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The Practical Application of Spiritual Laws In Regards to Relationships and Spirituality

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***The Practical Application
of Spiritual Laws
In Regards to
Relationships & Spirituality***

*A guide to healing body, soul and spirit
for those searching for healing
and those guiding them*

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Chapter One

RECOGNIZING THE PROBLEM

Sometimes it seems that my counseling office is a stage where counselees replay their lives. They, once again, relive the struggles, anxieties, losses and fears which haunted them in the outside world. Only, now, they replay more honestly as they begin to understand the elements which come to bring them to this present moment. The healing begins with glimmers of insight as one client remarked, "It seems as though there is a law that is binding me ... that inevitably makes everything I do come out wrong."

Another client recognizes patterns of emotional absenteeism in the men she had married. Although these men appeared to be different they shared many of the same negative characteristics as the client's father. She wondered what force drew her to be attracted to men who would ultimately bring her emotional isolation.

Dave saw himself as a sexually inept, passive individual who spent a great deal of time and energy worrying about what others thought. His wife is a shrew, embittered with a life of regrets. The only thing they share is the commonality found in misery. It is easy to superimpose the image of Dave's mother over this scenario. How did he come to repeat what he knew he hated?

A young man is plagued with sexual and emotional infidelity. He learns that his stepdad, father and grandfather exhibited the same patterns. Did he "inherit" these behaviors from other men whom he barely knew?

What is common to these clients, as well as hundreds of others, is the struggle to define the influences which seem to be making them repeat destructive patterns. Can this "power", "spell", "influence" be broken? Or, in the final analysis, is this really a punishment from God?

This is an important issue. Many Christians believe that God allows His people to walk in the dark valley of suffering. In fact, He may even allow Satan to buffet us. Suffering, they believe, can lead to a deeper relationship with God. If suffering is for our ultimate good, naturally we must graciously accept it as God's special training. The only encouragement is the hope that God's grace will give us strength as we go through the trial. We are further directed to go through trials with thanksgiving. This seems to make sense, after all if we recognize God's hand in the good things

that happen to us surely we must be willing to recognize that He must also have a reason for allowing undesirable events. Job is a good example of how God allowed a creature to suffer evil so that God might receive greater glory.

Further, these same Christians believe that it is not always profitable to attempt to discern the reasons why we have to endure suffering. In fact, it may not even be possible to know the reasons. What we can control is our response to the suffering. Beyond that, we are in the hands of a fickle God.

I have heard a number of variations of the above theme from an equal number of well intended, but misinformed people. Strangely, these people seek the physician, the counselor and the minister for healing of their misery despite their belief that God gave it to them for some good end. The obvious contradiction begs an answer. Why would one seek relief from pain given by their God for the ultimate purpose of making them like Himself?

The faulty theology of the preceding paragraphs eliminates even the possibility of an adequate answer. If God is God then He must be a good God. The Book of Genesis describes creation as good. If we are known by the fruits of our labor, God therefore must be good and a giver of life. Clearly disease and suffering, emotional and physical, are anti-life events. Not only do they produce self-centeredness, psychologically and physiologically, but they may even cause

death. Satan is called "the king of death" (Heb.2:14).
Are, then, God and Satan one and the same? Certainly not!

Chapter Two

WHY SUFFERING?

Finally, we come to the central issue. Why is there suffering?

Many scholars have gone to the Book of Job in search of the answer and have come away with erroneous conclusions. The Book of Job, written about 400 BC, is an allegorical attempt to respond to the problems of unmerited evil, particularly the suffering of the innocent and the prosperity of the wicked. The Book concludes that "the justice of God cannot be defended by affirming that it is realized in the existing world. God must be just, or there is no such thing as justice; and if He is just, He must know that the world does not display perfect justice."¹ Job finds no answers but ends in the bankruptcy of human wisdom before evil. Job must accept the world as it is and accept God as He is. The Book of Job is an effort to investigate suffering. No definitive conclusions were drawn. The Old Testament, according to Paul, was a formative process designed to prepare the people of God for the coming of Jesus.

The Mosaic Law was formulated to raise consciousness concerning the depravity of man and the need for a savior.

If we look at the Bible as a whole and the New Testament in particular, we will see suffering as Christ did. The Bible speaks of every type of suffering--emotional and mental suffering: 1 Cor.2:3; 2 Cor.1:8, 2:4, 13:7; Spiritual suffering: 1 John 1:15-17; Rom. 7:18-24; Acts 13:8-11, 16:16-18; as well as physical suffering caused by accident or carelessness: 2 Sam.4:4; birth deformities: John 9:11; internal disorders: Luke 8:43; Satan: Luke 13:16. There are, however, over 82 direct references to healing in the Bible.

The point I hope to make is, God heals, "all your diseases" (Ps.103:3); "every kind of illness, every kind of disease" (Matt. 4:23,24); that God's people are directed to pray for healing (Acts 28:8,9); and (Jas. 5:16) and expect their God to respond.

The New Testament clearly demonstrates that there are three reasons for suffering: sin, satan, and persecution. God does not mention Himself as the direct cause of suffering.

SIN:

Sin is "grievous" (Gen. 19:13), "perverse" (Num. 22:32), "an abomination unto the Lord" (Deu.25:16), "abhorreth" (Ps. 10:3), "grieved" (Ps. 95:10), "provokes to anger" (Jer. 25:7), and "hated" (Zec. 8:17).

Sin is both an integral part of the human condition and

an individual response to the power of the flesh.

The origin of sin raises two questions: its psychological origin and its historical origin. Ultimately these resolve into a single answer. The psychological origin of sin is altogether clear in the OT and it is impossible to cite all the relevant passages. Sin arises from the lack of knowledge of God (Hos. 2:8; 4:1, 6); here the Hb conception of knowledge must be recalled. Lack of knowledge is a refusal to know, i.e., to accept God, to recognize His reality. Sin arises from the evil heart (Jer. 7:24). There is never any question in the OT whether sin is a deliberate and willful act for which man must bear full responsibility. There is no suspicion of any compulsion or neurosis, nor of any failure of society which excuses the individual. Sin is indeed a breakdown of society, and the prophets often speak of this; but society breaks down because of the failure of its members.

The historical origin of sin is really the question of original sin, and this in turn resolves itself ultimately into the question of how sin can enter a universe governed by the saving power and will of God. To this mystery the OT offers no solution; indeed it is more accurate to say that it does not consider the mystery. The narrative of Genesis 3 attributes sin to the free choice of man in his primitive condition when he was not subject to the burden of sin and of evil desires which the OT recognizes in historic man. Man is indeed tempted by agents outside himself; the narrative affirms that he has the power to resist temptation, and the fine psychological insight of the story shows how and why he yields. Man yields because he wants something which is not his. By this first sin the good relations between Yahweh and the sons of man are destroyed and in some ways irreparably destroyed; man can repent, he can receive forgiveness and a covenant with Yahweh, but there is no thought of a return to Paradise unless Yahweh himself restores man to his original bliss.

The result of the sin of Genesis 3 is the curse, and this is the result of every sin. In Genesis 3, the curse falls upon man in an

unspoiled universe; the author reduces the discord between man and the universe to the sin which ruptured his community with God. The OT response to the mystery of evil is to absolve God from all blame. The first and dominant effect of sin is death (cf. also Ezk. 18.4); sin is the denial of life.

The fullest theology of sin in the NT appears in the writings of Paul.

Both Jew and Greek are "under sin"; all men have sinned, and do not attain to the glory of God (Rom. 2:1-3:31). In this first part of the discourse a number of new points appear. Paul treats sin not only as a state or condition, but as the human condition. Again, without excusing anyone--for sin is a deliberate act--he presents a world in which sin reigns without any hope being offered of escape; sin is a power. These elements are elaborated on in Romans 5-8.

How sin became the human condition is the point of Romans 5:12-21. Paul traces the condition back to the sin narrated in Genesis 3. When the first man sinned, he sundered harmonious relations with God for the entire race. This is the Pauline doctrine of original sin which, it must be noticed, goes beyond the beliefs implicit in Genesis 3. This doctrine is intelligible only if one understands sin here in the Pauline conception of a state or condition or a power which is released.

The NT writings also speak of the nature and malice of sin in other contexts. For Paul what is not from faith as a principle of action is sin (Rom. 14:23). Jas. 1:14f contains a picturesque description of temptation in which the author affirms the responsibility of the sinner; one is tempted by one's own desire that brings forth sin; sin in turn brings forth death. The same epistle (4:17) observes that to know what is right and not to do it is sin.¹

Sin brought physical death and disease upon man, (Gen. 3:16-19; 5:5; Ps. 90:10; Matt. 9:2). Sin brought spiritual death upon man (Matt. 7:23; 25:41; Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8).

Sin brought disorder and pain to nature (Gen. 3:18; Rom. 8:19-23; 2 Pet. 3:10-13).

Although the evidence is clear concerning the destructive nature of sin, John 9:1-3 seems to pose a problem:

And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

What has been wrongly concluded from this passage; because neither the man, nor his parents had sinned, was the man's suffering God's sovereign will?

The disciples faced a theological problem. Believing that sin directly caused all suffering, how could a person be born with a handicap? Therefore either this man . . . sinned in his mother's womb (Ezek. 18:4) or his parents sinned (Ex. 20:5). Jesus therefore answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned." These words do not contradict the universal sinfulness of man (cf. Rom. 3:9-20, 23). Instead Jesus meant that this man's blindness was not caused by some specific sin. Instead the problem existed so that . . . God could display His glory in the midst of seeming tragedy (cf. Ex. 4:11; 2 Cor. 12:9).³

What Jesus is making clear is that not all suffering is related to specific individual sins but to our participation in Adam's sin (Rom. 8:19-23; 2 Peter 3:10-13). "The works [notice "works" is plural] of God should be made manifest in him", refers to the salvific works of destroying sin and Satan.

If sin is understood as turning aside from God's way, failing to follow the way of wholeness or individuation, there is good

reason for believing that this leads to illness. Men who lose their religious way, or have found none to follow, find themselves exposed to destructive spiritual forces that often trigger emotional disturbances. Thus they are open to fear and hate; to mental distress, meaninglessness, and despair; to destructive emotions that are almost a catalogue of the cardinal sins. There is good evidence, as we shall see, that such emotional disturbances often produce or contribute to a variety of mental and physical illnesses. There is clearly a very direct connection between sin and sickness, particularly if sin is understood as missing the spiritual mark.¹

SATAN:

"Satan is used 52 times and "devil" is used 35 times throughout the Bible. Satan is called, "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2); "the God of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4); "the King of death" (Heb. 2:14); "the prince of this world" (John 12:31); "the ruler of darkness" (Eph. 6:12); "Leviathan" [one who dwells in the sea of humanity] (Isa. 27:1); "Lucifer" [light-bearer, shining one] (Isa. 14:12); "The deceiver" (Rev. 20:10); "Apollyon" [destroyer] (Rev. 9:11); "Beelzebub" [prince of demons] (Matt. 12:24); "the wicked one" (Matt. 13:38); "the tempter" (1 Thess. 3:5); "a liar" (John 8:44, Gen. 3:4, 5); "a murderer" (John 8:44); "the enemy" (Matt. 13:39); "a roaring lion" (1 Pet. 5:8).

He sows tares among God's wheat	Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43
He instigates false doctrine	1 Tim. 4:103
He perverts the Word of God	Gen. 3:1-4
He hinders the works of God's servants	1 Thess. 2:18
He resists the prayers of God's servants	Dan. 10:12-13
He blinds men to the truth	2 Cor. 4:4
He steals the Word of God from human hearts	Matt. 13:19

He accuses Christians before God	Job. 1:7-12; 2:3-6; Zech. 3:1-4; Rev. 12:10
He lays snares for men	2 Tim. 2:26; 1 Tim. 3:7
He tempts	Matt. 4:1; Eph. 6:11
He afflicts	Luke 13:16; 2 Cor. 12:7; Acts 10:38
He deceives	Rev. 12:9; 20:8; 10
He undermines the sanctity of the home	1 Cor. 7:3-5
He prompts both saints and sinners to transgress against the holiness of God	1 Chron. 21:1; Matt. 16:22-23; John 13:2; Acts 5:3. ²

Jesus seemed to believe that a primary cause of sickness was a force of evil loose in the world which was hostile to God and His way. He believed that men were sometimes in the hands of this power, so that it exerted a baneful influence in their lives. You may call this force Satan, the devil, evil spirits, demons, autonomous complexes, or what you will.¹

Scientific Western civilization has made the error of diminishing Satan to myth and legend. Science fails to understand the maliciousness of these very real personal spirits. Jesus clearly saw Satan as a cause for suffering (Luke 13:16; Matt. 17:14-16; 2 Cor. 4:4; 11:3).

Not only has science diminished Satan but so too has the church. Many mainline denominations actually promote the celebration of Halloween and other occult activities. Even some of their worship rituals and artifacts own their origins in pagan worship. One Catholic church has placed over the altar a stained glass representation of the eye of the Egyptian god of power. The principle manifestation of the god is wealth and material things. A characteristic of this

particular church is the acquisition of money. We have attended this church two times. On the first occasion, the pastor gave a lengthy presentation on the building fund and on the second visit, he spoke on the proper care of the missalettes. On neither occasion was the Word of God preached. During both occasions our attention was drawn to "the eye" not the cross or the celebration. Clearly a Satanic entity directed this church.

Sometime later, I spoke with another Catholic priest who is a practicing psychologist. He asked me if I would look for Satanic influences in schizophrenia. I said I would. He abruptly attacked me, diminished my credentials and threw me out of his office.

Obviously, not all Catholics are ignorant of Satan and obviously Catholicism is not the only denomination which diminishes or denies the existence of personal evil entities. Unfortunately, there is too much ignorance across the board, in and out of religious institutions.

Jesus believed that men do have and should continue to develop conscious control over their personalities. Men, however, can be influenced by non-material psychic realities. Positive spiritual powers can enlighten and direct man. Other alien powers, e.g., unclean spirits, evil spirits, demons and satanic forces can make people sick physically, mentally, and morally. These alien spirits cannot be controlled by the will of the individual.¹

Apart from such an understanding it is certainly not possible to understand the healing ministry described in the New Testament.

The human will or ego cannot stand against demonic infiltration and possession unless one is endowed with the Holy Spirit.

One reason Jesus was so responsive to sickness and sin was his sense that they result from men's domination by alien spirits, to which his whole being was antagonistic.²

"There was open warfare on a cosmic level, with physical and mental healing one of the things fought for. Failure to release man from these powers would have been unthinkable for those who saw man from Jesus' psychological point of view."²

The most important reason that Jesus healed was that he cared about people and suffered when they did. He was opposed to sickness because it caused needless suffering.

Another of Jesus' reasons for healing seems to have been that he was somehow hostile to what made people sick. He rebuked the forces that seemed to possess the mentally ill, and expressed the same antagonism towards physical illness.

Jesus' underlying attitude was that the demon-possessed and the physically ill were under the influence or control of an evil power. Some evil source--demons, Satan, something destructive and uncreative, the very opposite of the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit--seemed to have gained control or at least a partial influence over the sick person. Since Jesus by his very nature was opposed to this power and hostile to it, he wanted to bring it into subjection and in that way to free men.

The "Christian" attitude that glories in sickness is completely alien to that of Jesus of Nazareth; it is aligned on the side of what he was fighting against.

Sickness is a destructive and evil phenomenon, and Christ as the incarnation of creativity was dead set against it. Modern medical practice is a monument to the attitude of Jesus; it practices in His way as the churches often do not.¹⁹

In order to understand the nature of the battle in which he is engaged, the counselor must study the biblical data concerning the evil one and his forces.

We must recognize that even though it may not look like it, as a soldier of Christ we are on the winning side. The enemy has already been defeated. Christ has thoroughly routed him by His sacrificial death, bodily resurrection, and ascension to power and glory. Satan's condition, since the cross, is described as follows:

He is "bound": Mark 3:27; Luke 11:20;
Rev. 20.

His power is restricted and restrained:
2 Thess. 2:6ff.

He has been rendered "powerless over
believers": Hebrews 2:14.

He is defeated, disarmed, and spoiled:
Col. 2:15; Rev. 12:7ff; Mark 3:27.

He has "fallen" and was "thrown down":
Luke 10:18; Rev. 12:9.

His kingdom has been replaced by God's:
Dan. 7; Luke 11:20.

He had a short, furious time of activity in the
first century that has ceased: Rev. 12:12.

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first century that has ceased: Rev. 12:12.

He was "crushed" under the foot of the early Christians: Rom. 16:20.

He has lost "authority" over Christians: Col. 1:13.

He has been "judged": John 16:11.

He cannot "touch" a Christian: 1 John 5:18.

His works have been destroyed: 1 John 3:8.

He has "nothing": John 14:30.

He must "flee" when "resisted": Jas. 4:7.

Surely Satan is alive, but not "well, on planet earth!"

His minions, likewise, have been cast out, subject to the authority of Christians, overcome by them, bound in chains, etc. (cf. Matt. 10-12; Mark 1:27; 6:7; Luke 9:1; 10:19; 1 John 4:4; Jude 6; Rev. 12:9, etc.) All in all, the data are overwhelming.

Whatever the outward signs may seem to indicate, Satan truly is a defeated foe. His power over unbelievers still is great: the "whole world lies in the evil one" (1 John 5:19); he can "take them captive at his will" (2 Tim. 2:26). Yet this no longer is true of the believer. Thus, the Christian by God's grace (help) can overcome evil and is exhorted to do so (Rom. 12:21).¹¹

PERSECUTION:

When Paul says "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10), he is not fatalistic or rationalizing inescapable afflictions or unresolved questions. Rather, Paul

has gloriously raised his position to one of a victorious warrior who intentionally and purposefully went into battle.

Paul attributes the infirmity to Satan and the remaining distresses to the sins of the heathen. He, in short, has entered the same battle Christ did and for Him he willingly suffers.

Persecution is the only acceptable form of suffering for a Christian. The apostles were honored to be "suffering disgrace for the name" (Acts 5:41). Later, Peter encouraged Christians to "rejoice" when they would "participate in suffering on behalf of Christ" (1 Pet.. 4:13; 2:18-21; 3:8-17).

"Suffering with him" (Rom. 8:17) means as He did, e.g., persecution and crucifixion because of obedience to the Father. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12).

1 Pet. 2:20 makes a clear distinction between being buffeted for one's own faults and for doing what is right.

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on his behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if

the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator. (1 Pet. 4:13-19).

The purpose of suffering, brought on by persecution, is to share in Christ's glory. The purpose of all other suffering is to create blocks in the giving and receiving of divine and human love.

Healing is a way of opening man's eyes to the power of God, to repentance and, as I said previously, discipleship.

With essentially this point of view, Jesus acted to express God's compassion toward men caught up in sin and sickness; he healed both. There was no hint of sitting back to wait for suffering to teach a man his lesson and bring him back into relation with God; Jesus knew that healing could accomplish God's will in men far better. God through Christ is interested in whole, redeemed men, not in using them to satisfy divine anger. This is one of the fundamental conceptions of Jesus and vital Christianity.⁴

We conclude that:

1. The Christian who goes around saying that sickness is God's will has not fully understood the life and teaching of Christ. A large part, perhaps even the major part, of Jesus' ministry was devoted to healing the sick just because it was indeed God's will that they should be well and not ill. God in Christ was opposed to sickness and to what makes men sick; he was in the world to heal it.
2. Health of mind and body and Christianity cannot be separated. It may be possible to separate health of mind and body out from other religions, but not from Christianity; they are in a corporate relationship.
3. For all practical purposes the aim in founding the church was to make it possible to carry on the ministry of Christ while they waited for the coming of the Kingdom. On one hand Christians who are actually

followers of Christ--in whom His Spirit is still working--have good reason to want that ministry and its healing activity to continue. And on the other, there seems to be only one good way to keep this Spirit alive in people, and that is to be touched by and to help carry out that same activity and ministry.

4. Jesus' ministry was to preach, teach, and heal. It was to be the same ministry for his disciples and for his church. The appendix to Mark (Mark 16:17-18) summarizes the last aspect of this threefold ministry of the early church in these words:

These are the signs that will be associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and be unharmed should they drink deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover.¹³

The point has been clearly made. The influences which seemed to be making the clients, mentioned at the beginning of the presentation, repeat their destructive patterns originate from Satan. The "power" and "spell" encourage us to sin. We sin by breaking God's law. There is a consequence for breaking the law and a great reward for keeping it.

Before we go further, let it be made clear that I am not speaking about works earning salvation. When the rich young man asked Jesus what else "might I do", he was speaking about earning grace. Jesus' reply was, "sell all you have and come follow me". Jesus was not simply giving the young man another task but requiring that he shed what held him from obtaining what his heart genuinely desired. You cannot have two masters. The young man was earth-bound. His focus and energy was on maintaining things and doing things. Jesus, on the

other hand, sought just the kingdom of heaven. Since likes attract, effectively Jesus was saying "become like me". The young man would learn how by following Jesus. What Jesus was requiring was a relationship. The young man's worth would be found in that relationship. He need not earn what was already given.

Americans know well the axiom, if I do well I will be well loved. Consequently, we often live in the terror of not doing enough, well enough. Somehow we anxiously strive for what we, too, already have.

Performance orientation does not mean one who works hard, but one who works hard for the wrong reasons. A free person may work harder, in the same works--impelled only by love. Performance-oriented people require constant affirmation (unconsciously demanding it, sometimes verbally). They cannot handle criticism well. Their security is not first in God and themselves but in what people think of them. They are dependent upon the reactions of others. They have little center of decision in themselves. They must become whatever it takes to gain approval for themselves. They have become what Erich Fromm calls "market-oriented personalities," who sell themselves to be or do whatever purchases them signs of acceptance.¹¹

O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? (Gal. 3:1-3 KJV)

