

Dr. Jack L. Arnold

THE HOLY SPIRIT

WHAT IS THE GIFT OF HEALING AND HOW IS IT TO BE USED TODAY?

Matthew 8:1-4 and John 5:1-8

Lesson 10

GOD AND HEALING

THE SOVEREIGN GOD OF THE BIBLE

Sovereignty over All Things

The Bible clearly teaches God is sovereign and He has control over all things, even sin and sickness. God did not create sin but He does have control over it. God is sovereign over nations. ***“All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as He pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth.” (Dan. 4:35).*** God is sovereign over kings. ***“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases” (Prov. 21:1).*** God is sovereign over salvation. ***“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world ... in accordance with his pleasure and will” (Eph. 1:4).*** God is sovereign over disaster. ***“I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God ... I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things” (Isa. 45:5-7).*** God is sovereign over circumstances. ***“When times are good, be happy: but when times are bad consider: God has made the one as well as the other” (Eccl. 7:14).*** God is sovereign over the destiny of the non-elect. ***“The LORD works out everything for his own ends—even the wicked for a day of disaster” (Prov. 16:4).***

Whatever else the Bible may teach about God, it definitely teaches His sovereignty. There is no law of any kind or description anywhere in the universe that can coerce or force God to do anything that He does not please to do. ***“Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other. I am God, and there is none like me. I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please” (Isa. 46:9-10).*** God always does what pleases Him. ***“Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him” (Psa. 115:3).***

Sovereignty over Sickness and Death

Sickness. Since God is sovereign, He has control over sickness. Whether that sickness is brought directly from God or allowed in His permissive will, He still has control over it and can remove it if He chooses to do so. God is sovereign over sickness. ***“The Lord said to him, ‘Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or dumb? Who give him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD?’ (Exodus 4:11).***

Death. Death is under God's sovereign control. ***"The LORD brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The LORD sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts" (1 Sam. 2:6-7).***

Even if some see Satan behind much of the sickness, we know from the life of Job that Satan must work under the limitations of a sovereign God. God allowed Satan to touch the body of Job with horrible boils but he could not take his life. ***"Skin for Skin!" Satan replied. 'A man will give all he has for his own life. But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.' The LORD said to Satan, 'Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life'" (Job 2:4-5).*** Whether God brings sickness in His directive will or allows for it in His permissive will, He always has control over it. Somehow, sickness is working for God's glory and the good of God's elect. Just exactly how we will not know completely until we get into eternity. Yet, because He is sovereign over sickness, God can remove it if He chooses to do so.

THE SOVEREIGN GOD HEALS IN THE BIBLE

The Old Testament

One of God's names in the Old Testament is Jehovah-Rapha which means, ***"I am the Lord who heals you"***, and it is used in relation to Israel's captivity in Egypt (Exo. 15:26). Jehovah was the physician for His covenant people Israel. One of the great healings in the Old Testament was that of the Gentile Naaman, commander of the army of the King of Aram (2 Kings 5:1-15). Naaman sought out Elisha the prophet for healing for leprosy. Naaman's first mistake was to try to buy healing from Elisha. Obviously, the prophet refused any money to heal. ***"As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing. And even though Naaman urged him, he refused.*** The lesson to be learned here is that one can't buy healing and those who heal should never accept money for their practice. Just as tragic in today's world are the opulent lifestyles of men and women who are getting rich by healing people in the name of Jesus.

Naaman made a second mistake by assuming Elisha should pray for him a certain way. ***"But Naaman went away angry and said, 'I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy.'" (15:11).*** Elisha told him to go wash himself seven times in the Jordan. Naaman was offended and thought the rivers Abana and Pharpar in Damascus were better than any waters of Israel. The issue for Naaman was not the water but God. Would Naaman swallow his pride and obey Elisha who represented God? Finally, Naaman humbled himself and washed himself in the Jordan seven times. He was miraculously healed of leprosy. ***"So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy."*** (15:14). What Naaman had to learn was it was not the prophet or the water which healed him but it was God, and it was to this God Naaman gave all the glory. ***"Naaman said, 'Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel'" (15:15).***

New Testament

The New Testament is filled with supernatural healings of the sick by Christ. The Apostles and the Elders. One particular healing to show the sovereignty of Christ is the healing of the invalid who had been in that condition for 38 years at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-8). Those with all kinds of sickness would come to this pool for supposed healing - the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. There were surely hundreds that day around the pool seeking healing but this one man who had been an invalid for

38 years could not get to the water. Then Jesus said to this man, ***“Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”*** At once, this man was cured. A supernatural work was done.

Christ healed only one person out of the hundreds who were around the pool. The invalid was chosen out of many as needy as he was to be healed. Why God chose one and passed by others is a mystery, which must be placed in the sovereign purposes of God. God did not choose this man because of his faith because Jesus had to ask him, ***“Do you want to get well?”*** The invalid was healed that day because Jesus chose to heal him and that was pure grace.

THE SOVEREIGN GOD CHALLENGED BY FAULTY MODERN THEOLOGY

There are a lot of things being said and done in the modern day healing movement, which need to be examined closely. What is being said is (and this may be an over simplification): “God loves everyone and desires to heal everyone. Sickness is sin and an enemy to the Christian. It is really God’s desire to heal all that come to Him by faith because Christ died for all sickness. If we come and are not healed, then the fault is not with God but the person who did not exercise enough faith or the right kind of faith.”

Behind this kind of thinking is a theology - a well thought out theology - that has some truth but just enough error to make it very dangerous. At the bottom of this theology is a misunderstanding of God, namely His sovereignty. It is freewill oriented and man centered which always plays down God and exalts man.

Because most of us are not theologically oriented, we never challenge the presuppositions (assumptions) of the many faith healers of our day. Yet, we need to do this if we are going to have a sane and biblical approach to divine healing.

God Can Be Coaxed To Change His Plan by Man’s Freewill

Problem

The modern healing movement says God has given man a freewill and by this freewill can exercise faith in such a way that God must give us our desires. “If I just have enough faith, I will be healed.” “I must believe I’m healed even though I see no signs that I am.”

This movement says we must not only believe God is able to heal us but that He can wants to and will. Some say He must heal to be faithful to His promises to heal. Anyone who wishes to be healed must have absolute certainty that he will be healed and it is God’s purpose to do so. Therefore, one must rid his or her mind of all doubt and apprehension concerning God’s desire to restore health. If God does not heal, it is not because He is not willing but due to some failure in one’s faith.

Answer

True faith is faith in God, who does all things right and well, not faith in ourselves, faith in our hopes or faith in our faith. Merely because we believe or are convinced in ourselves that God wants to heal does not mean He will. He may heal but not because we coaxed Him into it by our faith. God is sovereign and free to do what He pleases and is not dependent on the moods, whims and demands of His creatures.

We must never wield our faith as if it were a whip by which we compel God to respond. We do not force His will into submission to ours simply by banishing doubt from our hearts. What about those who have faithfully believed and were not healed? Often these people get great guilt, wonder

what is wrong with their faith and then get angry with God. Many abandon the faith because they feel God didn't keep His promise.

How do these healers explain to Joni Eareckson Tada? Who is crippled for life, that she does not have enough faith? Joni sought healing for a long time. Did not get it and became very guilty and angry with God until she finally submitted to God's will for her.

We never know the sovereign will of God for us until it happens. It may be that we are sick and this is God's will for us, but it also may be His will to heal us through supernatural means or through medical means. We should fight sickness as long as we can but when healing does not occur, then we must submit to the sovereign God who has higher purposes for us.

God is in No Way Connected with Sickness

Problem

Sickness is not in the will of God for man because pain, suffering and death are all the works of Satan. Peter Wagner says, "If sickness is not God's will, but many people are in fact sick, what is the cause? The answer is clearly Satan" (*How To Have A Healing Ministry*).

Those in the healing movement try to disconnect God from pain, suffering and sickness because these are equated with sin and Satanically inspired.

Answer

In the Old Testament, God is presented as the one who has ultimate control over sickness. ***"Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or dumb? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the LORD?" (Exo. 4:11)***, and this is clearly illustrated in Job's illness which was allowed by God for Satan to inflict but always with limits.

How God has control over sickness is somewhat of a mystery but He does. What is the alternative? The alternative is a God who does not have control over sickness, and we are the creatures of chance and a cosmic joke. What we must do is let God be God even though we don't understand everything.

God Wants Everybody to be Healthy and Happy

Problem

Those in the modern healing movement say, "God wants everybody to be healed because God wants everybody to be happy." They claim God is good and loves us, therefore He will alleviate whatever diminishes our joy. We are the "King's Kids" and He wants what is best for us and sickness is never His best for us under any circumstances.

Answer

This kind of reasoning says we have to be healed to be happy, but the Bible teaches we must learn contentment in whatever state we find ourselves. Joy does not necessarily mean the absence of physical pain and adversity. Joy is inner contentment, which is unaffected and not disturbed by worldly turmoil or bodily pain.

If a person cannot be happy until he is healthy, there is something woefully deficient in his or her understanding of God and His grace. The Apostle Paul prayed three times for God to remove his

thorn in the flesh (probably an eye disease) and God refused. He said to Paul ***“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).*** The Apostle Paul had to learn joy in the midst of sickness. Surely, we cannot say Paul had a defective, weak and misguided faith and this is the reason he didn’t get healed.

The Christian will probably never be happy about being sick but he can have the joy of Christ in that sickness. We should seek divine healing and healing from medical doctors to alleviate our sickness. But if in the providence of God we are not healed, then we must submit to our God in our circumstances, looking forward to our future, new resurrected bodies.

God Desires To Heal Everybody

Problem

Those in the healing movement say, “God desires all men to be saved” and “He is not willing that any should perish,” indicating God desires to save everybody but can’t because of their unbelief. The also say that God desires all men to be healed and if they are not it is because they do not believe.

Answer

If we are talking about some kind of an emotional will of God based on His compassion which is separate from His sovereign will which includes all things I can accept that. However, it is not God’s sovereign will to save all men and it is not God’s sovereign will to heal all men. But it is God’s sovereign will to save some and to physically heal some. On that basis, we seek to offer healing to whomever wants it, trusting God to do His will whatever it may be.

In Matthew 8:1-4, it says, **“When he 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 cured of his leprosy.”** When the leper came and knelt before Jesus, he rightly evaluated Jesus’ power. The leper knew Christ was able to heal and wanted to know whether He was willing. He said, ***“Lord if you are willing, you can make me clean.”*** Jesus touched the man and said, ***“I am willing. Be clean.”*** In this particular case, Christ was willing. The leper was appealing to Christ’s compassion, mercy and grace to heal from this horrible disease. He did not demand healing but asked for a healing and Christ gave it, not because He had to but because He wanted to do it.

Christ Wants to Heal Everybody

Problem

Most people in the modern healing movement believe healing has been provided for in the atonement (death of Christ). Their primary text is Isaiah 53:4-5, ***“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried out sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”*** They claim Christ bore our “infirmities” (sicknesses) and “sorrows” (pains). These folks believe that since Christ bore our sicknesses, then no one who comes to Christ by faith will be refused.

The modern healing movement also appeals to Matthew to show healing is in the atonement. ***“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 carried our diseases.’” (Matt. 8:16-17).*** Isaac 53 is obviously quoted to show that the casting out of demons and the healing of the sick was definitely related to Christ’s work on the cross, concluding Christ died in a substitutionary sense for sickness in the same way He died for sin.

Answer

Those in the healing movement must equate sin and sickness. It is true that sickness is the result of sin in the same way that pain, accidents, tornadoes and weeds are the result of sin, but sickness is not sin in itself. There is no guilt in sickness. The Bible tells us to pray for forgiveness for our sins and to confess our sins, but it does not say. “Forgive my arthritis” or “I confess I have the flu.” We do not repent of having kidney stones, nor do we come under conviction for having a cold. Jesus was punished for our sins not our sicknesses. He bore the wrath of our sins not our diseases.

When reading the context of Isaiah 53, it is obvious this passage is filled with figurative language to express the point that Christ died for our sins, and this has an impact on those things which sin effects such as sickness and disease. Through His death for sin, Christ laid down the foundation for the overthrow and ultimate annihilation of all physical disease, which will occur at the Second Coming of Christ. While healing is not in the atonement per se, any blessing we receive in life now, comes as a result of Christ having died for sins which affects matters such as sickness, disease, suffering tragedy and so forth. Is healing in the atonement? No! Is healing related to blessing which flow from the atonement? Yes! All blessings to both the saved and unsaved come through the death of Christ. While healing is not in the atonement, healing does come to us through or on the basis of the atonement.

It appears when it says, ***“by his wounds we are healed,”*** it is referring to the spiritual healing of the soul, or the blessings of healing which come to us through or on the basis of the atonement.

In Matthew 8:16,17, when it says Christ “healed all the sick” and then quotes Isaiah 53:4: ***“He took our infirmities and carried our diseases.”*** Obviously when this was quoted, the death of Christ had not occurred yet so it is referring to His earthly ministry. Furthermore, any and all blessings come to man on the basis of the atonement, and healing is just one of the blessings both saved and unsaved receive through the atonement.

If healing is in the atonement, then all should be immediately healed who come to Christ for healing because all that trust Christ for sin are immediately saved.

If healing is in the atonement, then no Christian should ever be sick. For if Christ forgives sin completely, then He must be able to heal completely or His death would be ineffective.

THE SOVEREIGN GOD HEALS TODAY

God Heals Sovereignly.

Does God have the power to heal? Yes! Does God desire to heal? Yes! Does God actually heal today? Yes! Does God desire to heal you? I don’t know but He may. It is your responsibility to seek divine healing by faith. It is God’s prerogative to give healing to whom He pleases.

We, who believe so strongly in the sovereignty of God, ought to be seeking God for healing and directing others to God for healing. Yet, when healing does not take place, we know it is not a mistake, a lack of faith or an inscrutable mystery. We know it was not God’s will. With that Divine

decision, we can live, knowing that in our suffering there is genuine redemptive value that can bring glory to God.

God Is To Be Approached As A Sovereign

When we go to God for a healing, we approach Him as a Sovereign, a king who has the power to heal or not to heal. We approach Him with awe and respect. We do not tell Him He has to heal; we do not demand He heal; we do not command Him to heal. We humbly throw ourselves on Him, who is a loving, compassionate God, asking Him to be merciful and heal for His own glory. God, the Sovereign, may or may not decide to heal, depending upon His infinite wisdom as to whether this healing would be best for His glory and for the good of His child. But, you know what? You will never know if God wants to heal you until you go to Him by faith asking Him to do so. ***“You have not because you ask not.”***

FAITH AND HEALING

THE ESSENCE OF FAITH

Faith in God

Faith is faith in God who does all things right and well. Faith is confidence in a loving, merciful, sovereign God who will never do anything that will not work for the Christian’s good. We do not always know God’s will but we know God and we trust Him.

Faith Is A Means

In Scripture, faith is not the cause but the means to an action. Ephesians 2:8 says about our salvation, ***“For it is by grace you have been saved through faith.”*** Faith did not cause our salvation but faith was the means God provided to appropriate the salvation that God causes to give us in grace.

If faith is a cause, then our faith could make God do what we want Him to do. However, because faith is a means, it becomes that avenue whereby we appropriate what God has for us. Faith does not cause or move God to heal us, but faith is the means whereby we appropriate His power to heal if He gives it.

IMPORTANCE OF FAITH

In the healing process, we cannot minimize the importance of faith in God for the healing to occur. Most of the cases in the New Testament where healing took place, faith was somewhere present. Remember that faith is confidence in a loving, sovereign God who does all things right and well.

Faith of the Sick

Mark 5:25-29. This woman, who had been bleeding for twelve years, just touched the garment of Christ and she was healed. She understood Jesus was able and had the power to heal her and sensed

He would if she could but touch Him. She did and Jesus said to her, **“*Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.*”** This woman’s faith did not cause Christ to act but it was the means where by she appropriated Christ’s power who freely gave it to her.

Mark 10:46-52. Christ healed the blind man Bartimaeus. “When Jesus was passing by, Bartimaeus began crying; ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ The blind man said, ‘Rabbi, I want to see.’ ‘Go,’ said Jesus, ‘your faith has healed you’ and immediately he received his sight.” Bartimaeus cast himself on Christ’s mercy for healing because he wanted to see. His confidence was in Christ who could heal him if He wanted to do so. Christ healed him and said his faith played an important part. Faith, indispensable is this healing, was the means not the cause.

Faith of Others for the Sick

Matthew 8:5-13. The Gentile centurion came to Christ asking for the healing of his servant. The centurion saw in Christ one who has the authority to heal and could do so by just giving the command. Jesus marveled at his faith and said to him, **“*Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.*”** The centurion’s faith was used in the healing of his servant. Notice his faith was in the sovereignty and authority of Christ who had the power to heal or not to heal.

Mark 2:1-5. Four men, believing Christ could heal their paralytic friend, let him down through an opening of a roof where Jesus was preaching because the crowds were great. When Jesus saw their faith, He healed the paralytic. Their faith in Christ’s ability to heal brought healing to their friend who apparently had no faith.

Joni Eareckson Tada tells the story of an enthusiastic charismatic brother who told her if she just had enough faith she could be healed from her paralysis. Joni had already prayed for healing and had others pray over her but nothing happened. She told this man, “What about those four guys who let their friend down through the roof? Jesus said that their friend was healed because of their faith.” The enthusiastic brother said, “That’s right.” Joni said, “Then go and pray for me and maybe God will honor your faith.”

THE ABUSES OF FAITH

Misunderstanding of Mark 11:22-24

“*Have faith in God,*” Jesus answered, **“*I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have it and it will be yours . . .*” On the surface, this verse seems to give a blank check for everything we desire in prayer, providing we believe hard enough and/or long enough. This is the main verse for the “name it and claim it” teaching of our day. Sometimes this is called “the health and wealth gospel.”**

There are other factors, which must be considered when we tell a person to exercise faith in order to get his desires met. *First*, are our desires prompted by pure motives. **“*When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*” (Jms. 4:3)?** Only God knows if we have pure motives for asking. *Second*, some of this promise is figurative language - being able to move mountains - to express the wonderful possibilities through prayer which are available to us, but, all things are not possible for us. For instance, it is

impossible to fly to the moon without a space ship and a space suit. All things are possible within reason. *Third*, there is another promise which balances Mark 5:24 which is found in I John 5:14-15, ***“This is the assurance we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us--whatever we ask--we know that we have what we asked of him.”*** We must ask according to God’s will. It may or may not be God’s will to heal.

Sometimes God gives a sick person a supernatural assurance he will be healed, or he may give confidence to those praying the sick person will be healed. This does happen but it is not the norm. Furthermore, those who pray with this kind of confidence better make sure it is God who has given this confidence and not their own whims and desires. If the healing doesn’t happen, it sure makes them and God look silly.

Manipulation by Faith

There are those in the modern healing movement who believe in the “faith formula,” defining faith as the human will to believe. The human ability to believe is the key, which gets God to give us our desires. If we really want something, if we repent enough and pray enough, we shall have it. But if not, we shall not have it. This kind of man-centered faith has produced the “name it and claim it” mentality of our age. This view says by our faith we can make God do what we want Him to do. We manipulate God by faith. Stripping Him of God’s right to be sovereign in all decisions.

Biblical faith is not positive thinking. Although there is a positive element in faith. Faith is not a hunch one follows, although faith deals with the subjective side of man. Faith is not hoping for the best, although faith expects the best from God. Faith is not optimism although faith does make one optimistic. Faith according to the Bible is trusting the God who has revealed Himself in Scripture. It is taking God at God’s Word. It is resting in God’s faithfulness. Biblical faith is not belief in one’s faith. Faith is not enough for all religionists have faith - Buddhists. Muslims, Jehovah Witnesses and so forth

To have a biblical faith one must have as the object of his faith a loving, sovereign Christ who does all things right and well.

Biblical faith is not getting emotionally up to believe enough so what we desire will happen. Our faith does not make or cause God to respond to our desires. We somehow think we have figured out what God should do and He in turn should respond the way we want Him to respond.

Biblical faith is confidence in God, believing, believing He will do what is right and best according to His sovereign will, plan and purpose.

Biblical faith is not confidence in our feelings, thinking God must meet our whims. Biblical faith is confidence in God and God’s plan for us, which may or may not include healing. We may not be able to understand, make sense of, even like our circumstances, but we know God is a loving, kind God and we can turn the situation over to Him. Whether we get healed or not.

Faith is not confidence in what we think should happen even when our motives are seemingly pure. If my desire honors God, then He ought to honor me.

Biblical faith says we cannot know the true desires of the human heart, and God alone knows if our motives are pure and we desire His glory alone. If our faith is pure, then God in most cases will honor it, but only He knows whether it is pure.

Whenever a person accepts a “faith formula” and does not get healed, then that person will have to say either his faith was inadequate or his God was inadequate. Those who have claimed a faith-formula and were not healed get guilty feelings because they or someone else didn’t have enough faith, or they get angry with God who didn’t give them their desires, or they get disillusioned with healing never getting involved with it again, or they abandon the faith and say it doesn’t work.

The faith-formula plays down the sovereign purposes of God. Most modern day healing movements say the reason someone was not healed is because either the sick failed to believe enough or those who prayed for the sick failed to pray enough. When someone is not healed, They put it into a mystery category, but they will not say it is the sovereign will of God because in their theology, God wants to heal everybody.

THE VALUE OF FAITH WHEN HEALING DOES NOT HAPPEN

The Bible States that not All Are Healed

When we look at the New Testament, we see there were some who either were not healed or could not be healed. In Philippians 2:29, we read of Epaphroditus who ***“was ill and almost died.”*** Apparently Paul could not heal him but God raised him up by His mercy. In 2 Timothy 4:20, the Apostle Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus and again Paul apparently didn't or couldn't heal him. In 1 Timothy 5:23, Paul told Timothy to take a little wine for his stomach, a gastric disorder. Timothy was obviously not healed supernaturally of this disorder. In 2 Corinthians 12:8, we read that the Apostle Paul asked three times to be delivered from some diseases, apparently an eye disease, but God said no because Paul had to learn, ***“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”*** In fact, we know that God used Paul's sickness to help him spread the gospel to others. ***“As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached to gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomes me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself” (Gal. 4:13-14).***

In the Bible, not everyone got healed but some did. Not everyone who prayed in faith received healing because Paul prayed in faith three times, and the answer was “No.” Why? Because God decides who will be healed and who will not be healed. It was not because Paul had a defective faith.

Experience Shows Not All Are Healed

Today most people who are prayed over are not healed but some are. Some are prayed for and are totally or partially healed. Yet, we should pray over everyone who asks, trusting God to do His sovereign work. Just as He saves souls, He heals the sick. Not all are saved and not all are healed. Yet, we pray for healing, trusting God for results. In the same way, we pray for the salvation of people, trusting God for the results.

PRAYER AND FAITH

The Prayer of Faith

“Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well: the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (James 5:14-15). This verse says ***“the prayer offered in (the) faith will make the sick person well.”*** This seems to be a particular kind of faith - a faith prompted by God. When the prayer is offered with pure motives, and for the glory of God, and according to the will of God, then genuine faith has been exercised and a healing will take place. This kind of faith is from God and is always effective.

This is why it is a serious matter for the elders to gather together to pray for the sick, for in their prayer they must be right with God, filled with the Spirit and Christ centered so they can pray according to the will of God.

The Practical Effect of Prayer

“You have not because you ask not.” (James 4:2). Prayer is essential for the healing of the sick. Prayer produces an environment where healing is more likely to occur.

Healing of Plants. There is some evidence that prayer effects the growth of plants.

Rev. Franklin Loehr, a chemist, reports in his book. *The Power of Prayer on Plants*, the results of 156 plants prayed for in 700 unit experiments, using more than 27,000 seeds and seedlings, involving about 100,000 measurements, and achieving up to a 52.71 percent growth advantage for prayer seedlings.

Healing People. Prayer is essential if healing is going to take place in humans.

An article published in the journal of the American Heart (Association describes the research of cardiologist Randolph C. Byrd of San Francisco General Hospital. He divided some 400 patients into two groups, then solicited prayer through home prayer groups for the patients in one group but not the other. None of the patient's, nor other medical personnel, knew which group they were in. The group that was prayed for developed significantly fewer complications and fewer died.

Prayer-The Key to Healing.

Prayer like faith is a means not a cause. Prayer becomes a means we use to appropriate God's power when He chooses to unleash it. God could choose to heal apart from prayer but He chooses to use prayer for **“the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”**

When praying for the sick, we must persevere in faith. We keep on praying and keep on asking until God gives us a “yes” or “no” answer. We may pray for heading today and not get it and pray again next month and get it. If the answer is “No,” then we humbly submit to a loving, sovereign God who does all thing right and well.

THE SPIRITUAL GIFT OF HEALING

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR HEALING

A Definite Spiritual Gift

While healing is something every person can pray for himself and for others. there is a special gift of healing that some Christians possess from God. According to 1 Corinthians 12:8, there are ***“gifts of healing”*** given to some members of the Body of Christ, the Church: ***“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.’ To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit ... All these are the***

work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.” (1 Cor. 12:7-9,11). This gift, like all other gifts, is given only to some, not all. *“Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles; also those who have gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration and those speaking in different tongues? Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts.” (1 Cor. 12:27-31).* The Greek has the negative *mai* and should be translated, *“Do all have the gifts of healing? No!”*

Definition of the Gift

What then is this gift? *The gift of healing is the special ability that God gives certain individuals in the Body of Christ to be instruments through whom it pleases God to cure and restore health to others.* Those with this gift will have an interest in this area and will see more results than others it is like the gift of faith or evangelism. There are some that are more skilled in these areas but all are to exercise faith, but not all will have the gift of healing. Just as an evangelist does not lead everybody to Christ, a healer does not heal everybody.

Different Levels of the Gift

First Corinthians 12:8 literally says, *“the gifts of healing.”* This could mean there are different types of gifts for different kinds of diseases, or it may apply to healing on different levels - physical, psychological and spiritual health. A person may have the gift to be the instrument God uses to effect supernatural physical healing or he might have a natural gift of healing coupled with the gift of faith to be used in healing the physical body through natural means. There may also be psychological, inner healing by supernatural means or by the skills of talented counselor with the gift of faith. Either way there is the ability to restore people to emotional and spiritual health.

THE PROBLEMS WITH THE GIFT OF HEALING TODAY

Biblical Healings Were Instantaneous

When we look at the New Testament, almost all healings done by Christ and the Apostles occurred immediately and the person was instantaneously restored to health.

There is one healing where there was a progressive element. *“They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, “Do you see anything?” He looked up and said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.” Once more Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Jesus sent him home, saying, “Don’t go into the village.” (Mark 8:22-26).* At least the healing took place in stages, even though it was separated by seconds or minutes.

Modern Healings Are Mostly Progressive

Today most healings are not instantaneous but are progressive, but some healings do occur immediately. Experientially it appears that there are gifted people who pray for the sick and a few are apparently healed instantly and most others progressively. Surely if the Apostle Paul could not heal Timothy of his stomach disorder and Trophimus of his severe illness, and then we cannot expect 100% accuracy of modern healers. Furthermore, progressive healing is taking place in the name of Jesus and we must not attribute it all to the devil.

That there are many abuses of the gifts of healings by Christians are, in my opinion not debatable. It seems to me that so much of the healing movement today is entertainment oriented and man-centered, and certainly does not glorify the Lord. When Jesus and the Apostles healed, there were no hyped up meetings, TV media, excessive emotionalism or whatever. It all just happened as a matter of lifestyle and without a lot of fanfare.

EVIDENCES OF THE GIFT OF HEALING

Here are some criterion we might use to determine if a person has a genuine gift of healing: 1) He heals in the name of Jesus; 2) He claims no healing power in himself but sees himself as an instrument; 3) He gives all the glory to God for all healings; 4) He does not take money for his healings; 5) He actually sees healing in his ministry on a consistent basis; 6) He is willing to submit all supposed healings to validation if asked to do so, and 7) He is willing to use his gift anywhere under any circumstances not just in massive healing meetings.

THE COUNTERFEITS OF HEALING

What is the Meaning of Mark 13:22-23?

“For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect--if that were possible. So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.” This verse tells us as we go on down towards the end of the age there are going to be many who claim to be the Christ and will do signs and wonders. They will be so slick; they will almost deceive the elect. If we believe in a future Antichrist, then he will be the ultimate false Christ with lying signs and wonders. We as Christians are told to, ***“Be on guard.”*** These verses tell us there will be many phonies, wolves in sheep’s clothing, who claim to be followers of Christ and healers of men who desire only to exploit people and feed their own flesh. Their end will be destruction.

What Is False Healing?

Jesus told us that people would do miracles in the name of Jesus but would not be true followers of Christ, ***“Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly. ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*** (Matt. 7:22,23).

We know from the Book of Revelation that Satan can perform signs and wonders. Obviously there is supernatural power in this world which is not of God. We see this power in Haitian voodoo, Brazilian spiritism, African witch doctors, Asian animism and the occult in the USA. Witchcraft, magic and astrology abound everywhere, which find their origin in Satan. Satan has his counterfeits to true healing by Christ. Remember how Pharaoh’s magicians were able to match two of the miracles performed by Moses when Moses was insisting Pharaoh let the children of Israel go from Egypt? They were able to turn the river into blood and cause a plague of frogs, but they could not reproduce the other eight miracles.

There are many false healers, phonies, charlatans in the visible church seeking to heal people in the name of Christ but their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach and their glory is their shame.

THE ABUSES OF THE HEALING GIFTS

Wherever there are Christian people with the gift of healing, who are not well grounded in the sovereign purposes of God, there will be abuses. Because Christians are still sinful, there is always the possibility that any spectacular gift will be abused because all men love power, authority and superiority, which come when any spiritual gift is not brought under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Attempting to Copy One Who Has the Gift of Healing

Those who do not have a gift of healing in their love of people, zeal for service and perhaps their need for personal praise, seek to imitate those who have the gift of healing. The result is often a disaster, especially when they are young, impressionable Christians.

Trying to Constantly Create an Environment for Healing

So much of the success of the modern day healing movement depends upon whether people are so-called consistently healed. Situations are contrived, emotions are hyped and people manipulated so people can see healings. In some cases, it seems as though people are addicted to feelings and walking by sight rather than by faith.

Insisting Everyone Can and will be Healed

To insist all can be healed, and if not healed, it is due to a defective faith, will result in total disaster. It is never God's will to heal all, just as it is not God's will to save all. He does heal some and that for His own glory. To insist that God wants to heal all and will heal all, can produce tremendous disappointment with God when a healing does not happen.

Peter Wagner, in his book *How To Have A Healing Ministry Without Making Your Church Sick*, says, "When we begin a healing ministry in our churches, we must be conscious of the ever-present danger of practicing magic with a Christian veneer."

THE PLACE OF DOCTORS AND MEDICINE

Medicine and Skilled Doctors are a Gift from God

Medicine

God is Lord over all His creation and every natural, physical and chemical process is subject to His will; therefore, medicine and healing from medicine may not be miraculous but they are from Him. God should receive as much glory when a natural healing takes place as when a supernatural healing takes place. Whenever medicine is taken, it of itself does not heal. Medicine only allows the body to heal itself. The body's recuperative powers are traced to the Creator. If an aspirin relieves a headache, it is not the pharmaceutical company that ultimate gratitude is due. God supplied nature with the ingredients in aspirin, and it is God who created, sustains and enables the human body to respond

positively to its medicinal properties. All genuine healing, whether miraculous or not, is ultimately a work of God.

Doctors

In His creation, God has provided medical doctors to heal in the area of their expertise. Whether doctors will acknowledge it or not they have been given their brains, aptitudes and skills by God and He expects them to use their skills for His glory. Many of us are alive today because of a knowledgeable doctor or a skilled surgeon, and we praise God for them.

However, we must never look to science or medicine or doctors as the ultimate healer, but we must look to the Great Physician - Christ. There is a tendency in a secular culture to set up science and the medical profession in particular as little gods who are the saviors for life. Physicians are but men and are ultimately accountable to God.

Medicine and Healing

Medicine and divine healing fight a common enemy-- one fights the enemy of disease naturally (and hopefully by faith and prayer) and the other does so supernaturally (and hopefully by faith and prayer). To polarize medicine and faith is false. If God chooses to heal, He gets the glory.

Physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists and counselors can be a tremendous help to the Christians, especially if these professionals are working from a Christian context.

Christians should pray for a healing before they go to a doctor, and they should continue to pray for healing when the doctor prescribes medicine. The tendency with most is to go to the doctor first and then pray, or as the very last resort turn to God for healing. There should be a balance between faith and medicine and each of us must find that balance.

Medicine Removal.

If a person is under medical care and senses God has given a healing, he should not take himself off medication until a doctor has been consulted. Peter Wagner says, "A medical doctor is the only one who has the authority to remove a patient from a prescribed medication. Those who believe they have received healing for a condition requiring medication should check with their doctor before altering their prescribed treatment."