

GOD'S UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE PLAN

By Michael Ward

Everyone seems to have a definitive opinion on our nation's universal health care initiative, and this doesn't seem to be an issue that will be resolved in the near future. What the majority of people fail to understand is their need for a spiritual health care plan. Fortunately, God has provided a perfect plan of healing.

No one is exempt from God's health care plan. (2 Peter 3:9.) Just as a physician tends to those who are sick, so did our Savior, the Great Physician, come into this sin-sick world to heal us, for we have all sinned. (Romans 3:21-23.) No matter how good we are or how many good deeds we achieve in life, we are not perfect and all the good we accomplish cannot erase one sin. In our body, the appendix is a very small organ, yet if it becomes inflamed and bursts it will poison

and corrupt the entire body; so will one sin condemn our soul.

Coverage under God's health care plan never changes. The one constant we have in this life is its inconsistency — things change, for better or worse. People change; cultures change; values change; even churches change. Thankfully, our awesome God does not change — His word is constant and eternal. (Hebrews 13:7-9.) Imagine how frustrating it would be if God kept changing the rules? It would be utter chaos, as what was condemned yesterday might be okay today. That would be a terrible way to live, never knowing from day to day what was or wasn't acceptable. We cannot "edit" God's word to fit the modern views, which are constantly changing. God has instituted a spiritual health plan under the Christian Age, which is

easy to understand and has attainable goals. (Acts 2:36-41.)

The premiums for your plan have been fully paid by Jesus. In our nation, people can only have the coverage they can afford, which means some will be left out of the best programs. But when it comes to God's health care plan, Jesus has removed this obstacle by paying our premiums. (1 Peter 1:18-19.) To rescue us from the sickness of sin, Jesus interposed His blood, giving His life for ours.

The things of this world will always be flawed and imperfect, yet God offers us a better solution for life and eternity. But it is still up to each individual to take advantage of this program of salvation.

— Velma, OK

BE SURE YOUR SIN WILL FIND YOU OUT

By Milton Smith

The title of this article is taken from a passage found in the book of Numbers, which reads, "But if you will not do so, behold: you have sinned against Jehovah, and be sure your sin will find you out." (Numbers 32:23.) One cannot sin and keep that sin a secret from the Lord. Any transgression one might commit is always seen and recognized by God. The Bible is full of many examples of men committing sins and ultimately having to deal with those sins before Jehovah, no matter how secret they thought their sins were.

Adam and Eve sinned in Eden and God knew all about it. In Joshua, chapter seven, we read about a particular sin committed by a man named Achan. This man thought his

sin was committed secretly, but we are told that God knew all about it. David must have thought that God would pay little notice to the sin he committed against Uriah, but he soon found out differently. (2 Samuel 11.) Ananias and Sapphira actually thought that they could lie to the church and get away with it; but God was well aware of their deceitful act that they paid dearly for it. (Acts 5:1-11.) Even Peter found out on the night of Jesus' arrest that his denials could not be kept a secret from his Lord. (Luke 22:54-62.) When we sin, God is fully aware of our actions.

Sin can come in many forms. It can be committed openly, by omission, by commission, willfully, and even by neglect. John tells

us in 1 John 3:4 that sin is the transgression of God's law. James has written, "He who knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin." (James 4:17.) The two scriptures cited above give us good examples of both the sin of commission (John) and the sin of omission (James). I alone am responsible for my sins, and you (whoever you might be) are responsible for your sins. But never let us forget this fact: the result of sin is tragic only if we let such sin affect our eternity. Jesus alone is the propitiation for the sins of mankind. Because of this undeniable fact, the wise person will want to come to the world's only Savior so that his sin will not ultimately "find him out" for all eternity! — Tulsa, OK

Old Paths

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"ask for the old paths" (Jer. 6:16)

A PLEA STILL NEEDED

By Johnny Hinton

Dissatisfied, disheartened, and maybe a bit disillusioned by the division in the name of Christ, a number of men, providentially it seems, embarked upon an effort to correct this problem. There was no initial concerted effort to find like minds yet they seemed to have found each other anyway. They came from varied backgrounds socially and educationally but they shared a dream.

The core of the dream was unity, the means was to be restoration of the ancient order of things. Restoration was not the goal but the means to the goal of unity. These men chose a path whose meanderings would only be revealed incrementally. Their noble effort would in fact bring surprises to themselves. They would discover that not only was there disagreement between groups, but that they themselves would have to conform more closely to the Scriptures.

These men collectively brought differing elements to light and that over more than one lifetime. Most died without having seen the composite result of their efforts. They never envisioned a new denomination among others. They endeavored to be Christians only -- nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else.

They called upon professing believers in Jesus to unite under the banner of simple NT Christianity. Tens of thousands came. Churches were planted and grew. And all the while the truths rediscovered through serious study and tested in the crucible of public debate at every turn emboldened this group of disciples to greater efforts. Their beliefs and practices as a whole began to show a distinction between them and those denominations so many had come out of.

Areas of restoration focused largely upon the church's work, worship, organization, terms of membership, plan of salvation, etc. None of these came lightly or without trial.

But now there are those who have been cradled within this marvelous movement who ridicule and castigate, who demean and mock, who deny the pattern and propositional truths gleaned and put back into place. Rather than seek unity on the basis of restoration, they would rather dissolve back into the malaise of confusing doctrines and practices of men which brought about all of the original divisions. They seek to just fade in amongst those who preach and practice error which was exposed and debated in by gone days.

Rather than merely leave they want to "correct" the rest who are holding to the original dream. Even if some have failed to consistently apply the efforts and factions have arisen, the vast majority of congregations do still share a common identity along with beliefs and practices. The unity that still exists among the multitudes without a central authority demanding conformity to a creed, is quite impressive.

May God's faithful children once again rise up with boldness and confidence with conviction to speak the truth in love so that the kingdom can advance and souls won for the cause of Christ.

— Tulsa, OK

GOD KNOWS OUR NEEDS

By Bobby Key

As Christians we must believe that if we do not receive the very thing prayed for it was best that we not have it. Therefore, we ought always to pray, "Not my will, but Yours, be done." (Luke 22:42.)

God knows best.

I once heard brother Gus Nichols comment on this point. He said, "We do not always know what is best for us. It may not even be best for us to have health or wealth. We may need to remain poor or ill, in order to remain humble and faithful. Even death may be best for us. I have no way of knowing that I would die faithful to the Lord if given twenty-five more years in which to live. If God sees best, I had rather die now and go to heaven than to live a thousand years, and die in sin and be lost eternally. Let us therefore pray and obey, then leave the results up to the will of God.

"This will require great faith, but remember: Christians are called believers. (1 Timothy 4:12.) If we do not seem to have our prayers answered, let us believe that they were heard, and that withholding the answer was equal to the Lord's speaking back to us, and saying, 'The thing you prayed for is not best for you;' or, 'You shall receive your request as soon as you are ready to receive it;' or 'I am sending you something better than what you requested.'"

Let us do our part and leave the results to God.

He will take care of us — whether we live or die.

— Miami, OK

“GREAT GAIN”

By Ron Stough

In 1 Timothy 6:6-8, the apostle Paul gave young Timothy some inspired advice in dealing with the riches of this world. There he states, “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.”

In the book of Ecclesiastes, the wise man Solomon gives us some very sound reasons why riches profit very little. In chapter 5, verse 10 he tells us, “He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase.” One who is in love with wealth has a hard time being satisfied with any amount he may attain.

Second, Solomon found it very disconcerting to realize that whatever riches he might store up would, ultimately, go to someone else. In chapter 2, verse 21 he laments, “For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, knowledge, and skill; yet he must leave his heritage to a man who has not labored for it. This is also vanity and a great evil.”

Finally, Solomon came to realize that, in death, he was no different from every other man who had lived. In verse 15 of chapter 2 he states, “So I said in my heart, ‘As it happens to the fool, it also happens to me.’” Solomon could take no more of his riches with him in death than could the fool who had nothing.

Surely we can realize the truth of the apostle Paul, “Now godliness with contentment is great gain.” — Duncan, OK

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“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” (Hebrews 13:5.)

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” (1 John 2:15-17.)

Editorial . . .

SIN, THEN AND NOW

By Dalton Key

Asked in Bible Class to define “a sin of omission,” one small boy responded, “A sin of omission is a sin we should have committed, but didn’t have time to get to.”

Sadly, the lad’s definition sums up the thinking of far too many of our neighbors, and sadder still, far too many of us.

Of course these days the word “sin,” a designation considered staid and old-fashioned, has gone missing. Sin is rarely talked about, even in our public prayers or from many of our pulpits. We hear of “faults.” We hear of “lapses in judgment.” We hear of “failing to live up to our potential.” Sometimes we may even hear of “mistakes” or “errors.” But the word, “sin”, rarely surfaces.

Times have changed and not for the better. Folks who used to require repentance now need understanding. Those who in days past were summarily rebuked for their sin now expect to be accepted and embraced “as they are.” Confession has been replaced with counseling while tolerance in all things (except, curiously, the scourge of intolerance) has become the universal currency.

Consider our Lord’s story of the publican and the Pharisee in Luke’s eighteenth chapter. The publican “would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.” His approach appears so quaint and out-of-touch with today’s conventional wisdom. He seems, from a modern, worldly perspective, even a bit pathetic. The self-assured Pharisee would surely be a much better candidate for membership in most modern churches than this pitiable publican! He didn’t let the sin problem stand in the way of his self-worth and self-confidence. He was happy with himself just as he was.

Yet notice which of these two men “went down to his house justified.” (Luke 18:14.) It was not the proud, self-loving Pharisee who failed even to acknowledge his sin. No, the one justified was the publican, the one who saw sin, and more accurately and personally, *his sin*, for what it was: a barrier separating him from God.

We would do better and be better served to spend less time listening to the mindless psycho-babble coming from the world around us and more time listening to God’s Word. Sin is universal. (Romans 3:23.) Sin is deadly. (Romans 6:23.) But sin, by God’s grace, can be overcome. (Acts 22:16.)

But refusing to acknowledge sin won’t make it go away.



WE ARE ALL THIRSTY

By Danny Tunnell

In John 4, Jesus met a woman of Samaria at Jacob’s well. It was a time when Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.

Jesus asked the woman to give Him a drink, and then He explained to her that He could give Living Water. Jesus said, “Whoever drinks this water shall thirst again: but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” (John 4:13,14.) The woman responded, “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not.” (John 4:15.)

We learn in this chapter that this lady was a sinner. She had been married five times, and the man she was now living with was not her husband.

What can Christians learn from this account?

A Christian should never convey to others a tone of moral superiority. It is too easy to fall off of that pedestal!

(Christ was sinless; we are not. —ED) People listen better to someone who presents himself or herself as one sinner talking to another; someone who begins with a confession of thirst.

No one in society should ever feel hated by Christians or feel that they are such “immoral” or “ungodly” people that Christians feel justified in despising them.

It would be better if we looked upon others as not just “immoral” or “ungodly,” but, hopefully as “thirsty,” as people dying for love. Like the Samaritan woman at the well, they, too, have drunk their fill of water that did not satisfy. They need Living Water.

Whenever we encounter someone whose behavior offends us, we should pray, “God, help me to see this person as thirsty.” The more we do that, the more we will see ourselves as thirsty as well.

Beverly Lowry wrote these

beautiful words:

One day I came to Him, I was so thirsty.

I asked for water, my throat was so dry.

He gave me water that I’ve never dreamed of,

But for this water, my Lord had to die.

He said, “I thirst.” Yet, He made the rivers.

He said, “I thirst.” Yet, He made the sea.

“I thirst,” said the King of the Ages. In His great thirst he brought water to me.

Now there’s a river that flows as clear as crystal.

And it comes from God’s throne above.

And like a river it wells up inside me.

Bringing mercy and life giving love. — Miami, OK

HAPPINESS AND JOY

By Cecil Burch

“A merry heart does good like a medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.” (Proverbs 17:22.)

There was an old gentleman who did gardening and other odd jobs for well-to-do people. A businessman saw him one day shoveling snow from a walk that led up to a beautiful residence. He was singing to himself and seemed to be enjoying his work. The businessman watched him for a moment, then said, “Joe, don’t you wish you had lots of money, so you wouldn’t have to get out here in the cold and shovel snow?” The old gentleman said, “No sir, I could stand a little more than I have, but I don’t want a lot of money.” The businessman asked, “Why is that?” “Well, sir, it’s this way: all the businessmen I work for never laugh. I would rather be poor and laugh than rich and sad.”

When Jesus preached the Sermon

on the Mount, He used the Greek word, “makarios,” which means “blessed, happy, or to be congratulated.” It signifies a state of genuine well being such as one exclaiming, “Oh, the happiness in me!” Jesus used this special word nine times in Matthew’s fifth chapter. He said, “Blessed (happy) are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed (happy) are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed (happy) are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth . . .” (Matthew 5:3ff.)

Even though the Apostle Paul was in prison when he wrote the book of Philippians, he made certain that the brethren at Philippi knew the joy of being a Christian. He said, “I thank my God upon all my remembrance of you . . . making my supplication with joy . . . make full my joy . . . finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord . . .

rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say rejoice.” (Philippians 1:3,4; 2:2; 3:1; 4:4.)

The most beautiful message that anyone will ever hear is: “Joy to the world, the Lord has come.”

— Angel Fire, NM

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