

Healing in the Christian Life 1

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

It's important for each one of us not only that we be strong in our spiritual life, but also to be strong and healthy physically. You can easily see that if your body continues to be weak, it doesn't matter how strong a spirit you have, or how strong or healthy a mind and emotions you may have. If your body is weak then the life cannot flow out to the outside world. Actually what happens is, the spirit life that God gives you damns up inside you.

You remember -- the natural life of our spirit is expressed in the last few Psalms in the Book of Psalms. Any of those Psalms at the very end of the book really express the normal state of our spirits -- anywhere from Psalms 144 to 150. If you look at Psalm 144 this is the normal activity of our spirits when they're filled with the Holy Spirit.

In other words, the Holy Spirit is like a fountain in the earth, and it's continually rising up to God with this kind of attitude: Psalm 144:1-2: "Blessed by the Lord, my rock, who trains my hands for war, and my fingers for battle; my rock and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield and he in whom I take refuge."

Psalm 145 verses 1 and 2: "I will extol thee, my God and King, and bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day I will bless thee, and praise thy name for ever and ever. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable." Psalm 146 verses 1 and 2: "Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul! I will praise the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God while I have being."

That's the normal attitude of our spirits. Now if your body is racked with sickness, do you see that it will block the outflow of your spirit up to God? You've noticed that even with a cold. A cold is often enough to block your spirit inside you so that it cannot rise up to God and it certainly can't go out to other people. You've noticed with a cold it kind of closes you in from other people. Any sickness kind of closes you in and blocks your spirit off.

Now that's why it's so vital for our body to experience the wholeness that our spirits experience and that our souls experience. That's why over the next few Sundays I'd like to talk just about sickness -- because sickness is something that we're very conscious of in our everyday lives, and it's very important for us to know what our attitude to sickness should be and how we should view sickness, and then how God can heal sickness.

Then you can see that if we don't move into this realm, brothers and sisters -- then we'll always be crippled children of God -- perhaps with spirits that are filled with his Holy Spirit and perhaps with minds that are renewed, and emotions that are balanced -- but with weak, tired, sick bodies that continually bear in on our spirits, press our spirits down, and repress our spirits, and make us in every way appear to the world really as unregenerate people.

Now, that's what Jesus meant when he referred to the disciplines in Matthew 26:41. It really didn't matter what the desire of their spirit was, because the old body held them back from doing what he had asked them to do. And so it is with us. If our bodies are not made whole as he wants them to be, then repeatedly we'll find ourselves in the position of the disciples there.

Matthew 26:41 tells what takes place in the Garden of Gethsemane: “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” It wasn’t the old self that Jesus meant was weak there. It was the body. The old body couldn’t keep awake any longer -- and if our bodies don’t share the strength of Jesus then we’ll find ourselves often in that position.

I put it to you: have you not done that? Have you not often found that there was a real desire in you to do something for God, or to spend time in prayer – and yet the old body wouldn’t respond? And it seemed as if you had a supernatural spirit but you had only an old natural body that wouldn’t rise to it.

Now that’s why it’s vital, you can see, to have a body that fits your spirit and matches really what he wants you to do. Now as we’re talking about this business of sickness the next two or three Sundays, will you really look to Jesus to break the bread for you? Will you do that? Don’t look to me. Don’t do that, loved ones. Don’t look to preachers, or teachers to break the bread for you. I’ll say what Jesus guides me to say but you see you must ask the Holy Spirit, “Holy Spirit, will you explain this to me in a way that I will understand?”

Otherwise brothers and sisters you’ll go off on all kinds of wild ideas. It’ll take us two or three Sundays to deal with the whole business of sickness. We’ll only talk about part of it tonight. So it’s vital for you to look to the Holy Spirit and say, “Holy Spirit, what do you want me to receive?” Now the reason I say this is found in 2 Timothy 3:6-7. It is really relevant to this kind of teaching about the deeper life. Paul isn’t really against women’s liberation here. He’s talking about those men among us who do the same thing -- but in this situation, it was just women that were involved. 2 Timothy 3:6: “For among them are those who make their way into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and swayed by various impulses.” And then verse 7: “who will listen to anybody and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth.”

Now that’s why I say -- look to the Holy Spirit. Don’t run away home tonight and take a whole lot of things that I share and then just without any question accept them all. And then take something else that somebody else says and pile those things on top. One moment you’ll be way over in this direction with healing, and another moment you’ll be way over in this direction, and then you’ll be down the middle for a while until you hear somebody else’s take on healing.

Now loved ones, don’t do that. Look to the Holy Spirit tonight and say, “Holy Spirit, I don’t want to be a person like that, swayed to and fro by anybody who comes with any gospel. I want your word for me.” You can see each of us are at different stages, brothers and sisters. Each of us are at different stages in regards to our bodies tonight, and only the Holy Spirit can minister to you what will be life for you. So that’s important -- otherwise we get into all kinds of extremes.

Now maybe it would be good to look at what Jesus’ attitude to sickness was. Let’s look at it first in Romans 8:2 and you can see there the general teaching of the Bible about sickness. Romans 8:2: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.” The Bible links sin and death as two results of the fall of mankind. Death is the ultimate consequence of sickness. So really the Bible links sin and death, or sin and sickness together. In fact, God implies that there was no death until men rebelled against God.

You can see that in Genesis 3:19. There you remember God is speaking to Adam and telling him the consequences of this fall. Genesis 3:19: “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you

return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” Death was a result that followed upon man rebelling against God. In other words, sin and sickness are twin results of the fall and God and Jesus look upon them as that. They don't look upon sickness as a natural thing. They look upon sickness and death as something that is not God's perfect will for us, and they tie them both up together --sin and death, sin and sickness.

Now Jesus came with a message about both of those. He came to completely recapitulate our lives and completely reverse the effects of the fall. So he came not only preaching forgiveness of sin but he came preaching healing of sickness. You can see it there in the first day of his ministry in Matthew 4. The very first day of his ministry includes the emphasis on these two things. He came not only to forgive sins but he came to heal sickness.

Matthew 4:17: “From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” That was his dealing with sin and forgiveness of sins.

Then in Verse 23: “And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people.” Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom and healed every infirmity and every disease. So Jesus came both forgiving sins and healing sicknesses, and he regarded both as equally important parts of his ministry. When he was sending out the seventy he gave them the same commission. You have it there in Luke 9:1-2: “And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal.”

You can't get away from it, dear ones -- as you go right through the Bible you find that God looks upon sin and sickness as both enemies of his in people's lives and both of them as results of the fall of mankind. These are both mentioned in that famous chapter -- Isaiah 53 -- that talks about Jesus' death and the effects of his death.

Isaiah 53:4-5: “Surely he has borne our griefs.” You see the footnote “x” in the RSV and you look down to the bottom, “Or sicknesses.” The Hebrew word is actually sicknesses. “Surely he has borne our sicknesses and carried our sorrows,” and the footnote “y” goes down to the word “pains” and the Hebrew is “pains.” “Surely he has borne our sicknesses and carried our pains.” Then in Verse 5: “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.”

That's continually the emphasis in the Bible -- that Jesus' death did something not only for our sins but for our sicknesses. Jesus came not only to forgive us our sins but to heal our bodies and to heal sickness. You find it in Psalms 103:1 and 3: “Bless the Lord oh my soul,... who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases.”

So brothers and sisters it's very hard for us to split sickness from sin. It's very hard for us to say, “Jesus emphasized only forgiveness of sins.” It's just very difficult to read anything about the gospel, or anything about the description of our fall from God's fellowship, and not to find sin and sickness linked together -- and that Jesus really dealt with both.

Sometimes he healed first. That's right. Sometimes he healed first and sometimes he forgave people their sins first. I think this was really because the Jews at that time found it easier to believe for healing. That's strange. They found it easier to believe that Jesus was healing diseases than he was forgiving sins and so Jesus therefore dealt with sickness.

He dealt with people where they were. If they respected his power in healing then he healed first in various situations. Matthew 9:5 was one of them where obviously Jesus himself would have been inclined to forgive the man his sins -- but then he saw the attitude of the Jews. He in that case did the thing that they would find it easier to recognize.

Matthew 9:5: "For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk?'" Then Verse 6 says, "But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins' – he then said to the paralytic – 'Rise, take up your bed and go home.' And he rose and went home. When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men."

Jesus healed a man in that case because they were readier to believe in healing and the power to heal. Then once they believed that, he felt they would begin to move on and see, "Well, if he can heal sickness, then maybe what he says about the forgiveness of sins is true."

Now in our day it's the other way around. We find it easier in our churches to emphasize, "Oh yeah, Jesus can forgive your sins, forgive your sins." But we find it difficult to believe that he can heal our sicknesses. So Jesus has to deal with us in a different way. And yet it is important to see that really it's both that Jesus wants done.

Luke 5:24 shows this: "But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins' – he said to the man who was paralyzed – 'I say to you, rise, take up your bed and go home.'" But then in Verse 20, it says: "And when he saw their faith he said, 'Man, your sins are forgiven you.'" So it's Jesus' will that both things should take place.

Now that isn't our attitude. So often our attitude is that sin -- which we can see -- belongs to the spiritual realm and is evil -- but we feel sickness is in the natural realm and it may be evil or it may be good.

Now do you see that Jesus didn't take that attitude? Jesus didn't say, "Sickness is an option for Christians." He implied that sickness was part of the work of the devil and that as it says in 1 John 3:8: "Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil."

In Acts 10:38, Peter says: "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." Jesus regarded sickness as an oppression or a work of the devil. So, brothers and sisters, if we ever regard sickness as just a natural thing in our lives -- do you see we're treating a work of the devil as something natural? That's what he wants.

He wants us to treat his works as something natural -- something that we ought to expect in the every-day world. And once he can deceive us into that, then half the battle is won as far as he is concerned. But you can see Jesus doesn't think of it that way at all. He thinks of sin as an enemy of his Father and sickness as an enemy of his Father and he opposes both.

Now maybe it would be good to see about the use and the meaning of sickness. Could God ever use sickness to chastise us? We say staunchly, "Never. Never." Don't we? You know we do it. We react against that old puritanical old-fashioned belief that anyone who was sick was a sinner and so we had reacted away to the other extreme and we say, "No, God never uses sickness to chastise us."

But what then is the place of sickness in the believer?

Now it might be good to see why we reacted in that way. It's because of what it says in John 9:3. You remember the man who was born blind. This is the basis of our attitude to sickness whereby we say, "No, God would never use sickness to chastise his children."

John 9:2-3: "And his disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him.'" We then tend to say, "There it is in black and white -- sin never causes sickness. That is what Jesus is saying: 'This man didn't sin nor did his parents sin. Sickness has nothing to do with sin.' And God therefore could never use sickness to chastise his children."

Now do you see first of all that this sickness is utterly different from what we're talking about in believers? This sickness was something the man was born with so it was of a different nature entirely to the sicknesses that come upon God's children. It was a different sickness -- it was one that the man was born with. It was a different situation.

Secondly, Jesus isn't saying, "No, sickness is never due to sin." He's just saying, "In this case it wasn't this man that sinned nor was it his parents that sinned." And Jesus is really saying, "Every time you see a sick person don't immediately say that they have sinned." But do you see that's a far cry from saying sickness is never due to sin?

Now brothers and sisters, do you see the two extremes? Jesus is saying, "Look, every time you see a sick person -- don't immediately say like Jesus' disciples, 'This man has sinned or his parents have sinned.'" Jesus is saying, "That's not always the case. There are many people who are sick who haven't sinned and brought their sickness upon themselves." But that's a far cry from Jesus saying, "No, my Father never uses sickness to draw attention to any sin in your life."

Now do you see it's important for us to balance that out, loved ones? It's important for us to accept what Jesus says. Every time you see a sick person you can't say, "Ah, you've sinned greatly because you have a great sickness." But on the other hand you shouldn't run to the other extreme and say, "No, God never uses sickness to chastise his children."

In fact, there are some indications in the Bible that God can use what is really a work of Satan. God never sends sickness. God doesn't send sickness and then send his Son to die for sickness. You can see how that doesn't make sense. You can't have A and not-A. You can't have God opposing sickness and then sending sickness. You can't have him sending sickness upon the earth and then sending his Son to take away sickness. But God can use a work of Satan and he can use it for his own purposes.

Now let's just look at some of the verses that would help us with that. 1 Corinthians 11:30-32, "That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world."

Now brothers and sisters you can see in Verse 30 that that can mean only spiritual death when you drink the body and blood of Jesus without discerning or without judging yourself, and without examining yourself about your sins. But it can mean really what it says, "That is why many of you

are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we should not be judged.”

In other words, if you examined yourself, Paul says, “You should not have to be judged by God or brought to account by him. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are chastened.” Of course the obvious implication with that verse with the previous one is that when we are chastened by sickness, then, “We are chastened so that we may not be condemned along with the world.” It is for a good purpose. Now that’s one of the verses that suggests how God uses a sickness caused by Satan for God’s purpose.

Now let’s look at another verse-- James 5:16. It makes sense of this verse which perhaps many of us have often wondered why the two facts are mentioned in this verse. James 5:16, “Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

Do you see that God connects confession of sins with praying that you may be healed? You see the previous verse has the same emphasis (Verse 15): “And the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” The two are closely connected -- the confession of sins and the healing of sickness.

Do you see that the normal state of God’s children is the normal state of the Israelites? Now that’s the state described in Exodus 15:26. Here God is speaking: “If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon you which I put upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord, your healer.” Now that’s the normal state of the children of God, that God puts or allows Satan to put none of the diseases upon us that ordinary non-Christians experience -- if we will abide by his statutes.

But do you see that when the Father sees us needing chastening, then he is able to use a work of Satan to bring us to a place of self-examination? Now what is very important for us to see is that it is not just connected with ordinary sin. That’s important. Otherwise if we teach that it’s always connected with sin, anybody with a cold tonight is in bad shape and you better just keep your coughs quiet! Otherwise everybody will look at you and say, “Ha-ha! You’re sinning like mad again.” So it’s very important to see that chastening is not simply connected with sin. It is also connected with the growth in Christ-likeness.

God chastens his children whom he loves. Maybe it would be good to settle that one from Jesus’ own words. When we talk about God using sickness to chasten his children we’re not talking only about sin. We may be talking about sin -- but we are not necessarily talking about sin. You can be talking about a new position of Christ-likeness into which God is trying to bring his children. Luke 13:2 deals with this: “And he answered them, ‘Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus?’” So again it’s Jesus’ balanced way of seeing things. It’s Jesus saying, “No, every time you see somebody who is sick, don’t say, ‘Ah, they must have sinned.’” Because God is concerned with not only bringing us into an awareness of sin in our lives, but with bringing us into new positions of Christ-likeness.

Job is an example of that. If you look at Job 1:7-12 you’ll find that Job was not regarded really in any way as a great sinner by God. Job 1:7-12: “The Lord said to Satan, ‘Whence have you come?’ Satan answered the Lord, ‘From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.’ And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?’” Now that’s God

obviously saying that Job was a blameless and upright man as far as God was concerned.

Continuing on in this passage: “Then Satan answered the Lord, ‘Does Job fear God for naught? Has thou not put a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to thy face.’ And the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, all that he has is in your power; only upon himself do not put forth your hand.’” That is, don’t destroy his physical self. “So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord.”

And you remember, God allowed Satan to bring all kinds of sicknesses, and boils, and pains, and sufferings to Job. So God will use sickness sent by Satan -- first of all, to bring us into an awareness of some sin that there may be in our lives, and secondly, to bring us into a new place of Christ-likeness.

Now do you see that this affects our whole attitude to sickness when it comes -- our response to sickness? Do you see that we shouldn’t scurry around looking for a cure? That’s our attitude, isn’t it? We say, “Sickness is of Satan, so once it comes about we must get a cure. We must get a cure either by doctor, by medicine, by drugs, by a healer, anything -- but we must get a cure. We must get rid of the sickness.”

Now brothers and sisters, do you see that that isn’t the attitude of children of God who trust their Father? The attitude of children of God is, “Father, you said you would put none of these sicknesses upon me. Now, is there any way in which I have become self-reliant in your work, or in which I have become greedy in your work? Or, is there any sin that is lodging in my life that you are trying to bring before my mind? Because, Father, once I confess that and turn from it, I know I won’t have to try to whip myself into a frenzy to believe that you’re healing. I know that the healing life will flow from Jesus and will fill me, and heal me, and make me whole.” Loved ones, that is to be our attitude to sickness.

There shouldn’t be this panic and this terrible fear: “We must get rid of it at all costs.” But there should be the attitude of children who have a loving dear Father and we should go to him and say, “Now Father, it’s your own word in Exodus that you’ll put none of these diseases upon me. Now I can only believe that you’re using this sickness that Satan has brought to bring something before my mind. Now Father, is there any sin in me that is there?”

Loved ones, do you see you don’t burrow into yourself in introspection? You ask the Father, you listen to the Holy Spirit, and if he brings the sin before you, you repent. You confess it. You make the thing right with somebody else if the sin has been against somebody else, or if it is against God you make it right with him. And then you look to the Father and you say, “Father, I will receive healing just as you want me to receive it now. I know it is here. I know it is my position according to your word to receive healing.”

Now if there is no sin you see you need to repent of -- you go before the Holy Spirit and you ask, “Holy Spirit, is there any new place you want me to come in here? Is there any new place, new position in Jesus that you want me to enter into?” Loved ones, I honestly think that we don’t realize how much Jesus wants us to draw into an experience of his own sufferings. I think we really feel it’s a superficial and easy thing to become like Jesus. It isn’t, loved ones. If Jesus had to learn obedience through suffering, do you see that we are called into the same thing?

We like to think that once we've reckoned ourselves dead with Christ then that's the end of it. But do you see that God requires of us permission at that point to begin to bring us into something of Jesus' sufferings? Do you see that there's a self-love, there are self-desires, there is a self will in us that has to be burned out? It cannot be thought out or prayed out -- it has to be burned out and at times suffered out. And after we've entered into a willingness to be crucified with Jesus, then we have the glory of walking the Calvary road with Jesus.

I think I shared with you before that I used to think all Jesus was asking me was: would I be willing to be nothing? Would I be willing to be a failure? Would I be willing not to have my own desires? Then as the years passed I found that he "did the dirty on me." He began to ask me to actually walk into these things. He tested the old will inside and really was saying, "Would you really be willing? Would you really be willing? Is this bit of you dead? Is this bit of you dead? Is this bit of you dead?" He'd stick needles in to see if that bit was dead. That's the Father showing that really you can only come into a real Christ-likeness if you're willing to take part in Jesus' own suffering.

I know it's a hard teaching. You find that there in Philippians 3:10: "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death." It's pretty explicit that Paul is saying, "There is a sense in which we are to share Jesus' suffering and become like him in his death." It's only in his death that we can become like him. So God will often use sickness to bring us into a place with Jesus that is close to his heart.

So God uses sickness at times to point out actual positive sin in our lives. At other times he uses sickness to try to bring us into a new place with himself, a new position in Jesus. Of course the reason is so that we will produce work that is lasting. If you are in the same place as Jesus, the work that God does through you will be lasting.

Now do you remember that Paul makes a distinction between two kinds of work? He talks about the foundation of Jesus and then about the building that men put upon it. The building would be things like the body here that we're building, or Fish Enterprises {a business affiliated with Campus Church and Rev. O'Neill}, or a work that God does through you in the world or through all of us.

Paul talks about this in I Corinthians 3:12: "Now if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw" -- you see, either precious stones, or stubble (wood, hay, or straw); "-- each man's work will become manifest; for the Day" -- that is, the Day of judgment -- "will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done."

Superficial shallow work that has been done by shallow little Christians who have entered into none of the fellowship of Jesus' sufferings -- that work will be wood, hay, and stubble and will not last. So it's vital for us to be willing to regard our sicknesses as a possible way that God has in bringing us close to himself -- never to regard that that sickness is his final will for us.

God's ideal will for us is perfect health. But it is his permissive will -- as it was his permissive will to use suffering with Jesus -- to bring us into an awareness of a new place with himself. Now I'd just share with you a book that I've just started to read. I suppose I should have read it a long time ago. It's a book with a message similar to that of *The Calvary Road* by Roy Hession. The *Calvary Road* book deals with the life of fellowship with Jesus' sufferings after the crisis experience of being filled with the Spirit.

You can see there are a lot of naïve people running around filled with the Spirit saying, “Hallelujah, and Amen, we’re filled with the Spirit.” But bless their hearts -- they have turned from any of the fellowship of Jesus’ suffering. Anything that is suffering in any way or travail they have turned from and said, “No, no, that must be wrong. That must be wrong. Things must be just Hallelujah and Amen all the time.”

Well it is. But it’s often a deep Hallelujah and a deep Amen from the heart of a spirit that has come unto the cross with Jesus in a new way. This is partly what is talked about in this book that I’m referring to, “Hind’s Feet on High Places.” God talks in his Word about how we will skip on the mountains on the high places like hinds -- light, and easily, and agilely. Of course this woman who is the author of this book is talking about how a person comes to those high places and she has an allegorical conversation between a person in the book and her Lord.

I’ll just read a little of the preface: “But the high places of victory and union with Christ cannot be reached by any mental reckoning of self to be dead to sin, or by seeking to devise some way or discipline by which the will can be crucified. The only way is by learning to accept day-by-day the actual conditions and tests permitted by God, by a continually repeated laying down of our own will and acceptance of his as it is presented to us in the form of the people with whom we have to live and work and in the things which happen to us. Every acceptance of his will becomes an altar of sacrifice.”

There’s a conversation found on page 41 of the book. Jesus introduces the main character in the book to the two helpers who will bring her unto the high places -- into the victorious life. She looks at them in horror. He’s just told her their names. She says: “I can’t go with them. I can’t! I can’t! Oh my Lord Shepherd, why do you do this to me? How can I travel in their company? It is more than I can bear. You tell me the mountain way is so steep and difficult that I cannot climb it alone. Then why, oh why, must You make Sorrow and Suffering my companions?” Those were the two companions that Jesus introduced her to -- Sorrow and Suffering.

“‘Couldn’t You have given Joy and Peace to go with me, to strengthen me and encourage me and help me on the difficult way? I never thought you would do this to me!’ And she burst into tears.”

“A strange look passed over the Shepherd’s face as he listened to this outburst, then looking at the veiled figures as he spoke he answered very gently, ‘Joy and Peace. Are those the companions you would choose for yourself? You remember your promise, to accept the helpers that I would give, because you believed that I would choose the very best possible guides for you. Will you still trust me, Much-Afraid?’” That was the name she was given – Much-Afraid. “‘Will you go with them, or do you wish to turn back to the Valley, and to all your Fearing relatives, to Craven Fear himself?’”

Now loved ones, do you see that it brings a new meaning into sickness if we can see that it’s not a matter of scurrying away to the nearest faith healer, or scurrying away to the first doctor -- but rather a going to our Father first and saying, “Lord, why has this come upon me? I know you can keep this from me. Why have you allowed it to come upon me? What do you want me to repent of, or what new position into Jesus do you want me to enter?” It’s this way that God begins to expose any self that is still there.

Loved ones, we will say in the glory of health, “Father, I will take from your hand whatever you

choose to give me.” But in the midst of sickness God can tell whether we meant that or not. We will say in the glory of health, “Lord, I don’t care what happens to me. I will look to you alone.”

But when sickness comes and we get wrapped up in the symptoms and we begin to wonder, “Are we hot enough? Or, “Are we too cold?” Or, “Are those people giving me the right sympathy?” Or, “Are they treating me right? Am I looking after myself right?” As we get involved more and more in the symptoms of our sickness, we see that God is using that sickness to expose the self that we thought was absolutely on the cross. Do you see that what God wants is the midst of sickness is a forgetfulness of the sickness? That’s it.

That proves to him that we’re where he wants us to be. Where we forget the sickness and we say, “Father, I thank you for allowing this to come upon me. I know it’s here for some reason. Now will you reveal to me whether it’s positive sin in me, or whether it’s a new place of completeness in Jesus that you want me to enter into?”

Then he wants us to be content to have the sickness as long as he wants us to have it. Because the truth is, loved ones, once the cause or the reason for the sickness is removed, the sickness will be healed. The sickness will be healed once the reason is dealt with. But if we get down under it and we start yielding to Satan and saying, “Ah, I’m a sinner. I’m a sinner. Something must be wrong,” and we don’t look to the loving healer himself -- then of course the sickness will work death in us.

Now loved ones, I think that’s maybe as far as we should go tonight -- just about God’s attitude to sickness, and our attitude, and then how God can use sickness.