

# **Church of God, The Eternal**

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## **The Nature of Illnesses and the True Source of Healing—Part II Illness Is the Result of Sin**

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Dear Brethren,

Disease, ill-health, and general degeneration are pandemic. In fact the cost of illness and all related health services comprise at least one quarter of the total gross national product. Of course the costs and percentages are higher in some countries than in others. The costs usually follow the curve of value on which a country or its people place human life. Even so, the costs, in general, are astronomical. The cost in human misery and loss of work time is catastrophic. The economic impingement is unbelievable. Why, in this age of great scientific advancements are we so fettered and troubled by this human condition? There must be a reason.

Even though we have, in part, addressed the matter of ill-health, we must now expand the concept. Will conditions get better? If so, how? Will we experience great scientific and medical breakthroughs? Can man save himself from what seems like a headlong plunge into self-annihilation?

How can anyone change the course of the downward curve of health unless he first understands the reasons for its existence? It is not possible. For in this age of human arrogance and intellectual presumption, there exists an inherent factor which is categorically rejected because of its innate implications. For until man reaches the end of his rope and honestly admits his total inadequacy to cope with his problems he will not reach outside of himself to ascertain the answers. Regarding this problem what is revealed from that outside source?

### **Illnesses, Degeneration, and Other Problems Are a Part of the Curse of God**

Christ in His initial glory, whom God used to create all things, made the concept of disease—cause—quite plain when addressing the matter of illness. He said in the presence of those who were scorning Him: ". . . Son, thy sins [a palsied individual] be forgiven thee" (Mark 2:5). Jesus, the Creator of man, plainly said that the cause of illness is sin. It, then, follows that the healing of sin-caused disease is forgiveness.

Illness and degeneration are the precursors to that ultimate curse—death. In fact children in general inherit the death-curse pronounced upon Adam and Eve; in many cases specific diseases are hereditarily contracted (Ex. 34:7; 20:5; Num. 14:18; Deut. 5:9). The very fact such hereditary diseases exist is a living testimony that the curse of God is still viable and in force, a fact science and philosophy cannot deny. Just to keep things in focus, let us ask: If sin and the original curse (not yet lifted) are the causes of disease, illness, and degeneration, can any scientific or medical program counter the express purpose of God?

A part of the very degeneration of man is inherited due to the initial curse of God. Paul knew and understood this concept. He said the "motions of sin" work in us (Rom. 7:5). What is the end of that which is working in us? Death, the curse of God (2 Cor. 4:12). The ultimate cessation of life is only the termination of the curse which befell man due to sin. The ultimate cannot be circumvented in this physical life. However, the "motions of sin" or the "workings of death" can be dramatically altered. By faithful obedience to God and His perfect way of life, our existence can be made enjoyable and free of much of the suffering experienced by those who rebel. Notice carefully God's explanation of this potential suffering when He instructed ancient Israel (Lev. 26:14–21 and Deut. 28:15–66). Interestingly, the exact opposite was promised for obedience (Lev. 26:1–13 and Deut. 28:1–14). Obviously, man's state of health is intricately related to his relationship with his Maker. Obedience produces good health and a beneficent life; disobedience results in ill-health and catastrophe.

The choice is man's (Deut. 30:15–19). Generally speaking, the only human beings who will take hold of the promise of a better life are those who are called of God. Men for the most part will live defiantly—in opposition to the way which produces good health (Rom. 8:7).

Are all men destined to live in opposition to the way which brings about good health and a favorable life? How can we change the course of our human experience? That course and its consequence is very precisely and clearly explained by James (James 1:14–15).

## **A Price Paid**

Man is inherently sinful. He cannot, of himself, change his degenerative nature. An outside price had to be paid. The price paid affected not only his hope of everlasting life, immortality, but the manner in which he lives now in the flesh.

Christ paid that price (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23). It was a severe price; it was the price of death. It was the fulfillment of a prophecy uttered by Isaiah many years earlier (Isa. 53:4–7). Because of our sins and the resultant physical degeneration, Christ had to die to effect a change in the human condition. Man's sins had brought about a terrible condition, resulting in the ultimate physical death (1 Cor. 15:56). The only way to abrogate the penalty of sin was to pay the price

of that sin. The price was death. Only the life of Christ was commensurate with the lives of all humanity combined. By His death He paid the price for all mankind (John 1:29).

The price paid covered all disease and degeneration, as well as the final death (1 Pet. 2:24). But that great blessing was not granted to all mankind at one and the same time. Only those chosen to receive it, in their respective times, will be blessed with such physical intervention by God (2 Tim. 1:9–10). As you can see from the text just given, the physical condition typifies the spiritual state of man. The ultimate perfection promised is to lay down the physical and become immortal—no longer subject to the weaknesses of the flesh. But that is not a part of our subject for this time.

With the death of Christ the price of death and its precursors of illness and degeneration had been paid. Restoration of good health and a sense of well-being are now possible. The promises are absolute and unequivocal.

### **Restoration of Health and Well-being Possible**

The Psalmist David, through God's Spirit, understood the devious, doubtful nature of man. Though great blessings are promised, mortal man is reluctant to accept that which he is offered. David said:

Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul [the physical body] abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! (Ps. 107:17–21)

Men not only fail to praise God, they have forgotten Him. In fact, most do not even believe in His ability to heal and restore to health. Men have turned to themselves and built laws around their own concepts whereby they insure, hopefully, the perpetuity of their philosophies. What a surprise awaits them.

Yet, in the course of time, as troubles mount, men will turn to God. When all else fails, where else can they turn? God, in his abundant mercy, saves and helps them out of all their troubles. He heals them and forgives all their iniquities.

Conditionally, we are promised a good life (1 Pet. 3:10; Prov. 10:2; 11:4). If we want good health, and an abundant life all we have to do is turn to God and put our implicit trust in Him. There is a reason for illness, disease, degeneration and death. Conversely, there is a reason

for the abundant life—good health, well-being, freedom from disease and illness. The cause of the human condition must be recognized and changed. The premise of the abundant life must be accepted and practiced.

However, human beings do not spontaneously overcome that which is inherently a part of them—the carnal nature. Mastery, even when called by God, is a lifelong endeavor. The results of human frailty are continued illnesses, diseases, etc. They are mastered and overcome on a gradual basis. For this reason, there will come times in the lives of the called when they need to turn to God for healing (James 5:14–15). To turn to any other source only increases the price which must be paid—regardless of any apparent "cure" or improvement in the health of the individual.

The law which affects our relationship with God, in this respect, is found in Ex. 34:6–7. We read the following concerning the time Moses stood before God receiving the two tables of stone:

. . . the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty . . .

Unless we recognize the cost of sin, repent bitterly, and turn to God in a right spirit we will face the exaction of that cost, hereditary and degenerative illness. It is inescapable. He, God, refuses to clear the guilty. Is there any way by which man can circumvent the price that must be paid? Can any profession, including that of the medical, render null and void the purposes of God? Honesty and integrity dictate the answer. There is no way!

One of the names for God is, "God our Healer". He alone has the power to alter the course of natural consequences—illness, disease, etc.—when a human being turns to Him. No human being has ever had power and authority over God. Many fabrications and concepts, including those of "Christianity" have been devised by which men have been deceived into believing that they can find solutions to the curses pronounced by God. This philosophy is the very basis for the educational concept of evolution and its counterpart, medical science. Of course, those who do not know God or His awesome promises—who live solely according to the dictates of flesh have no other recourse. They will turn to whatever seems to extend some advantage over the natural curses imposed by God upon all mankind. To some extent they have altered the course of that natural curse; but, they have never rescinded it. Men still die and they pay the terrible penalty of carnality in the suffering of illness and disease.

Despite this natural course of physical affairs there are some who have been promised intervention by God. As stated earlier, His name is "God our Healer". How may one receive this promised intervention?

## **The Requirement Is Faith**

As we have seen, Jesus bore the price of our iniquities and sins. He paid the price for us. Healing, the interruption of the natural consequence of sin, does not come automatically. Further, it is not given to everyone. How then may anyone become the recipient of such healing? By faith and obedience. Let us note God's specific instruction to those called and promised such intervention. We read:

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 (James 5:14–15).

Faith is the central—essential—ingredient. Jesus made this clear during the time of His earthly ministry. On one occasion Jesus told those requesting healing, ". . . According to your faith be it unto you" (Matt. 9:29). Faith is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It is the only evidence one called of God needs (Heb. 11:1). Being spiritual in nature, faith cannot be seen, handled, or observed. Therefore, many can make claims regarding faith. Millions purport to know God and to live by that promised faith. But the fruits borne do not justify the claim. Is it possible to know? Indeed!

## **Basis for Blessings From God**

". . . [H]ereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1 John 2:3–4). To receive anything from God we must first know Him. How is it possible to petition a blessing of intervention if one does not even know God? It is not possible. Therefore, God must first reveal Himself (Matt. 11:25–27). Once God has revealed Himself to a called servant, that individual may then communicate with Him.

Second, we must be obedient to the will of God. God does not hear sinners (John 9:31). Since there is no man who sins not, we know that Christ was referring to one who practices sin as a way of life. The acceptable orientation is spelled out by the Apostle John. He wrote: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight" (1 John 3:22).

Third, we must ask. God does not spontaneously heal. The called must ask and they must ask in faith. Matthew recorded these words of Christ: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find. . . . For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth . . ." (Matt. 7:7–8). When the called have come to recognize God as the Healer, they may confidently petition Him for intervention in their lives. The results are assured to the implicitly faithful (Mark 11:23–24).

Why are the faithful and obedient of God so confident and assured? The Apostle John said it succinctly and clearly. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14–15). The learned know that healing is according to His will. They also know that they are not perfect in faith. For that reason, all of us must yet grow and put on the total faith and confidence of God. God knows that we are weak and imperfect. He simply wants us to recognize what we are and admit this condition to Him. As humans we may yet do many things which are not in accord with the purpose of God. God will be most kind to our weaknesses and frailties, but never to our deceptive hypocrisies or intentional perversions of His Word in gross attempts to camouflage the real self. We must admit (confess) what we really are.

God is perfect. He is all-powerful. There is nothing He is not able to do or perform. He is the Healer of those called and who manifest that faith and confidence in Him. Those who are under the influence of this world cannot look to God for they do not know Him. Therefore, a conflict exists between the peoples of this world who believe they are doing the right thing—for all the ways of a man are right in his own eyes—and those called to know God and who attempt to live that way of life given to them. Men of this world legislate according to that which seems right to them. That does not make it right spiritually. Further, the problem is compounded because to the carnal, natural, mind all who make a profession of Christianity are considered mutually sincere in their personal relationships with God. This problem is not resolvable in this present human existence. How can anyone tell another that he is deceived and is therefore receiving the just deserts imposed upon him because of his own sins. Only those called can recognize this basic fact.

There is a cardinal fact which all peoples of this world must learn. A fact that when learned will lead mankind to happiness, well-being, and all that is good and right.

### **What This World Must Learn**

Carnal men in their deception argue about spiritual things. They arrive at conclusions which reflect only their evil thinking. Even so, they are convinced they are right before God. What conclusions they have come to are predicated on minds devoid of the Spirit of God. These are the idols of their own minds.

What man really must come to recognize is God; that He is the Ruler and Sustainer of His own majestic creation. Nebuchadnezzar, as a type of man devoid of the mind of God, through a most significant experience had to come to recognize that fact (Dan. 4:17, 32). Living mortals do not know God until they are called or until God, for purpose, intervenes in their lives causing them to know Him. Some of the ancients learned this fact the hard way. In the future all nations

and peoples are going to come to recognize the same fact, by an experience which virtually defies explanation.

Men in responsible positions today make laws, render judgments, and exercise control over other men based on carnality, prejudice, and self-preservation. Men do not know how to rule over men. Rulership, authority, and responsibility are not wrong. On the contrary, these are of God. What man needs to learn is how to properly rule—acting as a servant for the benefit of all.

If men really served and honored God, what would be the prevailing condition—in health, economics, and political orientation? The promise is succinctly stated by Moses:

Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee [the Occidental world who are basically the children of ancient Israel] the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers: And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee (Deut. 7:12–15).

To have such blessings requires much faith. To achieve such a relationship with God requires long, arduous, and diligent effort aided by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. No one has perfectly achieved that lofty objective. Even though called, we fail in definite relationship to the lack of faith evident in our personal lives. We must grow in faith. It is for that very reason, no human being can honestly, or even should, judge the faith of another. Our call is for personal mastery, not a fallacious judgment of anyone else.

Some are called. Others are not. What the one cannot comprehend he should not inflict upon the other. The uncalled of this world should not be required to live by faith. Equally imperative is the fact, the uncalled should not inflict their perverse human wills upon those God holds accountable for living by faith. And of even greater significance is the fact among those called, the one with "superior" faith should not—indeed must not—compel the "weaker" brother to live according to the standard of faith he assumes he possesses.

Reflecting again upon the premise of this series of *Monthly Letters* we must attempt to comprehend the real problem encountered in that Boston courtroom.

## **The Real Problem**

Those not called of God will not admit they are not called—that their presumed faith is feigned and not honest or legitimate. Being deceived by the master deceiver, they are convinced that they are just as religious and honest as anyone else. Simply because someone makes a claim of honesty, integrity, and rightness, does not make the claim a fact. And we must remember that the only person who is capable of making a just judgment is one who is called and thereby understands the spiritual side as well as the physical (1 Cor. 2:14–15). How is it possible for a carnally minded judge to render an acceptable judgment regarding spiritual matters? An absolutely impossible task. But will that carnal judge admit his area of weakness? No, for he sees only the physical and does not even grasp the existence of a spiritual dimension.

On the one hand, in the Boston case, we have an uncalled individual who is attempting to live by a principle which he does not even understand, and due to the inevitable failure, makes the spiritual concept of healing itself look ridiculous and bizarre in the eyes of those who are themselves equally blind. On the other hand, in legitimate cases of those called and who do possess the necessary faith and relationship of obedience toward God, physically minded judges attempt to judge matters which are beyond their areas of expertise. Since they comprehend only physical things, they are capable of judging by physical criteria only.

The conflict generated by the above facts is the division about which Christ Himself spoke (Luke 12:51–53). Even the tie of blood will not acceptably bridge the gap between the physical and the spiritual.

## **The Author of Man's Bewildering Condition**

Man's own devious nature is sufficient to create multiple problems for himself. However, in fact, he has an enemy who is even more devious, injurious, and hateful. It is that enemy who, for the present, rules and regulates this whole world (Rev. 12:9; 20:3). It is Satan, the devil, who now rules and manipulates all humankind. He is the one whom God put in charge of the affairs of this earth (Luke 4:5–6). It is he who has led all mankind into believing that they are in charge of their own destiny. He has led men into believing that they can take care of themselves. They deny God; or, they render Him impotent by believing that they must work out the details of their own existence. They have no faith or confidence in any of God's promises. For that reason, unconverted man has come up with a host of explanations to justify his inability to respond to the promises of His Creator. None will stand in the day of judgment. Honesty and a factual appraisal of his own life would require the admission that he is uncalled and faithless. Do you think that any man is going to admit such a condition? Indeed not! By his own nature he will turn to the deceptions of one of the gods which exist in this world (1 Cor. 8:4–6). Compare the previous text with Galatians 4:8.

Since two irreconcilable orientations of life exist and since the man who pursues a physical orientation cannot understand the thinking and way of life practiced by the called one, and, since physical man is presently in charge of the affairs of this world an impasse prevails. It is most difficult for natural man to make concessions in his way of thinking. How, then, do these two orientations coexist in the present world?

### **Coexistence Until God Intervenes**

The called and knowledgeable man of God will not compromise his faith and conviction. He knows the truth and will not violate his conscience toward God. Under adverse circumstances when the two orientations come into conflict, the faithful servant of God will do that which God requires and accept whatever physical man deems necessary because of this stand (Dan. 3:17–18; Acts 4:19–20; 5:29).

In due time, this earth will be under the rule of God. At that time the ways of God will prevail. All mankind will be compelled to subscribe to the ways of the Creator. Then, and then only, will good health, the abundant life, and all the promised blessings of God be poured out on mankind. The systems devised by man in rebellion against the ways of God will be terminated. Then, peace and accord will be achieved. There will no longer be contention, division, and divergence of opinion. There will no longer be men who, because of deception, feign to be servants of God. There will no longer arise a situation comparable to the Boston one which is mentioned at the beginning of the previous *Monthly Letter*.

Thank God, the called now are afforded a foretaste of what tomorrow will bring. Persecuted by those who continue in the flesh, but filled with joy and thankfulness in their own minds, they possess the spiritual mind promised to the obedient.

With profound love to all,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Raymond C. Cole". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'R' and 'C'.

Raymond C. Cole