

Healed to Heal – February 8, 2015
By Wayne J. Schneider – *Soli Deo Gloria*

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St. Mark 1:29-39

Holy Scripture takes my breath away. As we read about our spiritual ancestors we also find ourselves as well. Centuries before Jesus the Israelites had given up God's plan for them. This action brought them Babylonian bondage and exile. Far from familiar land also mean far from the Temple. Ripped from the Promised Land they felt snatched from God too.

While it is true God's people had continued sinning in spite of all the prophet's warning, now they were repentant. But as loud as they cried it seemed as if God was absent. Far from friendly places, abandoned, alone, physically and spiritually suffering, adrift from God.

Haven't we sometimes also felt this way? Regardless of who we are we have fought through fear, anxiety, and grief. This plus ill health, broken relationships, shattered dreams. We have discovered disillusionment with ourselves, our situations, and even with God. Often times it is because of our own actions, sometimes it is due to the actions of another; often it is simple due to living in a fractured world. If we pray our prayers are in despair. At times like this we can be tempted to unbelief rather than to believe in a God who appears not to care at all.

Yet, it was the Prophet Isaiah who spoke to our forbearers that into our darkness light shines. And this light is a word from God. This is not like "Wheel of Fortune" where you pick any word, but God's word is a word of promise, and not a generic promise: "*Wait on the Lord, he will lift you up.*"

If you are somewhat like me, you have experienced being 'down,' and in need of a helping hand and of being enlightened. You know what it feels like to be hopeless, except for the promise that even when we cannot crawl, let alone rise up like the eagles, God will come and lift us up.

Do you ever wonder if St. Pete's mother-in-law had reached to point where she gave up? Did she throw in the towel on ever being healed? Had she finally given up on God? Don't you wish St. Mark had shared these details? All we are told is that Jesus came, lift her hand, lifted her up, and she was healed.

And what is this mother-in-law's response? "*She begins to serve them.*" Our culture's response might be "*No rest for the weary, eh?*"

There was a woman we'll call Sally who, several years ago, had a lethal form of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. The treatment was so vicious that it might kill her before the cancer did. Sally's goal was to live long enough to see her daughter graduate from Jr. High. There was a six-week period where she was so out-of-it that she couldn't even pray. Family and friends prayer for her. But family and friends could not heal her.

But God could and did. Using a medical team God touched her body. M.R.I. and PET scans portrayed the retreating cancer. Finally, Sally saw her daughter not only graduate from Jr. High school, but high school and college too! The healing was not instantaneous as was St. Peter's mother-in-law but it was healing.

But there was more than physical healing for Sally. She felt her soul healed too. This is the restorative process of the Holy Spirit. God's modus operandi is to use our past experiences to inform our future. The problem is that these opportunities are often disguised as humongous death dealing problems. Mark Batterson in his book "*In a Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day*," writes, "*How we react to these events will determine our destiny. We can cower in fear and run away from our greatest challenges. Or we can chase our God-given destiny by seizing God's ordained opportunity.*"

Like Christianity, healing is never an individual event. All of us play a role in the lives of others. If one person suffers we all suffer. If one person is healed then we are all blessed.

The One God who raised Jesus from death uses our healed injuries to heal others. Henri Nouwen has named those who have been hurt and healed "*Wounded Healers.*" In our restoration we are called to encourage others in their struggles that God is present and has not abandoned them.

Restored, we try to encourage others in their struggles so they may come to recognize that God has not abandoned them. Then, as others also experience healing, we make room for them to work alongside of us in also blessing others. We are healed to heal others. And the circle continues.

Within this experience we discover a paradox: The more we actively pass on the blessing of Jesus the deeper is our healing. I am unsure how this pans out, but I have seen it and know it. I believe it's a safe bet that St. Pete's mother-in-law did too.

The point of all of this is if you are to the point that 'down' looks like 'up,' God promises you that God has never abandoned you. This is the same God who has turned death into life and desires only strength, healing and wholeness for you. And, since you have been healed, you now have a purpose: To so live that the Light that is Jesus shine in your life that the unhealed may trust God's promise too. May our growth in the One who loves us continue in joy! Alleluia. Amen.