

**Series: HEADWINDS—April 2, 2006**

**GOD STILL HEALS!  
Matt. 8:14-17; James 5:13-16**

**I. INTRO**

- A. Twenty-five years ago, supernatural healing was laughed at by most of North America. Not any more. In that amount of time, many people in our culture have done almost a complete 180 on this issue.
1. In a *Time* survey done ten years ago, 82% of those surveyed said that they believe in the healing power of personal prayer; 73% said they believe that praying for someone else can help cure their illness; 77% said they believe that God sometimes intervenes to cure people who have a serious illness. Listen to this fact: 64% said they think doctors should join their patients in prayer if the patients request it!
  2. When you press people a little bit on *what* they believe about healing, the range is huge--ranging from magic crystals to eastern mysticism to witchcraft to Deepak Chopra--to healing as it's taught in the Bible.
 

-Several years ago, an article in **U.S. News and World Report** on healing says, "Got a friend whose feeling sick? During a dark or full moon, take an unfertilized egg from a black hen. In a sacred space, clean, consecrate and empower the egg. Then rub the egg over your friend's body and chant, ***Within, without, up and down, I banish the illness all around.*** Finish by throwing the egg at a body of water, asking the water to whisk the illness away." This spell was taken from one of hundreds in a new book entitled, **Teenage Witch: WICCA for a New Generation**. It also has spells to take care of annoying principals, math tests, etc.
  3. People jam stadiums, convention centers and hospitals, desperate for *someone* to ease their pain and add time—even if it's just months to their lives. They don't really much care *who* it is. Desperate people, running out of time and strength, will spend their last dollar--hoping for healing.
- B. The key word when it comes to healing is ***desperate***. People in pain, whose bodies are diseased and broken, are desperate and will do desperate things. People will undergo drastic disfiguring surgery, expose themselves to humiliating procedures and do things that are downright weird--hoping to be healed. People in pain are desperate for a single ray of hope.
1. And healers, no matter how weird, are making a killing on this vulnerability. By the mid-90s, Deepak Chopra, New Age healing guru, had already made at ***least*** \$15 million, despite lawsuits for fraud. The day after he appeared on Oprah Winfrey, he sold 137,000 copies of his book, **Ageless Body, Ageless Mind**. Some TV healers have shamed Christianity by doing the very same things.
 

-And just think of the money to be made. 6 ½ billion people on this planet, every single one of them with a body that will age and experience pain--and a death rate that continues to hover around 100%.

2. 2000 years ago, Jesus Christ, the most amazing Healer who ever lived, stepped onto this diseased, fear-filled, planet--over run with snake oil and hucksters--and revealed something amazing. God is deeply moved by the plight of the broken and the sick and the marginalized. This same God who made these sophisticated bodies of ours can—and does heal them.  
-This morning, I want lay out, as clearly as I possibly can, what the Bible says about healing.
3. When I'm done, you will have to make a decision about whether or not you need His healing power—and whether or not you will ask for it. We as the church are prepared to simply do what He says; to anoint and pray for you in the name of Jesus. I believe some of you will in fact be healed.

## II. THE BIBLE...ON SUFFERING AND HEALING

A. I want you to think for a moment this morning about all the things that go wrong with the human body. Heart disease, liver cancer, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, AIDS, influenza, schizophrenia, ADD—the list is endless. The question is—**how** did this happen? I believe all suffering and pain can be traced back to a single point in history when the first couple God created defied Him. Ever since, disease and death have grown and mutated in staggering proportions.

1. To understand biblical healing, you need to understand that disease and brokenness is the result of Satan and his kingdom of darkness—not God. Sin causes suffering—both directly and indirectly.  
  
-For example, when a person gets hit by a drunk driver and paralyzed, sin is the **indirect** cause of their suffering. If a person gets drunk and wrecks their car and gets paralyzed, sin is the **direct** cause.
2. Ironically, in our world, the God who originally created a perfect disease-free, tragedy free environment ruined by **our** sin tends to be blamed for the suffering. When things are going well, people pat themselves on the back--tell people their good health is a result of good exercise and eating patterns. When things begin to fall apart, they shake their fist at God and say, "Why me?"  
  
-Into this world sagging under the weight of sin and sorrow and sadness and pain, God in his amazing compassion introduces something called **healing**--where He restores diseased bodies and devastated emotions and broken spirits.
3. Maybe one of the most important things to know is that **God** gave Himself the Name, **Healer**, not us:

***If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you (Exodus 15:26 NIV).***

-God fulfilled this promise in several ways:

\*First by protecting the Israelites from the disease and plagues in that era of history.

\*Second, by directly healing them on certain occasions—which were comparatively rare.

\*The third might surprise you. The lifestyle issues God addressed with his commands were directly related to producing healthy bodies, healthy minds and healthy spirits.

- B. Anyone here heard some of the gurus in our culture talk about how the mind, body and spirit are all interconnected when it comes to our health? How you can't just treat the body as a single unit? People drop their jaws. "Wow! That's so profound!" Well, it's profound, but it's not new. The Bible is filled with that teaching! One of the healthiest things you can do for yourself is read the Bible and do what it says.
1. These days the medical community is discovering more and more that the human body is not a specimen to be treated and fixed like a car on a jack. Your emotional and mental and spiritual health have a huge impact on your physical health.
    - Do you know what current research says is the leading cause of illness, disease and, ultimately, death? Anxiety, loss of hope, guilt, hatred, stress, and broken relationships--not germs.
    - Listen to some of these facts:
      - \*A 1995 study among heart-surgery patients found that patients who drew comfort and strength from their faith in God were **three times** more likely to survive than those who didn't.
      - \*Do you realize that those of you here this morning have a health advantage? A physician named David Larsen has made a career of studying how religion affects health. He has concluded that people who attend church regularly, pray, and read their Bibles are hospitalized less often, recover from surgery faster, have stronger immune systems and normally live longer.
      - \*One study showed that when people had faith in God **and** were significantly involved in meaningful relationships with others they were **14 times** more likely to recover from heart surgery. John Ortberg says, "It's healthier to eat Twinkies with friends than to eat broccoli alone."
  2. Soul problems create health problems. Let me give you just a few of the many words of advice in the Bible that can improve your health in amazing ways.
    - a. Let God guide you in how to handle all your relationships. Don't let anger and grudges and jealousy sit in your heart; it will poison your soul and your body. And it **can** kill you. Let God forgive you and help you forgive others.
    - b. Listen to what God says about the place the money plays in your life. If the obsession with making and guarding and spending money hooks into your soul, it **will** affect your health. Guaranteed.
    - c. Listen to what God says about filling your mind with **good** things; loving others, and receiving their love--being tender, good, kind and joyful. Get into a Roots group where you can find people who will do life with you.
    - d. Follow the principle of the Sabbath. Rick Warren says: Divert daily, withdraw weekly, and abandon annually. Slow down your rpms and keep your priorities straight. If God says you need a whole day off every week to re-orient--believe me, you do. Get your life out of the red zone.

- e. Stay sexually pure. It is pure stupidity to be messing around with sex outside of a marriage relationship in a world like ours. I'm not just talking about STDs and AIDS—this stuff creates unbelievable relational and emotional messes.
- f. I used to visit a shut-in named Ruth in a previous church. Ruth **wasn't** that old, now that I think about it, but at one point she was so heavy and in such danger of having a heart attack that she had a bowel resection to force her to lose weight. On top of all this, she smoked and worried incessantly. One day in the middle of the pain this created, she said to me, "I don't know why **God** is doing this to me!"

I didn't say anything, but my **thoughts** were evil; "Hello! Clue phone! It's for you, Ruth! You've been abusing your body for years—don't blame this on **God!**" When you and I listen to God about how to treat our bodies, how to get rid of poison, how to slow down, how to stop worrying and trust it, it makes **incredible** sense. In fact, it might save your life!

C. But trusting God as your Healer goes **much** deeper than good health tips. The Bible makes it clear that God at times intervenes in our lives supernaturally heals people from devastating illnesses.

- 1. The New Testament is the record of the point in history where God launched His all-out offensive against the kingdom of darkness and all the suffering it had caused by sending Jesus.

Isaiah prophesies about this: ***Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken of God, smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed by our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and BY HIS WOUNDS WE ARE HEALED (Isaiah 53:4-5 NIV).***

-If you were to interview the people who lived at the same time as Jesus, they would tell you that He was a great teacher and miracle worker. He healed thousands.

- 2. Now, there's a lot I could say at this point, but the core truth is that Jesus, by His coming, invaded Satan's' kingdom in a major way. When Jesus sent his disciples to go out to the towns around them and heal people, He said, "Tell them that the **Kingdom of God** is near. Jesus gives them a taste of what it's like to live under a different king. He gives them a taste of what Heaven will be like where there is no more suffering or disease or death.

-Christ, through his death on the cross, dealt the final blow to the kingdom of Satan on this planet. When Jesus walked out of the grave alive, it meant the ultimate end for disease, sickness, and death.

It's not just a "watch your health" thing! God answers prayer. Almost exactly two years ago, Sydney Amer, newborn daughter of Karm and Cammie Amer from our church, was diagnosed with infectious meningitis. Neurologists and specialists told them there was no hope. In fact, one specialist took them through the CAT scans to show them how much of her brain had been destroyed by the infection. They told her, "She'll never see, talk, walk or comprehend." But that wasn't **God's**

ultimate diagnosis. She's a perfectly healthy little girl. And if you want proof, watch for her—talk to her parents and grandparents. God answers prayer!

### III. WHAT HEALING LOOKS LIKE IN THE CHURCH

A. There is a HUGE amount of confusion over healing. Frankly, *I get* a little confused sometimes. Let me talk about some misconceptions--places where truth gets pushed to the edge of untruth.

1. For example, some people say that healing stopped with the Apostles, because it was intended as a sign to authenticate Jesus Christ and His Kingdom as true and real.
  - a. And towards the end of the book of Acts, it **does** appear that miraculous healings were less frequent. Paul brings this out; Epaphroditus almost died, Trophimus got left behind on a mission because he was sick. He told Timothy to drink wine to ease his stomach problems.

Paul himself had some kind of ailment—something he called a **thorn**--that hindered his ministry. He asked God to heal him. God didn't. He said, "My grace is sufficient for what you're facing. My strength is made perfect in **weakness**."

- b. But to say that God has stopped healing is to totally ignore the **fact** of healing. I just described one example, and I could describe a number of others. I've been healed—and so have some of you.
2. Some people believe that we really shouldn't ask for healing because God uses our pain to make us better people. Does He do that? Of course. I hate to admit it, but sometimes I **need** pain to grow!

-When we ask for healing, it would appear that sometimes God says, "I'll give you grace to endure. At other times, he heals our bodies partially or completely.

3. Some people take the approach that God uses sickness, disease and suffering to spank people--you know, punish them for wrong things they've done. That's what Job's friends said. "Get right with God, Job, and God will heal you and restore your fortunes."

-Does God use pain and suffering and disease as punishment? You'd better believe He does. Jesus told one guy, "Stop your sinning so that something worse doesn't happen." Paul told the Corinthian church that some were sick and some had **died** because of the rotten, arrogant way they were treating each other.

-Sometimes pain and suffering is the only way God can get our attention and keep us from wrecking our lives. You need to know that God is not at all squeamish about using painful surgery to save a soul. Let's be clear, though, that God doesn't usually **send** it. He **allows** it.

4. There's another misconception widespread in Christianity today that **really** bothers me--and that's faith healing. If you listen carefully to what's being taught, people will tell you that it is **always** God's will to heal and bring financial prosperity. If you have the **faith**, i.e., push all the right buttons with God, it can be yours. If you don't receive the healing, then it's obvious; you just don't have enough faith. It puts the responsibility on us.

-Is faith important? Of course it is--but it's confidence in who Jesus Christ is, and His compassion and willingness to get involved in your pain. Faith isn't something you can pump up by thinking positively and praying in a loud voice. We need to be really careful to get this straight. Healing is a gift from a compassionate Father who loves his children, not a product God begrudgingly gives us when we dance and beg and plead just right to push all his buttons.

-Friends, God is **sovereign!** He makes the final decision, not us. We can't earn a healing with our faith.

B. Now, in these closing moments, I want to just get very practical about healing. Okay?

1. I recently reread all of the accounts in the New Testament where Jesus healed people. I wanted a fresh perspective on how He healed, why he healed, and what some of the common denominators were. Let me tell you what I found.
  - a. First of all, no disease, injury, deformity or damage was off limits. He wasn't just making vague bodily pains disappear. These were spectacular healings of things like leprosy, blindness and deafness. He healed quadriplegics and raised the dead. The implication is, He can do whatever it takes to heal us.
  - b. Something else about Jesus; He **never**--not even **once**--paraded healed people in front of astonished audiences to promote his healing ministry. He didn't swoop his hair or wear white shoes. He didn't blow on people or throw his coat at them or make them fall down. In fact, Jesus often pulled people **away** from the crowd and swore them to secrecy when he healed them until their healing could be verified by the experts of that day.
  - c. Third, Jesus never told people that they weren't healed because they didn't have enough faith. There were whole areas, like his home town, where he could do very little because, frankly, they thought he was still a carpenter selling snake oil--putting on a big show. They lacked faith in **Who He was**.
  - d. Fourth, Jesus never showed disdain for the physicians and medical practices of his day. In fact, Luke, writer of Luke and Acts, was a physician.
  - e. Something else, quite revealing. Jesus didn't heal everyone. Sometimes when he was done, the whole crowd was healthy. But on several occasions, he healed just one person in a crowd of sick ones.
  - f. Jesus also used a variety of methods to heal. Sometimes it was just a word. Sometimes it was a prayer. On one occasion—and I can't explain this one, he spit on the ground, made some mud, and smeared it on a blind person's eyes—and told him to go wash. Sometimes he healed from a distance.
  - g. On the faith thing--Jesus healed people who had tremendous faith—and people who never even expected to be healed.

- h. Sometimes Jesus related the ailment to sin or demonic activity, but other times he clearly said that sin had nothing to do with it.
  - i. There's one consistency. Every healing Jesus performed was only temporary. I don't know of anyone still walking around that Jesus healed. Whether it was heart disease, an accident, cancer, infection—execution--100% died.
2. What does God want you and I to know this morning about healing? I think God wants you to know that, as His child, He loves you--more than you can imagine. And He didn't cause your problem, your disability, your sickness. It is ultimately the result of living in a world spoiled and deeply diseased by sin. Satan is the prince and power of this world. He keeps people bound with suffering and with the fear of death. Healing is the sign that the Kingdom of God is advancing--taking enemy ground. Healing makes it clear that on the cross, Christ **won** the battle, not Satan.
- a. I think God would want you to know that since He **made** your body--He knows it amazingly well. He not only knows how many hairs you lost this morning, He knows how many billion skin cells your lost, and whether they got cleaned up when you dusted the house.
  - b. I think God would want you to know that **He** works through physicians and researchers—that **He** gave them the wisdom and insight they have in the human body--and that He uses their hands, their gifts of healing.
  - c. I think God would want you to know that suffering is not wasted time and energy. He is able to work for our good and do things in our hearts that we need done. You need to know that God can work for your good in the most horrendous of situations. And you need to know that there will come a time in eternity where there is no more suffering or death or disability or decay.
  - d. I think God would want you to know that **He** is the one who created this amazing body of ours.  
That He placed within it the astounding powers of healing and self-correction--and that physicians and medications count on that process for the work that they do.
  - e. But more than anything else this morning, I believe God wants you to know that He has tremendous compassion for you—that He is still walking the paths of this planet miraculously healing frail, broken bodies, wounded spirits, messed up relationships--all because of Jesus Christ who was wounded for us.
3. This morning, I want to briefly explain to you the most specific passage in the New Testament on healing--and encourage you to do what it says. And it's not at all complicated.  
-It simply says:

***Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the Name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective (James 5:14-16 NIV).***

- a. The first thing you need to know about supernatural healing is that it is **biblical**--and it's available to you. There aren't a whole bunch of qualifications here. It's very direct. Are you sick? Ask for anointing and prayer. Asking for healing is simply **asking for the strength you need to do the will of God.**

-Now, that does raise a question: What **will** you do with the strength God gives you? Will you submit it to Him--do what He asks?

- b. Secondly, it's all clearly part of what Christ calls us, as a gathering of believers, His body, to carry on. When leaders lay their hands on you in the name of Jesus, they are literally being His hands of healing. And that takes faith to see that. These don't look at **all** like God's hands!
- c. Let me mention something else that I believe is clearly implied here in this passage. It says, ***if he has sinned, he will be forgiven.*** Friends, I believe that if you are going to come to Jesus and ask for Him to heal you--it is your responsibility to make sure that you and He are on good terms. ***If*** there's rebellion or some point of stubborn resistance in your life--it is in your best interests to deal with it. Get rid of any obstacles.
- d. The fourth thing is, let God be God! Let Him choose what He's ultimately going to do, and how He's going to do it.  
-He may heal you on the spot. He may start the healing process and do it over time. He may choose to heal through physicians or surgery. I do know this; we **can't** tell God how to heal.
- e. Sometimes, a lot of times, in fact, it doesn't happen at all--at least in the way we expect. Sometimes God says, "My grace is sufficient for you and your need. It will feel like a thorn, like a stone in your shoe--but I will make my power strong in your weakness."

-Sometimes God heals in the ultimate way--people die and are healed forever. Sometimes they die young—and God is not shocked by that.

-But you know what? We don't have to protect God's reputation. We don't have to pry into and explain His mysteries. We just do what He asks; come to him for healing.

4. I want to mention something else I think is very important--implied here and specifically mentioned elsewhere. Notice vs. 16, ***Therefore, confess your sins to EACH OTHER and pray for EACH OTHER so that you may be healed.***

-Do you see what this is saying? This ministry of healing is not just something that happens at the front of the church. We are all to be involved in one another's lives--supporting each other, praying for each other, helping each other. We are to be a healing community. We are not just to be **takers** of healing; we are to be **givers** of healing. Help. Encouragement. Ongoing prayer. God intended us to walk with each other through these deals--and I want to ask you, are you in a place where you can do that right now?

Do you have a small group of people around you that you pray for--who pray for you?

5. Know what the burning, right in your face issue is for some of you this morning? You've got to ask. Ask. It's a very simple thing, but some people **never** ask. Jesus said to do **what** and you shall receive? Anybody know? **ASK!** Earlier, James says, "You don't have **because you don't ask!**" Why **don't** we ask? Pride. Maybe we're afraid we'll be disappointed. Let down--one more time.

-Jesus said that sometimes we need to keep on asking! Counting on God's compassion--that He will either heal us, or give us the grace to make it to the place where we will be ultimately healed.

6. This morning, during communion, we are going to simply and quietly do what it says here in this passage. I'm going to ask some of our leaders to be prepared here at the front, and we are going to offer to you what this passage teaches. Anointing and the prayer of faith for healing, believing that this same Jesus lives--that He's passing by this morning--and that He, in fact, wants to bring relief and healing--simply because He's loving and compassionate and good.

#### IV. **CLOSING THOUGHTS.**

My simple question for you this morning is this: Do you believe that this same Jesus is alive. Do you believe that His death on the cross made it possible for you to be healed. Do you believe He cares for you? Do you believe that the prayer of faith can still bring healing. And, **will you ask? WILL YOU ASK?**