

HEART TO HEART TALKS

PRAYER FOR THE SICK

THERE is another form of prayer which we may profitably consider in this connection—prayer for the sick. We have no need—whether it be physical, temporal, or spiritual—that it is not our privilege to bring to God in prayer. Christ is the great physician of the soul as well as of the body. The apostle John, addressing Gaius, expressed the wish: “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou may prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospered.” 3 John 1:2.

The Lord does not willingly afflict the children of men. When we become sick, it is usually because of a violation of the laws of our being. In presenting our cases of illness to the Lord in prayer, we should be sure that we are cooperating with Him by removing, so far as is in our power, everything in our lives that might hinder Him in answering our prayer. If we knowingly have violated the laws of health, which are God’s laws, we should confess our wrongdoing and resolve by God’s help to work in harmony with His plans. Perhaps we have violated these laws ignorantly. Hence, we should study the laws of our being. We should become acquainted with the principles of physiology, and hygiene. We should study the uses of foods and their combinations, discarding the foods which are unwholesome and eating moderately of those which are suitable for use.

We should study also to see whether there are other sins which separate us from God. Are we violating His law of Ten Commandments? Do we have other gods before the Lord? Have we set up in our hearts idols which, instead of our Creator, are receiving our first love? Are we taking God’s name in vain, or do we hold it in holy reverence? Are we keeping the Sabbath of the Lord in harmony with the commandments—not speaking our own words, not finding our own pleasure, not doing our own ways? (See Isaiah 58:13). Are we observing the other commandments? Are we observing the one which says, “Thou shalt not kill,” remembering that hatred of our brother is a violation of this righteous requirement, because the fruit of hatred is murder? There is another commandment which says, “Thou shalt not bear false witness.” This prohibits not only falsehoods regarding others but misrepresentations and unkind criticisms. One or all of these things will shut out God’s blessing from our lives.

Having prepared our hearts in these ways to seek the Lord for healing, it is our privilege to carry out in our own cases or in the cases of our friends the instruction given in the fifth chapter of James:

Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availed much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.” Verses 14-18.

Subject to God’s Will

Every request, of this kind should be made subject to the Lord’s will. God in His great wisdom may see that it is best for us to suffer awhile to learn needed lessons, before He brings us back again to life and health. The apostle Paul, with his power of working miracles, says in his epistle, “Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.” Evidently for some reason the Lord did not see fit to raise up Trophimus at that time in answer to prayer.

Sometimes the loving Father feels that it is best for His weary children to go to their rest. And upon this class there rests this divine benediction: “I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, said the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.” Revelation 14:13. This class will be saved from passing through the storm and tempest of the last days. And while they rest from their labors, their works follow them. The seed they have sown in Christian ministry continues to bear fruit until the final harvest.

I have known of many instances in which the Lord has raised up His people from the very verge of the tomb to life and health. He is just as willing to hear prayer today as He was when He walked this earth nineteen hundred years ago, and He has the same power to heal. We have the same blessed Christ who healed the leper, who raised Lazarus from the grave, who stilled the tempest, and who cast out devils. He is glad to have us bring to Him, in the arms of faith, the sick and the suffering. Sometimes it pleases Him to raise them instantly to health. At other times the process is a gradual one. They improve from day to day; and finally they are given perfect restoration.

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Co-operating With God

While this process is going forward, it is right and proper that the sick one should co-operate with the Lord in bringing about an answer to his prayer. It would be unfortunate for him to fill his system with drugs. There are natural remedies which may be employed, such as pure food and water, abundance of sunshine, rest, and recreation. There is the employment of hydropathic remedies. There is no denial of faith on the part of the sick one in employing these agencies as long as he feels their need. The Lord works through such means the same as He wrought for Hezekiah when He gave instructions that a plaster of figs should be placed upon the carbuncle afflicting the king.

The divine promise is that when prayer is offered for the sick, if the afflicted one has committed sin, the Lord will forgive him. And so the afflicted should seek from the Lord, not alone a physical blessing, but even a greater spiritual blessing. Nothing will contribute so much to the desired blessing, both physically and spiritually, as will the spirit of complete surrender and resignation to the divine will. As the afflicted commit their cases to the hands of God, believing that He knows best and that as their loving and merciful Friend He will do for them what He sees to be for their good, there will come peace of mind and joy of heart even in the midst of pain. And this spirit of submission we need to exercise in every experience of life. Having done the best we know, and failed, we may be saved from sorrow and disappointment by believing that in all our affairs God has overruled for the best.

All Shall Be Well

All shall be well
The darkest, night encircles me about,
And not a ray of cheering light appear;
His promise shall preserve my faith from doubt;
“Fear not, My child; in darkness I am near.”

All shall be well,
When hard the battle grows against sin and wrong,
And victory seems to turn on evil’s side;
Then is the time to sing faith’s glorious song,
And fearlessly in His great power confide.

All shall be well;
Though dearest friend may turn to bitter foe,
And love may change to hate and cruel sneer;
He still is true, and this my soul does know,
His love divine brings to me helpful cheer.

All shall be well;
The arrow may not reach its destined end;
Our plans may fail to win the longed-for prize;
But in the failure He may choose to send
may be the way which leads to the skies.

All shall be well;
In pleasure or in pain, in death or life,
His hand is on the helm in good or ill;
In calm, sweet peace, or hard and trying strife,
There comes to me what He shall wisely will.

All shall be well;
Then trust Him in the stormy ocean wild,
As well as on the calm and peaceful shore;
He ever cares for His trusting child,
He safe shall keep me now and evermore.