WP-20 FAITH IN PRACTICE

Healing: Where Sickness Comes From and What Jesus Did About It

STATEMENT

Scripture names three sources of sickness: the devil, God's discipline and judgment, and our own choices. For every one of them, Scripture also gives a path to healing. Our Father wants His children well. We will still grow old and die, because that is part of His plan since Adam, but living this life in sickness is not what Jesus paid for.

Read time **9 min** Sources & resources **7** Series **Faith in Practice** Author **Lee Gregory**

01 ABSTRACT

Exodus 4:11 troubles many readers: "Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I, the LORD?" Does God make people sick? Is sickness the devil? Is it our own fault? Scripture's answer is that all three happen, and that none of them is the end of the story. This paper sets out where sickness comes from, what Jesus did about it, how believers are told to respond, and how healing fits with the fact that every life on this earth ends.

02 THREE SOURCES OF SICKNESS

1. The devil. Jesus repeatedly connected sickness with satanic oppression. He described a crippled woman as one "held in bondage by Satan for eighteen years" (Luke 13:16). He healed a man who was blind and unable to speak by casting out a demon (Matthew 12:22; also 9:32–33). Peter summarized His whole ministry: Jesus "went around doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38). The thief comes "to steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10), and the very conditions named in Exodus 4:11, muteness, deafness and blindness, are the ones Jesus most often reversed.

2. God's discipline and judgment. Under the old covenants God plainly placed sickness on people: the plagues on Egypt, the plague in Numbers 16:46–50, the curses of Deuteronomy 28. The New Testament continues the pattern in specific cases. Herod was struck down by an angel of the Lord (Acts 12:23); the sorcerer Elymas was struck blind (Acts 13:11). Most striking, Paul tells believers that taking communion carelessly brings illness: "if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died" (1 Corinthians 11:29–30). Paul is clear about the purpose: "when we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned along with the world" (11:32).

3. Our own choices. After healing a man at the pool of Bethesda, Jesus found him and said, "Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you" (John 5:14). The psalmist says, "Some were fools; they rebelled and suffered for their sins" (Psalm 107:17). Scripture states the principle again and again: "You will always harvest what you plant" (Galatians 6:7). "Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death" (6:8). "A farmer who plants only a few seeds will

get a small crop" (2 Corinthians 9:6). "The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged" (Matthew 7:2). "Those who plant trouble and cultivate evil will harvest the same" (Job 4:8; also Proverbs 22:8; Hosea 8:7). Choices about food, drink, sexual conduct, unforgiveness and stress all reap a harvest in the body.

Underlying all three is a fallen world. Since Adam, "all creation was subjected to God's curse" (Romans 8:20). Sickness entered with that curse.

03 A PATH TO HEALING FOR EVERY SOURCE

SOURCE	WHAT SCRIPTURE SAYS TO DO
The devil	Take authority and resist. "I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19); "They will cast out demons in my name… place their hands on the sick, and they will be healed" (Mark 16:17–18); "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7).
God's discipline	Examine yourself and repent. "If we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged by God in this way" (1 Corinthians 11:31). "If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us" (1 John 1:9).
Our own choices	Stop sowing the wrong seed and start sowing the right one (Galatians 6:7–9). Confess and pray: "Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed" (James 5:16). "He sent out his word and healed them" (Psalm 107:20).
Any cause	Call for the elders: "Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick, and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven" (James 5:14–15). Use practical remedies as well: Isaiah prescribed a fig poultice for Hezekiah (Isaiah 38:21), Paul advised Timothy on his health (1 Timothy 5:23), and Luke was a physician.

04 WHAT JESUS DID

Isaiah prophesied: "It was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down… He was whipped so we could be healed" (Isaiah 53:4–5). Matthew applies this directly to physical healing: Jesus "healed all the sick. This fulfilled the word of the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, who said, 'He took our sicknesses and removed our diseases'" (Matthew 8:16–17). The verbs are past tense: He took; He carried. Peter repeats it: "By his wounds you are healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

Even under the old covenant, God's stated intent was healing: "I will not make you suffer any of the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you" (Exodus 15:26). "He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases" (Psalm 103:3).

05 THE FATHER WANTS YOU WELL

When a leper said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can heal me," Jesus answered, "I am willing. Be healed!" (Matthew 8:2–3). That settles the question of God's will. In the Gospels, no one who came to Jesus asking for healing was turned away; "he healed all the sick among them" (Matthew 12:15). The only limit recorded is unbelief: in Nazareth "he couldn't do any miracles among them except to place his hands on a few sick people and heal them" (Mark 6:5). Jesus "is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8), and John prayed that believers would be "as healthy in body as you are strong in spirit" (3 John 1:2). The evidence in Scripture points one direction: toward healing.

Healing requires faith, but not always the sick person's. The woman with the issue of blood was healed by her own faith (Mark 5:34); the lame beggar expected only money (Acts 3:3–7); Lazarus was dead (John 11). Someone involved must believe. If you know you should lay hands on someone and pray, not doing it shows more fear of man than of God.

06 HEALING AND THE END OF LIFE

Healing does not mean living forever on this earth. The curse that came through Adam reaches everyone: "you were made from dust, and to dust you will return" (Genesis 3:19). "Seventy years are given to us! Some even live to eighty" (Psalm 90:10). "Each person is destined to die once" (Hebrews 9:27). "Our bodies are dying," even while "our spirits are being renewed every day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). Growing old and dying is part of God's plan for this age, and no one will supersede it. Creation is waiting for the day it is set free "from death and decay" (Romans 8:21).

Scripture also shows that an early death can be an act of compassion. "The godly often die before their time… No one seems to understand that God is protecting them from the evil to come. For those who follow godly paths will rest in peace when they die" (Isaiah 57:1–2). When the child of wicked King Jeroboam died, God said he alone would be honored in burial, "for this child is the only good thing that the LORD… sees in the entire family" (1 Kings 14:13): taken before the judgment that would fall on his house. David, after his infant son died, said, "I will go to him one day, but he cannot return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23). God sees what we cannot.

But dying at the end of a full life is very different from living that life sick. God's picture of the end is "You will go to the grave at a ripe old age, like a sheaf of grain harvested at the proper time" (Job 5:26), and "I will reward them with a long life" (Psalm 91:16). At 120, Moses' "eyesight was clear, and he was as strong as ever" (Deuteronomy 34:7). Jesus did not carry our sicknesses so we could carry them too. Lying in suffering is not victory, and it is not what He gave us.

07 SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT

OBSERVATION	DATA & SOURCE	CONFIDENCE
Sickness from the devil	Luke 13:11, 16; Matthew 9:32–33; Matthew 12:22; Acts 10:38; John 10:10. Acts 10:38 ↗	HIGH
Sickness as God's discipline	1 Corinthians 11:29–32; Acts 12:23; Acts 13:11; Numbers 16:46–50. 1 Corinthians 11:27-32 ↗	HIGH
Sickness from our own choices	John 5:14; Psalm 107:17; Galatians 6:7–8.	HIGH
Reaping what you sow	Galatians 6:7–9; 2 Corinthians 9:6; Matthew 7:2; James 3:18; Job 4:8; Proverbs 22:8; Hosea 8:7.	HIGH
Jesus carried sickness	Isaiah 53:4–5; Matthew 8:16–17; 1 Peter 2:24.	HIGH
God is willing to heal	Matthew 8:2–3; Matthew 12:15; Psalm 103:3; Exodus 15:26; 3 John 1:2.	HIGH
A path to healing	James 5:14–16; 1 Corinthians 11:31; 1 John 1:9; Mark 16:17–18; Luke 10:19.	HIGH
Death is appointed; early death can be mercy	Genesis 3:19; Hebrews 9:27; Psalm 90:10; Isaiah 57:1–2; 1 Kings 14:13.	HIGH

OBSERVATION	DATA & SOURCE	CONFIDENCE
Healing is provided in the atonement for today	Held by Pentecostal and charismatic traditions; other traditions read 1 Peter 2:24 as primarily spiritual healing.	INTERPRETIVE

High = directly measured, or stated plainly in the text. **Moderate** = well-supported, with recognized debate. **Interpretive** = consistent with the text, but depends on how the passage is read.

08 OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

OBJECTION

Exodus 4:11 shows God causes disabilities, so sickness must be His will.

RESPONSE

God did place sickness on people under earlier covenants, and still disciplines (1 Corinthians 11:30). But discipline has a purpose and a remedy. Jesus never put sickness on anyone who came to Him; He removed it, to fulfill Isaiah 53.

OBJECTION

If sickness can be my own fault, this just heaps guilt on sick people.

RESPONSE

Scripture names three sources, and the disciples were wrong to assume a blind man's condition was caused by sin (John 9:2–3). The point is not blame; it is that every source has a remedy, and the Father wants you well.

OBJECTION

Faithful believers still get sick: Timothy (1 Timothy 5:23), Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20), Paul's "thorn" (2 Corinthians 12:7).

RESPONSE

Provision is not the same as experience in a fallen world. Paul calls his thorn "a messenger from Satan," which fits the first source above. He also recommended a practical remedy to Timothy: prayer and medical care belong together.

OBJECTION

If God wants everyone healed, why does anyone die?

RESPONSE

Death is appointed for this age (Hebrews 9:27), and sometimes an early death is God's protection (Isaiah 57:1–2). Healing is about how we live, not whether this body lasts forever. Scripture's picture is a long life and a timely end, not years of suffering.

09 CONCLUSION

Sickness comes from the devil, from God's discipline and from our own choices, all in a world under Adam's curse. Scripture gives a remedy for each: resist the devil, examine yourself and repent, change what you are sowing, call for prayer, and use

what God provides. Jesus took our sicknesses, was willing to heal everyone who asked, and has not changed. We will all grow old and go home in God's timing, but living this life sick is not victory, and it is not what He purchased for us.

> *"Lord, if you are willing, you can heal me." Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" Matthew 8:2–3*

10 FURTHER RESOURCES

SCRIPTURE **Isaiah 53: the suffering servant** New Living Translation
https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2053&version=NLT

SCRIPTURE **Matthew 8:1–17** New Living Translation
https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%208%3A1-17&version=NLT

SCRIPTURE **1 Corinthians 11:27–32** New Living Translation
https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%2011%3A27-32&version=NLT

SCRIPTURE **James 5:13–16: the prayer of faith** New Living Translation
https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James%205%3A13-16&version=NLT

TEACHING **God Wants You Well** Andrew Wommack Ministries
https://www.awmi.net