

Instruction for the Sick: A Dispensational Consideration

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*Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake
and thine often infirmities (I Timothy 5:23).*

In this verse we find a remarkable instruction given by Paul the Apostle to Timothy. The dispensational light which is given by this passage on sickness is often overlooked.

Timothy, according to this Scripture, was plagued by stomach problems and “*often infirmities.*” These easily could have been relieved under the program of Israel’s Kingdom (*i.e.*, the ministry of the twelve apostles) and in the early *transitional* ministry of Paul; but in Paul’s latter ministry, after having received the full knowledge of the mystery, he no longer had such powers (Philippians 2:24; II Timothy 4:20).

Paul’s instruction to Timothy was not:

1. That his sickness was a result of his sin, and that he needed to confess his sin to be healed.
2. That Satan had inflicted this upon him and that he must “deny it.”
3. That his faith was weak or lacking and that if he would only believe God’s promises and pray the “prayer of faith” that he would receive deliverance from his sickness.
4. That he should call for the elders of the church (he was one!) and have the anointing with oil.
5. That his healing was in the atonement and that he was to “claim it.”
6. That he should use special handkerchiefs or aprons.

7. That he should get into a “healing line.”
8. That he should simply “pray about it.”

Paul did not give Timothy any of these instructions. He gives Timothy only one simple piece of instruction. Paul prescribed the common medicine of that day – wine.

... use a little wine ...

It must be remembered that Luke, the beloved physician, was Paul’s companion. Paul’s instruction to Timothy was that medical attention to be given to the weakness and frailty of his corruptible body. Paul gave no further hope than that which could be received through nutritional-medical resources.

Does this seem like strange advice? Does it seem somewhat “unspiritual” to you? What had happened to the ministry of Paul?

The answer is that a new order (or dispensational change) had completed its transition and was now in full operation. No longer were there the many miraculous signs, wonders and healings; but now there was a focus on that which was real and lasting – the eternal, the unseen (II Corinthians 4:18).

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God (Colossians 3:2-3).

We can learn much from Paul, our apostle (Romans 11:13). We learn from him that deliverance is not the answer to our physical infirmities.

And He said unto me, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities ... (II Corinthians 12:9-10).

... For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content ... I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (Philippians 4:11, 13).

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