

**BIBLE FACTS ABOUT . . .**

**THE HEALING OF THE BODY**



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Bible Facts About

# THE HEALING OF THE BODY

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Very few subjects have aroused more controversial discussion than the matter of "Divine Healing". There are those who say that there is no such thing as miraculous healing, that the age of miracles is past. This is usually the voice of so-called Modernism, with its denial of all the miraculous of past, present or future. There are others who say that sickness is a direct attack of the devil, or brought on by some sin, and that it is therefore never God's will for a Christian to be sick. What is the truth about these matters? What does the Bible say? What is the WHOLE teaching of Scripture on this subject? This booklet is designed to act as a signpost to the Scriptures, and to answer such questions as: -

Does God heal today?

Is healing in the Atonement?

Why do I become sick?

When can I be healed?

Shall I call the doctor?

How does God heal?

What methods does He use?

May God's Holy Spirit use these words to help and bless every reader of this booklet, by clearly illuminating the truth of His Holy Word.

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## THE HEALING OF THE BODY

The subject of miraculous healing is vast in its scope, and it is therefore somewhat difficult to get a full-orbed view that will prevent the delusions produced by partial concepts. It is easy to lay stress upon some isolated part of Bible truth concerning Divine Healing, to the exclusion of the WHOLE truth. In this way many false ideas lay claim to Bible proof, and boldly quote the "proof-texts" for their confirmation. Sometimes a partial truth is worse than a lie because of this very fact. We therefore urge the reader to seek as wide a grasp of the subject as possible, laying aside all prejudice, and earnestly desiring to know ALL that the Bible has to say about the matter. ✓

This matter is very close to our personal living. Some who read these words will be those who are desperately ill. And all of us, at some time or other, have faced or will face the troubles brought by sickness and pain. The cry for some healing power is a natural and common one in the human race. Most sincere and godly people agree that God often permits His children to suffer calamity, sorrow, loss, grief, and even pain and martyrdom, as part of His refining plan for us, but some of these godly folk earnestly contend that we must not include sickness in this list, and that this natural cry to God for healing must always find answer in the healing of the body. What does the Bible say about it? Is our sickness always from some sin, and will repentance enable us to pray such a prayer of faith that all of us can be healed from every sickness? Or is it true that, in God's plan some of us must suffer sickness and pain through life, however much our nature rebels against it? Search the Scriptures for the answers! ✓

### IS THERE SUCH A THING AS MIRACULOUS HEALING?

This first question is completely superfluous to any thinking person who reads the Word of God. It is only the infidel, the unbelieving atheist, together with his strange bedfellow, the modernist, who adopts the materialistic view that everything on earth happens in strict conformity to natural law. Anyone who understands Bible teaching at all knows that God is SOVEREIGN. He is the Omnipotent One, all-knowing, merciful and loving. The God who made all things, and who set and maintains the laws that govern our universe, is abundantly able to superimpose His will upon any law or set of circumstances. It is thus self-evident that He can heal a human body, by His own direct act, apart from human means. In Jeremiah 32: 17 we read: "Ah Lord God... there is nothing too hard for thee". God can miraculously heal

anyone of any disease, whether it be cancer or T. B. or polio, heart disease or any other sickness or disability. "He is in control. In Deuteronomy 32:39 God says of Himself: "I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal". One of the great names of God is found in Exodus 15:26, "The LORD that healeth thee".

Today the average church pays far too little heed to this matter of the healing of the body. We ought to remember that the emphasis on healing is found on many pages of our New Testament. In I Corinthians 12:1, 8-9, 28 we find repeated reference to the presence of the gift of healing in the early Christian church. This gift of healing was given by God to the church for this Age of Grace. We challenge anyone to produce any proof, any verse of Scripture showing that these wonderful gifts of the Holy Spirit, once given to the church, were ever abrogated. Surely they ought to be IN FULL USE TODAY! How can any Bible-believing Christian think otherwise? The gift of healing ought to be operative today, if God's Word means anything at all.

Now think on into another phase of this matter. As we read the Bible it becomes evident that not only is God able to heal miraculously, but it has often been His will to heal the sick by His own, direct, miraculous touch. The Bible is full of inspired, authentic records of such healings. The first example is found in Genesis 20:17, the healing of the household of Abimelech. In Numbers 12:9-15 we read of the leprosy of Miriam, and her miraculous healing. It is important to see that this disease came because of her sin of presumptuousness, and that her healing came, not by her deserving, but by the mercy and grace of God alone. This latter fact is always true. None of us deserve God's least blessing or healing. All He does for us is through the impulse of His mercy.

It is scarcely necessary to add the fact that Christ's earthly ministry included the healing of a multitude of sick folk. It was an outstanding mark of God's approval on His ministry. He did NOT heal everyone, but He did heal many. The quoting of two examples will serve to illustrate all the rest. Read all the records you can find in the Gospels, including those in Matthew 4:23-24 and Matthew 12:14-15. These two alone will show Christ as the famed healer of His day, and demonstrate how great was this part of His ministry on earth. Later on we shall speak of some who were NOT healed, but never forget that He healed multitudes of people. Words describing healing are used of Him over thirty times in the Gospels.

Then add to these the records of miraculous healings since the days when our Lord dwelt on earth. All through the ministries of the Apostles the record of healing is evident. Read such examples as those found in Acts 3:7 and Acts 14:8-10. And then, since the days of the early church and the completion of the Bible, we have many, many authentic records of healing by miraculous means, down through every century and into our present day. There is then just one INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION. It is OFTEN GOD'S WILL TO HEAL SICK BODIES by miraculous means. He is ALWAYS able to do this, and He is OFTEN willing to do it.

Every Christian ought to understand these basic facts. Dr. Ironside said: "No instructed Christian can help acknowledge the power of the Lord to heal the body as well as the soul". It is thus evident that Christians ought to pray for the sick, in the confidence that God hears, that God is able, and that He is often willing to heal. Sometimes there are hindrances to healing, and we shall deal with these later. But let us never forget that our God is "ABUNDANTLY ABLE". (Ephes. 3:20).

#### IS HEALING IN THE ATONEMENT?

Our second question is another one that is vital to a proper understanding of this subject. It is not a good question, because it is not clear. In many minds it is vague in meaning, often misunderstood and open to a wide variety of interpretation. There has been much loose talk about this, and many false conclusions drawn from such discussions. We must be careful to go as far as God goes, and stop where God stops!

First of all read Isaiah 53:4. Here is the clear statement that the Lord Jesus, as part of His redemptive work at Calvary, "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows". Now when this is interpreted for us in the New Testament, it is clearly applied to physical healing. Read this in Matthew 8:16-17. God says that this prophecy was fulfilled by the Lord when He cast out evil spirits and healed the sick. Surely it would be foolish to try to fight the plain teaching of these verses, that in some way Jesus bore our sicknesses for us. Apart from this clear declaration, is it not true, as Dr. S. D. Gordon says, that EVERY good thing God ever gives us was purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ, paid for on the cross, and comes to us solely by His merits? Thus Dr. Torrey says: "Physical healing is in the atonement". Surely that is true. All we have or shall have comes through Calvary, the forgiveness of our sins, the resurrection of our bodies, our glorification, our heavenly home, and every other

wonderful thing that God gives to us, including the healing of the body.

Now at this point we need to EXERCISE GREAT CARE. We must weigh ALL the Scriptures well. Upon perceiving this fact, that healing is in the atonement, paid for at Calvary, some have at once jumped to the conclusion that no Christian should ever be sick! And then, with this assumption as a foundation stone, they have built a vast superstructure of convincing teaching about healing, backed by inexorable logic and many Scriptures that seem like positive "proof-texts". BUT, if this foundation is FALSE, then all else built upon it falls to the ground. Later on we propose to show that the fact of healing being in the atonement does NOT MEAN that no Christian should ever be sick. We shall show beyond dispute that sometimes sickness is in God's will for His child. We shall try to do this with extreme care, for we are not interested in discrediting anyone's healing ministry. We do not want to discourage anyone from seeking for and praying for the healing of a sick person. Christian, if you are sick, PRAY! Pray for your sick loved ones. Pray on the ground of the atonement. Seek God's full will in the matter. If the sickness is caused by sin, then put it away. But one FACT must never be forgotten in this matter of healing being in the atonement. Mark it and learn it well; WE DO NOT NOW RECEIVE ALL THAT CHRIST HAS PURCHASED FOR US! It is wonderful to be saved, and to have all our sins forgiven, but every Christian ought to know that this is only PART of our inheritance in Christ. The best is yet ahead! Heaven will still be glorious after earth's life is over. There will still be some joyful surprises! We haven't got it all yet! for example; freedom from death was purchased for us at Calvary. It is certainly part of the atonement. But it is not yet our possession. We are still dying men and women. And again: absolute sinlessness, sinless perfection, is in the atonement. We shall receive it some day; we shall be sinless, through with sin forever! But nobody now living on earth has yet received that release, for in I John 1:8 the Apostle included himself when he said: "If WE say that WE have no sin, we deceive ourselves". Freedom from the conflict between the two natures, the old and the new, is in the atonement. But we still have the two natures and the battle between them still rages on. How clearly this is set forth in Romans 7:21. Much of our salvation lies ahead!

This fact is taught very clearly. As long as we are on earth, in a fleshly body, we are under the natural law of corruption. God clearly shows us this in I Cor. 15:53-54. We shall not be free from that process of corruption until the Lord Jesus comes

to change our vile bodies, as they are called in Phil. 3:21. That word "vile" means "depressed". Our bodies are NOT YET like His body, free from corruption. He tasted death for every man, and yet Christians still die. Their teeth decay and their hair falls out. They grow old and feeble, and some walk with a cane. All this was atoned for, but it is a state in which we shall all remain until Jesus comes for us. We are subject to physical laws. If we fall, we break bones. If we cut our flesh, we bleed. All this state is carefully described in Romans 8:18-23. We are in the "bondage of corruption." We "groan within ourselves".

Now make this important distinction, for it will save from much error:

We HAVE the redemption of the soul NOW. See Romans 3:21-26. WE WAIT for the redemption of the body. Read Romans 8:23. Both those gifts are in the atonement. We HAVE one, but we WAIT for the other! Is not that clear? That is why many times Christians have to WAIT for healing. We shall discuss that fact later on. In a sense, all the people who were ever healed were only partly healed, except Enoch and Elijah, who were translated, for all others finally went to the grave, and their bodies decayed in corruption. Thus bodily healing is in the atonement in the same sense that our resurrection in the atonement. Our resurrected bodies are all provided for in the atonement, and when that resurrection becomes a reality, THEN we shall be free from sin, and forever done with sickness, sorrow and pain. We shall THEN be like Christ, glorified for evermore!

This puts the matter of healing into its proper perspective, and does away with a great mass of false ideas at once. It is both rational and Scriptural. Our complete redemption, our freedom from all ills, the glorification of our bodies, although certainly in the atonement, is yet ahead. We must WAIT, WAIT, WAIT for it! The Bible says so. And yet God heals today! How? Just in the same way that He blesses us today in so many other ways. It all comes from the overflow of His grace, His unmerited FAVOUR! It is the earnest, the token and taste of what is yet ahead. Thus healing is not something that we today DEMAND from God as our immediate right. We PRAY for healing as a special manifestation of His love to us, in His will. We pray, willing to accept His will, His best for us. Christian, PRAY TO BE HEALED. But ask God to give you a heart wholly yielded to Him in everything, looking for that glorious moment when He shall appear, and in that glorious culmination of life, He shall change us to be like Him for ever! (I Cor. 15:51-52).

## WHY DO I BECOME SICK?

People do become sick, and sometimes that sickness leads to death. It is foolish to deny this obvious fact, so clearly evidenced in experience and taught in the Word of God. Sometimes Christians become sick. Godly, right-living people become sick. Some who believe that no Christian should ever be sick fall sick themselves, and sometimes die from such sickness. Some such earnest Christians have died from polio, from cancer, and from many other ills. Elisha, the mighty prophet of God, serving Him faithfully to the last breath, died of a SICKNESS. Read that fact in II Kings 13:14. Surely then we do well to ask this pertinent question: Why do we fall ill? What does the Bible say about it?

Now it is soon evident the Bible indicates to us that there are several causes of sickness. Before you express a doubt about that statement, search the Scriptures with great care. Be sure to examine the WHOLE truth of the matter. The devil quoted Scripture to Christ, but did not tell the WHOLE truth.

FIRST: - The Bible teaches us that sickness is sometimes brought about by purely natural causes. In II Cor. 4:16 Paul says that our outward man PERISHES. That word means "to rot thoroughly". Now rot is a natural process of decay. Our bodies are subject to natural decay, and natural illnesses. Through falling down, or cutting the flesh, or the intrusion of germ-life into the system, we naturally fall sick, even when there is no moral issue involved in the matter. In Levit. 13:45-46 we find Moses, or rather God through Moses, giving instructions for the segregation of the leper from amongst Israel. Why was this done? Simply to prevent NATURAL contagion. Even regarding inanimate things great care was taken, as we find in Levit. 14:44-47. Why was this done? For the same reason, that others might not NATURALLY contract the disease. Moses practised both quarantine and a strict form of sanitation, to prevent NATURAL infection from spreading. There was NO MORAL ISSUE involved in the matter. It was simply good, scientific common sense! Again in II Kings 1:1-4 we read of one who fell downstairs and became sick to death. The inference in this story is that if this man had sought the Lord he would have been healed. That is often true. But notice that his sickness came from a NATURAL cause, a fall. Furthermore we read in I Tim. 5:23 about the young man Timothy, who evidently had a NATURALLY weak stomach. For this Paul prescribed natural means of help, the juice of the grape. Thus we see very clearly in Scripture that sickness is often from purely NATURAL CAUSES,

with no moral issue involved at all. Do not, therefore, ascribe all sickness to some occult power, or see in every illness some sinful root-cause.

SECOND: - Sickness MAY be caused by sin. There is abundant Bible evidence of this fact. Let me set out just a few of the multitude of examples. In Numbers 12:10 we read about the awful leprosy of Miriam, which came distinctly because of her sin. In II Kings 5:27 we find the record of Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, who was also stricken with leprosy because of his sin of covetousness. Remember that to the impotent man, healed by our Lord, these words of serious warning were spoken by the Master: "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee". (John 5:14) Ananias and Sapphira were even struck dead because of their sin of lying to the Holy Ghost. Notice too, in I Cor. 11:27-30 that unworthily partaking of the Communion Ordinance is productive of sickness. God says so! Notice too that in verses 31 and 32 of this chapter, the sickness produced by this sin is called a "chastening of the Lord". Sometimes sickness comes as God's chastening to correct us, and to draw us back to Himself. Thus, if a Christian is sick, he should carefully examine the matter, and let the Spirit of God search him through, to see if any wicked thing has brought on his sickness. He should confess and forsake the sins that might thereby be revealed. Notice the way in which James puts confession right alongside this matter of healing, in James 5:16. "Confess your faults... and pray... that ye may be healed". When Christ dealt with the man sick of the palsy, (Mark 2:5, 11), He first dealt with the matter of his sin before He healed his body. He said "Thy sins be forgiven thee" before He said "Arise, and take up thy bed". The load of sin had to be laid down before the bodily health could be gained.

THIRD: - Sickness may come for still other reasons. It DOES NOT always come from some personal SIN! In this connection we ought to understand the two phases of God's will. God has a directive will and a permissive will. Some things take place because God moves directly and personally. Other things happen because God permits other agencies to operate, even permitting the devil certain scope of action. It is not probable that sickness comes from God's directive will, but certainly does come through His permissive will. He allows sickness to come either through natural or supernatural means. That is obviously so, because God is sovereign over all. And there is much Bible evidence of this, evidence that is quite indisputable. Read this strong, positive declaration of God in Exodus 4:11. "Who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the

LORD?" God said He did it. Read on into Job 2:4-7. Note this matter carefully, for his sickness was NOT BECAUSE OF SIN AT ALL! Job is declared to have been God's CHOICEST SAINT ON EARTH at that time. Read this declaration in Job 1:8 and Job 2:3. God "bragged" on Job. He challenged the devil to find fault with him or in him. Job's miserable comforters were sure his sickness was because of some hidden sin, God utterly condemned them for adopting such a WICKED ATTITUDE! It was not true at all. Never follow their bad example! Yet this man Job fell grievously sick. And he COULD NOT be healed until God's time came. God had consented to the challenge of the devil, and given him permission to afflict Job. Great and eternal issues were at stake, although Job knew it not. The devil was going to get a mouthful of dust out of it! Now no matter what Job did, whether he prayed, or was anointed or had the elders lay their hands on him, he could not be healed. Why? Because it was GOD'S PERMISSIVE WILL for this disease to come upon him, that God might be vindicated and glorified through Job's integrity and trust, and that the devil might be completely disappointed and frustrated.

In the New Testament we find another remarkable instance. In John 9:1-3 we read of the blind man who was healed by Christ. Now many folk in that day were sure that sickness always comes from sin. They thought somebody must have sinned, either this man or his parents, to produce this blindness from birth. They discussed the matter freely, cruelly, to the bitter anguish of those involved. What a wicked, cruel thing to do! Then when Jesus came, they asked Him about it. And His answer was crystal clear. Jesus said "NEITHER"! Let that settle the question forever in our minds. NEVER say sickness is always caused by sin, or you will make the Lord Jesus out to be a liar! He said otherwise. He said "NO". The fact is clearly declared. This man was allowed by God to live a life of total blindness, made blind by God, that the Lord Jesus might finally be glorified in him. And until that moment he COULD NOT be healed. It was not God's will. We may well ask ourselves: Would we be willing to be blind for most of our life for the glory of God? Fanny Crosby, the wonderful hymn writer knew exactly what that meant, for she was blind from infancy. Yet out of her blindness there came her wonderful hymns, such as "And I shall SEE Him face to face."

Yet another New Testament example of sickness that was in the will of God, and for His glory, is the story of Paul's thorn in the flesh. Many arguments have raged about this simple statement found in II Cor. 12:7-10, yet the truth is plain enough. Paul

calls it a "thorn in the FLESH". He surely knew. Do not try to make it a thorn in the mind or the soul or the spirit. It was in his FLESH, his body. It produced constant weakness. His three prayers to God for its removal received the answer from God, "NO". And Paul learned there was something better for him than to be healed of this infirmity. That better thing was to have the power of Christ upon him. He refers to this again in Gal. 4:13, where he calls it an "infirmity of the flesh". Is not that perfectly clear? What is an "infirmity"? The root word is EXACTLY THE SAME as that found in Matt. 8:17 where we read that Christ bore our "infirmities"! This places it in the atonement He made, and yet it was God's will for Paul still to bear it, until he actually received this part of the atonement at the glorification of his body. We WAIT for the redemption of the body! The word "infirmity" means "malady, disease, sickness". This is conclusive Scripture to prove that God sometimes has a special purpose in allowing sickness to come.

In summing up this part of our discussion, we may say several things. Sickness sometimes comes through perfectly natural causes. It sometimes comes through sin in the life, and is sent of God to chasten us. Sickness sometimes comes for other reasons as God permits it, often in order that His plan may be worked out fully. It is often for our refining, and it is always to His glory when it is thus permitted. It may be sent temporarily, or until death brings the final release. If a Christian is sick he ought to ask God, "Is this a chastening?" He ought to seek out and confess any sin that may be in the life. Then if that is not the cause, he ought to seek God's purpose in permitting the sickness to come, and then cooperate fully in the outworking of that purpose, whatever it may be. Like Paul, we ought to be able to cry, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities". May God make it so in our lives!

#### WHEN CAN I BE HEALED?

How often this question is asked by those who suffer the pangs and pains of dire sickness! It may be that most of us who read these words will ask this same question in days to come. It introduces a new and very important element into our thinking about the matter of miraculous healing, the element of TIME. How long must a sickness last? Will healing come immediately upon praying about it, or slowly and gradually? And the most important question in this regard is: "Will I ever be healed? Is it God's will?"

That there is a lapse of time between sickness and the healing

is almost inevitable. Otherwise a sickness would not even be apparent. I know of none who were instantly healed the moment they fell sick. Some have been healed very shortly after the sickness came upon them. One of the most amazing cases is that of Jeroboam, King of Israel. The record of his sickness and the healing that followed probably in the matter of minutes is found in I Kings 13:4-6. He was healed almost at once. But the amazing thing about it is that Jeroboam was a WICKED MAN! He was engaging in wickedness at the time of his healing, and continued to do so afterwards. Yet God healed him! Healing is certainly not necessarily a sign of spirituality in the one healed! This healing of Jeroboam was undoubtedly God's last call to repentance. Read Romans 2:4 in this regard. Another instance of a person healed very soon after the onset of sickness is that of Hezekiah, as recorded in II Kings 20:5. We shall speak later about this healing, for it teaches us many lessons. Here let us note that he was healed in three days. Healing is closely linked with the time element.

Now there is strong indication in the Bible that many sicknesses ought to be healed as soon as the person is conscious of their need of healing. A sickness ought to be cured at once if it is God's will to do so. In Matthew 8:2-3 we read of a leper healed as soon as he requested it. There was an instant response to his prayer. This shows us very clearly that God's will is involved in the matter of healing. The leper said "If thou wilt", and Jesus replied "I will". The leper's prayer was orderly and proper as he sought God's will first. He believed in God's power, but sought to know His will. And for him the TIME HAD COME! Some today would rebuke this man for saying "If thou wilt", insisting that he should have demanded healing from Christ. Our Lord did NOT rebuke him. He simply gave him the answer he sought, and then healed him. That was true, submissive prayer.

Now let me go a little farther. Sickness that is called "oppression of the devil", which is the work of an evil spirit, or demon possession, ought to be faced at once by one who knows how to use the authority of the believer over the devil. In Acts 10:38 we read that Jesus healed every one who was in this bondage. He did NOT heal all the "sick". In some cases that would have been contrary to His Father's will. But He did heal all who were "oppressed of the devil", freed them and cast out the demons. There is another wonderful example of this in Luke 13:16. Many who are thus bound today ought to be loosed immediately. It is high time the churches acted in this capacity, and learned how to set these oppressed ones free. We shall speak later about this.

But this is not yet the whole story. Some folks remain sick a long time. We have already spoken of Job. How long was he sick? We are not told, but it was certainly for weeks, and perhaps for months. He was ill, and remained ill until God's purposes, not only with Job and his wicked, miserable "comforters", but with Satan himself, were all accomplished. Let me remind you again of the man born blind, as recorded in John 9:1-3. He lived ALL his life up to that day Jesus came to him, in total blindness. Why? That God might be glorified when the moment of healing came. He had to wait for that precise time. Again in John 5:5, 8-9 we read of the impotent man, sick for 38 years! then he was healed as God's moment struck for him. And back in the Old Testament again we read in Daniel 8:27 that the prophet was sick "certain days", and then evidently restored. Still other Bible records tell of folk who were sick for indefinite periods. Read the thrilling story of Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25-30. Was he ever healed? This Scripture would indicate that he was, SLOWLY recovering from his sickness, for he had to be sent on his journey "more carefully" because he had been ill. Some important facts in this record are very noteworthy. His sickness was not from sin, but came from overwork in the cause of Christ, undertaken because others had failed to carry their load of witnessing, or of praying, or of financial support of the work. How often that happens today! Was this man to be blamed for falling ill? Paul did not blame him. He said: "Hold SUCH in reputation". We ought to do so. Some day there will be great reward for such unselfish labour for God. Notice too that Paul did NOT heal him. Apparently he was unable to do so. Probably God allowed this sickness to linger on as a means of shaming the lazy, thoughtless, careless Christians in that church. Now here in II Tim. 4:20 is yet another case of sickness. Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletum. There is no hint that he was ever healed. Certainly the great Apostle Paul did not heal him. Remember that Paul, through the power of God, had healed others. Thus it evidently is not always God's will to heal. Similarly we have spoken of Paul with his own "thorn in the flesh". There is no record that he was ever healed, until death relieved him forever of his sicknesses, until that final healing when he received all that there was in the atonement for him.

But there is still more to tell. Some of God's people DEFINITELY WERE NEVER HEALED. We read of Elisha, serving God faithfully, unwaveringly, to his very last breath. But in II Kings 13:14 we read that he died of SICKNESS. He was not healed, but instead he was relieved by death. Again, when Christ was here on earth, He certainly healed all who were



oppressed of the devil, but He did NOT heal everybody who was sick. Read again the record in Job 5:3, and notice that at the pool there was a "multitude of sick folk". But Jesus healed only one, and the rest remained ill. Again, think of this record in John 11:1-4. This is a most important case. The call came to Jesus that his friend Lazarus was desperately ill. And Jesus said: "This sickness is... for the GLORY OF GOD". Is that not perfectly clear? Sickness is not always from sin, nor out of the will of God. That sickness of Lazarus was sent out of LOVE! Read carefully verses 5 and 6. Jesus loved Lazarus and his sisters, and so He let Lazarus die! Jesus said later: "Lazarus is dead. And I am glad...!" That must have been hard to understand. Little wonder his sisters cried out later, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died"! But later... LATER.. Lazarus was raised from the dead, that we might learn many precious lessons from this wonderful record, and be assured of our own resurrection after we have, perhaps, like Elisha and Lazarus, died from some unhealed sickness and been laid in the grave. God had His purposes with Lazarus and Mary and Martha and everyone who witnessed this tremendous event, or heard about it afterward. May God teach us never to question His wisdom, His love and His purposes!

David Brainerd, a man of earnest prayer and mighty faith, who received marvellous answers to his prayers, a missionary to the Indians, died at the age of 29, stricken with tuberculosis. He died, perfectly content to go, assured that it was God's perfect will for him, the best promotion he could have. Why did he die? His story has been used of God to stir the hearts of countless thousands. For many he has been their Epaphroditus, shaming the lukewarm, half-hearted, selfish, unsacrificing Christians everywhere. May his brief life stir us today! God knew what He was doing!

When can you be healed? Not perhaps when you or I think. We ought not to go to God and DEMAND healing, right away, when we say so. Have you found assurance from God that your moment has come? Be willing to wait upon God and for God. It may be difficult, but it is the only right way. Some of you may not have to wait long. Trust God as you pray. Some may have to wait until the bright angel comes to sweep you home to glory, to give that wonderful glorified body, free for ever from every pain and sickness. May God give us hearts wholly yielded to His will!

#### SHALL I CALL THE DOCTOR ?

When sickness comes, this question is often asked, and con-

flicting answers are often given. There are two sides to this truth in the Bible, and we need to know both of them, for some truth pushed into undue importance to the disparagement of truth on the other side results in heresy and fanaticism.

In discussing this question it is very important that we understand the conditions under which we humans are now living. We are still mortal creatures. We are not yet in the "land of the living": we are still in the land of the dying. Let me suggest that Romans 8:21-23 be read again with great care. This Scripture tells us we are in the "bondage of corruption". That is a strong term, but it is true indeed, and our deliverance from that state is yet in the future, for we read "We SHALL BE delivered". That is perfectly clear, is it not? Again in II Cor. 4:16 we see that our body is "perishing", and it is evident that this process of decay and death will not cease until we are glorified with Christ. Luke 20:34-36 tells of a coming state in which we "cannot die", but until that time comes we are dying every day.

Now because we, although Christians, are still in a natural, corruptible, aging, dying, decaying body, a natural body, we sometimes use natural means to help that body. How foolish we would be to try to live otherwise. It would in fact be quite impossible. It would be stubborn wilfulness, to be sure, for a Christian to say he would never trust God to heal without medicine or natural means, but it would be just as stubborn and unreasonable to say that he would never take medicine, but demand that God must always heal him miraculously. We eat food, of necessity, and we are wise enough to know that certain foods are not good for us. Some people cannot eat pork, for it makes them ill. We eat that which will keep the body in health. We eat natural food for our natural health. If figs help the body, we eat them. How foolish it would be to eat figs because they are good for us, and then refuse to drink the juice out of a bottle because we say that it is medicine! Should we observe the natural laws of health, hygiene and sanitation? Of course we should! Moses instituted many of those laws, under the direct, inspired guidance of the Spirit of God, and we use them today. If we cut a finger, we bandage it. We give artificial respiration to a drowning man. Even the animals, when sick, instinctively seek out the herbs God has put on earth for their health and for the cure of sickness. Many natural medicines are provided by God, such as quinine, mustard and sulphur.

Now look at a number of Bible records of the use of natural means. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He often COMBINED

the natural and the supernatural in the performing of miracles. He made clay for the eyes of the blind man. He helped Peter pay his taxes with the natural use of hook and line, to catch a natural fish. He fed the multitude miraculously, but He had His disciples use natural baskets to pick up the remnants. He rode a donkey into Jerusalem when He could have flown, had He so desired. And just so we use natural things every day in the physical realm. Think of the way that Elijah was maintained in health in the wilderness, as recorded in I Kings 17:2-6. His bread came by means that were clearly miraculous, but the water he needed came by the most natural, unmiraculous means. Now turn onto Isaiah 38:1-5, and read again of the healing of Hezekiah. He was miraculously healed in answer to prayer. But he did not jump out of bed immediately, call the doctors "imposters" and vow never to take medicine again! Verse 21 tells us that Isaiah prescribed MEANS for the King's healing, a simple poultice of figs! And even then, as we learn from II Kings 20, it took him three days to recover. This was not instant healing, nor healing without means, and yet it was certainly miraculous healing.

Now it is also evident that God sometimes heals by natural means alone, and that God honours the true physician in his work. In Luke 5:31 Jesus said that sick folk actually NEED a physician! He did not disparage doctors. Moreover, in Col. 4:14 we find Paul calling Luke "the beloved physician". Again we find that the Bible often recommends the natural use of means for healing. In Exodus 21:19 we read about the case of one who has been injured by another person, so that he has to walk with a cane. Is it right for him to use a cane? Of course it is! And moreover the offender in this case is here commanded to see to it that his victim is thoroughly healed. Now that must of necessity refer to the use of natural means of healing. Again, in Acts 27:34 we find the simple, clear statement made by Paul that food is for our natural health. And in I Timothy 5:23 we find Paul writing to this young man about his natural sickness, a weak stomach, and prescribing for him a little wine, the pure juice of the grape. Was he right to do this? If we think that grapes are good for us, why not then drink the pure, unfermented juice? In this Scripture it is also interesting to note that the word "infirmities" here used is exactly the same as that found in Matthew 8:17 which includes them in Christ's atonement for us. The Lord Jesus has bought our release from all these things, and yet Timothy still had to WAIT for that release, as we do today. In the meantime God expects us to use natural means in the curing of natural ills. One more example is found in Luke 10:29-34, where we read the story of the Compassionate Samaritan, who is also

clearly a type of the Lord Jesus Himself. This man poured in natural oil and natural wine to help cleanse and heal the wounds of the one so gravely injured. Surely then it is clear that we are to use natural means as God directs us.

But still the question comes to us. WHEN shall I call the doctor? Now there is a common error among Christians today, in that they often try every conceivable remedy, until all fails, and then begin to call on God! That is exactly the opposite of what God wants! Too many run to the doctor first, instead of first going to God. Yes, we are to follow the known laws of health, and try to preserve ourselves from illness. We should seek to have a proper, nourishing diet. But we should NEVER fall into the error of King Asa, as recorded in II Chron. 16:12. He sought to the physicians and NOT to the Lord. God expects us, if we are sick, to PRAY first of all. We ought to seek to find His will, and ask Him for direct healing. God will not be angry if we do that. It was not his will to heal Paul of his thorn in the flesh, but there was never a word of rebuke because he prayed about the matter three times, asking for healing. ASK GOD FIRST! Then if it seems that direct healing is not going to be given, ask Him about the use of means, about calling the doctor, or about that operation that seems to be needed. If He provides these means, and so directs you to them, do not despise them or resist them. Some sincere Christians have resisted the use of means and natural helps, and have probably died because of so doing. But PRAY FIRST. Always do that. Pray before you spend all your living on physicians (Mark 5:25-26) as did the woman with the issue of blood. Perhaps the loving Lord Jesus will say to you today: "I WILL... be thou made whole".

#### HOW DOES GOD HEAL?

With the solid background of Bible knowledge we have now acquired, we ought to be able to answer this question very clearly. What does the Bible say about the ways in which God heals? The most amazing thing, at once evident to the student, is that God is completely unlimited in the ways He has healed people. He has used a multitude of entirely different methods in different cases. We are thus at once impressed with the fact that God has much for us in this regard, often much more than we ask or claim. His love to us is beyond computation.

Let me remind our readers, however, that our present healing of the body, should God grant it, comes entirely by the grace of God, as He wills. We cannot DEMAND healing from Him. It is true that the Bible often speaks of the healing of the soul and the

healing of the body in the same Scripture passage. Psalm 103:1-3, Mark 16:15, 18 and III John 2 all closely associate these two things together. The prosperity of the soul and body are closely allied, and God will finally remove every disease from our bodies. But we still have to WAIT for the redemption of the body from all its infirmities and ills.

Now, setting aside all God's natural ways of healing, examine His various ways of bringing miraculous healing to His children. There will be some repetition of Scripture passages, but this time we shall look for the WAY in which God has healed. Now usually there was some prayer, some asking for healing. Sometimes people prayed for themselves. Sometimes others prayed for them. But the amazing thing is that prayer was NOT ALWAYS involved in these healings. Healing was sometimes sent to those who did not expect it or ask for it. How gracious is our God! These facts encourage us to expect much from God, and each example of healing teaches us some important lesson about the whole subject. This part of the study will not be exhaustive, but will rather present typical cases, and lead us to seek out the lesson God has to teach us in the recording of each one in the Bible.

We could well begin with the healing of Job, as perhaps the most ancient case on record, but the strange fact is that God has given us no record of the actual healing of this godly man. He must have been healed, but it is unrecorded. Why so? Because it was relatively unimportant compared with the fact that Job came through his trials triumphantly. So with us the important thing is not HOW we get out of sickness but WHAT we get out of it! Job's healing came as a matter of course WHEN GOD'S PURPOSES WERE ACCOMPLISHED. We ought to learn that truth. We often have to WAIT for healing until God's time comes. May God teach us the patience of Job, and help us to remember it was PATIENCE IN SICKNESS!

Here in II Kings 5:10-12, 14 is the story of the healing of Naaman. He was healed by dipping in river water! Why did God heal him that way? It was undignified, unpleasant, and even ridiculous, but it taught Naaman the lesson of obedient HUMILITY. Let us learn too, that if we would be healthy, we need to be humble! God does not heal proud men. Let us heed the injunction of James 4:6. If you want to be healed, first humble yourself!

Still in the Old Testament we read of Hezekiah, in II Kings 20:5 and in Isaiah 38:21, and find that the method God used was a combination of prayer and figs! But the basic truth here is that

men ought to PRAY for healing. The use of the figs came later, as God led. The use of PROPER natural means may depend on prayer. Then we find examples of many other methods. In I Kings 17:21-22, II Kings 4:31, 34 and in Acts 20:9-10 we read of healing by embrace, the embrace of one who was filled with love for the sufferer, so much that he identified himself with the sick one. Here then is a lesson for the one who would pray for the healing of another! Be sure you are filled with CHRISTIAN LOVE! The one who would exercise God's power of healing ought to be filled with charity; and remember that charity is the highest point of personal Christian development. How many of us are unqualified right there!

Now in the New Testament we find many more examples. In Luke 17:12-14 we find the record of ten lepers healed as they walked. Why were they walking? They were going to fulfill the commands of the Scriptures regarding the healing of the leper. They were required to show themselves to the priest, to obtain his official release from their restricted life. They were healed as they were willing to obey the Word of God implicitly. God heals on the ground of His own WORD, and in obedience to it. Similar to this is the record found in John 9:6-7. Christ healed this blind man by the application of clay, and by his obedience to the command to wash in the pool of Siloam. This man was completely submissive to the methods of the Lord, even though they were strange and unprecedented. There is no mention of prayer or asking in this story, but only obedience to Christ. God may send some human "clay" to us, to use as His instrument in healing, as Ananias was sent to Saul of Tarsus, Acts 9:17, 18. Do not refuse one who is sent by God.

In John 5:5-9 we read of healing that came simply by the command of God, and this surely teaches us that we ought to look to Him and to His power alone for the physical help we may need. He is able. He is as able to heal as He was to create the universe by the command of His mouth. Then in Mark 6:56 we read of many who were healed as they touched the garments of Christ. Surely this illustrates for us the touch of faith. When God has shown His will to one who is sick, then that one can trust that revealed will completely, stand upon His promises and claim that which He has promised. That is the touch of faith. Compare this incident with that recorded in Mark 6:5. Here, instead of the touch of faith, unbelief was prevalent, and hindered the healing ministry of the Saviour Himself. In this place He healed only a few sick folk, this time by laying His hands of blessing and power upon them. This shows us that healing is by the grace of

God alone, coming as His free gift to us, a foretaste of what He has for us in heaven.

Through these examples, may God teach us that He is unlimited in method, always able to help, and that He delights to pour out His favour when we are ready to receive it and submit to His supreme will.

#### WHAT METHODS DOES GOD USE IN HEALING?

This question is closely allied to the previous one, and is indeed a continuation of it. However, we have set it apart, as it deals with yet another important phase of our study, the matter of personalities that are often involved. Someone has well said that men are God's methods. The healing touch of God often involves personalities other than the one He wishes to heal. How often we read in the Bible of someone sent to a sick person with a ministry of healing. We have already mentioned many of these. Now sometimes folk do not like this too well. We like to be somewhat independent. Some ask: "Why can't God just heal me without anyone fussing about it?" He can do just that, but sometimes God chooses otherwise, for His own good purposes. We may not always understand those purposes, but they are there. We must be careful not to fall into the error that almost cost Naaman his healing and his life, by thinking that God ought to act as WE choose. God sometimes works out a purpose of using a human being as His channel to us. Sometimes He sends to us a "HEALER"! And sometimes we don't like that. True, some of that dislike has been born because some men have set themselves up as the Healer, instead of taking the humble place as God's channel of blessing that the God who healeth us might have His way, and receive all the glory for the work done. Moreover there are some who are sheer fakes and charlatans, and multitudes have been deceived and disillusioned by them. But the fact remains that we ought to like and accept the GENUINE channel that God is using as His messenger to us, and thank God for all such. God has always had His genuine, humble, holy, loving instruments, living a patient, submissive and often obscure life, true to the Book, and exercising all the wonderful gifts of the Holy Spirit.

It is almost superfluous to speak of the men God has used as His instruments of blessing. We have spoken already of Elijah and Elisha, of Isaiah and Paul and their ministries of healing to others. Now read that important Scripture found in James 5:14-15. Although this is not written directly to the Christian Church of this day, some very important general

principles are involved in the truths here declared. In this method of healing notice that oil is used, and this is the symbol which avows faith in the saving health of the Holy Spirit. It is well to notice that in Mark 6:13 the twelve disciples of the Lord used this same symbol of the anointing oil as they went forth in their early ministry. Of the Three Members of the Trinity of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit is the active, healing Agent today. HE IS THE HEALER! But His power is often exerted through men, and James told the ELDERS to anoint with oil, in acknowledgement of the work of the Holy Ghost, and then said that THEY were to pray the prayer of faith. The ELDERS were responsible to do this. They were to be men able to discern God's will in each case, and then act upon that revealed will in absolute faith, being moved and directed by the Holy Ghost. May God send such Elders into our churches today!

In the Book of Acts we read of two very unusual methods of healing, involving God's use of men as His agents. In Acts 5:12-15 we read of people healed by the passing shadow of Peter! Can a shadow heal? Then in Acts 19:11-12 we read of people healed by contact with a handkerchief or an apron that came from the body of Paul. Now admittedly these latter are called "special" miracles (Acts 19:11), out of the ordinary, with no Scripture record of their repetition. It ought also to be noted that there are no such things as "blest cloths" mentioned in the Bible. The use of such an expression seems to tend towards superstition like that found in the use of so-called "holy" medals, relics, charms blessed by some priest or pope, and such heathen amulets. These handkerchiefs and aprons were brought from Paul's BODY, and then were used of God to heal at a distance, where Paul could not go. Now what do these two instances of healing by a shadow, and healing by a piece of cloth, teach us? Surely that the very INFLUENCE of these holy, Spirit-filled men carried with it the healing power of the Holy Ghost! How far does a person's influence extend? The Bible has much to say about this, and it is a whole study in itself. Suffice to say here that our personal influence extends far beyond anything we know or imagine, into homes and public gatherings, through communities, through walls, and into heaven itself. How many times we speak of the "spirit of a meeting". For good or evil, our influence travels afar to those all about us. Just so, a man filled with the Holy Ghost can be mightily used of God, even to the healing of others through the vital influence of his life.

Now let us look at one crowning method of healing before we close this study. In I Cor. 12:7-11 and I Cor. 12:28 we read

God's record of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, given to the Christian church, and still operating in Christian lives. These gifts are certainly, indisputably for the Church today. All of them are. No Scripture or logic can be found to support the purely speculative notion that any or all of these gifts have been retracted by God. And amongst them we find the "gifts of healing". Paul certainly had this wonderful gift. What was it? Simply a special calling and empowering of the Holy Ghost, fitting men for, and using them in a specific sphere of Christian service. The person with the gift of healing will be used of the Spirit to heal various people. That does NOT mean that he will go around healing everybody of their ills, and leaving empty hospitals behind him. Nor will he go about healing every believer. He will not heal everybody in a certain crowd or line-up. He will simply exercise this gift AS THE HOLY GHOST DIRECTS HIM. And the Spirit of God heals when and how and if He sees best. How little we know what is best for us, and what will work our highest good, whether it be sickness or health! The Holy Ghost knows, and he will direct that one to whom He gives the gift of healing. He will forbid him to go to some, even as Paul was forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach in Bithynia. He will direct the one with the gift of healing to those for whom he can pray the prayer of faith, knowing it is God's will to heal. He will leave sick those in whom God is working out His purpose through suffering, even as Paul left Trophimus sick. The Spirit gives the gift, and He not men, directs its use. I believe that today the Church needs all the GIFTS of the Holy Spirit.

Now let me add this last word to you who are sick and suffering. PRAY about your illness. It is ALWAYS right to do that. Ask God to heal you. Ask Him to show you the way He would lead you, either to healing, or to His sustaining grace through all your suffering. Submit wholly to what He says, and live, by health or sickness, only to His glory. May God's rich blessing be upon every one of you.

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