

## QUESTIONS WE WANT ANSWERED

### 31.1 What Is the Gift of Healing?

#### Part I

*Scripture: I Corinthians 12:9,28,30; II Corinthians 12:7-10; James 5:13-16; Matthew 8:1-4*

One of the great problems that mankind faces is the problem of sickness with its accompanying pain and grief. This has been true through the ages and is a fact of life today even in the wake of the great advances in medical science. Because Christians are not exempt from the experience of illness a study of the nature of disease and what the Bible has to say about bodily healing is of interest. Within the last thirty years there has been a reemergence of the ministry of healing in the Christian church so that we have seen a new emphasis emerge within most of the major denominations, foremost among them, the Episcopal church. I have been asked what I believe concerning healing and what I think our attitude should be toward this emphasis. Let us turn to the Scripture and try to establish some basic facts from which I hope we will be able to draw our own conclusions. Now, what are some Biblical truths concerning this subject?

#### **I. THERE ARE DEFINITE REASONS WHY WE BECOME SICK:**

We will readily admit to the reality of illness and seek to understand the causes:

##### **1. The Tragic Sin of Man Has Brought Disease into the World:**

As result of the introduction of spiritual disorder into the universe, a curse was pronounced upon man's Dominion, introducing a principle of decay and death. This was superimposed on the basic principle of conservation by which all things are upheld and we have our being. (Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 5:12, 8:20-22; Colossians 1:17) We can say that this curse is unnatural and will one day be removed when Christ returns.

##### **2. The Work of Satan:**

In a way which we are not able to understand, there is Devine permission for this oppression. (Luke 13:11-16; Acts 10:38; Job 2:6; II Corinthians 12: 7)

**3. A Violation of Natural Laws:**

Sometimes we become ill because we fail to take care of our bodies, such as failure to exercise properly, get enough rest, or eat the right foods.

(Leviticus 13-15)

**4. The Chastening of the Lord:**

Sometimes, God directs bodily affliction. If there is a divine healing, there is also a divine sickness. It is important to understand that God will never use the sword of punishment on His children, but he will use the rod of chastisement. A classic passage here is I Corinthians 11:29-32.

**5. For God's Glory and Our Good:**

All sickness in the life of a Christian cannot be attributed to God spanking us in chastisement. When God molds a person and makes us strong like him, He hangs weights upon him to develop spiritual muscle. Also, He can be glorified by the gracious manner in which we accept His will for us. (John 9:1-3, 11:4).

**II. THE SICK WERE HEALED BY JESUS AND THE APOSTLES:**

There are many passages in the New Testament which leave no doubt that the sick were healed in a miraculous way by Jesus and the Apostles. (Matthew 4:24; 10:1,8; Mark 6:13; Acts 14:9-10) These were extraordinary visible acts of Divine power. We have no record of an infirm person coming to Christ without being healed. Jesus sent a band of 70 out only to have them return with a glowing report (Luke 10:17) Peter, Stephen, and Paul healed in the name of the Lord. (Acts 3:6-8; 5:15; 9:32-41; Acts 8:6,7; 14:8-10; 19:11; 18:8,9)

**III. HEALING IS MENTIONED AMONG THE GIFTS FOR THE CHURCH:**

Three times in I Corinthians 12, verses 9, 28, and 30, Paul mentions the gift of healings. The word is plural and may have to do with different kinds of diseases thus requiring different kinds of healings.

**IV. THE BIBLE TEACHES THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF CURES:**

When I am asked if I believe in "faith healing," I reply by saying I believe in "God healing." Healing is ultimately in the hands of God who intervenes in the life of a person who has fallen ill. We are to understand that the means which God chooses to use in the healing process may vary.

### 1. God May Heal Through Rest:

I heard Dr. Vance Havner at the Pinebrook Bible Conference many years ago say that *“if you don't come apart and rest awhile, you will soon come apart.”* (Mark 6:31; Psalm 139:14)

### 2. God May Heal Through the Use of Medicine:

The Bible teaches a healthy respect for the medical profession. The poor man beset by robbers on the Jericho Road was restored, according to Jesus, by the loving application of *“oil and wine”* in the binding up of his wounds. (Luke 10:33-34) other relative Scriptures are I Timothy 5:23; Matthew 9:12; Isaiah 38:21)

### 3. God May Heal Through Direct Intervention:

The direct healings in Scripture were characterized by **immediacy**. (Matthew 8:3), **totality** (John 5:9) and **permanency**.

## V. PRAYER OFFERED IN FAITH WILL SAVE THE SICK:

A Scriptural pattern for bodily healing is found in James 5:13-16. Hope Church follows this outline and there have been times when God has brought this scripture to the attention of a believer and given faith to believe that God can heal. Having mentioned these five truths which are taught in God's Word, let us see what conclusions' can be drawn from them.

**First**, there were definite reasons for those healings effected by Jesus and the apostles apart from the relief of sickness. These miracles were never meant to be spectacular in themselves; they were meant to draw attention to the miracle worker. They were meant to authenticate the message that accompanied them. Healings accompanied the giving of revelation. The purpose was to ratify and confirm a message. Whether the miracles were those of Moses, Elijah, Jesus, or the apostles in the book of Acts (**four periods of manifestation**) they were always a sign (to Pharaoh, to Egyptians, to the nation of Israel, to the world) Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the savior of mankind. With the passing of time these miracles became less frequent until in the latter part of the Book of Acts they are seldom mentioned at all. The church having been firmly founded on the Apostles and the prophets, their office ceased with the closing of the Scripture, as did the mighty signs and wonders. (Hebrews 2:3-4; Mark 2:7-12; II Corinthians 12:12)

**Secondly**, while some sick were healed by Jesus and the Apostles, not all the sick were thus relieved. The intent was not in the healing per se. The gift did not heal every disease. Paul was unable to heal himself, Epaphroditus nearly did and Timothy used other medicinal means. (I Corinthians 2:3; II Corinthians 11:30; Galatians 4:13; Philippians 2:25-27; I Timothy 5:23; II Timothy 4: 20) People who are within our acquaintance who remain ill despite all efforts are the extension of a long line of God's people who have had to cast themselves on the grace of God which they have learned to be sufficient, for plainly, they have not been healed.

**Thirdly**, the fact that healing is listed among the gifts of the Spirit raises a question that we will all have to answer for ourselves before the Lord. Is this gift for today or was it one of the sign gifts that accompanied the giving of revelation. I am not going to answer this question for you. However, whatever way one resolves this matter, it should be on the basis of Scripture. One such passage is found in Matthew 10:3 where Jesus is commissioning His men to heal the sick, cleanse the leper, and raise the dead. Unless we are going to say that part of that commission is not for us today, we can look for the healing of diseases and even the raising of the dead. I know of no one who has the gift of raising the dead. Furthermore, there is a distinct limitation stated by Christ (Matthew 10:5-6) which we are not bound to today. Interesting that the Lord should also comment on the matter of funds concerning this ministry of healing. We are going to have to evaluate the matter of faith healing and the people involved by their results and on the basis of Matthew 10 and the limitations it imposes.

**Fourthly**, just as there are different ways in which God heals, there are also other ways in which healing evidently comes to our lives. We recognize the reality of psychosomatic healing in which there is the amazing effect of mind over matter. Whether it is on a psychiatrist's couch or a crowded meeting place, the removal of certain mental blocks can bring restoration to the body. We have come to realize that in the range of 70% of all illness is psychologically caused. In Matthew 7:21, Jesus warned that his people were to be aware of false healers who would come in his name. Whether in an evangelical church, a unity center, a Christian science church, a shrine or whatever, we are to beware. Also, there are demonic healings. (Exodus 7:11-12; I Timothy 3:8; Matthew 12:24; Acts 8:9-11; 13:8-10)

**Fifthly**, we ought to recognize there is a Biblical view of illness, and how the believer is to handle sickness when it comes. The following suggestions may prove helpful:

1. Recognizing we are a part of a fallen humanity, we ought to take care of our bodies recognizing that God has chosen them to dwell in as living temples.
2. When we become sick we ought to go to the Lord immediately and assure ourselves in him that all things are working together for good.
3. We ought to consult a physician whom we respect and have confidence in. Understanding that he is an agent of healing that can come from God, we ought to do what he tells us to do.
4. We should call for prayer and even for the men of the church whom God has chosen, to come and anoint with oil and to pray.
5. If healing does not come, we should ask the Lord for grace to accept our indisposition as His will. You recall that Paul pleaded for the removal of his thorn but was ultimately cast upon the grace of God to endure.
6. More than enduring, we should recognize that God has a purpose in allowing such a thing to happen to us and is going to use this weakness to glorify his Name in someone's life. It is sometimes possible to have a more moving testimony for the Lord in weakness than in strength.
7. We should rest assured that our light affliction is but for a moment: (II Corinthians 4:17-18; Romans 8:18-23) We should have an eternal perspective on things. Jesus Christ makes all things spiritual, even the suffering which comes to our lives through sickness.

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## **NOTES**