

## What Does the Bible Say About Healing?

Recently a middle-aged man in our church died from a cancerous brain tumor. Over the five months between his diagnosis and his passing, many prayers for healing went up to God on his behalf. From all outward appearances, if anyone were to be miraculously healed, it would be this man. His testimony and work for Christ were an asset to all. His church needed him, his family needed him, his students needed him. Despite the prayers, no healing came. As one medical professional wrote, “Nobody beats Glioblastoma multiforme [level four brain cancer].”

After his passing, more than one person said to me, “Kinda makes you rethink miracles of healing.” Since none of us has God’s omniscience, we should never determine our doctrine by our experiences. It is too easy to conclude either God does not heal or we lacked the faith. Both conclusions are questionable. We should be driven to the Scriptures for the answers. What does the Bible say about miraculous healing? Is it for our age? Is it guaranteed?

### There are two basic positions on healing held to by the Christian community.

(1) God does perform miraculous healings in our day, but healing is not guaranteed. God may not answer prayers for healing because, in a particular case, healing would not be His perfect will. The majority of protestant evangelicals hold to this opinion.

(2) God performs miraculous healings in our day, and healing is guaranteed. Since the healing of our bodies is the will of God for the New Testament Christian, if we pray in faith, we will always receive the healing for which we ask. Those in the Charismatic branch of the protestant church generally hold to this opinion.

Both groups go to the Scriptures for support, and the controversy may wrongly cause a person to wonder about the clarity of Scripture. The Scriptures are clear, but the differing opinions arise from the Scriptures that are emphasized. There are some texts that seem to teach healing is guaranteed; there are others that seem to teach healing is not guaranteed. Reconciling these texts is the cause of disagreement.

The apostle Paul reminds his disciple Timothy to “accurately handle the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15) Apparently, it is possible to handle Scriptures inaccurately by lifting a principle out of the whole context of Scripture or by teaching a truth to the exclusion of other qualifying truths. Peter also writes that “the untaught and unstable . . . twist the Scripture to their own destruction.” (2 Peter 3:16). We must be aware that all that is said in the name of the Bible, is not the Bible.

## Moving Mountains

One of the most popular passages in regard to healing is the message of Christ to his disciples.

*Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not drive it out?” And He said to them,*

*“Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible to you. (Matthew 17:19-20)*

*And Jesus answered and said to them, “Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ it will happen. And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” (Matthew 21:21-22)*

Taken by itself and at face value, it appears Jesus is giving His disciples a blank check. We can accomplish whatever we want to accomplish; and if mountains are not moved, it is because we lack faith. After all, “all” means “all.” Many dynamic messages have been preached on this passage, urging Christians to “name their need and claim it.” Failure to receive God’s promises can always be blamed on the Christian’s lack of faith

But is Jesus really giving His people a blank check? When Jesus said “all,” was He not assuming that His hearers knew that He meant “all righteous requests” in the will of God? Jesus certainly wasn’t saying that if you ask for sin, he will give it. There is no reason to believe that these words of Christ were overriding the rest of Scripture which requires us to ask for the will of the Lord to be done.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that He would give His children only that which is good. If you ask for something that you believe is good for you and you don’t receive it, it is reasonable to conclude that you were unknowingly asking for a snake in disguise.

*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! (Matthew 7:7-11)*

Notice also the qualification of the Psalms. You must ask for a good thing.

*For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord gives grace and glory; no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly. (Psalm 84:11)*

This addresses the question, “Is all healing good?” Apparently not.

- Despite King David’s prayers, his first son through Bathsheba had to die. (2 Samuel 12:16-18)
- Paul had to have an infirmity in his flesh to keep him humble. (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- Jesus asked that if it were possible let this cup pass from Him. Nevertheless, the Father still sent Him to the cross. (Matthew 26:42)
- Many Christians living in the apocalypse will be ordained to martyrdom. (Revelation 6:11)
- The prophet Isaiah came to King Hezekiah and told him that his sickness was to result in his death. (2 Kings 20) Hezekiah cried to the Lord for healing and the Lord granted him fifteen extra years of life. We would have remembered Hezekiah as the most righteous king in the history of Israel, but in his extra fifteen years he grew proud, and his heart turned away from the Lord. In his extra years, Hezekiah also fathered a son who became the most evil king in the history of Israel. Often we don’t know what is best for us. Sometimes we ask God to move mountains that ought not to be moved. Therefore, our requests to God ought never to be demands. We should always pray “not my will, but Your will be done.”

But notice in Matthew 21:21 - *“And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.”* Jesus did

not include any qualifiers or limits. Were they implied? I think so. God's people know that "*all things we ask in prayer*" are things that ought to be according to the will and purposes of God.

But why did Jesus say these words in such a way that some people would jump to the wrong conclusion? Anticipating the confusion, Jesus could have added some caveats. In my thirty years of Christian work, I have seen the abuse of many texts of Scripture. I have often wished that God would have written more to prevent such misinterpretation, but I see the superior wisdom in God's plan. The Scriptures were written in such a way as to test the motives and hearts of people. If your heart leans toward self-will and greed, you will certainly find some Scripture you can take out of context to support your agenda. The Scriptures are written in such a way as to give the defiant enough rope to hang themselves.

Furthermore, any conversation can be twisted if analyzed without an overall understanding of the speaker's intent. Take, for example, Lincoln's Gettysburg address. Are "all men created equal"? In the broad sense, this is not true. Some people are tall and some are short. Yet sound minds understand "equality" in regard to the specific venue Lincoln was addressing. Broad statements need to be understood within the scope of context. As someone once said about Bible study, "When the writers of Scripture use the word "all," you need to determine which "all" the writer is talking about. The "unlearned and unstable" people, whom the apostle Peter wrote about, do not understand these things. (2 Peter 3:16). When Jesus said "*all things*," sound minds understood which "all" he was talking about.

Yet because Jesus did not put any qualifiers on his words--"*And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive*"--many have taken this text and run with it in the wrong direction. To understand the drive behind this misinterpretation, one must be aware of the Christian world view embraced by certain Christian groups--particularly, some groups within the Charismatic movement. Their system teaches that physical healing is guaranteed through Christ's work on the cross: "*by His scourging we are healed*" (Isaiah 53:5). Christ demonstrated this power in His earthly ministry, and His disciples are to continue this power. As a sign of Christ's presence with us, it is the will of God for every Christian to be healed of physical infirmities. If we die, we are to die as Moses: "When he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated." (Deuteronomy 34:7). God does not want us to suffer infirmities like the ungodly, but He gives us healing as a sign that we are in His favor. The blessing of God is healing, as God said to Israel, "*The Lord will remove from you all sickness; and He will not put on you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known, but He will lay them on all who hate you.*" (Deuteronomy 7:15)

Your faith is considered the key to healing, not God's will. My wife once mentioned to someone that she would pray that God would heal a certain person if it is His will. The person shot back, "Of course it is His will; it is doubters like you who keep the power of God from being displayed in this world."

It has been our experience that Christians who live under this system are often ostracized and guilt ridden when they find themselves poor or unhealthy.

## The Overall New Testament Emphasis Concerning Healing

This Charismatic system is very compelling, but is it a true reflection of what the Bible teaches concerning the will of God for the N.T. Christian? The apostle Paul paints a very different picture. Paul constantly reminds the believers that they are ordained for suffering and tribulation.

*After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. (Acts 14:21-22)*

*To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless; and we toil, working with our own hands; when we are reviled, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure; when we are slandered, we try to conciliate; we have become as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now. I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me. (1 Corinthians 4:11-16)*

*We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (2 Corinthians 4:8-11)*

*But in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger (1 Thessalonians 3:3-4)*

*So that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. For indeed when we were with you, we kept telling you in advance that we were going to suffer affliction; and so it came to pass, as you know. (2 Corinthians 6:4-5)*

Paul taught that we suffer so that we might share in the suffering of Christ and be united with Him in purpose and destiny (Philippians 3:10; 2 Timothy 2:11). With this Peter and Jesus agree.

*For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:21)*

*These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)*

Do these texts about afflictions include sickness? Apparently, they do because Paul was not healed of an infirmity in his flesh despite his prayers for healing. Many Bible students believe it was an infirmity that involved his eye sight. From this text we understand that Christ's words about "moving mountains" are not a blank check. God may ordain our sickness.

*Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)*

*But you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself. Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. (Galatians 4:13-15)*

In order to support the position that healing is guaranteed, Some teach that Paul's infirmity was

spiritual, not physical. This is unlikely since Paul referred to the flesh and the body. In other passages we read that some of Paul's companions were also sick of body. Neither Timothy nor Trophimus were healed of their infirmities.

*No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments. (1 Timothy 5:23)*

*Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus. (2 Timothy 4:20)*

### **Consider the Following New Testament Principles Concerning Healing:**

1. The emphasis of the New Testament is that we will be healed, but that day awaits the coming of Christ. The true relief comes to us when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven. Our main faith and hope needs to be fixed not on earthly healing, but on the resurrection. We might want to fix some bodily ailments, but God wants to give us a whole new body

*Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:13)*

*And to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, (2 Thessalonians 1:7)*

*For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, (2 Corinthians 4:17)*

*For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. (2 Corinthians 5:1-5)*

2. It seems faithless that we would resist death when death is the full treatment. If we truly have faith, heaven should be our desire, and we should reluctantly desire to remain on earth. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Revelation 14:13). Do we truly believe this?

*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24)*

*Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?(Romans 7:24)*

*Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; (Romans 6:6)*

*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith (Philippians 1:21-25)*

3. Although our souls are made new in Christ, our bodies are corrupt and must eventually be destroyed. God's plan is not to always repair these bodies, but to allow us to work in these broken down bodies so that Christ could shine through our weakness.

*Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weakness, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me (2*

*Corinthians 12:9)*

*Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (2 Corinthians 4:10-11)*

4. True faith is not always interested in healing, but in showing that we can believe regardless of any earthly signs of deliverance. Many godly saints have gone to their death in martyrdom or sickness with the heavens being silent. Their faith was not in any present deliverance, but in the resurrection. *“All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance.” (Hebrews 11:13)*

*Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego replied to the king, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to give you an answer concerning this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up' (Daniel 3:16-18)*

*Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. (Job 13:15)*

*As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. (Job 19:25-27)*

5. It is not the strong in faith that look for signs and wonders. A Jewish official came to Jesus asking him to come to his house and heal his son. Jesus said *“Unless you people see signs and wonders, you simply will not believe.”* (John 4:48). At another time a Gentile centurion came to Jesus asking him to heal his servant, but this Gentile did not think it necessary for Jesus to travel to his house. Jesus commended this Gentile by saying, *“Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.”* (Matthew 8:10).

Sometimes what is claimed is the opposite of what truly is. Those healing ministries that profess to be strong in faith may actually be weak in faith. The weak in faith ask to see the “Hokus Pokus” – the healing handkerchiefs, the pressing of the forehead, the show. The quest to see miracles in this life is not a sign of genuine faith.

*But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it . . . ' (Matthew 12:39)*

*For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness. (1 Corinthians 1:22-23)*

6. Miracles by themselves do not have any saving or convincing power. This may appear counterintuitive because people tend to give attention to religion when they see a miracle. Nonetheless, with a miracle you may get amazement and fear, but seldom a genuine love for God. The love and devotion God looks for does not come about through seeing a miracle performed. If you recognize this, you will understand why God rarely shows miracles to this world.

*But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him. (John 12:37)*

*But he said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead." (Luke 16:31)*

*Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. (John 14:22-23)*

Faith is being able to say, "God, you could show me a miraculous deliverance right now, but it is not necessary. I would rather show my faith by waiting until the second coming--the glorious revealing of Christ from heaven."

### **The Difference Between Christ's Earthly Healing Ministry and the New Testament Letters**

When Jesus arrived He proved that He was the son of God through signs and wonders. The Scripture says that "He healed them all."

*The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them. (Matthew 4:24)*

*But Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. Many followed Him, and He healed them all. (Matthew 12:15)*

Was this healing ministry unique to Jesus and the apostles, or was this to be a pattern for the entire church age? The book of Hebrews says that the testimony of signs and miracles came through the Lord and the apostles. Hebrews also states that these Jews tasted of the powers of the age to come--not this present age.

*How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard. God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. (Hebrews 2:3-4)*

*And have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come (Hebrews 6:5).*

Messianic miracles were part of the physical Kingdom of God. This Kingdom was manifested when Christ was physically on earth. These same powers may not return until Christ's return.

One possible theory is that miraculous signs are given temporarily to establish God's new work. When God established the Old Covenant with Israel, He confirmed it with signs and wonders - the plagues on Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the manna from heaven. As time progressed, miracles of this nature were no longer commonplace in Israel, except near the end of Israel's history under the ministry of Elijah and Elisha. Throughout most of the ages, the average Jew had to put his faith in the Scriptures, not in visible miracles. Some conclude that the same pattern holds true for the establishment of the New Covenant. God established the New Covenant with miracles, and then the need for special miracles ceased. These miracles may not appear again until the end of the age when the two prophets appear who are spoken about in the book of Revelation.

In speaking about miraculous sign gifts, Paul writes

*Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. (1 Corinthians 13:8-11)*

Some interpret Paul's words to mean that these signs will be done away with when we get to heaven. Others say that Paul is generally saying a time will come when these signs will no longer be performed. In either case, we know from Scripture that God doesn't give everyone or every age the same miracles. Jesus granted doubting Thomas' wish. Jesus appeared to him in the upper room, but Jesus said to Thomas, "*Blessed are those who do not see, and yet believe.*" (John 20:29). Unlike Thomas, our generation has not been given firsthand the sign of the resurrection.

No matter your persuasion concerning the miracles in the life of the church, most Christians agree that the miracles done by Christ were special and are not being repeated in the same fashion. If these Messianic signs were for the church today, Christians would be walking on water, multiplying food, raising the dead, and emptying hospitals. Something is different in our age; and whether or not one explains the difference by changes in dispensations, it is evident that there is a change.

We do not see today the same type of healings found in the apostolic age. To be honest, the healing ministries of today are hardly a testimony to the power of God. The supposed healings are of far less quality. The healings performed by Christ and the apostles were unquestionable (John 11:47; Acts 4:16). One very prominent faith healing evangelist was investigated by a major news outlet, and not one alleged healing could be verified by medical proof or sound testimony. Given my own conversations with those associated with healing ministries, I do not doubt the authenticity of the investigative reporting.

I hope that my skepticism is not a sign of little faith, but of great faith. My God is not so small as to heal in such tawdry ways. We are to discern between the fake and the genuine by the intrinsic quality of a miracles.

*The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles. (2 Corinthians 12:12)*

*When the men came to Him, they said, 'John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, 'Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?'' At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind.<sup>22</sup> And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the gospel preached to them. (Luke 7:20-22)*

The pitiful excuses for miracles that are being claimed by false teachers are beneath the dignity of the Kingdom of God. They are an embarrassment to God and His people. Religious people settle for so much less than reality because they are desperate to have some sign that God is with them.

### **God Heals**

The New Testament teaches that God does heal in our age, but most likely we should expect the mode to be similar to that of Epaphroditus

*But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you. Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me. (Philippians 2:25-30)*

The Christian is subject to all the diseases and infirmities in this life, but God will protect believers from the environment only as is necessary for the completion of our mission. It is a comfort to know that we are invincible until our work is finished on earth.

God's healing may not be immediate. We may be sick to the point of death before we recover. An infirmity may stay with us to

- demonstrate we serve God with pure motives (Job 1:7-11; 2:4-5)
- discipline us to righteousness (Hebrews 12:11; 1 Peter 4:1)
- keep us looking up (Romans 8:23)
- give us an opportunity to be a witness (Philippians 1:12)
- show that God's work does not come by our strength but by the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 12:9)
- accumulate for us heavenly rewards (2 Corinthians 4:17)
- allow us to partake in the same sufferings as Christ experienced (Philippians 3:10)

Rather than being quick to throw off our infirmities, we may find glory and good purpose in our weakness and infirmities. This is a degree of spiritual maturity few Christians attain. And the spiritual Christian knows that the main focus of our hope is not temporary relief in this age, but the coming of the Lord and the resurrection. As the Apostle Peter writes,

*We are to fix our hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13).*

*After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. (1 Peter 5:10)*

I suspect that if God chooses to give us temporary healing in this world, it will not be so visible as to draw the attention of the world. We may be in an age where God is saying, "*An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it.*" (Matthew 12:39). Our recovery may look like the natural processes of the body.

If the world expects God to prove Himself through healings, they are sorely mistaken. The world is put on notice that "*God has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.*" (Acts 17:31)

Faith needs to be directed toward the resurrection of our Lord and His glorious return"

*And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also. (Revelation 6:11)*

*And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.'"* (Revelation 14:13)

*Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'"* And he said

to me, “These are true words of God.” (Revelation 19:9)

## **The Corinthian Gifts**

*But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:7-10)*

Some see this passage as teaching that certain Christians in every community and in every age will have the power to heal. However, it is reasonable to assume that Paul was referring to specific individuals and ages. The spirit gave to the apostles and certain prophets these gifts. There are no Scriptures that teach these gifts have to be continually given. Paul himself comments on the temporal nature of these sign gifts.

*“Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.” (1 Corinthians 13:8)*

On the other hand, there is no reason to doubt that God could, in our day, give the gift of healing to one of His people--even as Peter was able to say to the lame man in the temple, “In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene – walk!” (Acts 3:6). But to this day I have never heard of, nor come across, someone with the true gift of healing. I have met many people who were convinced they had the gift of healing, but what they demonstrated was nothing like the Biblical gift of healing. They acted more like the Jewish exorcists mentioned in Acts 19. These men tried to do the miracles of Paul and failed miserably.

*When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him. (Deuteronomy 18:22)*

Believe that God does give the gift of healing, and when God sends the genuine gift, rejoice!

## **The James Passage**

*Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. (James 5:13-15)*

This text has been wrongly used to teach that healing is guaranteed if we have faith. The mistake is to assume the “prayer of faith” is something we generate ourselves. However, the Bible teaches that faith is a confidence or attitude we receive from God.

*For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. (Romans 12:3)*

*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; (Ephesians 2:8)*

God gives us faith that something will be done if it is His will. I have met many Christians who were sure they had faith from the Lord that someone would be healed, but they were soon disappointed. It is easy to mistake one's own aspirations and self-will for faith. A spiritually minded man will know when his confidence comes from the Lord. Many great missionaries knew it was God's will for them to go to certain places. This is inexplicable, but God grants to His servants a special measure of faith according to their calling.

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