

4 Keys to Rid Yourself of Guilt if You're Still Sick or Need Surgery

In his latest book, *Through My Father's Eyes*, Franklin Graham shares a fascinating incident from Billy Graham's life.

In 1949, Billy began a series of tent revival meetings in Los Angeles, and a minister complained he was "setting the cause of religion back 100 years!" Billy responded, "I did indeed want to set religion back—not just a hundred years but 1900 years, to the Book of Acts, where first-century followers of Christ were accused of turning the Roman Empire upside down!"

Authentic Christians should have a passion for the restoration of New Testament Christianity. We should desire entire cities be converted, angelic visitations be frequent, demons be cast out and God's power manifest in dramatic healings and miracles.

But we must not romanticize the early church experience as if there was perfect unity, pervasive peace and nonstop healings. A careful reading of Scripture dispels any such notion. Not everyone was healed, believers suffered martyrdom and because of division it's noted, "For this reason many are weak and unhealthy among you, and many die" (1 Cor. 11:30).

Recently, I had a protracted period of suffering from an ailment, eventually requiring surgery, followed by several months of rehabilitation. During this season, demons tried to create mental guilt handles, whispering that if I had done or not done certain things, this never would've happened.

This is a common tactic of Satan to foster guilt, double-mindedness, discouragement and depression among us during a "trial of faith." I've often agonized over precious saints

struggling with feelings of guilt because their ailment remains or believing that submitting to surgery is equated with failure ("And what will people think who look up to me?").

Probably the greatest healing evangelist of our time (whose name we would all know) underwent open-heart surgery because of dangerous blockages. In our city, a patriarch leader had a triple-bypass procedure a few years ago. Many Christian leaders submit to the scalpel for correcting maladies, blending medicine and miracles to keep serving God.

Oftentimes hesitations in this realm come from those influenced by extreme teaching on faith. I relate because of my own foolishness when I early on heard a certain "heavy duty" faith teacher and decided to discard my glasses as a sign of my "faith" in God's healing power.

After a week of jeopardizing my safety and passengers in my car, as well as struggling reading my Bible, I tempered my misguided zeal and quest for perfect sight.

'I Am the Lord Who Heals You'

Lest anyone misunderstand, I believe God revealed Himself in sacred Scripture () as the God who heals us. He is "the same yesterday, and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8). James 5:14-15 invites, "Is anyone sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church," and then in fulfilling certain requirements Scripture says, "the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up..."

But remember that preceding His revelation in Exodus as healer, He stipulated, "If you diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes..."

God is not a genie in a bottle who automatically gives us whatever we want when we want it. Christianity is not

primarily about principles for successful living but rather an ever-deepening relationship with the living God, revealed through His Son. "This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent" (John 17:3).

I remember once ministering in South Africa with Bible teacher Derek Prince as he prepared the people for ministry to the sick. He masterfully shared on the character of God, then challenged the Christians, "I'll plug you into God, but it's your responsibility to stay plugged in!"

In other words, faith is not a technique but rather the byproduct of a relationship with Father God. We cultivate intimacy with Him to know Him and His ways so we're not thrown off track when He doesn't respond the way we think He should. There is an element of mystery in the area of healing and our interaction with our transcendent and omniscient Father God. Sovereignty means He does what He wants, how He wants, when He wants!

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:8-9).

4 Keys to Get Rid of Guilt

After decades of ministry travel, jogging and weightlifting, my left knee was reaching the point of "bone on bone." My doctor walked the journey with me until it became apparent I needed "Doctor Luke" for a knee replacement.

While out of commission, I had wonderful communion with the Lord. He impressed upon me four things that I trust can jettison any guilt if this commentary was custom designed for you!

1. Jesus taught that the "rain, floods and winds" (life's

trials and afflictions) come to everyone (Matt. 7:24-27). If we have a solid foundation in Him and His Word, we will prevail. If we can stand the pull, He will pull us through. Also, never forget that His grip on us is stronger than our grip on Him.

When afflictions come (and they will), we must be careful never to passively “lie down on the inside” like Jesus cautioned the man sick for 38 years (John 5:6). We need to be aggressive in our faith. “I pursued my enemies and overtook them; I did not return until they were destroyed” (Ps. 18:37).

2. My friend Dr. Michael Brown, says, “God’s normative will for His obedient children is health and healing.” We search the Scriptures to build our faith plus maintain good health habits as we contend for our inheritance as expressed in 3 John 2, “Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, even as your soul is well.”

Contrary to unbiblical, extreme faith teaching, we live in a fallen world where the “outward man is perishing, yet our inward man is being renewed” (2 Cor.4:16b). When we face Job-like physical trials, there’s nothing to be ashamed of, nor should we automatically attribute it to sin or Satan. Let’s face it, this is part of the curse, and we’re all growing old, no matter how many “age-defying” Botox fillers some try!

3. Faith activates God just as fear activates the devil. “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (a). Therefore, we need to keep our faith level high by regularly building up our faith which “comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17b).

Hebrews 11 defines faith and lays out the faith honor roll, yet the outcome for some was victorious, but for others, it apparently wasn’t. We need to bear this in mind when things don’t go according to our plan. Both groups here were commended for their faith, and the directive is to always

“keep our eyes on Jesus” (see).

4. When we are in the tunnel of trauma, we should remember there are two kinds of grace (although we naturally opt for the first kind). There is “delivering grace” where we want immediate deliverance; there’s also “sustaining grace” whereby God develops character and strengthens us to see us through the trial and His intended outcome.

My knee replacement experience is, thank God, concluding. A card on my table encourages me daily, “Therefore lift up your tired hands, and strengthen your weak knees. Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame go out of joint, but rather be healed” (-13).

Here’s the deal: Psalm 91 is God’s assurance policy, chock-full of promises to keep us “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Eph. 6:10b). Let’s “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12a); not submit to any fear of man or man-pleasing regarding what people may think; and live a guilt-free journey to health, strength and long life for the glory of God.