

# Divine Healing

Having grown up in a conservative church environment, the subject of 'divine healing' was largely ignored. It probably was not intentional, but that is the way it was. No doubt some of the leadership felt that the use of the gifts of the Spirit terminated with the 'Early Church'. However, I am deeply grateful for the emphasis given to evangelism and the need of bringing people to Christ. I still believe that the greatest miracle a person can witness even today is when that person comes to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Having a strong emphasis on evangelism and teaching is only part of the gospel message and I have since come to the conviction that the 'Father heart of God' has compassion for the suffering multitudes and desires to release people into wholeness.

*'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'* Luke 4:18,19

Jesus fulfilled these words through His teachings and actions. A similar command comes to His followers.

*'And these signs will accompany those who believe ... they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.'* Mark 16:15-18.

The early church took these words of Jesus seriously. Jesus also says,

*'I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these.'* John 14:12

The 'greater things' must surely refer to a wider geographical extension of His working outside of Palestine as no one can perform (with God's help) any greater miracles than what Jesus did.

## Cautions

Factors which contribute to put some leaders off divine healing include ignorance of New Testament commands and teachings, excesses observed within some churches and fear of the unknown.

- *Ignorance.* The New Testament teaching is given not for philosophical and theological debate, but to know how to bring into being the 'ways of God.' As Paul says,

*'For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.'* 1 Corinthians 4:20.

Careful study under the guidance of the Holy Spirit will make this subject clear. On the other hand be aware that not all popular teaching around today is Scriptural.

- *Excesses.* Some healing meetings are like a side show where a magician does his latest trick. This is wrong. Jesus makes it clear that only an evil and adulterous generation seeks signs (Matthew 12:40). It is wrong also to avoid following through the commands of Jesus because of excesses. For example, we would never dream of not eating because some people have a problem with gluttony.
- *Risk.* Moving in the realm of faith is always a risky thing to do. Hebrews 11 is full of examples of people who ventured forth. Fears that may come to us as leaders could include things like-

If I pray for the sick and nothing happens it could bring discouragement and even embarrassment to that person and myself. Furthermore, how do I know whether things would get out of control or not if divine healing is encouraged? People always flock to the spectacular and they may get their eyes off Jesus.

In all these situations we must always learn to trust the Lord to build His church in whatever way He leads. Divine healing is one of the ways He has chosen. One objective report indicates that the most observable effective evangelism which occurs today is where there is evidence of the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit through signs and wonders (A Passion for fullness, by Jack Hayford. P24)

## Procedure for leadership to administer healing

Although there are many means whereby healing may occur, James 5:13-16 gives the procedure for those in eldership.

- a. *Elders.* Notice that the word 'Elders' is in the plural. Deuteronomy 32:30 makes it clear that with God's help one person can put one thousand to flight, while two people may put not two thousand to flight, but ten thousand to flight. Therefore, two or more elders united in prayer in a spirit of unity have great power in praying for the sick, if they are walking with the Lord.

Take another example - if four pieces of string placed side by side are then tied to a weight, that weight if not too heavy, will rise. However, if the strings are wound around each other to form a rope, then it becomes much stronger still and can therefore lift heavier weights. Likewise, godly elders flowing together in unity, allow the power of the Spirit to flow more effectively.

- b. *Anointing oil.* In New Testament times people thought oil to have medicinal powers. For example, Herod the Great before his death was bathed in oil. Even Jesus in telling the story of the Good Samaritan, talked about the good Samaritan anointing the battered person's wounds with oil.

However, the oil was probably used more for symbolic purposes than for any other reason. It may have been a visual way of encouraging faith in the believers as the power of the Spirit came upon them.

I do not always use oil when praying for the sick, as this is the only time the anointing oil is mentioned in the Epistles.

- c. *Faith*. In praying for the sick, it is important that faith is released whatever the procedure. An honest appraisal of James clearly indicates that the 'prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well'.

Discernment and wisdom are necessary in praying for the sick. We always want 'God's will to be done'. But His 'will' needs to be discerned and prayed for in faith accordingly. It is not just a passive acceptance of 'what will happen will happen'. However it does not always seem that it is God's will to heal. The glories of heaven are waiting for some soon, for others their suffering brings a powerful redemptive message to the world around, e.g. Amy Carmichael. If we witness in our spirit that God desires healing, then as elders we can pray with greater confidence and authority.

Sometimes this faith necessary to save the sick comes from us and the sick person (see Mark 5:34) and sometimes it is a faith released from God Himself (Mark 11:22 - the word faith here is in the genitive form and refers to God's faith).

I find it fascinating to observe that even some 'faith healers' have physical infirmities that are like a thorn in their side. This no doubt keeps them humble and dependant upon God for His sustaining grace.

4. *Sin*. The confession of sin is linked to healing. Wrong attitudes can stem the tide of God's power. If healing initially occurs, then a life full of sin may not retain the healing.

However, not all sickness is caused through sin. In Mark 2:5, it appears that sin was the problem, but not in John 9:2,3.

## **When healing doesn't occur**

If a person is not healed, never make them feel guilty and give the impression it is through their lack of faith or sin. Only God knows the reason.

Sometimes, after experiencing a healing the sickness appears to return. In these cases, continue to release faith through claiming appropriate promises of Scripture in the realm of healing. Make sure also that there is no unconfessed sin in their life and if necessary ask the elders once again to pray for that sickness.

If a believer is not healed from a terminal illness never give the impression that approaching death is a dreaded enemy, as after all, this gives direct entrance into God's everlasting presence; a place of joy and eternal security.