

HEALING

Healing – this is an area and subject of great controversy today. Is there healing thru faith? What are the workings of it?

Healing of the sick is another of the signs of confirmation used of God during the Apostolic period (Mark 16:15-20). Our Pentecostal brethren make much of faith healing today - as do many charlatans. And it is true that God obviously raises some from beds of sickness, when according to His own divine will. Hence, the promise potential of James 5:14-15 cannot be ignored. However, it is also obvious that many, many believers become ill and die, because the time has not arrived for entering upon our full inheritance, which is “reserved in Heaven” for us (1 Peter 1:4). Until then we have the Holy Spirit indwelling as “the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the promised possession.” (Eph. 1:14). Meanwhile, we who “have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23). Bodily healing for the believer is inherent in His work at Calvary in the ultimate sense, as is victory over death. (Rev. 21:4).

In Matt. 9:12 the Lord Jesus said, “They that are well need not a physician, but they that are sick.” Unquestionably God heals today, usually thru means of medicine, surgery, and other specific therapies. But not always. The inevitable process of “body decay unto death” is hastened in some because of exposure to various phases of this sin cursed and ravaged earth. And there are evidences of recovery from sickness that astonish man. The will of God (directive or permissive) is not always understood by man. The Apostle Paul had an ailment (thorn in the flesh), according to 2 Cor. 12:5-10. In spite of three pleas for healing, it remained. And it appears that Biblical miracles of healing were selective, for spiritual lessons. “The Lord while upon earth did not heal every sick person He met. Instead of healing, God promised grace to endure for Paul. Christ received no deliverance from His suffering (is there much difference between suffering from persecution or illness, all the consequences of Adam’s and our sin in this world?) In the meantime, we await that glorious promise - the adoption, the redemption/regeneration of our body (Romans 8:18-25).

Theologians differ as to the meaning of Psa, 103:3 - last phrase. Reference to some other passages may help understanding - see Ex. 15:26; Isa. 53:5; Psa. 147:3; Jer. 17:14. I’m helped as I consider that Israel confidently expected earthly blessings, when in a path of obedience. Today we are blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Is there no hope today for the sick? Read Matt. 9:12 again, which tells physicians are for the sick. And modern medicine is at its zenith - and God is able - and obviously upon occasion does over rule. And Paul, who did not receive the expected reply to his thrice requested prayer, advises us that the grace he received may be our portion too - see Heb. 4:16.

SOME NOTES ON SICKNESS, INFIRMITIES, AND HEALING

1. Reasons why God permits sickness and suffering

- a. Sometimes as a result of sin (1 Corinthians 11:30); but not always (John 9:2,3). Epaphroditus was sick not because of sin, but because of the work of the Lord (Philippians 2:30).
- b. To test the reality of our faith (1 Peter 1:7; James 1:3).
- c. To purge out the dross (Job 23:10, cf; Job 2:7).
- d. To develop certain graces.

- 1) Humility (2 Corinthians 12:7).
- 2) Patience (Romans 5:3; James 1:3).
- e. To enable us to comfort others (2 Corinthians 1:3-7).
- f. To glorify God in
 - 1) Our patient enduring.
 - 2) Our healing (John 9:3).
- g. To assure us of His love and our sonship (Hebrews 12:6-8).
- h. To teach us the sufficiency of His grace (2 Corinthians 12:9).
- i. To wean us from earth and make us long for heaven (2 Corinthians 5:4).
- j. To bring us closer to God (Psalm 119:67,71).

2 Is it always God's will to heal?

Obviously not, or the foregoing purposes would be defeated. But note also:

- a. Paul did not heal Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20).
- b. Timothy was advised to use medicine (1 Timothy 5:23).
- c. Epaphroditus was not miraculously healed (Philippians 2:25-30).
- d. Gaius was apparently not in good physical health (3 John 2), but no word about healing.
- e. Paul was not delivered from the thorn in his flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).
- f. Christ implied that sick people need a physician (Matthew 9:12).
- g. That physicians are not contrary to the divine will is implied in Colossians 4:14 where Luke is called "the beloved physician."
- h. If it were always God's will to heal, some would never die.

3. How does God heal?

- a. By natural means - rest and food. cf. Elijah (1 Kings 19:5-8).
- b. By medicines. cf. Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:7).
- c. By miracles. Gospels full of illustrations.

4. Are there other types of healing?

- a. Imaginary healing - when the sickness was only imagined.
- b. Perhaps Satanic healing (Matthew 7:22).

5. Is healing in the atonement?

- a. Isaiah 53:4 was fulfilled during Christ's earthly ministry (Matthew 8:17), and not on the cross.
- b. Healing is spoken of as a mercy from God (Philippians 2:25-30), and not as something that is ours by right.

6. Is failure to be healed evidence of a lack of faith on the part of the sick?

- a. When he saw their faith (Mark 2:5). Not the sick person's at all.

7 Are the modern healing campaigns scriptural?

- a. Christ healed all that were brought to Him (Matt. 8:16).
- b. His cures were
 - 1) Instantaneous, not gradual (Mark 1:42).
 - 2) Complete, not partial (Matthew 8:15).
 - 3) Permanent, not temporary (Luke 7:15).
- c. Christ commanded His servants to heal freely (Matthew 10:8).
- d. In James 5:14, the sick person is to call for the elders, not vice versa.
- e. Faith healers (or Christian Scientists) do not live any longer, on the average, than other people.
- f. More is demanded from the patient today, and less from the healer than in the days of our Lord.

8. Is there any harm in the modern healing campaigns?

- a. Yes, thousands who go and fail to get healed judge the power of Christ by this and are turned from the faith.

9. What about James 5:14,15?

This passage teaches that a sick person may call for the elders of the church. They in turn may pray for him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. In such cases, the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise up the person.

My personal opinion is that this passage refers to a person whose sickness is the direct result of some sin affecting the church or other individuals. I base this on two considerations-

- a. In verse 15, we read “and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.”
- b. Verse 16 adds, “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.”

In other words, healing in this section seems to be directly connected with confession of sins, either to the elders or to an individual.

Suppose that a person has caused dissension in a local church. Some time later, he becomes ill. Realizing the cause of his illness, he calls the elders and makes an apology to them. They pray over him, anointing him with oil. God promises restoration in such a case.

The passage obviously cannot be used as a blanket promise to cover all cases of illness, because it is not always God’s will to heal. This is proved by the fact that everyone dies eventually, unless of course the Lord comes in the meantime.

With regard to the use of oil, some teach that this refers to oil as a medicine. Others claim that it is the ritual use of oil. In either case it is important to notice that it is not the oil that is efficacious, but the prayer of faith.

“The prayer faith” is a prayer that is assured of a positive answer because of some definite promise of God to that effect. Here the elders can be sure that God will raise up the repentant person because He has promised to do so.