

Coping with Illness

Mark 2:17

INTRODUCTION:

- A. **Mark 2:17**- “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick . . . ”
1. In this text, Jesus was illustrating a spiritual truth by referencing a human need.
 2. There are many manifestations of the basic concept of illness:
 - a. Chronic poor health
 2. Acute sickness
 - b. Fatigue
 - d. Pain
 - e. Stress
 - f. Certain disabilities and handicaps
 3. Illness can affect people in numerous ways:
 - a. Illness can sap one’s strength.
 - b. Illness can negate one’s hopes.
 - c. Illness can drain one’s energies.
 - d. Illness can attack one’s emotions.
 - e. Illness can deplete one’s finances
 4. On the other hand, illness can become a cleansing fire to burn away the trivial things of life and better enable us to appreciate our blessings.
 5. The experience of illness can make or break a personality.
- B. Man has categorized illness into three main types:
1. Physical
 2. Mental
 3. Spiritual

COPING WITH PHYSICAL ILLNESS

- A. God is very much aware of physical illness among his creation.
1. Jesus’ earthly ministry caused Him to heal all manners of sickness and disease among the people. **Matthew 4:23** - “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.”
 - a. In Matthew 8:14-15, Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law who suffered with a fever.
 - b. In Mark 2:5, He healed those with palsy.
 - c. In Mark 9:22, He healed one who had an evil spirit.
 - d. In mark 10:36-37, He healed blind Bartimaeus.

- e. The list could go on. In fact, the Bible records at least 35 miracles Jesus wrought.
 - 1. 9 miracles over the forces of nature.
 - 2. 6 cures of demoniacs.
 - 3. 3 raised from the dead (Jarius' 12 year-old daughter, Widow's son at Nain, & Lazarus at Bethany),
 - 4. 17 bodily cures.
 - 2. In our generation, men still face physical illness.
 - a. Cancer
 - b. Heart disease
 - c. Diabetes
 - d. Multiple Sclerosis
 - e. AIDS
 - f. And other diseases are still destroying the bodies of men.
- B. There are two kinds of Physical illness:
1. **There is the physical illness that we can change.**
 - a. Perhaps a change in life-style would restore their health.
 - b. Perhaps a change in eating habits would aid their health.
 - c. Perhaps a change in present medications would change their health.
 - d. Perhaps less stress and more rest will change their health.
 - e. Perhaps getting rid of negative emotions will help one's health.
 2. **There is the physical illness that we cannot change.**
 - a. Sometimes there are things that the doctors cannot remove from us.
 1. In 2 Corinthians 12:7-19, Paul spoke of his thorn in the flesh.
 - a. Three times he prayed to god to remove it.
 - b. In stead of removing it, God gave him sufficient grace to bear it.
 - c. Paul learned to use his suffering as a means to bring honor and glory to God.
 - b. Sometimes there are terminal illnesses.
 1. Robert Louis Stevenson, while dying of tuberculosis, wrote some literature that has been enjoyed for generations.
 2. Charlotte Elliot was an invalid when she wrote, "Just As I Am."
 3. George Matherson was totally blind when he wrote, "O Love That Will Not Let me Go"
 4. Handel was almost paralyzed when he composed the "Hallelujah Chorus."

COPING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

- A. While many suffer with illnesses of the flesh, others combat illness of the psyche . . . mental illness.
1. Neurosis - People become Neurotic
 2. Schizophrenia - People become Schizophrenic
 3. Paranoia - People become Paranoid
 4. Psychosis - People become Psychotic

B. It has long been said that many of our hospital beds are filled with people who are more mentally ill than they are physically ill. Some say 2 out of every 3 hospital beds are occupied by those who are mentally ill rather than physically ill.

1. A lot of people are sick because of sin.
2. A lot of people use their sickness as a cloak for sinning.

C. A Biblical example of mental and spiritual illness is seen in King Saul.

1. Saul's pride and ego led to:
 - a. Hatred,
 - b. Jealously
 - c. Fear
 - d. And finally, death
2. During periods of stress, Saul fluctuated violently from expressions of faith to expressions of deep despair.
 - a. At times Saul loved his loyal friends.
 - b. At times he tried to kill them.
 - c. Today these are commonly recognized symptoms of mental illness.
3. **1 Samuel 16:22-23** - "Then Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Please let David stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight."

And so it was, whenever the spirit from God was upon Saul, that David would take a harp and play it with his hand. Then Saul would become refreshed and well, and the distressing spirit would depart from him."

4. Later David became a military hero. That became a problem for Saul. **2 Samuel 18:7-11** - "So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

8 Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?"

9 So Saul eyed David from that day forward.

10 And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house. So David played music with his hand, as at other times; but there was a spear in Saul's hand.

11 And Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David escaped his presence twice."

D. There is no way to separate one's mental and spiritual health.

1. Perhaps now we understand why Solomon wrote:
 - a. **Proverbs 4:23** - "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life."
 - b. **Proverbs 23:7** - "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."

2. No wonder Jesus said in **Matthew 22:37-39** - “Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'”

3. Negative emotions that arise from being hurt are a major cause of mental illness.
 - a. Mental Health experts tell us not to do the following:
 1. When you are hurt, do not bury your hurt.
 2. Do not withdraw from the world.
 3. Do not retreat from that which is good.
 4. Do not hold on to the hurt.
 - b. Mixing hatred with hurt and seeking revenge can only make us worse than the person who hurt us.
 1. **Colossians 3:8** - “But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.”
 2. **Ephesians 4:31** - “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.”
 - c. There are those who would make themselves our enemy.
 1. **Romans 12:9** - “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.”
 2. Christians will leave vengeance to the Lord. Romans 12:19
 3. Christians will sincerely and earnestly pray for their enemies. Matthew 5:44
 4. Christians will forgive their enemies. Luke 23:34
 5. Christians will love their enemies. Matthew 5:44

COPING WITH SPIRITUAL ILLNESS

A. Spiritual illness is a sickness brought on by unforgiven sin.

1. In **Isaiah 1:6**, the prophet Isaiah described the sinful Jews in this way: “From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment.”
2. Israel was spiritually sick! Israel needed to pray like David in **Psalms 41:4** - “I said, LORD, be merciful to me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against You.”
3. The Jews of Jesus’ day needed to be healed because they were spiritually sick. **Matthew 13:13-15** - “Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive;

For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.” They needed to be healed because they were spiritually sick.

4. The church at Laodicea was spiritually sick. **Revelation 3:16** - “So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.”
 5. They needed to practice **James 5:16** - “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed . . .” Spiritual healing is what James had in mind.
- B. The spiritually sick need Christ.
1. Jesus said in **Matthew 9:12-13** - “. . . Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. . . . For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”
 2. By way of contrast:
 - a. The righteous are well spiritually.
 - b. Sinners are sick and in need of spiritual healing.

CONCLUSION:

- A. Friends, we can cope with illness, be it physical, mental, or spiritual.
1. **Physical illness**
 - a. Many can help themselves by changing their life-styles.
 - b. They need to practice self-control and slow down.
 - c. Separate yourself from your illness.
 1. You are not a cancer. Your body may have a cancer, but you are not a cancer.
 2. You are not a virus. Your body may have a virus, but you are not a virus.
 3. You are not a diabetes. Your body may have diabetes, but you are not diabetes.
 4. You are not an arthritis. Your body may have arthritis, but you are not an arthritis.
 - d. Benjamin Franklin once said, “I am fine. This old house I live in needs some repair.”
 - e. Remember also that you would not be you if your illness were taken away.
 1. If you had never been ill, you would lose a lot of insight you have gained.

2. You may also lose some valuable character traits.
3. Illness can be a great teacher.

2. Mental illness

- a. Our minds should be set on right things . . . and not on wrong things.
Philippians 4:8 - “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy-- meditate on these things.”
- b. I read about a newspaper editor who had made a lot of money, but who also made a lot of enemies.
 1. His life was full of anger and bitterness.
 2. He suddenly became very ill and was very close to death.
 3. In the long silence of the hospital room, he took another look at life.
 - a. He recorded his priorities.
 - b. He looked upon the flowers sent by his friends.
 - c. His wife read him the cards, letters, and messages that he had received.
 - d. She passed along the many telephone messages.
 - e. He became aware of the many religious people that were praying for him.
 4. He left the hospital a new man.
 - a. He came to realize that there was more to life than making money.
 - b. He also learned that there is no place for hatred.

3. Spiritual illness

- a. Nothing good can come from sin.
- b. The Great Physician can cure you of that terrible malady.
- c. In a moment I will tell you how it can be done . . . I will tell you what the Great Physician has prescribed for your life.

B. Whatever your illness, use it to help others.

1. God is the God of all comfort and the Father of all mercies. **2 Corinthians 1:3-4** - “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”
2. Being right with God helps us physically, mentally, and spiritually.

C. Friends, there is indeed a “balm in Gilead.”

1. The Great Physician (Jesus Christ) would have you follow His prescription for turning your life around so as to enjoy a full measure of spiritual health.
2. **God’s Plan for Man’s Salvation**