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Holy Spirit: Healing Sickness—P7

“And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing” (Luke 9:2).

Where did the western world get the idea that helping the sick and healing disease was an important pursuit worthy of our time and energy? Where did the idea of western hospitals and healthcare come from? Was it from the Greeks or Islam, as some suggest? Was it an evolving sense of humanity as others suggest? No. The western concept of helping the sick and suffering, no matter their economic status, came out of Christianity.

It is important to realize that God did not create the world with illness or disease. The Gospel explains that man’s rebellion against God brought all spiritual and physical death, but God does not desire this for us, and He sent His Son to reconcile us back to Him that we might be restored spiritually and physically. Throughout Scripture, God describes Himself as a spiritual and physical Healer and His Law to Israel contains extensive teaching on cleanliness, disease, sickness, and health, but it is in the New Testament that God as a Healer is personified in Jesus Christ. Everywhere He went, Jesus did two things: preach the Gospel and heal the sick: *“Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness”* (Matt. 9:35). And He passed this directive on to His disciples:

“Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness...And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you received, freely give” (Matt. 10:1; 7-8). Furthermore, Jesus said when He returns, He will cast out those who did not help the sick, but He will say to the righteous, *“Come, you who are*

blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For...I was sick, and you visited Me’...Then the righteous will answer Him... ‘When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me’” (Matt. 25:31-40).

So it is no surprise that when plagues and illnesses swept through Rome, it was Christians who visited the poor, sick, and dying, nursing them back to health, while the pagans shunned them. This was a great testimony to nonbelievers up through the Middle Ages when monastic hospitals and nursing for the poor and sick continued to progress. With the Protestant influence in developing universities for research and education, modern medicine began to take form—no longer relying on the dogma of Greek and Roman sources, but applying free inquiry to explore God’s creation. The Gospel mandate spurred Christians to study and develop the fields of biology, chemistry, and medicine, learning about what caused disease and developing ways to treat the sick and infirm. The revivals in America and England during the Great Awakening renewed focus on Christ’s mandate to preach the Gospel and heal the sick, bringing a new age of hospitals. Nearly all of the great men and women who laid the foundation of modern medicine were from Christian backgrounds.

This is God’s legacy to the world, for He gives *“gifts of healing by the one Spirit”* (1 Cor. 12:9b), working in the world through the Church. It is not the product of secularists, atheists, or enlightened men who today stand on this great body of work and claim Christianity is ignorant and backward. Unfortunately, as the world abandons God, western medicine is sliding towards harmful practices such as abortion, euthanasia, pharmaceutical dependency, managing sexual immorality, etc. Harm in the name of medicine is growing. May we pray man returns to the true Healer. Amen.

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