

DOCTRINAL PAPER ON EMOTIONAL HEALING

In the church when we talk about healing we usually talk about two types of healing. We talk about spiritual healing –forgiveness from our sins and our new life in Christ and we also talk about physical healing - the healing of our physical bodies from sickness and disease.

We teach that Christ has paid the penalty for both our sins and the transgressions of health laws which lead to sickness. Since Christ has already paid the penalty we no longer have to bear the penalty of death for our sins and sickness for health transgressions which allows us to be healed by the miracle of God.

In this doctrinal paper I would like to raise an issue of whether the church has missed a third area of healing – that of emotional healing. Are there emotional afflictions which require healing and can we petition God to heal those in a similar way to which we request healing for our physical sicknesses?

The first place I'd like to turn to in our look at this subject is to the account of Christ's suffering in Isaiah 53 where we read:

“He (Christ) is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:3-5, KJV)

We are all familiar with the phrases in those verses that talk about our spiritual healing like being “wounded for our transgressions” and “he was bruised for our iniquities”.

We are also familiar with the phrase that refers to our physical healing - “by his stripes we are healed.”

Right before each of those phrases God also says that Christ has borne OUR griefs and OUR sorrows. Now I'd like to ask, are griefs and sorrows sins? Are they physical afflictions such as sickness or disease? No, they are EMOTIONS! Christ has borne our griefs and sorrows. It seems to say here that He has paid those emotional afflictions for us through His death.

Griefs and sorrows are merely by-products of emotional afflictions which bind many people such as various addictions and neuroses, even in the church. Is there a practical application of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ being used in healing some of these emotional afflictions in a similar way to that of physical healing?

One scripture that hints at this possibility is that of James 5:16 which says, “Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”

When seen in the light of some of the quotes I'd like to provide from an author who has written extensively on the subject of the healing of emotions and memories, this passage in James may be a reference to both physical and emotional healing.

Another passage of scripture where this type of emotional healing technique appears to take place is when Christ re-created the setting when Peter denied Him three times and asked Peter three times if he loved Him. This incident will be covered in more detail in one of the quotes I provide later on in this paper.

The subject of the healing of emotions and memories has been around in various Protestant churches for many years. In this, the age of the nervous breakdown, I feel it is an important subject that is worth our while, as a church, to look into and glean whatever truth and helpful insights those of the world, through their own diligent efforts, have come across on this subject.

David Seamands, who is ironically a Methodist minister, is probably mainstream Christianity's best authority on the subject. He has written several books on the subject including "Healing for Damaged Emotions" and "Healing for Memories".

There is an old saying that time heals all wounds. This phrase is true up to a point. The pain of most painful emotional experiences eases or heals with time but there are others that don't heal in the usual way. Like a physical wound, they become infected and the pain of those incidents, sometimes 20 years or more in the past, is just as clear and intense as the day that they occurred.

It's these type of infected emotional afflictions which is the focus on Seamands' book "Healing of Damaged Emotions". The first three sets of quotes explain how our mind works, some of the most common emotional afflictions, the guilt and debt mechanism of our minds as described by Christ and the broad principles of being healed emotionally. Seamands writes:

"Through fifteen years, as tapes have gone out all over the world, letters and testimonies have confirmed my belief that there is another realm of problems which requires a special kind of prayer and a deeper level of healing by the Spirit. Somewhere between our sins, on the one hand, and our sicknesses, on the other, lies an area the Scripture calls 'infirmities'.

"We can explain this by an illustration from nature. If you visit the far West, you will see those beautiful giant sequoia and redwood trees. In most of the parks the naturalists can show you a cross section of a great tree they have cut, and point out that the rings of the tree reveal the developmental history, year by year. Here's a ring that represents a year when there was too much rain. Here's where the tree was struck by lightning. Here are some normal years of growth. This ring shows a forest fire that almost destroyed the tree. Here's another of savage blight and disease. All of this lies embedded in the heart of the tree, representing the autobiography of its growth.

"And that's the way it is with us. Just a few minutes beneath the protective bark, the concealing, protective mask, are the recorded rings of our lives. There are the scars of ancient, painful hurts...as when a little boy rushed downstairs one Christmas dawn and discovered in his Christmas stocking a dirty old rock, put there to punish him for some trivial boyhood naughtiness. This scar has eaten away in him, causing all kinds of interpersonal difficulties. Here is the discolouration of a tragic stain that muddied all of life...as years ago behind the barn, or in the haystack, or out in the woods, a big brother took a little sister and introduced her to the mysteries - no, the miseries of sex.

"And here we see the pressure of a painful, repressed memory...of running after an alcoholic father who was about to kill the mother, and then of rushing for the butcher knife. Such scars have been buried in pain for so long that they are causing hurt and rage that are inexplicable. And these scars are not touched by conversion and sanctifying grace, or by the ordinary benefits of prayer.

"In the rings of our thoughts and emotions, the record is there; the memories are recorded, and all are alive. And they directly and deeply affect our concepts, our feelings, our relationships. They affect the way we look at life and God, at others and ourselves. We preachers have often given people the mistaken idea that the new (life in Christ) and being 'filled with the spirit' are going to automatically take care of these emotional hangups. But this just isn't true. A great crisis experience of Jesus Christ, as important and eternally valuable as this is, is not a shortcut to emotional health. It is not a quickie cure for personality problems(p.10-12)...

"Understanding that salvation does not give instant emotional health offers us an important insight into the doctrine of sanctification. It is impossible to know how christian a person is, merely on the basis of his outward behaviour. **Isn't it true that by their fruits ye shall know them?(Matthew 7:16) Yes, but it is also true that by their roots you shall understand, and not judge them...**What I am saying is that certain areas of our lives need special healing by the Holy Spirit. Because they are not subject to ordinary prayer, discipline, and willpower, they need a special kind of understanding, an unlearning of past wrong programming, and a relearning and reprogramming transformation by the renewal of our minds. And this is not done overnight by a crisis experience (p.12-13)...

"What are some of these damaged emotions? One of the most common is a deep sense of unworthiness, a continuous feeling of anxiety, inadequacy, and inferiority, an inner nagging that says 'I'm no good. I'll never amount to anything. No one could ever possibly love me. Everything I do is wrong.' What happens to this kind of person, when he becomes a christian? Part of his mind believes in God's love, accepts God's forgiveness, and feels at peace for a while? Then, all of a sudden everything within him rises up to cry out, 'It's a lie! Don't believe it! Don't pray! There's no one up there to hear you. No one really cares. There's no one to relieve your anxiety. How could God possibly love you and forgive someone like you? You're too bad!' What has happened? The good news of the gospel has not penetrated down into his damaged inner self, which also needs to be evangelized. His deep inner scars must be touched and healed by the balm of Gilead.

"Then there's another kind, that for want of a better term, I call the perfectionist complex. This is the inner feeling that says, 'I can never quite achieve. I never do anything well enough...I ought to be able to do this. I should be able to do that. I must be a little bit better.' He's ever climbing, but never reaching. What happens to this person when he becomes a christian? Tragically enough, he usually transfers his perfectionism onto his relationship with God, who is seen now as a figure on top of a tall ladder. He says to himself, 'I'm going to climb up to God now. I'm His child, and I want to please Him, more than I want anything else.' So he starts climbing, rung by rung, working so hard, until his knees are bleeding and his shins are bruised. Finally he reaches the top only to find out that his God has moved up three rungs, so he puts on his Avis button and determines to try a little harder. He climbs and struggles, but when he gets there his God has gone up another three rungs (p.14-15)...

"Then there's another kind of damaged emotion that we can call supersensitivity. The supersensitive person has usually been hurt deeply. He reached out for love and approval and affection, but instead he got the opposite, and he has scars deep inside of him...

"Then there are the people who are filled with fears. Perhaps the greatest of them all is the fear of failure. These damaged persons are so afraid of losing the game of life that they have a simple way out - never get into the game; just sit on the sidelines. They say, 'I don't like the rules', or 'I don't care for the referee'. 'The ball isn't quite round.' 'The goals are not right'" (p.16-17)....

Oughts and Debts

A profound parable that Christ once gave was the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. He said:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able

to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

"The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' The servant's master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go. But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

"When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:23-35, NIV).

"With this parable, Jesus put into living colour and stereophonic sound His teachings about forgiveness. The parable is filled with profound insights about spiritual and emotional healing. We shouldn't be surprised at this. Jesus was the only normal and perfectly sane Person who has ever lived. We are told that He knew what was in man, and at the deepest levels. So we should expect His truths, His teachings, to contain the most penetrating psychological truths.

"The servant fell on his knees and begged for mercy. He was asking for a special kind of mercy, 'makrothumason'. Every time this word is used in the New Testament, it means 'an extension of time, a delay.' 'Lord, have patience with me. Please delay and I'll pay you back everything. Give me more time.'

"We see that the servant's idea of forgiveness was one thing, but the lord's idea was another. The lord in his mercy forgave him all his debt and released him. But that same servant as he went out saw a fellow servant a co-worker, who owed him a measly twenty bucks. He seized him by the throat and said, 'Pay me what you owe me.' When the co-worker couldn't do it, the servant showed no mercy on him but put him into the debtor's prison until he paid in full. Then the lord summoned the servant and said, 'Look, I forgave you all your debts and now you treat your fellow servant this way.' So in anger the lord delivered him to prison until he should pay all.

"Now, that's bad enough, but Jesus' next statement is the real shocker. 'So also My heavenly Father will do to every one of you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.' Wait a minute, Jesus. What are you trying to tell us? What kind of picture of the heavenly Father is this? Is it a mistranslation? No, the inference is clear. To the unforgiven and the unforgiving, God will be like a harsh and stern debt-collector.

"Is this an exaggeration, like the inflated sum of money? Or does it refer to the future life, to the punishment of the wicked? It may include those, but we don't have to wait until the next life to see Jesus' words come true. For here and now, the unforgiven and unforgiving person is plagued with guilt and resentment. He lives in a prison house where he finds himself tortured by all manner of inner emotional conflicts (p. 24-26)...

"One of the biblical descriptions of sin is 'violation of God's laws.' When we break those laws we are, in a sense, in debt to them. The words ought and owe come from the same root. To say, 'I ought to do this,' or 'I ought not to do this,' is like saying, 'I owe it to God,' or 'I owe it to this person' to do this or not to do this.

"What is true about God's laws is also true in the realm of interpersonal relationships. We feel oughts and debts to one another. When we sin against a person, we often say, 'Somehow I feel as if I'm in debt to him,' or 'I feel as if she owes me an apology.' When a person is released from prison, we say he has paid his debt to society.

“Jesus put this concept at the very heart of the Lord's Prayer when He taught us to pray, ‘Forgive us our debts as we forgive those who owe us debts.’ **A pastor, counsellor, or anyone who works closely with human beings knows that this whole debt system has been built into the human personality in a most incredible fashion.**

“There is a sense of oughtness, of owing a debt, an automatic mechanism by which the built-in debt collectors go to work. We seek to atone for those wrongs, to pay the debt we owe, or to collect the debt that someone else owes us. If we feel anger at ourselves, we say, ‘I must pay in full.’ Or if we feel anger at someone else, he or she must pay. In this way the whole inexorable process is set in motion as the personality is turned over to the inner tormentors. They are the jailers who work as debt-collectors in this awful prison (p.27)....

The Broad Principles of Being Healed Emotionally

How do we solve these damaged emotions with the healing help of God's Holy Spirit?

"At this point, let me suggest the general, biblical principles which must be followed throughout in order for you to find healing for damaged emotions.

“1) Face your problem squarely. With ruthless moral honesty and with God's grace, confront that awful, hidden childhood memory, however deep the feelings within you. Acknowledge it to yourself, and acknowledge it to another human being. Some problems can never be solved until you confess them to others. 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed'(Jam.5:16). Some people miss deep inner healing because they lack the courage to share deeply with another person.

“2) Accept your responsibility in the matter. ‘But,’ you say, ‘I was sinned against. I was a victim. You don't know what happened to me.’ True enough. But what about your response? What about the fact that you learned to hate or resent, or to escape into an unreal world? You may say, ‘My folks never told me anything about sex, and I grew up and I went out into this evil world, innocent and ignorant and got into trouble.’ That's the way it happened the first time. But what about the second or the third time - whose fault was it then? Life is like a complicated tapestry, woven with a loom and shuttle. Heredity, environment, all the things experienced in childhood, from parents, teachers, playmates, all of life's handicaps - all of these things are on one side of the loom, and they pass the shuttle to you. But remember, you pass the shuttle back through the loom. And this action, together with your responses, weaves the design in the tapestry of your life. You are responsible for your actions. You will never receive healing for your damaged emotions until you stop blaming everyone else and accept your responsibility.

“3) Ask yourself if you want to be healed. This is what Jesus asked the sick man who had lain ill for 38 years (John 5:6). Do you really want to be healed, or do you just want to talk about your problem? Do you want to use your problem to get sympathy from others? Do you just want it for a crutch, so that you can walk with a limp?....

“4) Forgive everyone who is involved in your problem. Facing responsibility and forgiving people are really two sides of the same coin. The reason some people have never been able to forgive is that if they forgave, the last rug would be pulled out from under them and they would have no one to blame. Facing responsibility and forgiving are almost the same action; in some instances you need to do them simultaneously. Jesus made it very plain that no healing occurs until there is deep forgiveness.

“5) Forgive yourself. So many christians say, ‘Yes, I know that God has forgiven me, but I can never forgive myself.’ This statement is a contradiction of terms. How can really believe that God has forgiven you, and then not forgive yourself? When God forgives, He buries your sins in the sea of His forgiveness and forgetfulness. As Corrie Ten Boom says, ‘He then puts a sign on the bank which says: “No Fishing Allowed”’. You have no right to dredge up anything that God has forgiven and forgotten. He has put it behind His back. Through an inscrutable mystery, divine omniscience has somehow forgotten your sins. You CAN forgive yourself.

“6) Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what your real problem is, and how you need to pray. Paul said that often we do not know how to pray as we ought (Romans 8:26). But the Holy Spirit prays in and through us, and makes intercession for us. Sometimes the Holy Spirit uses a temporary assistant in the

form of human counsellor who can help us to perceive what the real problem is. Sometimes the Spirit is able to do this through God's Word or through some incident in life that suddenly makes us aware of our real problem. For it is important that we realize the true problem and know how we should pray. James reminded us that we sometimes do not receive because we pray for the wrong things (James 4:3). It may be essential for you to get help from a counsellor or a pastor or friend; then together with this person, you can ask the Holy Spirit to show you where your real need is" (p. 20-22).

In David Seamands book "Healing for Memories" he goes into the counselling techniques used in what he refers to as the healing of memories. It's a counselling process by which the counsellor works with the person in going back to the hurt memories which are at the heart of a person's current interpersonal problems. Together they work on applying the broad principles of emotional healing outlined above. In some cases, as a last resort, where the person is in so much emotional pain or is unable to deal with his or her automatic emotional responses, God's miraculous intervention is sought to heal the mind of the person in need of help.

Seamands has documented a number of cases where it appears as if God has miraculously intervened and healed a person of an emotional affliction. A person may still remember the old memories but by God's miraculous hand the pain that used to be there no longer has a hold on the person.

Rather than quote at length from Seamands book "Healing of Memories" I would like to quote a summary of that material that appears in another very fine book that he has written called "Putting Away Childish Things". These quotes will cover some actual case examples of people Seamands believes were healed emotionally directly by God's hand, including the biblical example mentioned earlier of the apostle Peter. Seamands writes:

"I remember that Sunday evening service in 1966 when with great fear and hesitation I preached on theme, 'The Holy Spirit and the Healing of Our Damaged Emotions.' I doubt if I have preached another sermon God has seen fit to use as much as that one. The tapes have gone all over the world and have been the means of bringing release to people held captive by their emotions....

"As far as I can discover, the phrase 'the healing of the memories' began with Agnes Sanford, an amazing Episcopalian lady whom God has used so miraculously in a healing ministry all around the world. The term is hers, but the basic idea is an old one which has long been used by Christian counsellors and psychologists....

"The obvious place to begin with this troublesome inner child of the past is where he really makes himself felt—in our memories. It might be tempting to go off on a high-sounding tangent to discuss the unconscious mind, but personally, I think we have overdone this a bit. At most, I like to talk about the subconscious mind or perhaps a preconscious mind.

"I think the reason for overemphasis on the unconscious is to find an excuse, an escape from responsibility for our own wrong behaviour....Although you may not be able to recall at will, anything that ever crossed your path lives in your memory. It is filed in the storeroom of your mind. This is both wonderful and terrible. It is both the misery and the grandeur of being a human....

"Long ago I discovered the amazing power of the subconscious part of my mind in helping me prepare sermons. I have found that if weeks and months in advance, I feed certain basic ideas into my mind—a title, a brief outline, some thought of what I want to say—then the preacher doesn't simply work on the sermon. The sermon also works on the preacher! My subconscious mind is always occupied with that sermon, even when I'm busy with other duties...

“But the subconscious mind can also be a tormentor, for it contains tremendous power for producing evil and misery. This especially relates to painful childhood memories. In trying to push them out of our minds, we actually bury them deeper and deeper, until they no longer can find a way out. As a result, the intense emotions we experienced but did not express at the time the hurt occurred, have no way of being expressed now. Burned alive within our hearts, they retain amazing persistence and explosive power.

“While we may think we are free of those apparently forgotten torments, this is not the case, for submerged memories cannot be stored away in peace in the same way that the mind files pleasant memories. Instead, we have to keep closing the door again and again, refusing to let these painful memories into our conscious minds. Since they can't enter through the door of our minds; they disguise themselves and try to smuggle into our personalities through another door.

“The great effort required to keep these memories below the surface of the conscious mind is a constant drag on our energy. Some of us are as tired when we get up in the morning as when we went to bed at night, even though we have had eight hours of sleep. Why? All night long the battle has been raging in the depths of our personalities, causing a constant drain on our energies.

“Many people live with the unresolved tensions of painful memories for years, during which the load increases. If such a person comes to the end of his endurance and finds his energies depleted, he becomes a prime candidate for an emotional crisis. If he is further weakened by physical exhaustion, illness, or traumatic shock, and then if some experience takes place which associates itself with a painful event of the past, those hidden memories he has so long tried to bury are awakened and reactivated.

“When the dormant inner child of the past is thus aroused, he can take over the person's attitudes, reactions, outlook, and behaviour. The submerged emotions rise up and express themselves in feelings of deep depression, rage, uncontrollable lust, inferiority, fear, loneliness and rejection.

“These painful memories are not automatically evicted or transformed by an experience of conversion or even by the filling of the Holy Spirit. They are not necessarily changed by growth in grace. In fact, these memories are often great hindrances to spiritual growth. And until a person receives deliverance from them, he does not really mature. It is as if one part of his person is in a deep freeze, or in a time machine. His body matures and his mind develops but that one particular area is still frozen. He remains a little boy, she is still a little girl, locked into that childhood stage of life.

“Unfortunately these memories do not seem to be reached by our ordinary levels of prayer. Sometimes prayer seems to make the pain even worse. You feel you are in quicksand: the more you fight and struggle, the deeper you sink. I believe this situation calls for a special kind of shared praying and healing. The confusing thing is that often there is nothing wrong with the person in his present life. Not understanding this, Christian friends have been known to berate such people by saying, 'There is sin in your life' or, 'You are guilty of some transgression.'

“Such people are made to feel guilty about disobedience to God, when just the opposite may be true. Sometimes they are the finest, most sincere Christians who are trying the hardest. They read and pray and struggle with their hangups. Their friends give them Scripture verses, books, and lots of advice. All this only adds to their agony, so they become disillusioned and sometimes despair of life.

“Please don't berate a person like this! There is nothing wrong with his present adult mind. His commitment to Christ is clear, his surrender as complete as he knows how to make it. The trouble is in the child he used to be, who still lives within him, repressed and crushed down into the mind, and unexpressed until something causes it to rise up and take over.

“What is to be done in this kind of situation? Often what is required is prayer for the healing of memories - the healing of that little child or teenager who underwent certain experiences which made him stop growing, experiences which imprisoned him, froze him at one stage in his growth.

“All those memories need to be offered to God in a prayer for healing, so that the person can be freed from his pain and compulsion. You may ask, ‘What happens then? Will he no longer

remember? Will the memories be erased?' Certainly not! But the power of the emotions which surround those memories - the sting, the pain, the fear, the hate, the hurt, the lust—will be broken. As we kartegeo them, they will lose their propulsive significance. They will be devitalized, no longer effective and operative in the adult life.

“Someone add, 'How is this possible? After all, those childhood experiences are gone. They took place many, many years ago. How can our prayers today possibly affect that inner child of the longest past? It doesn't make sense.' To which I reply in the words of Jesus, 'You are mistaken, not understanding the Scripture, or the power of God' (Matthew 22:29).

“For you see, Scripture over and over again emphasizes that Jesus Christ transcends time. 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever,' (Hebrews 13:8). John the Baptist, talking about Jesus, said, 'Here is the One I was speaking about when I said that although He would come after me He would always be in front of me; for He existed before I was born' (John 1:15, PH). The Jews mockingly said to Jesus one day, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am' (John 8:57-58, ASV).

“Jesus of Nazareth is the everlasting Christ who broke through the time barrier and entered history. He lived within our time for thirty-three earthly years. But time is a finite concept. It is the way you and I experience reality—in pieces, in parts. We divide time into past, present, and future. But Christ transcends all of time. 'Even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God...for a thousand years in Thy sight are like yesterday when it passes by' (Psalm 90:2, 4).

“Thus our Lord is not restricted by time. He is our eternal contemporary who can walk back through time to minister to that hurting little child. Jesus can gather him into His loving arms, comforting and loving that child who so desperately wanted to be loved but never was. He can understand that little child who so intensely sought to be understood, but never was. He can reassure that child with the unconditional, accepting love he so acutely needed but never experienced. He can forgive that guilt, shame-filled little child the way he so deeply wanted to be forgiven back then, encouraging him and replacing the feelings of condemnation and dirtiness with virtue and cleanness. Yes, Jesus, the tender and everlasting Shepherd, can gather the lambs into His arms and heal their tormented, thorn-filled memories.

“My experience is that the inner child of the past which most needs healing is usually one of four kinds: he is the hurting child, the hating child, the humiliated child, or the horrified child. The memories that seem to grip and grind us, that have an almost hypnotic sway and power over us, are memories of deep emotional pain, resentment, hate, fear, or embarrassment. Sometimes it is a terrible mixture of all these.

“With increasing frequency, some form of sexual abuse is mingled with the memories - violation, homosexuality, betrayal, or incest. And so some people, who in their present lives are very sincere Christians, experience a near hypnotic, propulsive and compulsive lust in their lives. Their imaginations paint terrible pictures on the walls of their minds, driving them into guilt and depression, and almost to self-destructive actions. Or, they have deep-seated distrust and revulsion toward sex which prevents them from having meaningful relationships with their spouses.

“I want to share some experiences I have had with people, in prayers for the healing of the memories. Mike was a committed christian, a leader among youth, a dedicated Sunday School teacher who was much loved by all his students. Yet he had a deep inner struggle in his spiritual life, for he could never quite believe that God loved him. Every once in a while feelings of rage, bitterness, and lust would get hold of Mike. These would be followed by guilt, depression, and a feeling that God had forsaken him and was far away.

“We counselled together several times and tried all the ordinary ways of praying, but there was no real deliverance. So one day I explained to Mike the concept of the healing of memories. I loaned him some books and tapes and asked him to write down the most troublesome and hurtful memories which came to mind as he read and listened.

“Finally, when I thought he was ready for this special time of prayer, we met for an undisturbed and unhurried time of openness to the Holy Spirit. We entered into an open, conversational kind of prayer in which we just talked to each other and to God, remembering that He was right there in the room.

“As we did this, several pictures arose in Mike's mind, one of which was a very binding, grinding, and searing scene. This memory was central to his childhood, so dominant that he still had repeated nightmares about the event. Mike's father was well-meaning and sincere, but a very harsh disciplinarian. To punish Mike whenever he did any childish wrong his father would shut him up inside a little room in the barn. There he would strap him severely until Mike was screaming for mercy, crying for his mother and his brothers and sisters to come and let him out. He'd run for the door of the barn, but his father would get there first and stand at He door barring the way. He would then order Mike, 'Say you're sorry.' He would repeat this over and over again, until the hysterical little boy would finally say he was sorry. Then his father would force Mike to embrace and kiss him.

“As we prayed together and as Mike began to bring this memory to the Lord in prayer, he started to relive the emotion of it. All the resentment, hurt, and terrifying fear came into his voice. I didn't know what to say or how to pray, so I waited on the Spirit for guidance, asking Him to pray in me and through me.

“All of sudden it came to me. As I was praying, I saw little Mike. We were confined together in that horrible barn. And I realized that emotionally Mike was still in the barn, that he had never gotten outside the door. He had lived in that barn for fifteen years without getting around his father and out of the door. Inside himself he was still screaming, still hysterical with fear, still burning with rage. When I began to pray, I believe it was in the spirit of Romans 8:26-27, where we are told the Holy Spirit Himself intercedes for us.

“‘Lord Jesus, we are in the barn together. Take this little boy in your arms, dry his tears, quiet his fears, cleanse away his hate. But, O Lord, above all, open the door and let him out.’

“When I said that, he began to sob uncontrollably. I continued, ‘Lord, Mike has never seen the blue sky. He has never lived in Your love and freedom. He is still locked in the barn. Open the door now, and let him out - set him free.’

“While we were praying, it happened. It seemed Jesus rolled back the carpet of time and walked right into that barn. He took frightened little Mike in His arms and comforted him, loved him, and healed him. All the scars and the wounds were washed with the Balm of Gilead. Then we saw the door opening and Jesus talking that frightened, hurt, hate-filled lad out of the barn and into the clear blue sky and clean air of God's love.

“I used to wonder along with Nicodemus who asked, ‘Can a man really be born again when he gets old?’ New birth for young people we can understand - it seems much simpler for them. But let me tell you about Anne, a married woman in her middle forties, who came to see me after one of my meetings. She had several teenage children. Her marriage was about to break up because of her terrible inner conflicts and the way she was taking them out on her family. As we counselled together, I saw that she was a deeply sincere woman who had spent many hours praying about her problem. We talked several times and I loaned her some books to read. Those helped her to open up and share with me many things she had never before talked about.

“When I thought Anne was ready, we had our time of healing prayer together. She lifted up to God her awful childhood and teenage memories. She had an abusive alcoholic father who made several advances toward her, broke up the home, and then committed suicide.

“We prayed for the deepest possible healing of those childhood memories and the cleansing of all her twisted emotions. Nothing seemed to happen when we prayed together. I didn't see her for about two weeks. Then she told me this most amazing story, and we knew God had answered our prayers.

“It happened this way: about a week after we had prayed, she awoke very early one morning. She couldn't get back to sleep, so she lay in bed and began to pray. She said it was as if Christ Himself came into the bedroom, called her and said, ‘Come, Anne, take My hand. I want us to walk back through your life.’

"Lord, I couldn't stand it again. It was so hard when I told the pastor.'

"Anne, this time is going to be different. I am going to be with you each step of the way.'

"Anne then described that walk with Jesus in a most unusual fashion. The two of them were in a great art gallery where each painful incident was a picture on the wall. As Jesus led her they would stand before each vivid memory, like looking at a painting. And as she looked at them one by one, all the original emotions she had experienced swept over her. Once more she relived the fear, the pain, the shame, and the rage connected with those ghastly memories. Each time she would weep bitter tears and each time an inner voice would say, 'My child, just turn it over to Me; forgive everyone involved and receive forgiveness for your own hate and rage.' As she surrendered each memory to the Lord it was as if Jesus reached up and took down that particular picture.

"This went on for several hours until finally, when she looked around, all the pictures had been taken down and the walls of her mind were clean and whole. The scalding bitterness and poisonous fangs had been removed from those destructive memories.

"That dramatic experience was many years ago and, although there was a lot of reprogramming which had to be done as a follow-up, it was clearly the beginning of her healing. A subsequent medical and psychiatric report confirmed this. Her deliverance and transformation has been a source of joy to her husband and family and to those who work with her.

"Both Mike and Anne needed healing for childhood and teenage memories. However, many times the painful memory is more recent, a part of an adult life. This is especially true of some of the traumas surrounding our modern tragedies involving sex, violence, and the sense of betrayal in a divorce. The same principles apply and bring about release and healing when often the ordinary means of prayer do not. The best biblical example of this is the way Jesus handled Peter's denial and restoration.

"These are the only two places in the New Testament where the word for 'a charcoal fire' is used. Surely this is more than a coincidence. It is obvious that Jesus deliberately set the stage for His conversation with Peter on the beach that post-Resurrection morning. Peter had denied Him three times while standing near a charcoal fire in the high priest's courtyard. Now he would be asked to affirm his love and loyalty three times. Everyone knows this part, but the fact that Jesus staged the conversation by asking Peter to relive the very setting of his denial seems to be overlooked. Surely the memory of those courtyard coals had been burning like fire in the conscience and memory of Peter. The Master Psychiatrist led Peter to his most traumatic memory, and used a charcoal fire to cauterize and heal Peter's pain and shame. With the sting removed, Peter would be able to use that burning memory not as a curse which crippled, but as a spark to ignite him to an even deeper devotion, even unto death.

"I know this may all sound much too simple - like a shortcut. It is not meant to be a cure-all, for this type of healing prayer doesn't apply to everybody. However, it does apply to some. The difference is perhaps a difference of degree in our lives. I am trusting the Holy Spirit will apply it to those who need this deeper kind of healing experience.

"While this experience can take place when you are by yourself, it doesn't usually happen that way. I believe it is the kind of healing spoken about by James in his epistle. 'Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much' (James 5:16).

"Healing of the memories usually requires a very deep openness and sharing with another person, and then the prayer of faith by that other person for you on your behalf. You see, you are so intricately involved in the whole matter that you may be unable to reach the inner layers of the child of your past.

"You should spend time preparing yourself and in reaching an openness to the Holy Spirit for new insights and the courage to surrender your defenses. This kind of praying should take place with someone you trust and respect, and whom you believe can pray the prayer of faith on your behalf.

"It is often helpful to write out a list of the areas in your life that need to be cleansed and healed - anything that raises to bother you, memories that have powerful emotional overtones. Omit nothing,

however insignificant, petty, or even foolish it may seem, as you open your heart to the probing scalpel of the Holy Spirit. Don't be surprised at what comes to your mind.

“Paul Tournier says this inward examination is like entering a dark room. At first your eyes see only the most evident and the prominent objects, and you say, ‘Oh, there's only a table and a chair.’ But as your eyes become more accustomed to the dark, you begin to realize the whole room is filled with an amazing clutter of objects. Don't be afraid. Relax in the Spirit. Thank Him for every new insight, however painful.

“Pray with someone in whom you have confidence, one who knows how to really pray the prayer of faith. Conversational prayer together with that person and with the Lord is easiest and best. Confess to God every feeling, every emotion you experience as you relate these memories. If you remember anything new, interrupt and share it at once, for it is the Spirit taking you to a deeper level of your mind that may need healing.

“Remember that Christ is alive. He is here now. And because He transcends time, He is also back at that painful experience. Confess to Him, turn over to Him each experience, each emotion, each attitude. Let Him love and comfort and forgive you. Let Him cleanse your hates and comfort your hurts and disinfect your lusts and remove your fears. Then specifically forgive others their trespasses as He also forgives you. Let Christ's love take the place of hate. Let Christ's strength take the place of hurt feelings and self-pity. Don't be in a hurry. Allow plenty of time for undisturbed, unhurried prayer.

“If you are the one who is praying the prayer of faith for others, let the Holy Spirit melt your spirit with theirs. It is not easy work. Baron van Hugel talked about the ‘neural cost of intercessory prayer.’ Such prayer is demanding and exhausting. Let the Lord fill you with understanding and empathy so you can feel the same sorrow, anger, hurt, and fear. In this way the Spirit can pray through you, putting the very words in your mouth. If the Spirit leads you in the spirit of James 5, lay hands on them, even anoint them with oil. Prayerfully and carefully obey the Spirit without embarrassment or fear. Your feelings at this time are not as important as your trusting faith.

“Your friend may not have much faith so you may need to have enough faith for both of you. It was when the four disciples let the paralyzed man down through the roof before Jesus that He saw their faith and healed the man (Luke 5:19-20). Jesus said to Jairus about his sick daughter, ‘Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed’ (Luke 8:50, NIV). In these and other instances, faith on behalf of another brought healing.

“Finally, don't dictate to the Holy Spirit as to how God will accomplish His work. It may take several such prayers, as the Spirit peels one layer at a time. It may happen on the spot in a great rush of victory and release. It may come about several days or even weeks later. It may happen by leading that person to another healing experience - never mind, God will answer the prayer of faith for that person (p.20-31).”

The healing of emotions and memories is all about squaring the ledger - balancing the ledger in our mind through forgiving others, genuinely receiving and accepting forgiveness from God and, as a result of that, forgiving oneself.

By forgiving others we write off the debt they owe us in our minds for sins and hurts to us that may have been horrific and excruciating. We no longer stew over wanting our pound of flesh.

If we have been the instrument of such horrific sins and painfully embarrassing moments we accept the forgiveness that God plainly offers in His word for our sins and this makes it possible to forgive ourselves.

The healing of memories technique is where the miraculous intervention of God's spirit is sought to help a person to forgive others and forgive themselves when such

forgiveness either way is almost impossible for them to do by themselves because of the extreme pain associated with those incidents and memories.

I hope that this paper will stimulate the doctrinal committee to study and learn more about this subject.

I hope that whatever material is practical and useful in Seamands' books on this subject of emotional healing can be referred to the Educational Committee and distributed to the church as part of the Focused Education arm of the work of the committee in the form of articles and video seminars, etc.

Thank you for your attention and interest.

Yours Faithfully
Roger Waite