



Spiritual Healing

Text: Romans 8:5
O.T.: Psalm 119:105-112
N.T.: Romans 8:1-11

Most Americans define health as a condition of the body. Good health is freedom from illness, disease, or physical disability. In these days of COVID-19 we are painfully learning the truth in the observation of the nineteenth century Swiss philosopher Henri Fredric Amiel who wrote, “Health is the first of all liberties.”

We are most free when we are healthy. Health presents unlimited choices which illness, disease, or disability prevent.

But others warn health is more than freedom from bodily illness or disease. Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, “Health is the condition of wisdom. The sign is cheerfulness – an open and noble temper.” Emerson pointed to people, such as Helen Keller. They are afflicted by what many of us would consider a terrible disability. Yet they stayed optimistic despite their physical condition. They transcended their infirmity.

Joni Eareckson Tada, inspired thousands to find God despite being paralyzed from the neck down from an accident she suffered as a 17-year-old. Her accident re-defined her life. She was physically devastated. But her accident awakened her spiritually.

Joni Eareckson Tada is now 70 years old. She is healthy and joyful when you measure her heart, attitude, and emotional condition by her cheerfulness. Joni radiates the joy of living in God’s presence.

Joni shows how health lies beyond freedom from bodily afflictions. All real health lies in spiritual gratitude to God



The Apostle Paul describes the struggle to discover health in his letter to the Romans. He does not use the word “health” at all. But the battle between the flesh and the spirit that he describes is about finding spiritual health in our awareness of God.

Paul frames the search for spiritual health around freedom from sin. In Romans 7 he describes the internal wrestling of the mind and body with physical impulses and pleasures of the flesh. In verse 19 he laments, “I do not do the good I want. But the evil I do not want is what I do.”

Two verses later, he observes that he can force himself to do the right thing. But the impulse to do the opposite “lies close at hand.” Then, he collapses in despair with the admission, “I see in my members (or body) another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members.”

The Apostle Paul describes the battle between the flesh and the spirit by focusing on our body as an end unto itself generates frustration and defeat. Forcing the flesh to be healed is not satisfying. The mind, emotions, and body are so intertwined, pursuing physical health obstructs the spiritual health that is needed to overcome bodily disease or affliction. We end up trying to avoid physical infirmities rather than to love God.

Joni Eareckson Tada admits she sat motionless with paralysis. Her overwhelming demand for physical improvement led to such despair she gave up trusting God. The tortured pain inside her mind did not permit her to see God’s love for her.

Joni could only see what she could no longer physically do. She could not see God in her infirmity, so she gave up living.



She was healed of alienation from God when a 16-year-old boy led her to see her condition from Jesus' perspective while He was on the Cross. The boy talked with her about God knowing our pain through suffering on the Cross. When she found herself in Christ's suffering, she was freed from focusing on her bodily pain. She was free to discover God's love.

Spiritual health begins with seeing God in every circumstance of life. God calls us to share Christ's Gospel with joy, especially in circumstances where a person's cheerfulness defies explanation. When we see things from the perspective of the flesh, we want freedom from worldly discomfort. We seek freedom from suffering rather than union with God. We drop our love for God and restrict our attention to only fixing the body.

When we see life from a spiritual perspective – the perspective that God's love is in the bodily hardships and tribulations we experience - then we're free to embrace God's love and find His redeeming purpose.

One Godly purpose in infirmity is to bring spiritual health to others.

Amy Carmichael was born in Northern Ireland to a large Presbyterian family, in 1861. She was the eldest of seven children. When Amy was three, she told the local minister she loved the color blue more than any other color. She loved the blue sky. She loved blue Lotus flowers. She loved her mother's blue eyes. But Amy had brown eyes. She wanted more than anything to have blue eyes.

Amy was fixated on her physical condition and prayed to God one night as a three-year-old can, that God would change her eyes to blue. She awakened the next morning and jumped out of bed to see that God had not honored her request. She started crying.



Amy's mother told her disappointed child that God had a reason for Amy's eyes to be brown. She needed to be content with God's love for her and wait to discover why God had given her brown eyes.

Many of us struggle with praying to God to change our physical condition, like Amy. We criticize God for not hearing our petitions for change. To see beyond the change we seek, to discover the hidden purpose behind the condition of our flesh, to embrace the spiritual purpose for which we are called, is the object of spiritual healing.

It wasn't until years later, when Amy became a Presbyterian missionary to India's children who were ritually abused in Hindu temples, that she discovered why she had brown eyes. To save these children, Amy Carmichael disguised herself as a Hindu woman to free them from their terrible fate. If her eyes had been blue, she would never have been accepted as an Indian. For 56 years she labored as a Christian missionary to save the children in Dohnavur, India. There was a spiritual purpose that she could see, in her faithfulness to God's mission.

In 1932, angry Hindus dug a hole outside her home to cause her death and end her mission. She fell into the hole and was severely injured. Those who knew of Amy's missionary work feverishly prayed she would be healed so she could continue saving the children of Dohnavur.

Amy was confined to bed because of her injuries. She began to think about God's purpose again. She re-discovered what she was first learned as a three-year-old. The nature of her flesh, the condition of her body, was not what gave her God's purpose. It was God's own love that gave her purpose to save India's children that physical infirmity could not prevent.



Amy began writing, and writing, and writing, about God's power to bring salvation to the hopeless. Her poems and prose filled 30 books before she died at the age of 100. Her mission work was expanded - to readers around the world. Thousands have read her cheerful message of God's healing love through Jesus Christ. Her infirmity taught her the wisdom of companionship with God. She was a shining example of spiritual health throughout her lifetime.

All of us are concerned about staying physically healthy during this COVID-19 crisis. Many of us spend significant time thinking about how to avoid the virus. Others seem oblivious to the threat and go on without consideration of its consequences, risking the lives of those around them. Some even have COVID parties to become infected in defiance of public concern for safety. We are seeing the members of our country war against one another in sin.

All this debate over COVID 19 has led to accusations against each other, an inability to trust each other. Inflammatory remarks in national rhetoric is tearing apart our common humanity as we collectively fall into sin. Some exploit generational differences to make accusations to benefit their political interests. People are accusing others of risking their lives. Anger and fear have increased while mutual respect and compassion are decreasing in the heated climate.

What is missing in our national conflict is how this global situation is calling us to find other sources of value than physical health. COVID-19 is forcing us define what is our common ground.



Is it endless fear and arguing over blame? Is it really about how we save ourselves from death? Good health cannot ultimately prevent death. Perhaps COVID-19 is God's way of leading us to better spiritual health.

What lives beyond our body's limit is what really matters. What endures beyond our mortality is the real point of this pandemic.

If we are so consumed by the body that we are no longer of the spirit, we have condemned ourselves to a fate that is worse than disease. We have condemned ourselves to living without God. That is sin.

Living without God is filled with fear, anger, accusation and blame.

Spiritual healing depends upon our focus upon God's victory over death. When we limit our vision of life to only seeing things of the flesh, we will fail to see the God's healing presence bringing life from suffering and death. This is the great miracle of Christian faith that gives us freedom.

Life with God's love frees us from sin, frees us to be joyful. This is spiritual health.

Focus on God's remarkable power to overcome life's difficulties, life's limits. We find joy from our spiritual health in Jesus Christ. Earthly physicians, earthly health care workers, earthly government intervention only temporarily extend mortality's limits. Heaven's physician has given us His eternal cure through Jesus Christ our Lord. He is our joy!

Stay focused on Christ. Pray the 100th Psalm each day. Read Philippians 4. Keep your heart, mind, and spirit in Christ's hands. He will build up your spiritual health so that you can see God's blessings during these anxious times.

Amen.