

## God's Healing Power

From John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*,  
trans. Rev. James Anderson (Edinburgh, Scotland: Calvin Translation Society, 1846),  
Vol. IV, 254-255, emphasis added and English updated.

***God's mighty power is seen in His healing of diseases.***

### **PSALM 107:17-22**

- 17.** Fools are afflicted on account of the way of their transgression, and by reason of their iniquities.  
**18.** Their soul loaths all food; and they approach the gates of death.  
**19.** Then they cry unto the LORD in their tribulation; He saves them from their distresses.  
**20.** He sends His word, and heals them, and rescues them from all their corruptions.  
**21.** Let them praise the mercy of the LORD in His presence, and His marvelous works in the presence of the sons of men.  
**22.** And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of praise, and declare His works with rejoicings.

**17.** *Fools are afflicted on account of the way of their transgression.* . . . [Some people are] visited by God with disease, as the fruit of their transgressions. And when the transgressor shall find that it is God who is administering correction to him, this will pave the way for his arriving at the knowledge of His grace.

He denominates those *fools*, who, thoughtlessly giving themselves up to sensuality, bring destruction on themselves. The sin which they commit is not the result of ignorance and error only, but of their carnal affections, which depriving them of proper understanding, cause them to devise things detrimental to themselves.

The maxim, that the fear of God is wisdom, must never be lost sight of. Hence it plainly follows, that they who shake off the yoke of God, and surrender themselves to Satan and sin, are the victims of their own folly and fury. And as constituting a principal ingredient of this madness, the prophet employs the term *defection* or *transgression*; and subsequently he adds *iniquities*; because it happens that when once a man departs from God, from that moment he loses all self-control, and falls from one sin into another.

But it is not of the illnesses which commonly prevail in the world to which a reference is made in this passage, but to those which are deemed fatal, and in which all hope of life is abandoned, so that the grace of God becomes the more conspicuous when deliverance from them is obtained.

When a man recovers from a slight ailment, he does not so plainly discern the effects of God's power, as when it is put forth in a wonderful and notable manner to bring back some from the gates of death, and restores them to their former health and rigor.

He says, therefore, that they are preserved from many *corruptions*, which is equivalent to his saying, that they are delivered from as many deaths. To this purpose are the following words of the prophet, in which he says, *that they approach the gates of death, and that they loathe all food.* We have already adverted to their calling upon God,

namely, that when men are reduced to the greatest straits, they, by thus calling upon God for aid, acknowledge that they would be undone unless He wonderfully interposed for their deliverance.

### ***God's miraculous healing power***

**20.** *He sends His word.* Again, in saying that they are delivered from destruction, the prophet shows that he is here alluding to those diseases which, in the opinion of men, are incurable, and from which few are delivered.

Besides, **he contrasts God's assistance with all the remedies which are in the power of man to apply; as if he should say, that their disease having baffled the skill of earthly physicians, their recovery has been entirely owing to the exertion of God's power.** It is proper also to notice the manner in which their recovery is effected; God has but to will it, or to speak the word, and instantly all diseases, and even death itself, are expelled.

I do not regard this as exclusively referring to the faithful, as many expositors do. I own, indeed, that it is of comparatively little consequence to us to be the subjects of bodily care, if our souls still remain unsanctified by the word of God; and hence it is the intention of the prophet that we consider the mercy of God as extending to the evil and unthankful.

The meaning of the passage, therefore, is, that **diseases neither come upon us by chance, nor are to be ascribed to natural causes alone, but are to be viewed as God's messengers executing His commands; so that we must believe that the same person that sent them can easily remove them, and for this purpose He has only to speak the word.** And since we now perceive the drift of the passage, we ought to attend to the very appropriate analogy contained in it. Corporeal [bodily] maladies are not removed except by the word or command of God, much less are men's souls restored to the enjoyment of spiritual life, except this word be apprehended by faith.

*And let them sacrifice.* This clause is subjoined by way of explanation, the more strongly to express how God is robbed of His due, if in the matter of sacrifice His providence be not recognized. Even nature itself teaches that some kind of homage and reverence is due to God; this is acknowledged by the heathens themselves, who have no other instructor than nature. We know too, that the practice of offering sacrifices has obtained among all nations; and doubtless it was by the observance of this ritual, that God designed to preserve in the human family some sense of piety and religion.

To acknowledge the bounty and beneficence of God, is the most acceptable sacrifice which can be presented to Him; to this subject, therefore, the prophet intends to recall the attention of the insensate and indifferent portion of men. I do not deny that there may be also an allusion to the ceremonial law; but inasmuch as in the world at large sacrifices formed part of the religious exercises, he charges those with ingratitude, who, after having escaped from some imminent peril, forget to celebrate the praises of their Great Deliverer.