

## Pastor's Column

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(1) "I am not sick. I do not need to see a doctor."

(2) "The doctor can take care of my illness and get me back on my feet again."

The above typify two responses those in the pew and, we must confess, those in the pulpit often make toward personal illness. They can be summed up in this way: (1) I am a good and thus indestructible, (2) The doctor is god. He can know immediately what is wrong with me and cure me.

Both statements must be looked at in light of Scripture. The pastor needs to remind himself and his congregation of the errors in either of these statements.

Since the Garden of Eden man has been tempted to "be as God." In our day of self-help and multitude of health fads and emphasis (Not all are bad - our bodies are God's temples. We are to take good care of them.) our humanistic culture would tell us that we can defeat death. Sickness is not a part of the life of the macho man nor the perfect "10." Why should it be a part of our life? Certainly we do not deserve it. After all, gods do not get sick, do they?

Once we are admittedly sick it is easy to set up the physician as god. Surrounded by his pills, surgical instruments, or other medical technology surely he has the power to make us well. Admittedly it is tempting for the physician to assume the role of deity. This is a false assumption. Sadly, the doctor can easily be blamed if the patient does not get well.

Scripture provides clear answers to these presumptions.

Our bodies are dying as a result of original sin. The inspired Paul correctly wrote, "Though outwardly we

are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day." (II Cor. 4:16) Interestingly, this was written by one whom God had used as an instrument to heal others. Today we have faith-healers who claim the sick are not healed due to a lack of faith. How unbiblical!

Our bodies will one day return to dust. No amount of oil of olay, hair dye, vitamins or exercise equipment will prevent this. Only the Lord's return will cause anyone to miss a physical death.

Sickness reminds us that we are sinners. Our sinful state results in a weak body and an imperfect immune system. Sin affected man's entire being - even his physical constitution.

In its failure to preach and teach on man's sinfulness the modern church has encouraged man in his natural thinking that sickness has no place in the Christian life. Sadly faith healers have led many Scripturally ungrounded people in the church to believe that sickness is foreign to one who is spiritual.

Illness reminds us that not we but God is sovereign. We must realize that some sickness is a direct result of sinful action. This can happen on a personal basis as a result of an intemperate use of food or alcohol. It can happen on a national basis as a result of national sin. (Deut. 28:21,22)

Illness is allowed by a sovereign God to test God's people. (Job, 1,2) Is their faith true? Do they serve God just because of blessings they receive? The world asks these questions. Watching a faithful Christian endure affliction the world sees enduring well-grounded faith.

Through illness God is glorified. Nowhere is this more

clearly seen than in John 9:3. The blind man was healed not just for the purpose of giving him sight. More importantly the miracle taught an important lesson to a blind society. The Great Physician alone can make the spiritually blind to see. In fact, that is His chief work. The ill Christian is to be reminded that restored to health or not, "All things work together for good to them that love the Lord and are called according to His purpose." (Rom. 8:28) God sovereignly deals through sickness to build us up inwardly.

Finally, we must admit that all things are held together by Christ. (Col. 1:17) Without His sustaining hand our bodily structure would come loose.

God may well allow healing to come through the work of doctors and their use of medicine. Doctors remain instruments in God's hands. God must receive all the glory.

Man is not god. Modern man must face the fact that death is a part of life. This does not mean that we should not take care of our bodies or be proud of bodies built on junk food. It does mean that our ultimate trust must not be in our own physical fitness nor the knowledge of our doctor. Our ultimate trust must be in Jesus Christ who has defeated death on behalf of all who trust in Him. Only on death's other side will the Christian leave behind all suffering, pain and affliction and physical death.