



“From My Heart To Yours”
A Newsletter For Christian Women
By: Cyd James
Edition 11

A Certain Woman

“And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.” **Mark 5:25-34.**

This “certain woman” had suffered an illness or plague for twelve years. Common sense would tell us that she was probably pale and weak, yet for the most part her infirmity would not be discerned at first glance. Some health conditions are easily perceived, and others such as this woman’s are not. Her plague was one that was basically hidden and not even spoken about in polite company. It also caused her to be “unclean” among others and shut her out of the courts of the Lord’s house. **Lev. 15:19-33.** If we put ourselves in her place, we can imagine her great desire to be free from this disease and to be made healthy once again. Having an infirmity is a trying thing in itself, but to have the added burden of being unclean and shut away from others and the Lord’s house would be a much more difficult situation to bear.

Though sickness is something that all of mankind faces and of which nothing is unique, chronic or long-term illness often brings about judgments and misunderstandings. Author Katrina Berne states, “Many of us are told that we have brought illness upon ourselves as a result of character deficiencies or weak moral fiber, flaws we could voluntarily correct if we were properly motivated. Illness has been viewed as a punishment for improper living, the result of an inadequate spiritual belief system, or a self-created opportunity to grapple with certain life lessons. Remaining ill connotes that we have failed to learn the right lessons or to conquer our imperfections. Such beliefs inappropriately blame the patient for the illness.”

In the book of Job, his friends came and mourned with him over the afflictions that he was enduring. When his sickness and sufferings continued, they started to falsely accuse and judge him. They did not have a fuller understanding of God’s will concerning

illness and suffering, for if chronic illness was simply a chastisement from our imperfections and sins, then EVERYONE would be sick every single day as we all sin and have shortcomings each day. To think that we are healthy because of our lack of sin or that we try harder to maintain good health than those around us is to place ourselves on a pedestal that is not taught in the Scriptures. It is only by God's grace that we are able to get up each morning, work hard, enjoy hobbies, and have a body free from disease and pain. Though sickness can at times be a chastisement, if it were always so, the Lord would not have sought out the sick and infirm and had pity upon them. **Matt. 14:14.**

Many commentators state that Job is the oldest book written in the Bible. There were misconceptions about sickness then and they continue to this day. One that is currently prominent is that if a person gives their body what it needs to heal itself (exercise, nutritional support, etc.,) it will always respond accordingly and be healed. Thus we are seeing an increase or boom in the vitamin/herb and exercise industry, and are hearing more about anti-aging remedies. On the surface much of what they teach sounds good, but on deeper reflection, it is nothing more than humanistic thinking trying to control our destinies and to somehow defeat death. Yes, it is a responsible thing to take care of our bodies and to give it the proper nutritional support and exercise that it needs. Oftentimes this will alleviate illness and cause healing; but to think that exercise and nutrition is a cure-all is not Biblical thinking. God alone is in control of each aspect of our life's circumstances, including illness and the time of our death. **Eccl. 3:1-2.** He is the great "I Am" and all things occur or happen according to His will. The Scriptures also tell us that because of our inherited sin in Adam, we are sinners and thus dying each day. Godly brethren such as Timothy and Paul had infirmities in the flesh and there is no recorded evidence of their ever being healed.

Conversely, if it is God's will, we will be healed. For when this certain woman touched but the hem of Christ's garment, she was healed. She noticed it immediately. It was not a gradual healing as is stated in some religious circles. What Christ accomplishes is perfect, whole, and instantaneous. This certain woman's healing was also a picture of salvation. That which was unclean and even shameful to talk about, was made clean and pure and whole. Hence at the appointed time, the Lord was pleased to heal and manifest His grace to her (one person amongst the multitude).

At the beginning of our text it says, "And [she] had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." How sad that this woman suffered at the hand of many physicians and also spent all of her money desiring to be cured of her illness. The same thing happens today as many seek respite from their pain and suffering. A pastor friend we have in Papua New Guinea has been ill most of his adult life. He has times where he can hardly function and has sought help at various health clinics within the country. Since they do not have access to modern medical tests, they ended up experimenting on him for treatment and even gave him psychotic drugs. This made him feel much worse than he already did and thus he quit going to the clinics. One day as he walked along the road to go to a marketplace, some of his relatives who were in a vehicle stopped and said they would give him a ride. After he got in, they locked the doors and "kidnapped" him and took him to a secluded area of Port Moresby to see a Sanguma or witch doctor. In their lost state and ignorance, they thought this Sanguma could cure him. Our pastor friend refused to cooperate and was extremely grieved and prayed for God to deliver him from the situation. He clearly stated that he wanted no part of a satanic ritual and was

then reluctantly taken to the market place where he originally wanted to go. It was a traumatic event for him to go through. When he related it to us he said that he trusted God in all things, including his illness, and that his life was nothing. He only wanted to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ with the strength and health that he did have.

Christ often allows suffering for reasons or purposes that are not understood in this life. It may be a time of testing. Testing for the one who is suffering---tempering and refining their faith, or it may be a time of testing for those living around the one who is suffering. There's a tendency to think that an illness or a trial of some sort is meant totally for the one going through it, when that is not so. Trials affect more than the person directly involved. It is our duty to think of others and to give aid to those who are struggling around us, as the Lord did during His earthly sojourn. In the account of **Matthew 25:34-40**, He specifically commends those who helped others in need. One part listed is, "I was sick and ye visited me." **Matthew 25:36**.

Since we still have our flesh to contend with, long term illness sometimes leads to self-pity and a loss of perspective. There have been times when I've been sick in bed for weeks at a time and started noticing every single thing about the ceiling. It becomes highly important for Frank to knock down every cobweb and I've wanted to ask him to repaint it, but know that is going too far. Focusing on imperfections only leads to dreariness, pettiness, and more imperfections. Praying for renewed grace and to have a proper perspective on what is truly important is a daily need.

The principles concerning the widow's mite in **Luke 21:1-4** can also be applied to our health. Though the natural man tends to judge by how busy we are or how much we are doing, the Lord knows our abilities and judges accordingly. Thus doing what we are capable of doing to glorify the Lord, though it may seem insignificant in the eyes of the world, is highly essential. Many who suffer from chronic illness beat themselves up or are embarrassed because they cannot hold up to what others are able to do or to work as hard as others, yet that is wrong thinking. The Lord looks on the heart and knows our desires, our capabilities, and what effort we put into serving Him.

At Olmstead Baptist Church's 50th Anniversary, an elderly woman who is a charter member and has been faithful to attend church services for all of those years told me that if she waited until she felt good in order to attend services, she would rarely make it to church. She also said that there are times when she doesn't feel well, however when she goes to church, she starts feeling better during the services. Her words were a blessing to hear. I am not advocating going to church when one is truly sick or infirm, but am rather showing the fine line there is of making every ache and pain an excuse "not" to attend worship services.

In the text in Mark chapter five it states that Jesus looked around to see who had touched him and had caused virtue to go out of him. When He saw this certain woman, it caused her to fear and tremble and she fell down before Him and "told him all the truth." Perhaps she felt unworthy to have touched His garment and to have been healed. The Lord who is ever gracious told her that her faith [in Him] had made her whole and to go in peace. This woman's humble attitude of knowing that she didn't deserve anything, yet having faith that all things were possible with Him are an example to us today.

J. C. Ryle wrote that sickness is no sign that God is displeased. Sickness is intended to be a blessing to us and not a curse. ---Lazarus was a good man, converted, believing, renewed, sanctified, a friend of Christ, and an heir of glory. And yet Lazarus was sick!" "Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." **John 11:3.** J.C. Ryle further states (paraphrased): "Sickness helps to remind men of death and helps them to think seriously of God, their souls, and the world to come. It also helps to level and humble us. We have no right to murmur at sickness but rather ought to thank God for it. It is an awakener to the conscience and a purifier to the heart. Surely I have a right to tell you that sickness is a help and not an injury, a gain and not a loss, a friend and not a foe to mankind."

Charlotte Elliot was born in Surrey, England on March 18, 1789. She became an invalid at age 30 and remained so the rest of her life. About her physical condition, Elliot wrote, "My Heavenly Father knows, and He alone, what it is, day after day, and hour after hour, to fight against bodily feelings of almost overpowering weakness and languor and exhaustion, to resolve, as He enables me to do, not to yield to the slothfulness, the depression, the irritability, such as a body causes me to long to indulge, but to rise every morning determined on taking this for my motto, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Though this article has dealt with sickness, every trial that we experience in this life is similar. All include suffering, weariness, misunderstandings, and judgments. Therefore whatever the trial is: the death of a loved one, sickness, being handicapped, being married to a lost spouse, being a single adult, being childless, financial burdens, difficulties with our children, and so forth; all warrant our true, heartfelt sympathy and understanding towards each other.

Recently I read that as Polycarp stood ready to be burned alive for his faith in Jesus Christ, he said, "Oh Lord, I thank thee that thou has thought me worthy of this hour." And he bowed his head as the flames consumed him. Consequently, whatever trials we are going through in this life, may we too in some small way be as Polycarp and pray to be counted "worthy of this hour."

"My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." **Psalms 63:5-7.**