

OLD TESTAMENT HEALING SCRIPTURES

In the Old Testament period God "set the stage" for what He would be doing later on through Christ. He clearly announced the connection between sin and disease, He presented Himself as both Savior from sin and Healer of disease, and He demonstrated His ability and willingness to save and heal by many miracles, signs and wonders.¹

Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. Psalms 107:19-20 ESV

Prayers for Healing

We can learn so much just by listening in on the conversations of others (not snooping, but with their permission!). Especially when people are talking to God our own unvoiced questions might be answered. Their communications and how the Lord responds open vistas of possibility for us, such as: "You mean, I can talk to God like that?" or "Is it really ok to ask such a thing?" So, let us listen in, watch, and learn. It will surely be our turn soon.

Abraham's Prayer for Abimelech

The very first person God called to follow Him, just happens to also be the first person through whom the Lord healed someone. Coincidence? This should give us all a wonderful reassurance. Abraham was far from perfect, but he was willing to believe God at His Word -- that God would do what He promised.² Apparently, that was all God needed to declare Abraham righteous, grant him right standing, and use him as a vessel to help those around him.

Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children. For the Lord had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife. Genesis 20:17-18 ESV

The Healing of the Leper Naaman

Without a doubt Elisha was both meek and mighty. In God's kingdom, meekness before God is a prerequisite for spiritual power. Yet, here he is up against his opposite: Naaman, the Syrian commander who holds worldly power and shows himself arrogant before God. Naaman flatly refuses to do what the prophet tells him! It could have ended there, but he repented of his anger and turned back to do as he was told. This shows us the readiness of our God to forgive those who repent and more. As Jesus pointed out, this unbelieving Syrian was the only leper Elisha healed, despite there being other lepers in Israel.³ Evidently, the Lord



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is perfectly willing to heal even those who don't know him, or barely know about Him, as well as those with anger issues. That should give us all hope!

So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and stood at the door of Elisha's house. And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." But Naaman was angry and went away, saying, "Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. But his servants came near and said to him, "My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it? Has he actually said to you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God, and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. 2 Kings 5:9-14 ESV

The Prayers of the Psalmists

The Book of Psalms puts champions of prayer and praise on display before us, so that we can learn and be encouraged by their ways of approaching God. For one thing, they don't try to hide the way they feel from God. He already knows, so they set everything before Him – all of their complaints and well as whatever they may need to confess. We see too that for them confession has two dynamic sides: confessing their sins and also confessing the goodness and faithfulness of their God. These are excellent prayers to take to heart and repeat with hope-filled faith. The same God who listened to them and healed them is the same One who is listening to you. Give God everything in your heart, holding nothing back, especially God's rightful praise. That is the message of the Psalmists.

O Lord, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled. Psalms 6:1-2 ESV

I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up and have not let my foes rejoice over me. O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me. O Lord, you have brought up my soul from Sheol; you restored me to life from among those who go down to the pit. Psalms 30:1-3 ESV

As for me, I said, "O Lord, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!" Psalms 41:4 ESV

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. Psalms 103:2-5 ESV



Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting. The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. Psalms 147:1-3 ESV

Hezekiah's Tearful Prayer

Never underestimate what your tears mean to the Lord. Watchman Nee called tears "liquid prayers" because God listens through them to what our heart is seeking to express. David was a man of war, but he was also a man of tears who drenched his bed with tears at times, crying his heart out to the Lord. Never cry your tears as if they are falling into an uncaring void. Your Great Friend is listening to every tear and storing them in His bottle.⁴ The Lord sent the prophet back to Hezekiah with a reverse decision, all because the king gave the King his tears.

"Turn back, and say to Hezekiah the leader of my people, Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will heal you." 2 Kings 20:5 ESV

Jeremiah's Desperate Prayer and Faith Proclamation

People who hated his ministry put Jeremiah through some terrible ordeals, including casting him into a muddy pit and mocking him for his faith when he was down. Perhaps, it was there that he took ill. Fortunately, we see by this heart-felt plea that Jeremiah kept his faith and his focus on God. Jeremiah is absolutely clear in his own mind that God can indeed heal and save Him. He is equally convinced that since he is living with God at the center of his praise (all he holds dear), he believes God will save him ("for you are my praise"). No matter what we are going through, our God will always (eventually) prove His faithfulness, if we don't quit and give up. Keep putting the Lord first, and He will take care of what concerns you.⁵

Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise. Behold, they say to me, "Where is the word of the Lord? Let it come!"
Jeremiah 17:14-15 ESV

Promises of Healing

Promises play such a key role in the spiritual life. Learning how to hold onto God's promises, especially when they don't seem to be coming true, is almost the most important thing practical we could learn. Believing the promises keeps our hope alive for as Paul pointed out, "Hope that is seen is not hope."⁶ Believing the promises also keeps our faith active and faith is the "substance" God uses to bring what we hope for towards us.⁷ Standing on the promises with confident hope and faith, therefore, enables us to live in the meantime. We even enter into the very presence of God and reap our inheritance of peace, joy and other good things by means of His "precious and very great promises."⁸

In the passages that follow, look carefully for the promises that the Holy Spirit may be flagging for you. Anything that gets your attention, or makes you pause and think, or tugs at your heart, just may be a specific promise of God intended as a lifeline for you to hang on to. Get a good grip on God and His grace by means of these promises!



But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:5-6 ESV

I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will lead him and restore comfort to him and his mourners, creating the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace, to the far and to the near," says the Lord, "and I will heal him. Isaiah 57:18-19 ESV

Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security. I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first. I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. Jeremiah 33:6-8 ESV

Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them. Hosea 11:3-4 ESV

I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel; he shall blossom as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. Hosea 14:4-6 ASV

Healing with Conditions?

It must be said that *sometimes* the Lord lays conditions down which must be met, before what He desires to do can take place. This is certainly true of healing – at times. How are we to know if our situation of sickness is one of those times? The devil is expert at raking Christians over the coals, breathing fiery threats (like Job's accusers) that we are sick because of something we did and unless we confess up, God will be mad, and the sickness will remain.

First of all, God took His righteous anger out on Jesus and has nothing of it left over for you – that's the gospel truth! He loves and forgives us and wants to heal us. Nevertheless, this may be a time of discipline. One way to know is clarity. It is the Holy Spirit's job to convict us of sin. Just ask Him to reveal if there is anything to confess. Either a specific sin will come into focus or the fog of confusion will remain. That fog of generalized wrongness is always from the Enemy. Clarity about a sin to confess is always from the Lord. For more on discerning between the two see [Conviction versus Condemnation](#).

There the Lord made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them, saying, "If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, your healer." Exodus 15:25-26 ESV



"If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14 ESV

"Behold, blessed is the one whom God reproves; therefore despise not the discipline of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he binds up; he shatters, but his hands heal." Job 5:17-18 ESV

A voice on the bare heights is heard, the weeping and pleading of Israel's sons because they have perverted their way; they have forgotten the Lord their God. "Return, O faithless sons; I will heal your faithlessness." "Behold, we come to you, for you are the Lord our God. Jeremiah 3:21-22 ESV

An Extraordinary Healing Event

While in the wilderness (think dry, dreary, dreadful journey) the people murmured and complained against the Lord. Please note that this is the opposite of the Psalmist's approach! In response and as a form of chastisement, the Lord sent a plague of fiery serpents. Blessings are consequences of our actions that we like; chastisements are consequences we don't like.⁹ This is clearly a case of "to whom much is given, much is required."¹⁰ The children of Israel were given the cloudy pillar by day and the fire by night. They were treated to the greatest continuous display of sovereign, supernatural power the world has ever seen. Their extremely faithless response, therefore, called forth a most severe consequence.

The point is that God didn't want to see His people sick and dying. They brought it on themselves by the way they chose to behave. Nevertheless, God already had the cure in mind. His idea of a gracious remedy turned this whole sorry episode into a fantastic living picture of the Messiah's future work. Jesus alluded directly to this incident when He said that if He was lifted up (wrapped in sin like that serpent on the pole) He would draw all men to Himself.¹¹ Don't ever mistakenly think that your sins and misdeeds have outfoxed God. He can make even our worst segue into His best. He seems to delight in doing so.

And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live. Numbers 21:7-9 ESV

A Word about O. T. Language

The Old Testament passage quoted below is truly scary and even bizarre, if it means what it seems to mean in bare-knuckled English. How do we make sense of it? No less an authority than the Great Reformer himself, Martin Luther, cautioned that we should only read the Old Testament through the lens of gospel glasses.¹² By the gospel, we know that the Father is perfect love, that He is the Author of life, not death, and that it is the thief who comes to "kill and destroy."¹³ When I read a passage like this (there are not many of them), I see it as the Father



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taking ultimate responsibility for all that happens on the earth, like a captain choosing to go down with the ship. He doesn't cause people to sin, but sin brings forth death. He is not the agent of temptation, sin and death, Satan is. Nevertheless, He oversees and overrules the free will decisions of people and demons, so He assumes ultimate authority for what He has to allow. This may be a fine distinction, but it has always suited me just fine.

"See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand."

Deuteronomy 32:39 ESV

Healing Only Slightly

Would it be sufficient to lift people's spirits with a quick prayer and a pat on the back, but leave them confirmed in the sickness? Would it be sufficient to patch a wounded heart with a few platitudes, but still leave the person joyless and dragging? Let's take it a step further: Would it be a sufficient healing, if a person recovers from a disease, but not from the sin-sickness of living apart from God and His ways? The Lord says He wants His healing to go deep. He evidently desires us to be fully healed in [body, soul and spirit](#).

They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace. Jeremiah 6:14 ESV

Next Healing Essential

[Scriptures of Jesus in Action](#) Jesus is a living demonstration of the invisible Father's will and desire. Jesus said that He always did what the Father wanted Him to do. That certainly includes the healings Jesus did. But how did He do them? As our Example we can try to imitate Him from the outside by "copying" the way He lived, or from the inside by seeking to adopt His same internal stance. Both ways are valid, however, the latter way yields extraordinary results!

Interested in Going Deeper?

Consider taking our free [eCourse for Healing](#). We have designed a complete series for personal transformation, "Matters of the Heart," to help Christians gain emotional freedom and inner healing. In all there are 24 Main Healing Lessons and 24 Head to Heart Guides to help you bring your heart to God and receive His Great Heart for you in return!



Scriptures and Footnotes

¹ Read Deuteronomy to see how the curse of disease is not something that God wants for any of us—He desires that we listen to His voice and walk in His ways so that He can shower us with blessings. However, He "sends"



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disease as a consequence of our sins. He is no respecter of persons: even the covenant people receive the curse and its consequences if they choose not to seek God, listen to His voice or obey Him.

² And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness. Genesis 15:6 ESV

³ "And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." Luke 4:27 ESV

⁴ You have kept count of my tossings; put my tears in your bottle. Are they not in your book? Psalm 56:8 ESV

⁵ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Matthew 6:33 ESV

⁶ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Romans 8:24-25

⁷ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1 ESV

⁸ His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. 2 Peter 1:3-4

⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." Deuteronomy 30:19-20 ESV

¹⁰ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more. Luke 12:48 ESV

¹¹ And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." John 12:32 ESV

¹² Here is the quote that I have heard for years, but I can't find the source to confirm it: "A Christian should read the Bible through the lens of the gospel." Even if Luther didn't write this, it nicely describes his approach to reading scripture by seeking an interpretation of each passage that also fits with Christ and the gospel.

¹³ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. John 10:10 ESV

