

PARCHMENT

AND HE SAID UNTO ME, WRITE: FOR THESE WORDS ARE TRUE AND FAITHFUL.

REVELATION 21:5



And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. Luke 5:12

HEALING THE SIN-SICK SOUL

Physical healing and cleansing from sin are themes constantly interwoven throughout the Bible. In demonstration of His power to transform the inner (unseen) man, Christ would perform a miracle, reviving one from their physical depravity. In every case, this was to represent God's capacity to forgive and cleanse the soul from the disease of sin, which is of more consequence than any earthly infirmity.

In the Old Testament, the prophet Jeremiah highlights this link in prayer, by saying: "heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved". The use of parallelism in this verse plainly aligns physical healing with spiritual salvation, and thereby highlights man's need for complete and utter dependance on God.

Furthermore, in the New Testament, Christ's miracles serve as evidence of His power to heal the soul from spiritual death. This is distinctly expressed in Jesus' response to John the Baptist's messengers, who were sent to discover whether Jesus was the prophesied Messiah. Jesus instructs them to "tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." Luke 7:22. While Jesus recalls the many physical miracles He has performed, the final proof of His Messiahship is reserved till last. Recovery of sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and even life to the dead, were recorded to inspire faith in His ultimate miracle: preaching the gospel to the poor. The conclusive argument for His

Messiahship was in declaring that as certainly as the dead had been raised, He had imparted new life to the dead in sin.

This connection is further established by the story of the paralytic, who is lowered down a roof to seek healing from the Saviour. Recognising in this man a rich, living faith, Jesus speaks to him and proclaims: "thy sins are forgiven thee". Luke 5:20. As revealed in the story of creation, the Words of Christ are actions themselves, imbedded with the Divine authority to transform and create. Having thus exercised His power to heal the sin-sick soul by His voice, Jesus reads the thoughts of the pharisees that surround Him and asks: "whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?" Luke 5:23.

Certainly, Jesus redeems the paralytic from his sins. This is a spiritual work; unseen and intangible. Yet to prove that his words had been fulfilled, He instructs the man to arise and walk. To the crowd, seeing that the paralytic had been healed physically by Jesus' command was also to believe he had been healed spiritually by the same voice. This was the divine purpose for which the miracle was wrought. In Jesus' own words, it was "that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins". Luke 5:24. In essence, Jesus longed to show that He who heals the body from its temporal diseases, can just as swiftly and entirely heal the soul from sin.



Notwithstanding this immeasurable power, Christ's ability to heal the sin-sick soul is dependant upon the willingness and desire of the sinner to be made whole. In Luke 5:12, we find "a man full of leprosy" who recognises his helplessness, wretchedness, and need of a Divine Healer. At that time, there were many lepers who had not the faith to approach Jesus, and these died in their depraved, ailing bodies. Yet this one leper - no less contaminated than the rest - sought the Lord diligently, "fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Luke 5:12.

It was an awareness of his despicable malady that drew the leper to the Saviour. No doubts of Satan could persuade him that his sickness made him unworthy to approach Christ. This is the faith - held in spite of his trying circumstance - that allowed him to be saved. Jesus reminds us: "they that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick." The proverb might also be read: they that *think* they are whole need not a physician; but they that *know* they are sick.

Moreover, the leper's recognition of his need for a Healer echoes the need felt by King David for a spiritual Saviour. The 51st Psalm captures David's sorrow and torment as he feels the separation from God that his sins have caused. In regret of the "sin [that] is ever before [him]", David longs to experience again "the joy of thy salvation". With imagery that conjures the pain of physical debility, David prays that he might "hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." Psalm 51:8.

Indeed, it is the hopelessness of his cause that leads the King to his knees. As the leper's abhorrent spots drive him to the Saviour, David's abhorrent sin leads him to his Lord. The leper declares: "thou alone canst make me clean". Luke 5:12. In a psalm littered with motifs of cleansing, washing and purification, David presents his same request: "create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10. Certainly, these striking similarities give evidence of the distinct interrelationship between physical and spiritual healing, and the necessity of beseeching the Lord as the only one who can make us clean.

Without doubt, the common denominator of each

miracle is a broken spirit and a contrite heart. Yet David's request for a clean heart is coupled with his request for a right spirit. A right spirit is, as Peter explains, one that is purified "in obeying the truth". 1 Peter 1:22. And from Isaiah 51:7 we learn that "ye that know righteousness" are "the people in whose heart is my law". It's for this reason that the prophet Nathan questions David concerning his sin by saying: "wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight?" 2 Sam 12:9. Failing to possess a right spirit is to despise the Lord's commandments, as much as being righteous is to love and cherish the law in one's heart. Only the latter is acceptable to God. Thus, we are led to the conclusion of David's psalm. Here, he proclaims: "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Psalms 51:17.

Like David, we too have been made sick with sin. Standing beside the pure and sinless Christ, we are lepers of the most degraded sort. Yet never should the Christian feel that they are too unclean to come to Jesus. Rather, our shortcomings should reveal to us our need of His healing, so that we might fall on our face, beseech Him and exclaim: "thou canst make me clean"!