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PROBLEMS WITH THE GIFT OF HEALING

THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE GIFT OF HEALING

A Definite Gift

While healing is something every person can pray for himself and for others, there is a special gift of healing which 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!”*

Description 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 who 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

1 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 a 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, 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 healing by Christians is, 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.

THE EVIDENCES OF ONE WHO HAS THE GIFT OF HEALING

The criteria we might use to determine if a person has a genuine gift of healing are: (1) He heals in the name of Jesus: (2) He claims no healing power in n 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?

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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 Go, 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 strokes, 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."