

This is a portion of a larger book. In this version, the Bible texts have been modified into modern English, the punctuation improved, headings and emphasis may have been added, and some sentences realigned.

The Ministry of Healing

Chap. 9 (Part 1) - Teaching and Healing

When Christ sent out the twelve disciples on their first missionary tour, He bade them, “As you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely you have received, freely give.” Matthew 10:7, 8.

To the Seventy sent forth later He said: “Into whatsoever city you enter . . . heal the sick that are therein, and say to them, The kingdom of God is come near to you.” Luke 10:8, 9. The presence and power of Christ was with them, “and the Seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us through Your name.” Verse 17.

After Christ's ascension the same work was continued. The scenes of His own try were repeated. “Out of the cities round about” there came a multitude “to Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.” Acts 5:16.

And the disciples “went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them.” “Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ to them. And the people with one accord gave heed to those things which Philip spoke . . . For unclean spirits . . . came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city.” Mark 16:20; Acts 8:5-8.

Work of the Disciples

Luke, the writer of the Gospel that bears his name, was a medical missionary. In the Scriptures he is called “the beloved physician.” Colossians 4:14. The apostle Paul heard of his skill as a physician, and sought him out as one to whom the Lord had entrusted a special work. He secured his co-operation, and for some time Luke accompanied him in his travels from place to place. After a time, Paul left Luke at Philippi, in Macedonia. Here he continued to labor for several years, both as a

physician and as a teacher of the gospel. In his work as a physician he ministered to the sick, and then prayed for the healing power of God to rest upon the afflicted ones. Thus the way was opened for the gospel message. Luke's success as a physician gained for him many opportunities for preaching Christ among the heathen. It is the divine plan that we shall work as the disciples worked. Physical healing is bound up with the gospel commission. In the work of the gospel, teaching and healing are never to be separated.

The work of the disciples was to spread a knowledge of the gospel. To them was committed the work of proclaiming to all the world the good news that Christ brought to men. That work they accomplished for the people of their time. To every nation under heaven the gospel was carried in a single generation.

The giving of the gospel to the world is the work that God has committed to those who bear His name. For earth's sin and misery the gospel is the only antidote. To make known to all mankind the message of the grace of God is the first work of those who know its healing power.

When Christ sent forth the disciples with the gospel message, faith in God and His word had well-near departed from the world. Among the Jewish people, who professed to have a knowledge of Jehovah, His word had been set aside for tradition and human speculation. Selfish ambition, love of ostentation, greed of gain, absorbed men's thoughts. As reverence for God departed, so also departed compassion toward men. Selfishness was the ruling principle, and Satan worked his will in the misery and degradation of mankind.

Satanic agencies took possession of men. The bodies of human beings, made for the dwelling place of God, became the habitation of demons. The senses, the nerves, the organs of men were worked by supernatural agencies in the indulgence of the vilest lust. The very stamp of demons was impressed upon the countenances of men. Human faces reflected the expression of the legions of evil with which men were possessed.

What is the condition in the world today? Is not faith in the Bible as effectually destroyed by the higher criticism and speculation of today as it was by tradition and rabbinism in the days of Christ? Have not greed and ambition and love of pleasure as strong a hold on men's hearts now as they had then? In the professedly Christian world, even in the professed churches of Christ, how few are governed by Christian principles. In business, social, domestic, even religious circles, how few make the teachings of Christ the rule of daily living. Is it not true that "justice

stands afar off . . . equity cannot enter . . . And he that departs from evil makes himself a prey”? Isaiah 59:14, 15.

We are living in the midst of an “epidemic of crime,” at which thoughtful, God-fearing men everywhere stand aghast. The corruption that prevails, it is beyond the power of the human pen to describe. Every day brings fresh revelations of political strife, bribery, and fraud. Every day brings its heart-sickening record of violence and lawlessness, of indifference to human suffering, of brutal, fiendish destruction of human life. Every day testifies to the increase of insanity, murder, and suicide. Who can doubt that satanic agencies are at work among men with increasing activity to distract and corrupt the mind, and defile and destroy the body?

And while the world is filled with these evils, the gospel is too often presented in so indifferent a manner as to make but little impression upon the consciences or the lives of men. Everywhere there are hearts crying out for something which they have not. They long for a power that will give them mastery over sin, a power that will deliver them from the bondage of evil, a power that will give health and life and peace. Many who once knew the power of God's word have dwelt where there is no recognition of God, and they long for the divine presence.

The world needs today what it needed nineteen hundred years ago--a revelation of Christ. A great work of reform is demanded, and it is only through the grace of Christ that the work of restoration, physical, mental, and spiritual, can be accomplished.

Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, “Follow Me.”

There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.

We should ever remember that the object of the medical missionary work is to point sin-sick men and women to the Man of Calvary, who takes away the sin of

the world. By beholding Him, they will be changed into His likeness. We are to encourage the sick and suffering to look to Jesus and live. Let the workers keep Christ, the Great Physician, constantly before those to whom disease of body and soul has brought discouragement. Point them to the One who can heal both physical and spiritual disease. Tell them of the One who is touched with the feeling of their infirmities. Encourage them to place themselves in the care of Him who gave His life to make it possible for them to have life eternal. Talk of His love; tell of His power to save.

This is the high duty and precious privilege of the medical missionary. And personal ministry often prepares the way for this. God often reaches hearts through our efforts to relieve physical suffering.

Medical missionary work is the pioneer work of the gospel. In the ministry of the word and in the medical missionary work the gospel is to be preached and practiced.

In almost every community there are large numbers who do not listen to the preaching of God's word or attend any religious service. If they are reached by the gospel, it must be carried to their homes. Often the relief of their physical needs is the only avenue by which they can be approached. Missionary nurses who care for the sick and relieve the distress of the poor will find many opportunities to pray with them, to read to them from God's word, and to speak of the Saviour. They can pray with and for the helpless ones who have not strength of will to control the appetites that passion has degraded. They can bring a ray of hope into the lives of the defeated and disheartened. Their unselfish love, manifested in acts of disinterested kindness, will make it easier for these suffering ones to believe in the love of Christ.

Many have no faith in God and have lost confidence in man. But they appreciate acts of sympathy and helpfulness. As they see one with no inducement of earthly praise or compensation come into their homes, ministering to the sick, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, comforting the sad, and tenderly pointing all to Him of whose love and pity the human worker is but the messenger--as they see this, their hearts are touched. Gratitude springs up. Faith is kindled. They see that God cares for them, and they are prepared to listen as His word is opened.

Whether in foreign missions or in the home field, all missionaries, both men and women, will gain much more ready access to the people, and will find their usefulness greatly increased, if they are able to minister to the sick. Women who

go as missionaries to heathen lands may thus find opportunity for giving the gospel to the women of these lands, when every other door of access is closed. All gospel workers should know how to give the simple treatments that do so much to relieve pain and remove disease.

Teaching Health Principles

Gospel workers should be able also to give instruction in the principles of healthful living. There is sickness everywhere, and most of it might be prevented by attention to the laws of health. The people need to see the bearing of health principles upon their well-being, both for this life and for the life to come. They need to be awakened to their responsibility for the human habitation fitted up by their Creator as His dwelling place, and over which He desires them to be faithful stewards. They need to be impressed with the truth conveyed in the words of Holy Writ:

“You are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” 2 Corinthians 6:16.

Thousands need and would gladly receive instruction concerning the simple methods of treating the sick--methods that are taking the place of the use of poisonous drugs. There is great need of instruction in regard to dietetic reform. Wrong habits of eating and the use of unhealthful food are in no small degree responsible for the intemperance and crime and wretchedness that curse the world.

In teaching health principles, keep before the mind the great object of reform--that its purpose is to secure the highest development of body and mind and soul. Show that the laws of nature, being the laws of God, are designed for our good; that obedience to them promotes happiness in this life, and aids in the preparation for the life to come.

Lead the people to study the manifestation of God's love and wisdom in the works of nature. Lead them to study that marvelous organism, the human system, and the laws by which it is governed. Those who perceive the evidences of God's love, who understand something of the wisdom and beneficence of His laws, and the results of obedience, will come to regard their duties and obligations from an altogether different point of view. Instead of looking upon an observance of the laws of health as a matter of sacrifice or self-denial, they will regard it, as it really is, as an inestimable blessing.

Every gospel worker should feel that the giving of instruction in the principles of healthful living is a part of his appointed work. Of this work there is great need, and the world is open for it.

Everywhere there is a tendency to substitute the work of organizations for individual effort. Human wisdom tends to consolidation, to centralization, to the building up of great churches and institutions. Multitudes leave to institutions and organizations the work of benevolence; they excuse themselves from contact with the world, and their hearts grow cold. They become self-absorbed and unimpressible. Love for God and man dies out of the soul.

Christ commits to His followers an individual work--a work that cannot be done by proxy. Ministry to the sick and the poor, the giving of the gospel to the lost, is not to be left to committees or organized charities. Individual responsibility, individual effort, personal sacrifice, is the requirement of the gospel.

“Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in,” is Christ's command, “that My house may be filled.” He brings men into touch with those whom they seek to benefit. “Bring the poor that are cast out to your house,” He says. “When you seest the naked, that you cover him.” “They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.” Luke 14:23; Isaiah 58:7; Mark 16:18. Through direct contact, through personal ministry, the blessings of the gospel are to be communicated.

In giving light to His people anciently, God did not work exclusively through any one class. Daniel was a prince of Judah. Isaiah also was of the royal line. David was a shepherd boy, Amos a herdsman, Zechariah a captive from Babylon, Elisha a tiller of the soil. The Lord raised up as His representatives prophets and princes, the noble and the lowly, and taught them the truths to be given to the world.

To everyone who becomes a partaker of His grace the Lord appoints a work for others. Individually we are to stand in our lot and place, saying, “Here am I; send me.” Isaiah 6:8. Upon the minister of the word, the missionary nurse, the Christian physician, the individual Christian, whether he be merchant or farmer, professional man or mechanic--the responsibility rests upon all. It is our work to reveal to men the gospel of their salvation. Every enterprise in which we engage should be a means to this end.

Those who take up their appointed work will not only be a blessing to others, but they will themselves be blessed. The consciousness of duty well done will have a reflex influence upon their own souls. The despondent will forget their despondency, the weak will become strong, the ignorant intelligent, and all will find an unfailing helper in Him who has called them.

The church of Christ is organized for service. Its watchword is ministry. Its members are soldiers, to be trained for conflict under the Captain of their salvation. Christian ministers, physicians, teachers, have a broader work than many have recognized. They are not only to minister to the people, but to teach them to minister. They should not only give instruction in right principles, but educate their hearers to impart these principles. Truth that is not lived, that is not imparted, loses its life-giving power, its healing virtue. Its blessing can be retained only as it is shared.

The monotony of our service for God needs to be broken up. Every church member should be engaged in some line of service for the Master. Some cannot do so much as others, but everyone should do his utmost to roll back the tide of disease and distress that is sweeping over our world. Many would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin. They need to be instructed and encouraged.

Every church should be a training school for Christian workers. Its members should be taught how to give Bible readings, how to conduct and teach Sabbath-school classes, how best to help the poor and to care for the sick, how to work for the unconverted. There should be schools of health, cooking schools, and classes in various lines of Christian help work. There should not only be teaching, but actual work under experienced instructors. Let the teachers lead the way in working among the people, and others, uniting with them, will learn from their example. One example is worth more than many precepts.

Let all cultivate their physical and mental powers to the utmost of their ability, that they may work for God where His providence shall call them. The same grace that came from Christ to Paul and Apollos, that distinguished them for spiritual excellencies, will today be imparted to devoted Christian missionaries. God desires His children to have intelligence and knowledge, that with unmistakable clearness and power His glory may be revealed in our world.

Educated workers who are consecrated to God can do service in a greater variety of ways and can accomplish more extensive work than can those who are

uneducated. Their discipline of mind places them on vantage ground. But those who have neither great talents nor extensive education may minister acceptably to others. God will use men who are willing to be used. It is not the most brilliant or the most talented persons whose work produces the greatest and most lasting results. Men and women are needed who have heard a message from heaven. The most effective workers are those who respond to the invitation, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me." Matthew 11:29.

It is heart missionaries that are needed. He whose heart God touches is filled with a great longing for those who have never known His love. Their condition impresses him with a sense of personal woe. Taking his life in his hand, he goes forth, a heaven-sent, heaven-inspired messenger, to do a work in which angels can co-operate.

If those to whom God has entrusted great talents of intellect put these gifts to a selfish use, they will be left, after a period of trial, to follow their own way. God will take men who do not appear to be so richly endowed, who have not large self-confidence, and He will make the weak strong, because they trust in Him to do for them that which they cannot do for themselves. God will accept the wholehearted service, and will Himself make up the deficiencies.

The Lord has often chosen for His co-laborers men who have had opportunity to obtain but a limited school education. These men have applied their powers most diligently, and the Lord has rewarded their fidelity to His work, their industry, their thirst for knowledge. He has witnessed their tears and heard their prayers. As His blessing came to the captives in the courts of Babylon, so does He give wisdom and knowledge to His workers today.

Men deficient in school education, lowly in social position, have, through the grace of Christ, sometimes been wonderfully successful in winning souls for Him. The secret of their success was their confidence in God. They learned daily of Him who is wonderful in counsel and mighty in power.

Such workers are to be encouraged. The Lord brings them into connection with those of more marked ability, to fill up the gaps that others leave. Their quickness to see what is to be done, their readiness to help those in need, their kind words and deeds, open doors of usefulness that otherwise would remain closed. They come close to those in trouble, and the persuasive influence of their words has power to draw many trembling souls to God. Their work shows what thousands of others might do, if they only would. [Continued in Part 2.]