



## PRAYING FOR THE HEALING OF HURTS WHICH AFFECT OUR INNER LIFE

by Dale Appleby

Many people suffer from injuries which have affected their inner life. These injuries may be physical, emotional, social, spiritual or mental. The Christian has a great deal to contribute to the healing of our inner hurts and injuries. Many are very susceptible to healing prayer. In Christian healing what is being healed is the person who is present with those who minister. We are not healing a person in the past. Nor do we want to imagine ourselves back in another stage of life in order to heal the person as they suffered then. Indeed imagination can be very harmful if it leads us into a fantasy world of make-believe. Christ heals now and we do not need to imagine him being with us at the time of the injury and healing it then. Surely the fact that he did not heal the thing at the time should alert us to the fact that what we are imagining did not happen. It is far better to deal with what is true.

In many ways this kind of healing deals with the same symptoms as psychological healing. Some writers want to place Christian healing in opposition to psychological and medical healing. But all good gifts come from God who has revealed a great deal through the normal processes of scientific inquiry which we ignore to our danger. So Christians who minister healing should work together with health professionals. There are many things we do not know and often people's troubles are complex and confusing. Christians must seek healing in all places where God provides it, including scientific medicine.

### Hurts

What is true is that many hurts, attitudes, habit patterns, inhibitions and reactions which we have now were caused or began at an earlier stage of our life. Some may have happened as recently as last week, and others as long ago as the week we were born. It is we who need to be healed. We as we are now. For this healing to happen we may have to remember what happened back then. We may need some revelation into where the matter began. But we do not always need this. Sometimes it is sufficient to recognise what our present state is and to ask for that to be changed.

In either case the person in the present may need to acknowledge their feeling reactions (anger, resentment, disappointment, grief etc) and seek forgiveness for those which were wrong, admit the rightness of those which were right, and seek forgiveness for allowing any of the right reactions to linger and fester. They may need to ask God for healing both for the initial injuries and for the effect of their feeling reactions. They may need to forgive others, and even stop blaming God.

There may also be decisions the person has made as a result of what happened to them which have affected their life from then on. These decisions may have been conscious and willful or they may have been unconscious. Either way they are real decisions with effects in the real world. Some of these decisions may need to be changed and a new way of operating adopted with God's help.

Some of these injuries have happened as a result of the way our parents and other adults influenced our upbringing. These are likely to be deep seated and complex and may take some time and even professional help to sort out. They are probably not appropriate for prayer after church.

To describe the process simply we could say that an injury done to us results in

- hurt
- reactions by us.

### Reactions

We could have at least four kinds of reactions.

1. One is to hold **blame** against the person. To act as their accuser. Forgiveness involves giving up being their accuser. It means deciding not to hold it against them any more.
2. A second reaction is to desire to **punish** the other person. This is different to the first. Punishment is what anger is about. This desire to retaliate, expressed in our feeling reactions, needs to be given



up and healed. Even though the initial anger may have been justified, the continuing of the anger is wrong and harmful.

3. Associated with this may be a cluster of other **feeling reactions** to the hurt. Feeling reactions are normal. But if they continue and have a bad affect on the person's life there may be a need for relief. What people do with their feeling reactions is their choice, so they may need to choose not to be full of self-pity any more. They may also need to pray that God will lift the depression or whatever feeling is still there.
4. A fourth reaction may be to make **decisions** (consciously or unconsciously) which alter the way we act or think. These may be decisions to protect ourselves, to retreat, or they may be decisions to get our own back. There are many kinds of decisions we could make - some good, some bad. Some decisions may have been the best we could do at the time. Some of these decisions may still be operating in our life, even though they were made a long time ago. Wrong decisions need to be changed in favour of new godly ways of living. Decisions that were the best we could do at the time could be changed for decisions that reflect how we want to live now.

Some of these reactions could also be displaced. We could blame God or a person other than the one responsible for the injury, including ourselves. We may do this because we are unwilling to face the truth about the actual person who did the injury, or for some other reason. The reactions could also be suppressed or denied. We may need to act in relation to each of these reactions as well as the initial hurt if we are to find freedom and healing. The process of asking for healing, changing our commitments and dealing with forgiveness is something the person affected must do. The ministers of healing will need to help the person to see, acknowledge and take action in these areas. That usually opens the way for prayers of healing to be prayed by those who minister.

### **Praying for Healing**

Here is an outline of what could happen when a person wants God's healing for hurts which have affected their inner life.

1. **The hurt:** They should acknowledge the original injury and ask for healing for it.
2. **Dealing with blame:**
  - 2.1 A person may need to acknowledge that someone actually did them harm.
  - 2.2 If they are holding blame against the person they should decide not to hold it against them any more. They can acknowledge that God is responsible for dealing with the guilty.
3. **Punishment:**
  - 3.1 Any desire to retaliate, expressed in anger or other feeling reactions, needs to be given up. The person decides not to stay angry. The person can acknowledge that God is the one who takes vengeance. They may want to ask for healing or a lifting of the feelings.
  - 3.2 It may be right to confess the wrong reaction or the holding on to anger and ask for forgiveness.
4. **Feeling Reactions:** Other feeling reactions may also need to be given up. The person may want to decide not to be full of self-pity any more. They may also need to pray that God will lift the depression or whatever feeling is still there. Confession for holding on to them may be appropriate.
5. **Decisions:**
  - 5.1 Wrong or inappropriate decisions may need to be reversed. The person could renounce or negate the early decision and replace it with a decision to act in another way.
  - 5.2 Confession of any sin involved in the original decision or its continuation may be necessary.
  - 5.3 Prayer for the help of the Holy Spirit to live the new way may be good.



#### **6. Where the hurt is continuing:**

It may also be right to call out to God for justice, protection, patience or perseverance in the face of ongoing injury. All these are prayers the person can pray themselves.

Those who are praying with them may help to guide them through these prayers. But their main ministry will be to pray supporting prayers after these have been prayed. Especially to pray for healing and for the blessing and strengthening of the Holy Spirit in the person's life.

#### **Confession and Forgiveness**

Confession and forgiveness is put at a central place in healing by James (5.14-16). Confessing sins to one another is one of the means of healing. Such confession aids healing by removing barriers between people, as well as removing the guilt that people carry around with them. To own up to sin and know God's forgiveness is very liberating in its own right. Many of our inner burdens are associated with unresolved guilt and its effects. To know that we are pardoned, justified and accepted by God is the entry to living under his kingdom care. It is there, in the holy presence of the God who loves us that we find the ongoing transformation of our lives. Once having come under the rule of Jesus, we find that the gospel gradually frees and heals us. His Lordship continually encroaches into more and more of our life, setting us free, leading us to see ourselves in the true light, and freeing us to be willing to allow him to heal our hurts and our physical injuries.

Confession of sins should be done as specifically as possible, admitting the sin rather than explaining it or excusing it. All we need to do is to acknowledge what is wrong, repent and ask forgiveness. Beware of the "If..." prayer. "If I have done anything wrong..." "I confess anything I have done to..." Either you have or you haven't. If the Holy Spirit convicts you the detail should be clear. It is appropriate to say: "I confess everything I have done..." We want to avoid vagueness and false guilt. The purpose of forgiveness is to be free of sin and guilt. So we ought to know what it is we are free from. Confessing specifically does not mean that we need to go into every tiny detail. Sometimes this will be right. In other cases we may have it clear in our head and summarize in our spoken prayer because of the large amount of small details - as long as we are really confessing all the sins.

In ministering this kind of healing we should note that the Holy Spirit is the one who convicts of sin. We may make people aware of the nature of sin but we must not persuade people to confess sins unless they are convicted by the Holy Spirit. We do not want to introduce the power of legalism to Christian ministry. Confession needs to be followed by the assurance of God's pardon spoken to the person in a clear and authoritative way.

#### **Forgiving Others**

Receiving forgiveness is one thing, forgiving others is another. Forgiving others is not a matter of explaining their sin, or of excusing it, but of acknowledging the reality of it, and then deciding not to hold that sin against them any more. When you forgive others check that you are truly admitting that what they did was really wrong. Only then are you in a position to cancel the charge. Cancelling, or deciding not to hold it against them, is not the same as rationalizing or excusing it.

Forgiving others is complicated when they haven't repented or acknowledged their fault or asked for forgiveness. They may be unwilling, unknowing or may even have died. They may still be acting wrongly towards us. Strictly speaking forgiveness is only appropriate in response to repentance. However an essential element in forgiveness is the decision not to hold blame against the other person. We can decide to do this whether or not the other person has asked for forgiveness. Deciding not to hold blame against them frees us from being their accuser and leaves the matter with God. It follows the principle that "love doesn't keep a record of wrongs".

Where the hurt is continuing it may also be right to call out to God for justice, protection, patience or perseverance in the face of ongoing injury. Forgiveness is not the whole of the story. Decisions may need to be made to alter the circumstances or seek another way of coping with the ongoing injury.