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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 which 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, which 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 in 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 He 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 it 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 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 God of His 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 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 psyched 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 He will do what is right and best according to God’s 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, or 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 right. We often think, “If my desire honors God, then He ought to honor me.” Yet, biblical faith says we cannot know the true desires of the human heart, and He alone knows if our motives are pure and we desire God’s 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 the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed 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.

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.

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 results.

PRAYER AND FAITH

The Prayer of Faith.

Is any one of your 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” (Jam. 5:14-16). 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 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 Effects of Prayer

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 persons prayed in 700 unit experiments using more than 27,000 seeds and seedlings involving about 1000,000 measurements and achieving up to a 52.71% growth advantage for payer 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. We may pray for healing 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 things right and well.

We must pray and ask God to unleash His power on the minds and bodies of people to bring a healing. We have not because we ask not. We pray and leave the results to God. He will heal some but not all. Those who are healed are those God chooses to heal for His own glory. Why He chooses to heal some and not others is His choice and we must not argue with His sovereign will but humbly submit to it.