

FRIDAY NIGHT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

THE MINISTRY OF HEALING TODAY

INTRODUCTION

- A.** We have become increasingly interested in the ministry of divine healing.
- 1.** By 'divine' I mean: what God does.
- a.** God may use medicine and qualified practitioners.
- (1)** This is from God.
- (2)** It is an example of common grace: God's goodness to all men that is quite apart from saving grace.
- b.** But I refer mainly to what God does as though apart from what can be explained at the natural level.
- (1)** So much 'healing' that is claimed by some these days either didn't happen after all – or it had a medical or scientific explanation.
- (2)** Those who overclaim do not really bring honour to God's name.
- 2.** We long to see the 'real thing' – that which defies a natural, medical or scientific explanation.
- a.** We want to see that kind of healing which can be verified at the empirical level.
- (1)** Empirical (def.): proof of healing not by hearsay but what is based on observation or experiment.
- (2)** When records – e.g. x-rays – prove a healing that medicine had no bearing upon.
- b.** It is true that sometimes there can be overlapping between the natural and the supernatural.
- (1)** If one has been taking medicine and healing follows, it is possible that the healing was supernatural but there could be some doubt.
- (2)** Medical authorities often remain sceptical when the obvious healing or miracle has taken place. Illustration: Jennifer Rees-Larcombe's miraculous healing.
- c.** It is also true that sometimes a person knows he or she has been healed and it will not be provable at the empirical level.
- (1)** This has happened many times.

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(2) One must not take this lightly.

d. But at the end of the day, one longs to see the undoubted healing that cannot be explained except in terms of God's supernatural overruling.

(1) That is what we pray for.

(2) That is what this lesson is about.

B. Why is this lesson important?

1. With the rise of Pentecostalism and the charismatic movement there has been an emphasis on healing.

2. There have been a number of claims of people being healed.

3. Too often these claims do not match the facts.

4. Overclaiming is not good for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

5. It is important to ask: Does God heal? If so, why?

I THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

A. A part of Jesus' ministry was healing.

1. Why did Jesus heal people?

a. He cared about people.

(1) When Jesus saw a large crowd, 'he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.' Mark 6:34.

(2) Jesus looked at a man 'and loved him.' Mark 10:21.

b. He knew what the people's need were.

(1) "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." John 4:17-18.

(2) The person who had been delivered from demon possession begged to stay with Jesus. 'Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.'" Mark 5:19.

c. He fulfilled Messianic expectations.

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- (1) 'When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.'" Matthew 8:16-17.
 - (2) 'Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows.' Is. 53:4.
 - d. He validated forgiving people of their sins.
 - (1) "'Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . . ." Then he said to the paralytic, "Get up, take your mat and go home.'" Matthew 9:5-6.
 - (2) This implicitly showed Jesus' deity since they asked, 'Who can forgive sins but God alone?' Luke 5:21.
 - c. It vindicated Jesus' ministry.
 - (1) As Peter later said, 'You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached - how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him.' Acts 10:37-38.
 - (2) Nicodemus said, 'We know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no-one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.' John 3:2
2. The kinds of healing Jesus did: 'Every disease and sickness.' Matt. 4:23.
- a. Leprosy. Matt. 8:2-4; Luke 17:11-19.
 - b. Paralysis. Matt. 8:5-13; 9:1-8; John 5:1-15.
 - c. Fever. Matt. 8:14-15.
 - d. Demon-possession. Matt. 8:28-34; Mark 1:23-26.
 - e. Haemorrhage. Matt. 9:20-22.
 - f. Raising the dead. Matt. 9:23-26; John 11.
 - g. Blindness. Matt. 9:27-31.
 - h. Dumbness. Matt. 9:32-33.
 - i. Epilepsy. Matt. 17:14-18.
 - j. Restoration of an ear which had been cut off. Luke 22:50-51.

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- B.** The ways Jesus chose to heal.
 - 1. By his physical touch. Matt. 8:3; 8:15; 9:29.
 - 2. By remote control. Matt. 8:5-13.
 - 3. By his word: 'Go!' Matt. 8:32. 'Lazarus, come out!' John 11:43.
 - 4. By forgiving sin. Matt. 9:1-8.
 - 5. When one touched his garment.
 - a. Jesus said it was her faith. Matt. 9:22.
 - b. Yet power went out from him. Luke 8:46.
 - 6. By spitting and laying on of hands.
 - a. He did this in two stages.
 - (1) 'He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." Mark 8:24.
 - (2) 'Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.' Mark 8:25.
 - b. Note: the man who had a 'legion' of devils was not delivered the first time Jesus approached him. 'For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!"' Mark 5:8.
 - 7. With mud and saliva, followed by the command to wash in the pool of Siloam. John 9:6-7.

II THE MINISTRY OF HEALING AFTER JESUS WENT TO HEAVEN

- A.** The Holy Spirit continued the healing ministry of Jesus. John 14:16.

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1. God testified to salvation by 'signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.' Heb. 2:4.
 2. What God did by the Holy Spirit was to show partly that healing was to continue – as well as people being saved.
- B.** God did this to vindicate his Son, thus showing the ongoing manifestation of the supernatural, by:
1. Signs.
 - a. Gr. *semeion*, used 77 times in the New Testament, e.g. Matt. 12:38-39; Matt. 16:1-4; I Cor. 1:22. Note: it usually appears alongside the other two words: wonders and miracles.
 - b. In ancient Hellenistic literature it meant 'sign', 'characteristic', 'mark'.
 - (1) There were sometimes two characteristics: prominence and visibility.
 - (2) It was often a pointer to something beyond itself.
 - c. The Hebrew equivalent is found 79 times in the Old Testament, e.g. Psalm 86:17: 'Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, O LORD, have helped me and comforted me.'
 - (1) The rainbow was a sign in Gen. 9:12ff.
 - (2) Gideon's 'fleece' was a sign. Judges 6:36-40.
 2. Wonders.
 - a. Gr. *teras*, used 16 times in the New Testament, e.g., Matt. 24:24; John 4:48; Acts 2:19. It is usually accompanied by 'signs' if not also 'miracles', e.g. Acts 2:22; 4:30; Romans 15:19; II Cor. 12:12.
 - b. In ancient Hellenistic literature it was used to describe anything awesome, if not terrible or terrifying, like a clap of thunder in a clear sky.
 - (1) They were thought to be associated with the gods, as if of divine origin.
 - (2) A mysterious element was usually associated with *teras*.
 - c. Its equivalent in Hebrew occurs 46 times in the Old Testament, e.g., Ex. 15:11; Ps. 105:5; I Chron. 16:12.
 3. Miracles.
 - a. Gr. *dunamis*, used 120 times in the New Testament, e.g., Matt. 7:22; 11:20; Luke 8:46 ('power'); Acts 1:8 ('power'). It is often translated 'power'.

(2) Honour to God's name.

E. The anointing of oil. James 5:13-16.

1. This would appear to involve the elders of the church.

a. The word 'elder' literally means an older man.

b. It came to refer to a wiser person and eventually was a function or office in the church.

2. If one is sick he or she should call for the elders.

a. This means the sick person initiates the process.

b. The elders 'pray over' and 'anoint' with oil.

3. 'And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.' James 5:15.

a. There is a big 'if' here; not all sickness therefore is a sign of sin or disobedience.

b. If there is reason to believe that the sick person has sinned so as to bring this illness, he or she should confess it. 'Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.' James 5:16.

III HEALING TODAY

A. Why should we want it?

1. People who are in pain want a better quality of life.

2. This brings honour to Jesus' name.

3. It provides a greater platform for preaching the Gospel.

B. Principles of healing today.

1. God can use anyone in the ministry of healing.

a. Structural authority has been given to the church.

(1) The apostles largely had this power in the New Testament. Acts 8:14-17.

(2) The sick would call for the elders of the church. James 5:14ff.

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- b.** Spiritual authority has been given to the body of Christ.
 - (1)** The gift of healing was apparently available to many.
 - (2)** 'God can use little old me,' says Randy Clark.
- 2.** We have a right, if not a mandate, to pray for the sick.
 - a.** The right lies in the tone of Scripture generally.
 - (1)** The ministry of healing didn't stop when Jesus ascended. Eph. 4:8-11.
 - (2)** The ministry of healing did not end with the early church. Heb. 13:8.
 - b.** I believe there is a real sense in which we are called to pray for the sick.
 - (1)** People in pain want to be touched by God.
 - (2)** If not us, who will pray for them?
- 3.** No case is too difficult for God.
 - a.** God can cure cancer as easily as he can heal a cold.
 - b.** What Jesus did in person the Holy Spirit can do in person. John 14:12.
 - c.** 'For nothing is impossible with God.' Luke 1:37.
- 4.** If we don't pray for the sick, we will probably never see people healed.
 - a.** God can sovereignly heal – in more ways than one.
 - (1)** He can use common grace – doctors and medicine.
 - (2)** He can heal during the preaching of the Gospel.
 - b.** But if we don't make prayer for healing available, we will not see people healed.
- 5.** Only God heals.
 - a.** It is not the laying on of hands or the oil which heals.
 - b.** It is God who steps in.
 - (1)** By a healing presence. Luke 5:17.
 - (2)** By granting the prayer of faith. James 5:15.
 - c.** We must not have faith in our faith or gift – but only in God.

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6. We must overcome the fear of failure (people not getting healed).
 - a. God is sovereign; we cannot make him heal anybody.
 - b. But if we don't pray for people, they probably won't be healed.
 - c. What keeps people from praying for the sick:
 - (1) Fear of being emotionally involved.
 - (2) Pride from fear of failure and not having answers.
7. We must never make people feel guilty if they are not healed.
 - a. Jesus never rebuked the afflicted person for his or her lack of faith.
 - b. He only rebuked those who prayed for not having more faith. Mark 9:19.
8. Affirm the least thing God does.
 - a. Forget the critics if only a back pain or headache is healed.
 - (1) After all, to the one who has suffered this is no small healing.
 - (2) Thank God for anything – whatever it is – that he does.
 - b. God may later trust us with extraordinary healings.
9. Pray for anybody who asks to be prayed for.
 - a. Whether or not they are saved.
 - (1) God may heal them before they are converted.
 - (2) This will almost certainly lead them to Christ.
 - b. Whether or not you have prayed for them previously.
 - (1) God may be testing you and them.
 - (2) Their time may come this time!
 - c. Whether or not you 'feel' faith.
 - (1) It is not faith in your faith.
 - (2) Faith in a big God is what is needed.
10. Remember that nobody ever truly deserves to be healed.

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- a. We are all unworthy.
 - b. The gift of healing – *charismata* – is a grace-gift.
 - (1) Sin may be a cause of sickness. James 5:14-15.
 - (2) It is for them not you to determine this.
- C.** Practical suggestions:
- 1. Interview them.
 - a. Try to get them to open up – what is wrong?
 - b. The purpose of this: to have some diagnosis of their problem.
 - 2. Welcome the Holy Spirit when you pray.
 - a. Invite him to come.
 - b. If you feel his presence, say so and thank him.
 - 3. Feel compassion for the person.
 - a. This will increase your own faith.
 - b. This will make the person feel loved – and not rejected.
 - 4. Be open for a sure word of knowledge.
 - a. If you discern something and pray accordingly, this increases faith.
 - b. The purpose of a word of knowledge: it releases the gift of faith (Randy Clark).
 - 5. Speak to the condition, being specific.
 - a. Pray that God will deal with the very cause (if you know what it is).
 - b. The Holy Spirit may lead you to pray in surprising detail.
 - 6. Don't try to make the correct use of words with a magic formula.
 - a. If you think you've come up with a formula, it probably won't work.
 - b. Pray with spontaneity in the Spirit.
 - 7. Ask them if they are feeling anything.
 - a. This may mean God is at work.

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- b.** They may feel a sensation that doesn't relate to the pain they wanted to be relieved of; if so, pray to the way God may be leading you.
- 8.** If there is a sense of God, keep praying.
 - a.** God often touches people gradually, in stages or 'waves'.
 - b.** If you sense God has stopped, then you stop.
- 9.** Always thank God for the least thing he does.
- 10.** Be open to further learning of God's ways.
 - a.** Be willing to say, 'I don't know.'
 - b.** We all see through a glass darkly.

CONCLUSION

- A.** Faith is not the absence of doubt but facing doubt and praying anyway.
- B.** It's not you that heals but God's power; *never* get *proud* if God uses you.
- C.** Put yourself in a place where God can use you; in other words, become vulnerable and be willing.
- D.** God may use you to see healings that defy a natural or medical explanation.
- E.** In the meantime, be willing to endure the pain of failure.
- F.** 'If you pray for two hundred sick people, you will see some of them healed' (Randy Clark).