

# Is There No Balm in Gilead?

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The Savior's healing power is not just His ability to heal our bodies but, perhaps even more important, His ability to heal our hearts.

Shortly after my mission, while a student at Brigham Young University, I received a phone call from my dad. He told me that he had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and that although his chances of survival were not good, he was determined to be healed and return to his normal life activities. That phone call was a sobering moment for me. My dad had been my bishop, my friend, and my adviser. As my mother, my siblings, and I contemplated the future, it appeared bleak. My younger brother, Dave, was serving a mission in New York and participated long-distance in these difficult family events.

The medical providers of the day suggested surgery to try and curtail the spread of the cancer. Our family earnestly fasted and prayed for a miracle. I felt that we had sufficient faith that my father could be healed. Just prior to the surgery, my older brother, Norm, and I gave my dad a blessing. With all the faith we could muster, we prayed that he would be healed.

The surgery was scheduled to last many hours, but after just a short time, the doctor came to the waiting room to meet with our family. He told us that as they began the surgery, they could see that the cancer had spread throughout my father's body. Based upon what they observed, my father had just a few months to live. We were devastated.

As my father awakened from the surgery, he was anxious to learn if the procedure had been successful. We shared with him the grim news.

We continued to fast and pray for a miracle. As my father's health quickly declined, we began to pray that he could be free of pain. Eventually, as his condition worsened, we asked the Lord to allow him to pass quickly. Just a few months after the surgery, as predicted by the surgeon, my father did pass away.

Much love and care were poured out upon our family by ward members and family

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The Old Testament teaches of an aromatic spice or ointment used for healing wounds that was made from a bush grown in Gilead. In Old Testament times, the ointment came to be known as the “balm of Gilead.”<sup>1</sup> The prophet Jeremiah lamented over the calamities that he observed among his people and hoped for healing. Jeremiah questioned, “Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?”<sup>2</sup> Through literature, music, and art, the Savior Jesus Christ has often been referred to as the Balm of Gilead because of His remarkable healing power. Like Jeremiah, I was wondering, “Is there no balm in Gilead for the Nielson family?”

In Mark chapter 2 of the New Testament, we find the Savior in Capernaum. Word of the Savior’s healing power had spread throughout the land, and many people traveled to Capernaum to be healed by the Savior. There were so many gathered around the house where the Savior was located that there was no room for Him to receive them all. Four men carried a man sick of the palsy to be healed by the Savior. They were unable to make their way through the crowd, and so they uncovered the roof of the house and lowered the man down to meet the Savior.

As I read this account, I was surprised by what the Savior said as He met this man: “Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.”<sup>3</sup> I thought that if I had been one of the four men who had carried this man, I might have said to the Savior, “We actually brought him here to be healed.” I think the Savior might have replied, “I did heal him.” Was it possible that I had not fully understood—that the Savior’s healing power was not just His ability to heal our bodies but, perhaps even more important, His ability to heal our hearts and the broken hearts of my family?

The Savior taught an important lesson through this experience as He eventually physically healed the man. It became clear to me that His message was that He could touch the eyes of those who were blind, and they could see. He could touch the ears of those who were deaf, and they could hear. He could touch the legs of those who could not walk, and they could walk. He can heal our eyes and our ears and our legs, but most important of all, He can heal our hearts as He cleanses us from sin and lifts us through difficult trials.

When the Savior appears to the people in the Book of Mormon after His Resurrection, He again speaks of His healing power. The Nephites hear His voice from heaven saying, “Will ye not now return unto me, and repent of your sins, and be converted, *that I may heal you?*”<sup>4</sup> Later, the Savior teaches, “For ye know not but what they will return and repent, and come unto me with full purpose of heart, and *I shall heal them.*”<sup>5</sup> The Savior was not referring to a physical healing but rather a spiritual healing of their souls.

Moroni brings additional understanding as he shares the words of his father,

Mormon. After speaking of miracles, Mormon exclaims, “And Christ hath said: If

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understand that a person can and will be physically healed if it is expedient in Christ.

The Savior's Atonement, which makes available both His redeeming and His enabling power, is the ultimate blessing that Jesus Christ offers to all. As we repent with full purpose of heart, the Savior cleanses us from sin. As we cheerfully submit our will to the Father, even in the most difficult of circumstances, the Savior will lift our burdens and make them light.<sup>7</sup>

But here is the greater lesson I learned. I had mistakenly believed that the Savior's healing power had not worked for my family. As I now look back with more mature eyes and experience, I see that the Savior's healing power was evident in the lives of each of my family members. I was so focused on a physical healing that I failed to see the miracles that had occurred. The Lord strengthened and lifted my mother beyond her capacity through this difficult trial, and she led a long and productive life. She had a remarkable positive influence on her children and grandchildren. The Lord blessed me and my siblings with love, unity, faith, and resilience that became an important part of our lives and continues today.

But what about my dad? As with all who will repent, he was spiritually healed as he sought and received the blessings available because of the Savior's Atonement. He received a remission of his sins and now awaits the miracle of the Resurrection. The Apostle Paul taught, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."<sup>8</sup> You see, I was saying to the Savior, "We brought my dad to You to be healed," and it is now clear to me that the Savior did heal him. The balm of Gilead worked for the Nielson family—not in the way that we had supposed, but in an even more significant way that has blessed and continues to bless our lives.

In John chapter 6 of the New Testament, the Savior performed a most interesting miracle. With just a few fish and a few loaves of bread, the Savior fed 5,000. I have read this account many times, but there is a part of that experience I missed that now has great meaning to me. After the Savior fed 5,000, He asked His disciples to gather up the remaining fragments, the leftovers, which filled 12 baskets. I have wondered why the Savior took the time to do that. It has become clear to me that one lesson we can learn from that occasion was this: He could feed 5,000 and there were leftovers. "My grace is sufficient for all men."<sup>9</sup> The Savior's redeeming and healing power can cover any sin, wound, or trial—no matter how large or how difficult—and there are leftovers. His grace is sufficient.

With that knowledge, we can move forward with faith, knowing that when difficult times come—and they surely will—or when sin encompasses our lives, the Savior stands "with healing in his wings,"<sup>10</sup> inviting us to come unto Him.

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2. 2. Jeremiah 8:22.
3. 3. Mark 2:5.
4. 4. 3 Nephi 9:13; emphasis added.
5. 5. 3 Nephi 18:32; emphasis added.
6. 6. Moroni 7:33.
7. 7. See Mosiah 24:15.
8. 8. 1 Corinthians 15:22.
9. 9. Ether 12:27.
10. 10. Malachi 4:2.

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