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IN NOMINE JESU

St. Matthew 8: 2, 5, 6 And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou cast make Me clean..... And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.

FAITH HEALING

We are witnessing today a great revival of interest in spiritual healing. We read of faith healing in newspaper and magazine articles. We listen to its appeal on the radio, and we view it on television. Here are the authentic words of one newspaper advertisement of a television healing program: Actual miracles happening before your eyes. Cancer, tumors, goiters disappear. Crutches, braces, wheelchairs, stretchers discarded. Crossed eyes straightened, Caught in the healing line as they occurred before thousands of witnesses. Over the country - like an epidemic - tents holding ten to twenty thousand people are crowded nightly by an emotion-swept mob, hoping either to see or experience the spectaculor. Littl attempt is made to follow the pattern set by Jesus when He said to many of those whom He had healed, See that thou tell no man of this. Today the motto is, Tell everybody of this!

While many of these professional faith healers are no doubt earnest men, one is reminded again of the fact that sincerity is not enough. The heart and core of our belief must have the proper focus. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity. There are also many who have made a million-dollar business out of their so-called power to heal, 1
-bleeding desperate people of their life-savings
A notable instance of such fraud involved a highly publicized faith healer in Miami, Florida. Ten thousand people crowded into his tent every night to applaud what appeared to be remarkable healings. The most exciting incident of the whole series came when a mother came with her little child five or six years old. The faith healer declared that her daughter was unable to utter a single word and that this was a tremendous handicap. The evangelist took the little girl on his knee and prayed over her. Then he spoke a word and told the child to repeat it. To

the astonishment of everyone the child spoke the word. Then he uttered a second word and a third with similar success. The crowd rose to its feet and cheered. A reporter of the Miami Herald was present and he made it a point to seek out the mother of the child and secure her address. The next day he asked her for the address of the school which the child attended. He looked up the principal who directed him to the speech teacher. He asked about the little girl in question and the speech teacher said, Yes, it is a sad case and progress is bound to be very slow. You mean to say, then, asked the reporter, that this child cannot utter a single word? Not quite that, said the teacher. She has made a little progress. She can now say three words. And the teacher uttered the three words spoken by the evangelist, the words which all ten thousand people in the great tent believed that that child had spoken for the first time that night.

What makes the situation so confused and complicated is that there is such a thing as faith healing. When all of the drugs and medicines and therapies have proved futile, God can still intervene! After doctors have shaken their heads in defeat, God can still heal! This must be our confidence! Leprosy was considered incurable. It continued to eat away at the flesh until fingers dropped off, eyes fell from the sockets, and the body finally rotted away in death. But the leper in today's Gospel appealed his case to the Lord Jesus with full confidence in His power to help: Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. His prayer was simple and straight-forward. And what do you know? There came the answer, I will, be thou clean! The centurion was a Gentile. But race and nationality made no difference to him. He believed in the ability of Christ to help where others had said the case was hopeless. His beloved servant was sick with the paralysis of palsy. And so he interceded: Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And over the miles went the Word of the mighty Savior, and his servant was healed! Let us understand that there is nothing too big for the power of God, and nothing too small for His love. All too often we have not because we ask not!

The story is told of a lad who in the years of his childhood was puny and not at all well. So often was he face to face with death that he dreaded even to close his eyes in sleep. It was not that he was afraid of death; but he dreaded the repeated agony of it - a dying and never dead. For six long years he yearned and sighed and prayed. This little boy had a Christian mother who in her love for him was deeply concerned. She prayed as only a tortured mother heart can pray; and in her prayer she promised the Lord that, if He but restore her boy to health, he in turn should be dedicated to the service of the Lord. In time for the mother to keep her promise the boy was restored to health and has not been seriously ill since. Today he is in the ministry, dedicated to the Lord by his mother.... While this same lad was at the seminary, there came to him a letter from his mother informing him that his brother was desperately sick and that the doctor had given him but eight hours to live. That night he knelt at his bed, and over the miles travelled an effectual prayer. His brother sank, he hovered in the crisis - and passed it. The fact is that he had passed the crisis even before the letter had reached his brother. But the brother who prayed for him that night has always believed that God heard and answered his prayer, according to His promise: It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear..... Several years later this same young man stood by as his wife was wheeled into an operating room for a serious operation. His prayers, though incoherent and inarticulate to anyone but God, were fervent and desperate. His little son of a year and a half needed that mother. Back through the door of the operating room was wheeled the young mother, her heartbeat weak, her life hovering very near to eternity. Fervent prayers hung on to that slender thread. The mother rallied. She mended. She lived!

We must be careful, however, that we do not dictate to God. To do so would be to question the wisdom of God. We may plead. We may promise. We may even bargain. But never ought we to deliver an ultimatum. Both the leper and the centurion simply made their desires known and left the rest to God. We are always to pray according to God's Will. God knows waht is best for us. We are reminded

of St Paul praying, not once or twice, but three times, for the removal of the thorn that was tormenting him. That thorn was not removed. Years later, when he was glorying in his infirmities, he was still marveling at the answer which he had received from the Lord: My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strenght is made perfect in weakness. St. Paul appreciated the lesson which the Lord had taught him. He said, Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. It is a lesson that is not easy to learn, that pain, suffering, bereavement, sorrow, toil are part of God's way of bringing us closer to Him, and that it is not God's will that we should evade them entirely. We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God.

Many think that, when a severe and long illness comes upon them, nothing could be worse. They are wrong. There is something worse - the loss of ~~your~~ their soul, eternal suffering in hell, the result of sins unforgiven. Time after time Jesus gave the same admonition to those whom He had healed: Don't go talking about it too much. He did this to guard against the danger that people would come to Him solely as the Healer of the ir bodies rather than the Savior of their souls. Of course, He is both, but He desires primarily to be the Savior of our souls; for unless our souls are healed and saved, the healing of the body will be to no avail.

Discouraging as it may sound, there is a direct relationship between sickness and sin. If it were not for sin, there would be no sickness. God created man in His own image, holy and perfect. He place man into the Garden of Eden and gave him a moral test in connection with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die. Man disregarded this command, and the process of death set in, for sin began to generate sicknesses and ills, and pains and, finally, death of the body. Our sicknesses and our frailties then, are to remind us of our sinfulness and of our dire need of a Savior from sin, who alone can heal our souls and save us for eternity. Never should we forget that the forgiveness of sins is more important than the healing of the body. Thank God, in Christ Jesus we have redemption through His blood, even the forgive-

ness of sin. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits - and now notice the order in which the psalmist mentions His benefits - who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases. We will always do well to remember that our body is but an envelope, a temporary tabernacle for the soul, and that sickness and death of the body are only matters of time. When that time comes for us we shall with firm confidence await the day when our Savior shall work a miracle of restoration and change our vile bodies that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body. The center of our Christianity is not whether we be well or whether we be sick or whether we be healed. The center of our Christianity is whether we have in our sinful and sad condition turned to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as our Savior, who alone can heal us from the root of all diseases - sin. This is the center of the Gospel: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house.

Amen.