



Promises, Not Promises
Part 1 – Physical vs Spiritual Healing
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Today, as Mackenzi said, we're starting a new series called *Promises, Not Promises*. In this series, we're going to be talking about things God has and hasn't promised us. We think that's important because we like to claim things, don't we? When you were a kid and the front passenger seat was open and everybody was piling in, how did you declare who was going to sit in the front passenger seat? Shotgun! And you don't mess with shotgun. If someone says it, I mean that's law. It's their seat; they've claimed it, right? There are other things that we claim. Some of you have your own version of shotgun here at church with the seats. I've seen everything from announcement bulletin cards to the coffee napkins, purses, coats, wildlife, small children... You name it; you guys will put anything in your seat to save your seat, sometimes. And we know if we see a napkin there, it's claimed, right? There's nothing we can do about it; it's theirs.

We just got finished with the Christmas shopping season where parking spaces are a premium, right? And when you're coming up on a parking space where someone is backing out, how do you claim it? You put your blinker on. Once the blinker is on, anyone else around knows that's your space. Some of you claim the parking space a little earlier though. You go to the store front and someone walks out and you follow them to their parking space. Has anyone done that before? You're out there. Do you know how creepy you are? I've never been stalked before, that I know of, but thanks to you, I know how it feels. It's kind of creepy.

We claim things, and it's very simple in some things. The problem is that sometimes we can find ourselves claiming things from the Lord. We can hear a song lyric, we can read a post, we can read a quote and we can say, "Shotgun! I like that; I claim that. Whether it's true or not, I claim that for myself. I believe it and I claim that." As you know, we talk a lot around here about our sources of truth, and our primary source of truth is scripture, the Word of God. So, we understand that something must be in scripture to be true, but also, it's very important, especially with what we're talking about with promises, that we interpret things and we apply things in context.

The reason that's important here is because of a couple of examples like the Proverbs. The proverbs are not promises. The Proverbs are generalizations, instructions for living; they're not promises like do this and this will happen. In the Old Testament, there are promises that are made from the Lord, but some of those promises are to specific people or people groups that don't necessarily pertain to you and me today, so it's important that we interpret and apply scripture in context.

As a teaching team, we do our best to preach truth from the front and something we're doing in this series is refuting some untruths, some commonly held beliefs that God has promised certain things where, in fact, he hadn't. Like he hasn't promised anyone tomorrow. He hasn't promised anyone earthly prosperity. He hasn't promised immediate justice for evil. And, in that, why do good things happen to people who do bad things? He hasn't promised that everyone gets into heaven. You see, there is one way, truth, and life and that's Jesus. So, with these not promises, we're going to apply promises as well and couple them together so we can talk to the things God has and hasn't promised us.

Today, we're starting Part 1 and I'll be covering what's not promised and that is **physical rest and healing**. That is promised is **spiritual rest and healing**. This is important because we all deal with this, right? The need for physical healing. It's part of life, it's part of our nature as it is now that we deal with sickness and injury and diseases and disabilities and disorders and so many other things. We petition to the Lord on behalf of those things for ourselves and for others. As we do that, the thing we have to be careful about is when we say, "I know that the Lord is going to heal me of this." "I declare that the Lord is going to remove this from her." "I know that the Lord is going to fix this for him."

We have to be careful because we can be declaring some promises that God didn't make. He didn't promise us physical rest and healing. We are to petition to the Lord for our physical condition. It's important that we should bring our petitions to the Lord, but it's also important to say, "Lord, thy will be done." So, there's the balance that we petition with confidence and it's okay to declare with confidence that I believe that the Lord can heal this, balanced with submission to the goodness of his sovereignty that God is in control and he knows what he's doing.

We're going to turn in scripture today first in 2 Corinthians 4: 16-18. I want to set the context here of what Paul is writing to the church in Corinth. Before this passage, he's talking about the perishable nature of our condition, our physical condition. He gives the word picture that we have this treasure in jars of clay, the treasure being the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ, the jars of clay being our physical condition. He gives that analogy because we wither with time and we're breakable and each one of us is one simple fall off the edge of the table to hit the ground and shatter into so many pieces that we are not repairable. That's our physical nature.

2 Corinthians 4 - ***16 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.*** So, we get this picture of our physical self and our spiritual self. Our outer self, our physical self is wasting away. Our inner self is being renewed day by day, our spiritual self. ***17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison...*** Do you see the contrast there with *affliction* and *glory*? ***18 as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.***

Paul is making this contrast of affliction versus glory. Every single one of us would agree that there is an affliction in our physical condition, right? Regardless of what you believe about religion, whether you believe God exists or not, you would agree something goes wrong with our physical condition. In that then we can apply that there is a more perfect condition. That's the difference between affliction and glory – something is wrong versus a more perfect condition of glory.

As Christians, we know that glory is something we have to look forward to. When we depart from the earth and go to be with the Lord, we will have glorified bodies where there will be no sickness, there will be no injury, no disease, no disorders, nothing in the way of pain or discomfort. Isn't that fun to look forward to? We talk about it a lot, especially when we're dealing with something specifically or counseling someone through something they're dealing with. We talk about it at funerals about how he's no longer suffering and she's no longer in pain. We look, in our condition of affliction now, forward to a day of glory, a glory beyond all comparison.

But, if for a moment, I was to look back to a time before affliction set in, that would be **creation and the fall**. So, God created the universe and everything in it, including mankind, and he said, "It is good." There was glory in his creation, everything was good. When he gave mankind the choice between sin and righteousness, man chose wrong. When man chose wrong, he brought affliction upon us. That was a promise from God.

You see, after Adam and Eve fell to the temptation of the sin of pride, God said to them, "For you are dust and to dust you shall return." In other words, at that moment, we became jars of clay that are perishable, that wither with time, that are breakable. This series of events can confuse you sometimes. Leading up to that, God laid the ground rules. He said, "If you eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, then you shall surely die." We think, *Well, they ate, but then they lived for a long time*. God didn't say you will die right away, if you eat that fruit. He said you shall surely die. In that, he made a promise to Adam and Eve and he kept his promise that they shall surely die. You see, they became perishable at that point. Our outer selves, our outer nature became perishable.

It's not always a sudden process, is it? Again, Adam and Eve lived for a long time. Some people sometimes live a very short time, not even making it out of the womb, and yet some people live beyond 100 years. And we have different conditions along the way. Some people will go their whole life without any major physical ordeals, which isn't many people, and yet many will go through struggling all along the way. Even for those who don't suffer any major physical ordeal with diagnosis or disability or anything like that, there is still the aging process which reminds us we shall surely die; we are perishable.

Has anyone else had it with the aging process? If my kids want to show me something, they put it in my face. What's the first thing I do? I move it out so I can see it. I used to have a left knee and a right knee; now I have a good knee and a bad knee. I tell my wife, "My knee is bothering me." She says, "Your good one or your bad one." I say, "It's my good one." She says, "That's bad." I say, "Yes, it is. I'm running out of knees." Because I'm getting older.

Some of you are thinking, *You just wait; you're young and you have no idea*. The Hollywood stars from my childhood are now making commercials selling reverse mortgages and CPAPs. I'm getting older. Captain Kirk is no longer fighting evil in the universe; he's worried about germs in his sleep machine. We're getting older and as we get older, we move slower, things ache. Your body makes more noises as you get older. I've found that the older you get, the less you care about who hears the noises that your body is making. I'm not going to look at anybody for this. I know your hearing is getting worse, but the rest of us can still hear that, okay? We're all aging. We're all moving to that sure death at some point as we breakdown and wither with time; we're breakable.

While some of us may not suffer from any major diseases, some of us will. Let's look at that. What is **disease**? It's simply the removal of ease – dis-ease. And ease is the opposite of difficulty. It's physical difficulty that we have as a result of our affliction. When we study disease, we kind of get a glimpse of glory. When God created Adam and Eve, when he created mankind and they fell to sin. He didn't wipe them out, he didn't start from scratch. I suppose he could have, but Adam and Eve just brought brokenness into the goodness that God created, and so we get glimpses of that when we study disease.

I want to look at one in particular to help us kind of understand that. I want to talk to you about the p53 tumor suppressor gene. Stay with me, okay? Cancer is a disease of abnormal cell division. So, it's normal for our cells to divide and reproduce and create tissues. It's how we form embryologically – the cells divide and differentiate into specialized tissues and even as an adult, some of our tissues are replacing themselves. It's important that that cell division takes place in an organized fashion.

On the other hand, cancer happens when that cell division takes place in an unorganized fashion, unchecked. What happens is one cell becomes two and two become four and four become eight and they grow unchecked into a tumor. Parts of that tumor, some of those cells can get into the lymphatic system, into the lymph nodes and metastasis to the lymph nodes. Some can get into the blood stream and spread to other parts of the body for what's called *distance metastasis*. And that's how cancer can take over a body. What's interesting is that every single one of us, on a regular basis, has machinery in our body that are killing off small cancers that are trying to form, controlled by, in part, the p53 tumor suppressor gene. You see, it codes for the physiologic machinery that controls that abnormal cell growth. When it's detected by the immune system, the immune system attacks those cells and kills them off so they can't form that tumor to begin with. That's the glory that God created.

The affliction that was brought upon us with our sin nature is that gene doesn't work sometimes, that there is genetic injury that happens to it or some inherent fault in it that it doesn't work and we end up with cancer sometimes. That's one disease. There are a lot of diseases, a lot of disorders, disabilities, conditions that we suffer from. As I said, we petition to the Lord for those conditions that he would heal them. Sometimes he doesn't, in his sovereignty. That doesn't mean he is not on his throne. The Lord may choose, in his sovereignty, to heal a physical condition, a disease and he may not. But, he did promise us spiritual rest and healing. So, let's look at that.

Turn to Matthew 11. **28** ***"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*** Notice the "come to me." **29** ***"Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."***

In the promises here that we're seeing, the first observation is pretty simple. He says come to me and I will give you rest for your soul. This is Jesus. It doesn't require much interpretation or application here. It's pretty simple. Jesus said, "Come to me and I will give you rest for your soul."

Another observation, if we look back in the scripture just prior to this passage, Jesus is lamenting over the cities that he went to and performed signs that he is the Messiah. Despite that, they didn't repent and follow him. They didn't come to him, which is why he then said, "Come to me." In coming to him, they could have received spiritual healing.

What's important to understand about Adam and Eve is when God said, "You shall surely die," it wasn't just that jar of clay that would now die. They died a spiritual death at the same time. That spiritual death was the separation from their Heavenly Father. They were cast out of the Garden Eden because a holy God can't be in the presence of a sinful creation.

So, they were cast out of his presence and there's this separation that affliction brings. Jesus is saying, "Come to me and I will give you rest for your soul." He's saying if these people would come to him, they would be healed spiritually. When we come to Christ, declare him as lord, then we are brought back into the presence of God, into communion with God, healed of the affliction of separation from our heavenly Father. In that, we are promised eternity in heaven where we will one day receive an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. We may not be healed physically now, but we will if we receive Christ, if we come to him. We will be healed spiritually from that separation from the Father and know that we will receive an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

Remember in 2 Corinthians 4, in Verse 18, the last part there that we read said, "For the things that are seen are transient but the things that are unseen are eternal." This is the physical and the spiritual. The key of what we're talking about is this eternal perspective and understanding that yeah, I'm struggling now physically and even emotionally, mentally... We're talking today about physically, but these struggles are temporary. The things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal. This spiritual healing we are talking about is forever.

I met Marc Holderfield about ten years ago. He was working in the hospital here at Cox Branson as a first assistant. If you don't know what that is, that's the person that works with the surgeon that is basically a second set of hands, so you kind of have four hands instead of two to work with in surgery. Marc eventually started getting assigned to more cases with me, so we got to know each other pretty well. We became buddies. Marc taught me how to hunt deer and turkey because I wasn't a good Ozarkian yet. So, he taught me how to hunt.

In our conversations and our time together and many hours spent together on cases sometimes, we got to know each other. I got to know about Marc's faith, and I knew early on that he was a follower of Jesus, that he had professed faith in Christ and that he had secured his eternal salvation. But Marc would admit to me, "I know I'm not doing some of the things I should be doing. I know I'm not pursuing my faith and the spiritual disciplines like I should." Over time, I would share with Marc, give him a book, share some scriptures with him, and encourage him. I got to watch Marc's faith grow over time to where he was pursuing the Lord and he was even more secure and confident in his faith in the Lord.

Just over a year ago, Marc was having some problems with his sinuses it seemed. Convenient because I'm an ear, nose, and throat doctor. I took care of Marc and tried to get his sinuses cleared up, but it just wasn't happening. Some of his symptoms were a little unusual so I said, "Marc, let's just get a CAT Scan to make sure we're not chasing down the wrong trail. I got the CAT Scan of his sinuses and about an hour after he had the CAT Scan, the radiologist called me. He said, "Marc's sinuses are fine, but he has a tumor in his brain." I said, "What kind?" And the radiologist said, "It looks like a glioblastoma," and my stomach sank. Marc had worked in neurosurgery and I knew that when I told him they think he has a glioblastoma that would mean he had about six to twelve months to live.

I was finally alone where I could properly call Marc. It was the hardest phone call I've made in my entire life. I'll never forget it. I was sitting in the parking lot of Woodland Hills Family Church right after dropping our boys off for youth group. I called Marc and said, "Marc, your sinuses are fine, but the radiologist says you have a tumor in your brain." He said, "Really? What kind?" I said, "He thinks it's a glioblastoma."

The discipling relationship between Marc and me turned on a dime in that instant because Marc said, "Okay. Let's figure out what we need to do. You and I both know that God is in control and no matter what happens, it's going to be okay." I got to watch Marc go through his treatment and his difficulty and just anguish physically, emotionally, mentally, everything that he was dealing with, with his wife and his two kids watching along the way. The way that Marc handled this was just incredible. He told me, "Travis, I'm praying that the Lord heals me. I know he can. But I also know that he's in control." If Mark said one time to me, he said it 100,000 times, "God is in control." He said, "He's got this; he knows what's going on and I'm just doing what I can to serve Him. I just want to do what's right for the Lord." Marc just poured into my life that way. Marc Holderfield, on October 5, 2019, went to be with the Lord. And he has received an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. He wasn't healed physically. He knew he wasn't promised that, but he was healed spiritually, and he received rest in that.

There is a video of Pastor Jonathan Evans, who did the eulogy at his Mother's funeral, also the mother of Pricilla Shirer. He speaks some powerful truth in this eulogy, truth that Marc fully grasped. I want to share this with you:

Jonathan Evans: *"And as I was wrestling with God, he answered. And he said, 'Number one, you don't understand the nature of my victory because just because I didn't answer your prayer your way doesn't mean that I haven't already answered your prayer anyway. Because victory was already given to your mom. You don't understand because of the victory that I have given you. There was always only two answers to your prayers. Either she was going to be healed or she was going to be healed. Either she was going to live or she was going to live. Either she was going to be with family or she was going to be with family. Either she was going to be well taken care of or she was going to be well taken care of. Victory belongs to me.'"*

Here in a minute, we're going to close with prayer and when we do, the prayer team will be down front here as they always are every Sunday. If you have not placed faith in Christ, if you have not come to him and you would like to do that, the prayer team would love to lead you through that. If you want to know more about that, they would love to talk to you about that. If you have physical healing that you need prayer for, we encourage you to come down and confidently pray and petition to the Lord for healing in that. But most of all to receive peace and spiritual healing.

Before we do that, I want to declare a promise that we do have, that we know the Lord has given us. I want to declare something, Woodland Hills, today that we can be certain of and it comes out of 1 Corinthians 15, another one of Paul's letters. ***54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?"***

The sting of sin is death and the power of sin is the law, but Woodland Hills, shotgun. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, we love you and are grateful for this church family. We're thankful for the truths in scripture and we're thankful for discernment that you can help us to walk through and understand the things that you have and have not promised us, Lord, so that we can have clarity to your creation and the way that things happen,

Father, thank you that you are in tune to our petitions and that you hear our prayers, Lord, and even more so that you are sovereign in the way that you answer our prayers. I pray, Lord, for peace for those who are suffering physically and for those with family and friends who are suffering and that you would hear their prayers and, Lord, that they would just be pleasing to you the way that they follow you in their petitions. We pray most of all for spiritual rest and healing that we are promised if we come to you, Jesus.

We thank you and we love you, and it's in Jesus' name we pray... Amen