



THE
GOD
WHO
HEALS



*Words of Hope
for a Time
of Sickness*

Johann Christoph Blumhardt
Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt

Foreword by Rick Warren

The God Who Heals

Words of Hope for a Time of Sickness



Johann Christoph Blumhardt
Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt

Edited by Charles E. Moore

Foreword by Rick Warren



Plough Publishing House

This is a preview. Get entire book here.

Published by Plough Publishing House
Walden, New York
Robertsbridge, England
Elsmore, Australia
www.plough.com

© 2016 by Plough Publishing House
All rights reserved.

PRINT ISBN: 978-0-87486-747-3

PDF ISBN: 978-0-87486-750-3

EPUB ISBN: 978-0-87486-748-0

MOBI ISBN: 978-0-87486-749-7

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version. ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Translated from the original German sources by Miriam Mathis

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Jesus of Nazareth

Matt. 11:28-30

Contents

Foreword by Rick Warren *xi*

Introduction by Charles E. Moore *xiv*

Turning to Jesus

1	Here Is Good News	3
2	Jesus Cares for You	5
3	All Are Welcome	8
4	Come as You Are	10
5	He Carries Our Burdens	14
6	Jesus Wants to Heal	17
7	He Is Still Working	20
8	You Are Not Alone	22
9	Jesus Is Fighting for Us	25

Trusting Jesus

10	When It's Time to Let Go	31
11	God's Will Is Best	34

12	Why God Waits	37
13	Your Heart Is Safe in Him	39
14	Choosing Freedom	42
15	Take Up Your Cross	44
16	Help Is on the Way	46
17	Even in Hell, Jesus Is There	48
18	Our Best Help	50
19	Keep on Singing	53

God Hears

20	No Matter What, Pray	57
21	Become Like a Child	59
22	Facing Doubts	61
23	Before You Ask	64
24	You Can Reach Him	67
25	Finding Joy in Suffering	70
26	God Loves You	72
27	Guard My Life	74
28	Honoring God with Our Lips	76
29	God Knows	78
30	Stand Firm	80
31	Take Heart	82

God Promises to Heal

32	When God Heals	87
33	God Reaches Deep	91
34	Renewal, Day by Day	94
35	After You Are Healed	97
36	The Gift We Don't Want	100
37	Inner Healing and More	102
38	God Heals for Good	104
39	The Greatest Thing of All	107

See What God Can Do

40	Our Miracle-Working Savior	111
41	Be Still, God Is at Work	114
42	Always a Way Out	117
43	Signs and Wonders	119
44	God of the Impossible	122
45	Miracles Beyond Belief	124
46	God Is Good	127
47	Miracles of Mercy	129
48	The Day Is Almost Here	132

The Hope That Is Ours

49	Fighting to Live	137
----	------------------	-----

50	New Victories Ahead	140
51	Satan's Power Is Broken	142
52	What Prison Can Hold You?	147
53	Facing Eternity	150
54	You Still Have a Task	152
55	God's Love Is Forever	155
56	There Is a Crown of Life	157
57	Death Has No Sting	160
58	God Won't Let You Go	163
59	God's Promise Prevails	165
60	New Life Coming	167
61	I Am With You Always	169
	<i>Further Reading</i>	174

Foreword

by Rick Warren

AT SOME POINT IN LIFE, every person will experience suffering, pain, and eventually, death. It's inevitable. When it happens, how are we going to respond?

Many of us, even Christians, struggle with God's purpose when we are suddenly faced with a serious illness or terminal diagnosis. Our first response is to turn to God, asking him to spare us from the suffering. But what if his answer is not to heal us immediately but to perfect us through the suffering? Such a season can test our faith. But if we can surrender our will to his, through that pain God can deepen our faith, heal our soul, and restore our joy.

In their book, *The God Who Heals*, the Blumhardts remind us that physical healing is not God's greatest answer to prayer. True healing is trusting God even when we lack understanding. It's believing in the promises

Foreword

written in his Word, which renews our mind and lifts our spirit even as our body is failing. It's not giving in to our fears. It's about giving ourselves completely to Jesus. Whatever circumstance you are facing right now, this book of daily readings will help you focus on a closer relationship with Jesus, our one true spiritual healer.

When you go through deep valleys, God is there with you, walking alongside you as you experience suffering. He knows it well. He's been there. He understands. As one who knows great pain, Jesus is our Great Comforter. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul tells us that just as God comforts us in our troubles, so too can we comfort others. How will you respond to the pain in your life? Our faith tells us that Jesus is the source of victory in our lives even in the midst of suffering. That's because God doesn't waste a hurt. He can use that pain to direct us in the way he wants us to go, to reveal what's inside of us, to perfect us, and to make us more like himself. He is the Great Physician who specializes in bringing blessing out of pain.

Open up your life completely to him and get to know Jesus more intimately. Soak in these "words of hope for a time of sickness" by the Blumhardts and find healing strength for your soul. Hide God's word in your heart, surrender your will, and trust in God's promises. He will carry you through to eternity. You have his Word on it!

*Pastor Rick Warren
Founder, Saddleback Church*

Introduction

by Charles E. Moore

MY FRIEND and fellow pastor, Richard Scott, had just been diagnosed with cancer when he addressed our congregation: “People facing serious illness or death must ask themselves: What am I going to do about it? Will you allow it to change you? Or will you resist and avoid God’s will for your life?”

I have to admit those words bothered me. In what way did my friend need to change? He was one of the most humble and committed followers of Christ I knew. Besides, I had been taught that those battling serious illness needed to get well. Only then could they be of use to God, and to anyone else for that matter. They needed comfort, support, medical assistance. They needed life to get back to normal.

This was my first reaction. Yet deep down I knew that what Richard said was true. I had brushed against the stark reality of death before, when my wife was diagnosed with cancer at the age of forty. Everything stopped, everything changed. God was speaking to us, and we knew, though we never spoke about it, that her physical well-being was not the most important thing. Thankfully, through prayer,

Introduction

support from friends, and medical help, she recovered. But perhaps even more importantly, through this difficult experience God gave us a gift: something from above, something eternal, something lasting between and within us had become our main focus.

In our scientific age we are pounded with a different message – namely, that pain, sickness, and death are evils to be resisted at all costs. The marvels of modern medicine are trumpeted as the antidote to whatever might ail us, and there is almost always another available course of action, another treatment that holds promise. Even so, all of us have to contend with bodies that are frail and vulnerable to all kinds of disease, not to mention the inevitability of aging. And we know that having a healthy body is one thing; living a full and meaningful life, at peace with ourselves and others, is quite another.

There comes a time when each one of us has to face eternity. When this happens, our whole life is laid out before us. Richard experienced this when it became clear that his cancer was incurable. Yet despite his grim diagnosis, he lived as one who had experienced God’s healing. Again and again he pointed me, and many others, to the freedom and peace that come when we confess our sins and can stand before God with a clear conscience. “Ultimately, healing is given when we repent,” he once said. In his last days, he seemed more alive than ever before. He had embraced God’s will, and was at peace.

Introduction

How did Richard come to this place of acceptance and inner certainty? And where did he find strength to hold on to it as his disease progressed? During his last months on earth, he often turned to the reflections you now hold in your hands (which I was sending to him and his wife to read as I discovered them). Written by two men of deep faith who cared for countless suffering souls during their lifetimes, the selections in *The God Who Heals* can help us today to live more fully, and with more purpose, despite our suffering. They show us what we need most in times of sickness.

Who are the Blumhardts, whose words have helped so many people? Johann Christoph Blumhardt (1805–1880) was a pastor in Germany. Early in his life it was obvious that he was destined to be used by God. This can be seen in his ability to turn his childhood peers to faith and in his early work among hardened youth. Blumhardt took on a small parish in Möttlingen, a remote village near the Black Forest. Here he came face to face with the evil forces of sickness, addiction, mental illness, and other afflictions he could only ascribe to demon possession that bound some in his congregation. When the local physician asked Blumhardt who was going to care for his patients' souls, Blumhardt took up the challenge armed with prayer, patience, and persistence.

This spiritual battle began in earnest in 1841, for a young woman named Gottliebin Dittus who suffered recurring nervous disorders and various other strange and inexpli-

Introduction

cable “attacks.” Blumhardt embarked on a two-year-long struggle that ended in victory over demonic powers. He never could have anticipated what happened next. Almost overnight, the town of Möttlingen was swept up in an unprecedented movement of repentance and renewal. Stolen property was returned, broken marriages restored, enemies reconciled, alcoholics cured, and sick people healed. An entire village experienced what life could be like when God was free to rule. Jesus was victor!

Word spread, and soon Blumhardt’s parsonage could no longer accommodate all the people that streamed to it seeking healing. Eventually, because of restrictions placed on his work by church superiors, Blumhardt left his pastorate and moved his ministry to Bad Boll, a complex of large buildings that had been developed as a spa around a sulfur water spring. At Bad Boll, many desperate individuals burdened with mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual maladies quietly found healing and renewed faith.

Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt (1842–1919) was barely a year old when his father began his prayer battle for Gottlieben Dittus. Nevertheless, this experience would stand as a backdrop to everything he would experience in life. When his family moved to Bad Boll he was ten years old. Eventually, Christoph worked alongside his father, and after his father’s death, he carried on his father’s task.

Troubled by the publicity surrounding miraculous physical healing, Christoph retired from public preaching altogether. Although he continued to experience the

Introduction

healing powers of God, he came to believe that what the prophets and Jesus wanted most was a new world: the rulership of God over all things. God wanted to transform both the inner and the outer person, both individuals and entire societies.

No other writers have influenced my faith in God's goodness and in his healing power more than the Blumhardts have. With bold confidence in the God who works miracles and a childlike acceptance of God's will in all things, these two men point us to look beyond our physical condition to Jesus, who heals and brings life to both body and soul, and to his kingdom. For them, the redemptive reality of God's healing love not only comforts us in our affliction but has the power to renew our spirits, providing us with the peace that passes understanding. They assure us that even the most material remedies can be improved by means of prayer, and that when we completely surrender to God's will, much greater things will take place. This is good news indeed, especially for those who know firsthand the limitations of medical science and the impossibility of a pain-free life.

This is why I turn to the Blumhardts again and again to gain new courage and a fresh perspective. I've also shared their insights with friends and acquaintances who, in times of terrible suffering, felt bereft of faith and hope. Their words remind us that it is sometimes only through suffering that we come to understand and know the healing touch God wants to bestow. When we are

Introduction

confronted with our mortality, God wants to free us and show us that neither sickness nor death is the final power.

I trust that you, the reader, will find this book a comfort, but also a challenge to live more fully for God and more surrendered to his will. I also hope you will think of others who might benefit from reading it. Only in Jesus is there real and lasting help. He is the true healer, the one who will not only raise us up to eternal life, but who will restore all things. He alone can bring the abundance of God's unending life here into our earthly lives.

Turning to Jesus



Here Is Good News

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them.

Matthew 4:23–24

THERE ARE TWO SIDES to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a message of forgiveness of sins, of everlasting life, but also a message of opposition to human misery. Not only is an end to sin proclaimed, but also an end to suffering and death. All suffering shall cease! Just as sin is overcome through the blood of Christ, so suffering will come to an end at the resurrection. When Jesus performed signs and wonders, he was proclaiming the gospel against suffering.

With this gospel we can be certain that the wretchedness of this world will cease, just as we are sure of everlasting

life. We cannot separate these two sides of Christ. We must not one-sidedly emphasize the cross and forgiveness, while ignoring the resurrection and the overcoming of our misery. It is Satan's trick to try and make us waver so that the Savior does not receive a full and complete hearing.

Faced with the world's longing for redemption, it is obvious that we can never bring real comfort through the gospel as long as we stress only the one thing – that the Savior forgives our sins – and otherwise the world can go its own way. Similarly, we would be unable to bring real comfort through the gospel, if we represented the Savior only as a miracle-worker and proclaimed, “Be comforted, you can be healed through the Savior.” Then repentance and forgiveness would be utterly forgotten, and no fundamental change would ever take place in men.

Jesus allowed the sick to come to him, just as he did sinners. He was ready to forgive sins and ready to heal. There were times when very few sinners came, only sick people. And Jesus welcomed them all. Oh, that the nations would hear the good news! That the sick would come, and that sinners would come – all are welcome!

Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt

Jesus Cares for You

Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

Matthew 15:29–31

GREAT CROWDS came to Jesus, bringing the lame, the maimed, the blind, the dumb and putting them at his feet; and he healed them. The news of his presence spread in a hurry. Indeed, if any one of us had been there and had heard of a chance to be freed from our affliction – who of us would not have given everything to come to Jesus?

Yet, it was not always easy for the sick to get to Jesus. Many relied on the help of others. These people must have had a lot of compassion and made considerable effort as well. How then could the Savior not receive them? Should

Turning to Jesus

he have shown less compassion just because they might have come to him for the wrong reason?

Compassion sees only the need of others; it omits all criticism and judging. Jesus never gave the sick a sermon first, or first examined their inner condition; he never asked them what sins they might have committed to merit this sickness. This would not only have been harsh but would have hurt the sick even more.

Why then are we so quick to judge the sick, examining them to find out whether they are remorseful enough or worth praying for? Jesus said, “Whoever comes to me, I will not reject.” This is why it is always wrong to think that illness is “a blessing in disguise.” What is more beneficial for us – sickness or health? The Savior certainly did not think that the sick were better off than the healthy, otherwise he would not have healed or bid his disciples to heal the sick.

Yes, God knows why some have to suffer; surely he chooses what is best for them. But the Savior welcomes each one who comes to him with deep compassion, and quickly the blind see, the mute speak, and the lame receive full use of their limbs. Let us remember this. All those who came and all those who brought the sick and lame to Jesus had a great deal of faith and hope. A lot more than we have. And in his boundless mercy Jesus healed them all.

Johann Christoph Blumhardt

All Are Welcome

And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick.

Luke 5:17

WHEREVER JESUS WALKED or stood, power streamed out from him, healing and reviving both soul and body. Whoever came to him with a trusting heart found help. The Lord of heaven, the God of Israel – the strength of this God streamed out from Jesus and worked healing. How wonderful that God’s Son appeared in this way!

It can hardly be grasped that God would draw so close to us with such kindness. How obvious it was that everything was rotten. How little fear of God there was on the earth. How hypocritical was the piety of those who pretended to be devout. Even the temple was made into a “robbers’ den,” turned into a marketplace.

Yet, he came. And what was he like? He came not as one who judges but as one who was full of kindness, warmth, love, and mercy. Nobody needed to fear him. Everybody was allowed to come, everybody was allowed to have

Turning to Jesus

hope – the wretched, even sinners and tax collectors. They could all come. And all who came were healed and satisfied. Everybody could rejoice that God’s ambassador in person had visited them.

Because the Lord was so kind and good to everyone who drew near him, it proved that he really came from God. Who could be greater? Can there be anything more wonderful than knowing that this man from Nazareth came from God? Can anyone else satisfy our deepest need? Can we imagine anyone coming from heaven greater, more majestic, or more glorious than he? Truly, he is the One. “We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Jesus is still the same Savior today. So there is hope for everyone – nobody needs to despair or doubt his patience and love. No matter who you are, you can come. But you have to come! Come in longing for grace and mercy. Then you will receive his goodness in abundance. Even in these troubled times you can know his mercy and that when the time is right, God will “wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev. 21:4). Praise to him for such immeasurable hope!

Johann Christoph Blumhardt

Come as You Are

Jesus stepped into a boat, crossed over, and came to his own town. Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.”

At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, “This fellow is blaspheming!”

Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “Get up, take your mat, and go home.” Then the man got up and went home. When the crowd saw this, they were filled with awe; and they praised God, who had given such authority to man.

Matthew 9:1–8

THE STORY of the paralyzed man should remind us of our own situation, because we are all broken people. Even if we are not physically crippled, our whole being is broken by sin. Corrupt powers

Turning to Jesus

of decay gnaw at our souls and bit by bit at our bodies, either openly or in secret, whether we are aware of it or not. Our spirits are dragged down into the captivity of fleshly pursuits. Many of us can barely keep our heads above water. We have either wasted our lives or become dull to anything of a higher nature. Divine things elude us, and things of eternal value escape us.

It would behoove us not to wait until the power of death and corruption strikes us down, as it did with this paralyzed man. Jesus came to make it possible for each of us to recognize our wretched condition, and in this recognition we can be healed. But we must not hide the fact that we are hurting in some way or another. That we are all in misery is evident by the fact that we come running when genuine help arrives, or even imaginary help, or when any kind of help seems to be on the way. Everywhere, as soon as a facility is built for the sick and disabled, people come flocking. But all this human help pales in comparison to the power Jesus had. When he touched people, life-giving powers poured forth.

And now, you dear ones, let Jesus work. Let him use your affliction to drive you into the light. Don't hide what afflicts you. Indeed, through Jesus we may look even deeper and ask ourselves what really afflicts us in our innermost being. Through Christ, we can turn to the light as poor, weak, and wretched human beings, crippled many times over, both inwardly and outwardly.

Turning to Jesus

Don't try to hide your need and cheerfully ignore it. Even if this is heroic, it does not bring help, nor does it bring praise to God. We should rather be like the paralyzed man and show ourselves as we really are. Let us not pretend to be strong, but instead recognize our misery and bring it out into the open before God. The Savior wants to reveal everything wrong in us so that we can be healed. Only then can those around us, like those around the paralyzed man, be filled with awe and praise for God.



The paralyzed man came into Christ's presence. We can do the same, whether we do this on our own feet, dragging ourselves to him and approaching him ourselves, or whether others do us this service of love and bring us to him, perhaps without our really wanting it. Hundreds of powers are at work when the Savior shows up. What is wrong comes into the open and is revealed to the eye of God.

What a blessing it is to come under the eye of Christ, even the eye of his judgment. That is how the paralyzed man was before the Lord. He trembled and shook, but his trembling and shaking was more genuine than if he had stayed lying proudly in bed, letting himself be cared for and fooling all his friends with his sickness, as if he were only to be pitied and there was nothing to be set right.

When Jesus comes on the scene, the truth must come out. We must not demand human sympathy the whole

Turning to Jesus

time. Besides, in the end, we can hide nothing; the eye of Christ sees right through us and discerns our innermost being – all that is still dark and sinful.

Jesus is never soft on sin. No, the very opposite. He speaks a sharp word and sweeps his threshing floor. He separates the wheat from the chaff, judging the feelings and thoughts of the heart. His grace shatters our fleshly nature, where no cloak under which to hide our shame is permitted. God reveals his love but only when we come under the melting fire of the Savior. We need not fear this, for God's justice is a justice that makes everything right.

Even if we feel we are poor and miserable, all is not lost. If we are honest, there is nothing any of us can cling to. Even if this or that was right and good, let us admit that it was still not pure. What we need most is to start completely afresh and come, broken and needy, before the judging presence of Jesus. We have nothing to boast of until he can live in us completely. Only then can we be healed.

Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt

He Carries Our Burdens

When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.”

Matthew 8:16–17

THE AMOUNT of need and suffering in the world, both in Jesus’ day and our own, can hardly be overstated. The Savior not only healed all kinds of diseases, but also the demon-possessed. People came to him who were out of control and who caused their relatives an incredible amount of pain, since an alien spirit within them made them furious, raging, screaming, or unmanageable.

If this was the case then, just think how many so-called mentally ill and insane there are today. Yet hardly anyone dares to call them possessed. Still, one cannot help thinking of Jesus’ time, when many possessed came to

Turning to Jesus

him. There are thousands of people among us today who are sick in the same way.

Yet we read how Jesus ruled over the spirits that oppressed people. He drove them out by his word. All this, Matthew quotes from Isaiah, was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, “He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases.”

The passage in Isaiah says literally: “Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering” (Isa. 53:4). Isaiah speaks more of a freeing from sin, rather than from sickness and disease; yet it is significant that Matthew speaks also of disease, that the Lord’s Servant wants to bear *all* our griefs. Jesus took away disease and sickness and in this way bore our infirmities. It is as if Jesus had made the diseases of the sick his own, representing the sick before his Father, who had given him the power to heal.

Something similar happens whenever we intercede for one another – we take the sickness of others on ourselves as though we were praying for ourselves. Intercession to God is genuine only when we feel very deeply for each other and share in each other’s pain; that is, when we have real compassion.

Our vocation is to represent Jesus, who was full of mercy. Everything we do must be done in his name and by his Spirit. “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). But we must be on

Turning to Jesus

guard, for whatever we do in our own strength, including intercession, has no value.

Ah, may the time come when we will fully have what Jesus promised and sealed with his blood: the power of God for salvation that heals all wounds, including those of the body. This is promised to all those who seek him.

Johann Christoph Blumhardt

Jesus Wants to Heal

When Jesus came down from the mountainside, large crowds followed him. A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy.

Matthew 8:1-3

A LEPER COMES TO JESUS in great trust that he can help him, although leprosy was, at that time, the most incurable illness on earth. This really took some doing – it demanded a great deal. All human wisdom lies far below the simplicity of such a wretched man. This poor man, tormented and horribly disfigured, knew God's greatness and might. Whoever thinks of God in this way has come very near to him. We should be filled with holy reverence to see one of the most wretched among men standing before his God with such confidence.

