are precisely the opposite. In those days men believed that the Lord had power to heal sickness but they doubted His grace of forgiveness. Today's saints believe His forgiving power and doubt His healing grace. They confess that the Lord Jesus came to save people from sin, yet ignore the fact that He is equally the Savior Who heals. Man's unbelief divides the perfect Savior into two, though the truth remains that Christ is forever the Savior of man's body and soul, competent to heal as well as to forgive.

In our Lord's thought, it is not enough that a man be forgiven and not healed too. Hence, we find Him commanding, "Ris
e, take up your bed and go home" after His declaration to the paralytic, "Man, your sins are forgiven you" (Luke 5. 24,20). But as to ourselves, although we are people plagued by both sins and sicknesses, we count forgiveness from the Lord sufficient, leaving illness to be borne by ourselves and to be healed by other means. The Lord Jesus, however, did not want people to have to take the paralytic home still confined to a bed after his sins had been forgiven.

The Lord conceives a contrary view from us with respect to the relationship between sin and sickness. Our thought is that sin belongs to the spiritual realm, something disliked and condemned by God, whereas sickness is merely a mundane phenomenon having nothing to do with Him. On the other hand, the Lord Jesus considers both the sins of the soul and the infirmities of the body to be the works of Satan. He came "to destroy the works of the devil" (I John 3.8), therefore He casts out demons and heals sicknesses. When Peter under revelation speaks of the Lord's healing ministry, he declares that He "went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10.38). Sin and sickness are as intimately associated as are our soul and body. Forgiveness and healing complement each other.