

When God Doesn't Answer Our Prayers For Healing

Rich Nathan

June 14-15, 2008

Healing: 21st Century Healing

Hebrews 2:5-18

I've been doing a series on divine healing and what I've been saying throughout the series is that it is impossible to follow the Jesus that we read about in the New Testament without believing in God's power to heal. Everywhere we look in the gospels, we find God healing someone through Christ. And so when you read the gospel accounts, you can't help but say, "God can heal. God does heal. God loves to heal!"

Nevertheless, there is one stubborn empirical fact that we cannot gloss over or just sweep under the rug of religion. That stubborn fact is that the vast majority of people we pray for don't get healed by prayer. And it is not just because we are such losers and don't know how to pray. The vast majority of people that anyone prays for, whether you are prayed for by John Wimber, who was the founder of the Vineyard movement, and who had an unusually strong healing gift, or any of the other healers, anyone you can see on TV, people like Katherine Kuhlman or Oral Roberts, anyone in some other country, whoever you pick, most people and most illnesses do not get healed through prayer alone. That is empirically true.

In the history of our church we have seen many, many people get healed miraculously, remarkably. I've been receiving testimonies from many of you about the impact of receiving prayer and the immediate aftermath of being healed. But it would be absolutely dishonest to say that the majority of people that we pray for, or the majority of illnesses that we pray for, are healed through prayer alone.

This has been true throughout the history of the Christian church. The great St. Augustine, back in the 5th century, died of a wasting disease while his city was under siege by barbarian attack. Teresa of Avila, who was a Christian mystic and writer back in the 1500's, and who had many incredible experiences of God, suffered for years with intense migraines. Martin Luther, the great Protestant Reformer, died a difficult death following a long string of debilitating illnesses. St. Francis of Assisi loved to look at nature as a way to adore God was almost completely blind when he wrote his famous Canticle of the Creatures with those famous lines about asking Brother Sun and Sister Moon to praise God with him.

All of these people were certainly beloved by God. And yet the Lord did not heal them through years of suffering.

Certainly, we read of many people in the Bible who were not healed. The great prophet Elisha died of a protracted wasting illness. And this doesn't even begin to cover all of the disappointments and hurts that people in the Bible experienced in their lives. Hosea, the prophet, married an adulterous woman. Job lost everything in his life. He lost his

children; he lost his house and reputation; he lost his income. The godly woman, Hannah, suffered through years of infertility.

Billy Graham has been suffering from Parkinson's Disease for years even though there are thousands of people who have prayed for Billy Graham to be healed. And Pope John Paul II likewise suffered for over a decade with Parkinson's as the world watched him slowly waste away and millions of people prayed for his healing.

In this broken, fallen world, we live with so many griefs, pains, and disappointments. If I went around this room right now, virtually every one of you could write down something or in some cases many things that have caused you grief. You've experienced many disappointments. It could be the disappointment and grief of infertility, cancer, heart disease, or you have a child or grandchild with a serious birth defect, or a parent or spouse with Alzheimer's, or maybe you've been affected in your family by mental illness, or you've experienced unfaithfulness in your spouse, or the rebellion of a child, or the desire to marry, but never married, or you are living in a deeply unhappy and unsatisfying marriage.

There was a wonderful Christian man, who taught theology at Princeton University back at the turn of the last century. His name was Benjamin Warfield. And Benjamin Warfield was passionately in love with a beautiful woman, who became his wife, but sadly shortly after their wedding day, she became an invalid. Benjamin Warfield, this brilliant theology professor, prayed for his wife for healing for 20 years. She was never healed. And out of this place of hurt and disappointment, Benjamin Warfield used his theological brilliance to argue in a book called *Counterfeit Miracles* that God no longer heals and that the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit were taken away from the church. In fact, Warfield's denial of healing and spiritual gifts still forms the foundation for the teaching of many churches across America.

I sympathize with Benjamin Warfield at the pain and disappointment he experienced as a result of unanswered prayers, but I think he was wrong. I don't think that you can read the gospel accounts of Jesus, or understand his message of bringing something of the future age – the age of the kingdom – into our age without praying for and working for and hoping for all that God intends for us to experience in this world: Healing, the reconciliation of marriages, justice for the poor.

At the same time, we must frankly come to accept the idea that we will not be able to enjoy all that the kingdom promises until the second coming of Christ. Until the Lord returns, many of us will be unhealed. We will still experience grief; we'll still have less than perfection in our lives and in the lives of loved ones. So what are we to do in the meantime? How are we to continue to have faith if we, or our loved ones, or our marriages are not healed? I've called today's talk "When God Does Not Answer Our Prayers For Healing." Let pray.

Hebrews 2:5-18

It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. 6 But there is a place where someone has testified: "What are mere mortals that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? 7 You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor 8 and put everything under their feet." In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them. 9 But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. 10 In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. 11 Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. 12 He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises." 13 And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me." 14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. 17 For this reason he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Let's look at verses 5-8:

Hebrews 2:5-8

It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. 6 But there is a place where someone has testified: "What are mere mortals that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? 7 You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor 8 and put everything under their feet." In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them.

The author of Hebrews is quoting from the Old Testament book of Psalms 8.

God created human beings to experience his favor and care, verse 6:

Hebrews 2:6

But there is a place where someone has testified: "What are mere mortals that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?"

Human beings were given incredible dignity. Verse 7 tells us:

Hebrews 2:7

You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor

We were made just a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor. And in verse 8:

Hebrews 2:8

and put everything under their feet.

All of nature was designed to be in subjection to us human beings. The fact is, as we look at the world, it is not as God designed it to be, is it? We despise God's favor; we abuse the gift of freedom that God has given us; we've lost the dignity of being made just a little lower than the angels; and our dominion and authority over this creation has become limited by our sins.

Talk about the loss of human dignity. Perhaps you've been reading about the obscenity trial that is taking place in California. A person who calls himself a "shock artist" apparently has produced videos that are so horrifically degrading, so awful, that even in liberal California, prosecutors felt compelled to bring obscenity charges against this so-called shock artist. Jurors are forced to watch hour after hour of the most degrading obscenities in order to see whether the videos have any artistic merit. Because if there is any historic merit, then according to Supreme Court interpretations of the First Amendment, the Constitution would protect these videos.

But unfortunately, the obscenity trial had to be suspended the other day. Now why? Why was the obscenity trial suspended? Was there an outburst from the audience? No. Did one of the jurors faint watching the videos? No. Was there an illness or an emergency in the prosecutor or the defense attorney's office? No, not at all! The reason why this obscenity trial in California was suspended was because the judge was discovered to have a website in which people are portrayed as having sex with animals.

What was the judge's reaction to this discovery? Did he resign in disgrace and shame, blaming the site on depression or the famous catch-all excuse today is that he is recovering from the "disease of alcoholism." But the judge didn't take one of the typical outs. Instead, he said:

"It is true. Is it prurient? I don't know what to tell you. I think it is odd, but it is fascinating and interesting. It is part of life. I have the website for the entertainment of my family."

Now the person who said this is not some justice of the peace in Mayberry, some small town somewhere. The person who defended bestiality is the Chief Justice of the 9th Circuit Federal Court of Appeals. He is the Chief Judge. He is right under the Supreme

Court. And he is presiding over an obscenity trial and he's maintaining this type of website, for "the entertainment of his family."

The Bible says that:

We all like sheep have gone astray. Everyone of us have turned to his own way.

You can't read the newspaper about contemporary America without coming to the conclusion that we have lost our way. We've lost our moral compass. We've lost our way financially as we sink into deeper and deeper debt at a personal level and at a national level because of rampant materialism and greed. We've lost our way morally. We can't any longer even meaningfully discuss obscenity because the judge who presides over the case is maintaining his own obscene website seemingly without shame.

The Bible says that because of our sin, we've lost out on God's created intention for us as human beings to rule over nature under God's good government. We're limited now in our dominion over nature. Nature no longer obeys us. Just look at this past week – there have been terrible floods and tornadoes sweeping through the Midwest. Just a few weeks ago we read of the tragic cyclone that hit Myanmar and the earthquake that ravaged a province in China.

This is what the writer of Hebrews tells us is the state of our human existence in this present world. Read with me verse 8:

Hebrews 2:8

and put everything under their feet." In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them.

In creation we were give rule over nature, but because of our rejection of God, the fact that we human beings turned our backs on God from our first parents to today, we have become severely limited in our rulership. Nature doesn't obey us. Our bodies don't obey us. Cancer goes unchecked; diabetes ravages our bodies. Our psyches don't obey us. What we wish for and hope for in our marriages doesn't happen. We are subject to addictions. We live in a world outside of our control, not subject to our authority.

How do we live in a world in which we do not see God's created intention for us or our loved ones being carried out? The writer of Hebrews tells us how to live in faith even when God doesn't answer our prayers. Verse 9:

Hebrews 2:9

But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

We look around at life and everything seems to be out of control. The empirical evidence points away from faith, away from God, away from any moral ordering of the universe. We look at the world and things do not seem to be bent towards justice. They seem to be bent towards power. We look at the world and there are so many who suffer, so many who are starving, so many who are ill. How do you maintain faith in such a world?

The author of Hebrews says just don't look at the world; you won't see God's intention fulfilled there right now. If you want to see God, then pay attention and look at Jesus. We see Jesus. Keep your eyes on Jesus. There is the purpose of God. There is the evidence of God's activity – in Jesus.

And what do we see in Jesus?

A friend who understands

Verse 9:

Hebrews 2:9

But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

The writer uses exactly the same language in verse 9 concerning Jesus as he used in verses 6-8 regarding all of humanity. In other words, Jesus shares our common humanity. He was made a little lower than the angels. He was crowned with glory and honor. And yet, he also died. He shares not only human dignity, but human suffering. The writer echoes this thought in verses 17-18 when we read these words:

Hebrews 2:17-18

For this reason he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

In Jesus we see the fulfillment of God's intended purpose for humanity. And the way we get through those times of unanswered prayer is that we turn to Jesus as a friend who understands.

Years ago when my children were small, we were down in Key West, Florida on vacation. Every evening they had a street fair right by the shore as the sun went down. Huge crowds of people were by the docks. I remember there was a fire breather and he had around 150 surrounding him. And then there was this guy in a white shirt and tie and he had a little flannel graph in which he was trying to explain the gospel to a very

small group of onlookers. There were only about 5-6 people around this gospel preacher.

So I decided to add some heft to his crowd and so I walked over and watched his presentation. He had these little pieces of flannel and he was putting them on his board and explaining in intricate detail the meaning of the various pieces of flannel. Sadly, it was a really dreadful presentation. There were two women from England watching him and one of them interrupted his presentation and said, "I've got a question for you."

The preacher said, "Just a second...I will take questions at the end." And he kept putting his little pieces of flannel on the board.

She said, "I want to ask you something."

The man said, "Not now."

I thought to myself, "What a mistake! He's got someone really interested. Dialogue with her! Stop looking at your flannel graph!"

She got upset and walked away with her friend. The man muttered something about how rude some people were. And now the crowd had dwindled to about three people.

I said to the Lord, "Lord, if you would want me to speak to this woman, help me find her in this big crowd." I needed to find my children, who were then small. I found my two kids and we were holding hands walking through this huge crowd that was pressed shoulder to shoulder. And as I turned the corner, the English woman who has asked the question ran right into me. I said to her, "I saw you back there trying to ask that man a question."

She just went off, "You know those preachers are all hypocrites."

I said, "Yeah, yeah, I know about preachers." And then I said, "What was it that you wanted to ask the man?"

She got really red in the face and began to tear up. She said, "What I wanted to ask, what I wanted to ask him was if there is a God why did he allow my husband to die of cancer at age 36?"

I put my hand on her shoulder and I said, "Look, I don't know why God allowed your husband to die of cancer at such a young age. But I know he understands how you feel."

She got really mad then and stepped back and said, "How would God know how I feel?"

I said, "Because he watched a family member, his Son, Jesus, who he loved, die a horrible death and didn't prevent that death either. In fact, he planned it so that you and I could be saved."

See whenever you turn to Jesus with some disappointment in your life, some grief, some less-than-what-you-hoped-for experience, you are turning to the God, who understands exactly how you feel because he's been there first.

Your spouse is having an affair? Or you've been betrayed by a friend or co-worker? Jesus knows what it feels like to be betrayed by people he trusted, who were closest to him. You have horrible pain in your body? Jesus understands what it feels like to have horrible, searing pain in his body and he didn't dull the pain with medication. You are losing your house through foreclosure? Jesus said that he had no home. Do you feel far from God? You just feel like God has abandoned you? Jesus said it first when he hung on a cross. He said, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" You are grieving; we read in the Bible that Jesus grieved. He wept.

We ought to look at Jesus the way a cancer-survivor looks at other cancer-survivors or the way a parent who lost a child looks at other parents who have lost children in a support group. We ought to say to ourselves, "When I look at Jesus I am looking at someone who gets my life. I don't have to explain myself to him." I say to Jesus, "You get it. You've been there. You don't give me superficial glib answers for my problems. I don't have to say a million things to you. You get it. You are a friend who understands."

And I see in Jesus:

A Savior who is my substitute

Hebrews 2:9

But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Often when we are sick and unhealed we imagine in our minds that God is punishing us for our sins. We're suffering the just reward for our rebellion against God. And, indeed, the Bible does tell us that sickness can, on occasion, be God's discipline for our sins.

But what do we do when we sin? Is there anyway back into God's good graces? Do we have to live under condemnation and discipline forever? The author of Hebrews says that we do not have to live that way because he suffered death so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. It was Jesus the Savior, who was our substitute.

The theological term for the doctrine of substitution is penal substitution.

Penal Substitution

It means that God in his grace had Jesus stand in for us and bear the penalty for our sins. God was in Christ exhausting his judgment on himself so that we could win from God forgiveness and reconciliation, to be put back into God's good graces. God did all of this because he loves us. You don't have to lie in a bed feeling that you have been permanently banned from the presence of God. You can be fully restored. Condemnation and shame can be fully removed whether or not your body is healed because you see Jesus as your substitute. You can know that you are no longer an enemy of God and you can be treated by God as a beloved friend.

If you are sick and your prayers are not answered, if your loved one is sick and your prayers are not answered, your marriage still isn't healed; the deepest desire of your heart still remains unfulfilled, is that it? Are you to spend eternity with an unhealed body or a hole in your heart? No. You see Jesus.

Hebrews 2:10

In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.

What do we see in Jesus?

We see a pioneer who leads us to glory

That word pioneer is variously translated. You might read in your Bible the "author of their salvation," or "the leader who delivers them." But "pioneer" or "trailblazer" is a good translation. The picture is of one of those explorers who are hacking their way through the jungle. There are no paths; no trails. But this explorer knows where he is going and he is hacking his way through until he reaches the goal. And then when he reaches the goal, it is possible for others to follow in his trail. That's what Jesus did. He hacked his way through this world opening up the trail to God's new world. And from that new world we are now experiencing something of its light at the end of the tunnel.

You know, it is amazing when someone blazes a trail how much easier it is for others to follow behind. Before May 6, 1954, no one in human history that we know of ever ran the mile in under four minutes. People used to talk about the four minute mile as the limit of human possibility. And then on May 6, 1954 an Englishman, who was studying to be a doctor named Roger Banister, broke the 4-minute barrier. Suddenly, it became thinkable! It became possible that a human being could run faster than 4 minutes. In all of human history, no one – and then Roger Banister does it. And then the next month someone else did it. And then the next year in one race three men did it. And the year after that four other men did it. And then the floodgates opened.

And it was the same in climbing Mt. Everest. Before 1953 no one had ever reached the summit of Mt. Everest. It is over 29,000 feet high. Many, many people died trying. It

was said that the mountain was cursed. And then two men, Edmond Hillary from New Zealand, and Tenzig Norgay, a Sherpa from India, climbed to the top. They blazed a trail. The way was now open. Since that time, 2000 people have made it to the top including a blind man in 2001 and a 70-year old man and a 15-year old.

If you are sick, if someone you love is sick, and your prayers are not answered, you say, "Yet, nevertheless, I'm looking at Jesus who is my trailblazer. He is the barrier breaker. He is the pioneer who has opened the way to the new world and I'm going to follow behind him. It is not always going to be like this. This is not my eternal state. I'm going to live in the new world he made the trail to and I'm just going to follow behind him."

When our prayers are unanswered, how do we maintain our faith? We look at Jesus who is our older brother.

We see someone who models faith in times of disappointment

Hebrews 2:11-13

Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. 12 He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises." 13 And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."

Jesus is our older brother. Verse 11:

Hebrews 2:11

Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.

I don't know if you had an older brother. There are some older brothers like the one in the story of the Prodigal, who you just feel judged by – older brothers who always have a superior attitude. There are older brothers who pick on and tease and generally harass their younger siblings. There are older brothers who we resent because they are always doing everything right and we're always compared with their achievements.

And then there are older brothers who we love and admire and want to be like because we know that they are always watching out for us. They have our backs. The older brother who we are so glad to walk down the street with because no one dares to mess with us when we are with our older brother. They are the older brother who fills us with a sense of pride. We say, "You see that star on the football field, that famous doctor that elected official – that's my brother!"

These quotes in verses 12-13:

Hebrews 2:12-13

He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises." 13 And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again he says, "Here am I, and the children God has given me."

These quotes are taken from the Old Testament. They are taken from situations of profound disappointment and abandonment by God. The first quote in verse 12"

Hebrews 2:12

I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises.

This is taken from Psalm 22:

Psalm 22

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning? 2 My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest. 3 Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel. 4 In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. 5 They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed. 6 But I am a worm, not a human being; I am scorned by everyone, despised by the people. 7 All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. 8 "He trusts in the Lord," they say, "let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him." 9 Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me feel secure on my mother's breast. 10 From birth I was cast on you; from my mother's womb you have been my God. 11 Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help. 12 Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. 13 Roaring lions that tear their prey open their mouths wide against me. 14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. 15 My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. 16 Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. 17 All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. 18 They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment. 19 But you, Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me. 20 Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. 21 Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen. 22 I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you. 23 You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel! 24 For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help. 25 From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows. 26 The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the Lord will praise him— may your hearts live forever! 27 All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will bow down before him, 28 for dominion belongs to the Lord and he rules over the nations. 29

All the rich of the earth will feast and worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel before him— those who cannot keep themselves alive. 30 Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. 31 They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!

For those of you who know your Bibles, know that Psalm 22 begins with a cry that Jesus quoted on the cross. Psalm 22 begins with the cry, “My God, my God why have you forsaken me.” Psalm 22 is a vivid description of a man who feels utterly abandoned by God. He is rejected. He has searing pain in his body. And yet, despite all of that, this man declares in absolute confidence that he will declare God’s praise in the midst of his people.

And the next quote:

I will put my trust in him

This was taken from the book of Isaiah at a time when Isaiah said that God was hiding his face from Israel. Nevertheless, the prophet says, “I will trust in God.”

The basic pattern of these quotations is a pattern of our older brother’s life. It doesn’t matter, Jesus showed us what happened to him, he is going to still trust in the Lord. And in so doing, we who look to Jesus say, “We want to be like you, Jesus. We want to maintain our trust in God even when our prayers are answered.

And finally, what do we see in Jesus?

We see a Liberator who delivers us from fear

Hebrews 2:14-15

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil— 15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Nobody who is afraid is free. Often when our prayers are not answered for healing whether or ourselves or a loved one, when our prayers about something else that we deeply want are not answered, we are trapped, and we are enslaved by fear.

You know, Jesus came to deliver us from all of our fears – the fear of being alone, the fear of being unhappy, the fear of not being provided for. But there is one fear that the writer of the book of Hebrews specifically points to and says, “Here is what it means to be liberated by Jesus. He delivers us from the fear of death.”

Hebrews 2:15

and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

Is there anything that traps the human race more than our fear of death, particularly when we are seriously ill? You see the difference that Jesus makes by simply going to a funeral. Go to a funeral conducted by people who don't know Christ for a person who doesn't know Christ and then go to a funeral conducted by someone who does know Christ for a person who died in Christ. If ever you want to see the difference Jesus makes, even if prayers for healing go unanswered, all you need to do is compare a non-Christian and a Christian funeral.

My grandmother died outside of Christ. I was raised in a Jewish family – all of my relatives going back forever are Jewish. I attended her funeral a little over a decade ago. What struck me was the emptiness, the absence of any hope among all who attended. What struck me was the inability of anyone to say anything meaningful in the face of death. The comments were entirely trivial and superficial. And the entire experience was one of weighty dullness and emptiness.

Bertrand Russell, the great mathematician and atheistic philosopher said this:

Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom,
falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless to destruction, omnipotent
matter rolls on its relentless way; for man, condemned today to lose his dearest,
tomorrow himself to pass through the gates of darkness, it remains only to
cherish, ere yet the blow fall, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; ...to
worship at the shrine his own hands have built.

There's nothing. And then you go to a Christian funeral and there is grief there, but it is grief mingled with joy and hope. That's why in Christian funerals we often sing:

Be still my soul! The Lord is on thy side
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain
Leave to thy God to order and provide
In every change the faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul! Thy best, thy heavenly Friend
Thro' thorny ways leads to a joyful end

Be still, my soul! The hour is hast'ning on
When we shall be forever with the Lord,
When disappointment, grief, and fear are gone
Sorrow forgot, love's purest joys restored.
Be, still my soul! When change and tears are past,
All safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

Let's pray.

When God Doesn't Answer Our Prayers For Healing

Rich Nathan

June 14-15, 2008

Healing: 21st Century Healing

Hebrews 2:5-18

1. When we look at this world, we see:

- A. Most are not healed
- B. Lost dignity; lost dominion (Hebrews 2:5-8)

2. When we look at Jesus, we see:

- A. A Friend who understands (Hebrews 2:9, 17, 18)
- B. A Savior who is our substitute (Hebrews 2:9)
- C. A Pioneer who leads us to glory (Hebrews 2:10)
- D. A Brother who models faith in times of disappointment (Hebrews 2:11-13)
- E. A Liberator who delivers us from fear (Hebrews 2:14, 15)