

Questions & Answers on Healing

By Roger Sapp

If someone has the gift of healing, why don't they go and empty out the hospitals? If healing were entirely in the control of the person who has the gift, then this would be possible. However, the New Testament reveals that healing nearly always involves the faith of the person being prayed for or the faith of a relative or friend. While there are a few noteworthy exceptions in the ministry of Christ worth considering, the vast majority of biblical healings reveal that someone, in addition to Christ, had faith for the healing. As the ministry of Christ is analyzed, there are four clear categories of the kinds of persons Christ healed. There are also two categories of persons not healed in Christ's ministry. These categories explain why a person with the gift of healing cannot empty out a hospital. Here are four categories of those who were healed:

1. There were those who came to Christ on their own and were healed. Their faith was evident by their behavior because they came to Christ for healing. Thousands of people seemed to receive their healing this way. Most often, these people received healing in Christ's mass healing events. However, some of the specific healings in Christ's ministry also fit this category, such as healing of the woman with the issue of blood¹. Christ often responded to these people by saying *your faith has healed you*. This category seems to cover the great majority of Christ's healings and seems to be the most ordinary way to conduct healing ministry.

2. There were those who were brought by someone else to Christ and were healed. In these cases, the faith of someone else was evident by their behavior. Again, thousands of people seemed to receive their healing in this way, and often received healing in Christ's mass healing events. A few specific examples also fit this category, such as the man whose friends lowered him through the roof to Jesus. The account says that Jesus, *seeing their faith*, healed this man². Together categories 1 and 2 cover the vast majority of healings in Christ's ministry.

3. There were those in need of healing who could not come, but someone else -- a friend or relative -- sought for Christ to come to the needy person. There are a handful of recorded examples in the Gospels of Christ regarding this type of healing. Again, the faith of another person who cared about the sick or injured person was involved in the healing. Their faith was revealed by their effort to get Christ to come to the person in need. The healing of the Centurion's servant³ and the healing of the Syrophenian woman's daughter⁴ are situations that fit this category. In each of these two situations, Christ gives credit for the healing to the faith of the relative or friend. While this is an ordinary way to heal, it is still a much less frequent way that Christ healed the sick.

4. There were those who did not come at all and Christ seemed to seek them out for healing. There are *only a very few examples* of this among the thousands of healings and miracles in the ministry of Christ. These healings are extraordinary, and it is important that healing theology acknowledges that they are extraordinary. It seems practical and prudent that the theological foundation for healing be based on the ordinary rather than the extraordinary. One of these examples

1. Matthew 9:20-22, Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:43-48

2. Matthew 9:1-8, Mark 2:1-12, Luke 5:17-26

3. Matthew 8:5-13

4. Matthew 15:21-28

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is found in the Gospel of John, Chapter 5. The man at the pool at Bethesda had been sick thirty-eight years and Christ initiated the events of this man's healing. In fact, even after the man was healed, he did not know who had healed him. It appears that Christ purposely went to the pool in Jerusalem where there were a great number of sick and injured people. Christ may have been looking for someone whom He could heal in order to get all the suffering people at this pool to believe in Him as their Healer. After healing this man, it is likely that the good news about this healing reached the ears of many that were seeking healing at Bethesda's pool. It is also possible that many of them sought out healing from Christ in the weeks and months to follow. In this case, Christ was able to use His own faith to produce the healing of this man. Christ seemed to catch this man completely by surprise. A second example in the ministry of Christ is the resurrection of the widow's son found in Luke 7:11-18. In this account, it appears that Christ has again surprised everyone with this miracle. There is no chance of anyone responding either negatively or positively to Christ in this matter. In these two cases, it appears that Christ's own faith is enough to accomplish the work of the Father, as long as He does not encounter unbelief and doubt among the people He is seeking to serve. Perhaps surprising someone avoids an unbelieving response. Emptying a hospital would require this type of extraordinary healing repeatedly. Considering Christ's limitations in His own hometown, not even He would be able to accomplish this. This would be similar to the situation at the pool at Bethesda. The afflicted people at this pool were not seeking Christ as Healer, and He was limited in the help that He could offer. Only this man was healed at that particular time. The vast majority of people in hospitals are not seeking Christ for healing. This is much like the pool at Bethesda. The people at this pool in that story were not seeking healing from Christ. Christ only healed the one man. Any help that a person with healing gifts could offer in a secular hospital under normal conditions would be limited. However, individuals within that hospital setting could be healed like anyone else if they come to Christ for healing.

The other two categories that must be considered are those who were *not healed* in Christ's ministry.

A. Some were not healed because they did not come to Christ because they did not hear about Him healing. The majority of those who remained ill or injured in Israel were those who did not come to be healed. They did not come simply because they did not hear Good News that Christ is Healer. The same problem remains today. The Gospel is often preached without revealing Christ as Healer. Consequently, many Christian people do not respond in faith to Christ the Healer and struggle on with sickness and injury when healing is available.

B. Some who heard about Christ healing people responded in unbelief and did not come and were not healed. In Christ's own hometown, the people responded in unbelief to Him, and Christ was unable to do much to help the sick and injured there. The implication of unbelief is present in many passages. Christ's critics and persecutors among the religious leaders were certainly unbelieving. Very probably some of these critics and their families were in need of healing but did not come because of unbelief. Although Christ was present and healing was available, most of them were not healed. Today, critics of healing ministry are likely to be in the same situation. Their criticism and unbelief will prevent them from seeking a Christian person equipped to help someone receive healing.

Doesn't a strong emphasis on faith condemn those who are struggling with sickness? No. It should

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not condemn anyone. Anyone can obtain faith for healing. Christ Himself put great emphasis on faith in matters of healing. Anyone wishing to emulate the Savior's supernatural ministry must also teach as He taught. In many of the accounts of His healings, Christ took the opportunity to comment or teach about faith.

Misunderstandings concerning the nature of faith are what create condemnation. Some have taught faith as if it were a static, unchanging thing. They have improperly taught that either you have faith or you do not have it. However, true faith constantly changes. Faith has to do with our active reliance upon Christ. Faith can grow or decrease in strength. Faith is affected by our understanding of the Father's will. Faith is affected by our theology. Faith is affected by doubts. Faith is affected by the clarity of our revelation of the love of God. Prayer and diligent Bible study can affect faith as long as we allow the Holy Spirit to use these means to adjust us. Faith for healing often comes to an individual after hearing a bold proclamation of Jesus Christ as Healer. Faith can be released. Faith is not static, but a dynamic reliance upon a faithful Healer. While a person may have been weak in faith yesterday, they may have their faith released today by a faithful presentation of the Gospel. While they may be struggling today, the destruction of a theological doubt, a mental stronghold, can release a brand new experience of healing tomorrow. No one should ever allow the enemy to condemn them as they seek to know Christ as their Healer. The enemy wants them to give up. However, the Father is on their side and will work with them until they are healed.

What about people who have strong faith in Christ as Healer and have not been healed? This is a difficult question to answer because it has an answer that is troublesome to some and offensive to others. The answer can make it seem as if those doing healing ministry are hard-hearted and insensitive to the struggles and suffering of some of God's people. The answer can produce defensiveness and reactions of loyalty in those having genuine compassion for those that are struggling. However, the question must be addressed if theological doubts are going to be completely removed on the matter of healing and help offered to struggling believers. The question itself has several important hidden assumptions that need to be addressed.

First, the question seems to indicate that the unhealed person's faith was unmistakable. However, experience reveals that these situations are often not what they seem on the surface. Often *strong faith* of these struggling people is mixed with significant theological doubts and misunderstandings of healing. These doubts can only be discerned and revealed by counseling with these persons. Fortunately, today there are more Christians being equipped to deal with these doubts biblically. Many times, biblical counseling and working through a sick person's doubts will result in their healing. Christ points out the relationship between *faith* and *doubt* in Mark's Gospel.

Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him.
Mark 11:23

This is encouraging. Those who believe that they have faith in Christ as Healer and have not yet received healing need only to seek to remove their doubts. Many times this is the case of those who have not received. They have faith in Christ but their remaining doubts prohibit their receiving.

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Secondly, the question also assumes something that cannot be assumed. The question assumes that we can know if another person has faith. Faith is an issue of the heart. No one knows his or her own heart much less the heart of another person. Love, compassion and loyalty sometimes makes us want to assume something about a person that we love that may not be entirely true and cannot be known for sure about another person or even ourselves. It is difficult to be objective about matters that involve us so personally.

Likewise, we are likely to confuse hope, sincerity and possibly even desperation with faith. We are likely to assume that some actions reveal faith such as lengthy passionate prayer and fasting. However, none of these things are faith. They are good works that may or may not be inspired by faith in Christ. Fear and desperation rather than faith may inspire these good works.

Thirdly, the question also presupposes that it is possible to have faith for healing and not be healed. This assumes that the Bible's promises of healing, numerous as they may be, are not reliable as its promises are in other matters. It assumes that the Father is a respecter of persons, doing for one person what He will not for another although the same conditions were met. All of these assumptions are decidedly unscriptural and do weaken faith in Christ as Healer. The assumption that it is possible to have faith for healing and not be healed is full of doubt itself. The doubts that this unscriptural idea produces could be the hidden reason healing has not yet come. God is *always* faithful to fulfill His promises when the conditions are met.

Fourth, this question invites the blame game. This makes it an unhealthy question. It balances the righteousness of the unhealed person against the righteousness of God. Either we must blame the unhealed person or we must subtly blame God for not fulfilling His promises. Those who blame God and justify the unhealed person often are blind to their behavior. They generally cannot see that they are blaming God and presenting Him as mysterious, unpredictable and unreliable in healing. This, of course, creates future doubts for everyone affected by this presentation of God. Blaming anyone -- God or the unhealed person -- is unproductive for the Kingdom of God. Let us affirm that God is faithful to His promises and patiently work with unhealed people to receive His grace without resorting to the *blame game*.

What about Job? Doesn't the Book of Job demonstrate that God is not always willing to heal? No. The book of Job does not demonstrate that God is not always willing to heal. We must remind the reader that the Old Testament revelation of God is incomplete. Christ alone completely reveals the Father's will in the matter of the will of God. Basing a theology of healing on Job rather than Jesus Christ will certainly cause confusion. Besides these things, the Book of Job is often misunderstood. However, the Book of Job does demonstrate a number of important things that are largely ignored by complex theology.

First, *Satan afflicted Job with sickness, not God.* Complex doctrine wants to over-emphasize that God initiated the conversation with Satan and gave permission to Satan before he could touch Job. This overemphasis creates a *leap-in-logic* that creates serious theological doubts. This *leap-in-logic* says this:

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When God allows something to occur, then it is His will for that thing to happen. This is simply because God already knows what the result will be when He allows something to occur. If God does not prevent something or intervene in the process, then what is happening must be God's will.

This *leap-in-logic* in effect *reverses* the stated truth of Scripture that Satan made Job ill. It creates a doctrinal viewpoint that states that God wanted and made Job sick. The Scripture does not say this. This twisted logic is imposed on Scripture and that produces doubts. Just because God allows something to occur does not mean that it is His will. God's foreknowledge does not mean that all things happen according to God's will. All the things that occur in the earth are not God's will. If all things that occur were God's will, then all the sin, injustices, losses, tragedies, and pain of the world would then become God's will. This is not so. This is a *demonic view of God* presented by popular but extreme theologies and western culture. These theologies present God as if He were responsible for and doing all the destructive works of the devil. In contrast, the Bible declares that the sinfulness of humanity, the devil and demonic activity and are the actual causes of the sad condition of the world. God, our Father, is not the cause of the *brokenness* of the world. Jesus Christ perfectly reveals the Father's will in restoration and healing of brokenness. Christ destroys the devil's destructive works and brings restoration and healing to all who come to Him. Christ *never* causes anyone to be sick or injured. This expresses the true will of God, our Father and is Good News. The complex theological view that God is the cause of the sad condition of the world and the suffering of humanity is not Good News and is therefore wrong.

Secondly, *God did heal Job*. Somehow, this fact escapes most people who know about Job. In fact, Job lived to be 140 years old. The last chapter of the book indicates that Job was greatly blessed by God after his sickness and experienced a *double restoration* of all the things that he had lost at the hands of the devil. The account reveals that Satan robbed, killed, destroyed and afflicted, but God healed, delivered and restored. Complex theology confuses these simple biblical facts. Furthermore, if someone believes that they are experiencing a mysterious dealing from God like Job's involving sickness, then they should expect that the final result would be healing and health, not further sickness or death. When a person dies without healing, then it should be clear to others that the sick person was *not* experiencing a *Job-like* dealing from God or they would have eventually recovered.

Thirdly, the length of time that Job was ill was a small portion of his life. The season that he was sick has been widely agreed upon to be less than a year long. Job lived to be 140 years old and apparently never again suffered an illness like this. Less than one-percent of Job's life is described in detail in the Book of Job. To think that God wishes someone to be ill for long periods in their life is even out of sync with the experience of Job and certainly out of sync with what Christ reveals.

Fourthly, Job's three religious friends played *the blame game* with him. They were wrong in their conclusions of why Job was sick. Job was wrong also in his conclusions of why he was sick. The tendency of Job's friends was to blame Job. In kind of a defensive reaction, Job eventually began to blame God. No one ever seemed to blame the real source of Job's condition, which was the devil. (As we have stated elsewhere in this book, the devil and demons are not the source of all sickness. The fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden is the direct cause of most sickness. However, the devil seems to be directly involved. In Christ's ministry about one-quarter of the specific healings involve Christ dealing with a demon. This means that three-quarters of the healings do not directly involve the devil

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or demons.) Eventually, in the last chapter of the Book of Job, God corrected the three friends who had blamed Job. God also corrected Job for blaming Him.

Job's whole painful and difficult circumstance brought out some issues that needed dealing with in Job's life. A young man, Elihu, who had been silent throughout *the blame game* debate between Job and his three friends finally spoke up and corrected Job and his three friends for playing *the blame game*.

Then these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. But the anger of Elihu...burned; against Job his anger burned, because he justified himself before God. And his anger burned against his three friends because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. Job 32:1-3

Elihu was angry with Job and his three friends. They were all wrong. Job has complained repeatedly that he has done nothing wrong. He had repeatedly declared his righteousness. Job went so far as to blame God (not the devil) for his problems. Job's three friends had been trying to make an accusation against him for dozens of chapters to explain why these things have happened. Finally, the young man, Elihu, begins to put things into a proper order. Elihu spends a few chapters explaining why Job cannot proclaim that he is innocent and righteous and why Job cannot blame God for his predicament. For instance, Elihu sums up and corrects Job's self-righteous attitude expressed in *the blame game* that he has been playing with his religious friends.

"For Job has said, 'I am righteous, but God has taken away my right; Should I lie concerning my right? My wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.' ..." Job 34:5-6

Elihu continues his correction of Job a few verses later.

For he (Job) has said, 'It profits a man nothing when he is pleased with God.' Therefore, listen to me, you men of understanding. Far be it from God to do wickedness, And from the Almighty to do wrong. Job 34:9-10

Elihu understands that when a man justifies himself, he subtly blames God for his situation. When a man declares his lack of fault in a situation, then his tendency will be to subtly argue that God is mistreating him. Often the accusation against God is cloaked in religiosity but is still there. God apparently agrees with Elihu's assessment of the situation and begins to correct Job in similar fashion in Chapter 38. This leads to Job's repentance from self-righteousness and his healing and restoration. One of the Book of Job's best lessons is that *the blame game* should be avoided. Justifying yourself or justifying another person in the matter of sickness and healing enters *the blame game* and subtly blames God. It is better to continue to seek the Healer than to declare that there is no fault in the one seeking healing. After the death of a loved one from sickness, there is no need to play *the blame game* either. The results of *the blame game* are harmful to others seeking healing because they produce serious doubts about God's faithfulness.

Doesn't Paul's thorn in the flesh reveal that God was not willing to heal Paul? Poor teaching about Paul's *thorn in the flesh* has created doubts in the minds of many people. These doubts have

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been sufficient to block healing for many people. Therefore, it is necessary to thoroughly analyze this passage. The primary verse in question is found in Paul's Second letter to the Corinthians. This verse reads:

And 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 buffet me-- to keep me from exalting myself! 2 Corinthians 12:7

The questions to be considered in analysis of this verse are:

- *What is the context of the verse?*
- *What does the verse actually say that the thorn is?*
- *What does the Greek word that is translated "thorn" reveal?*

Hopefully after these questions are answered honestly, then a good interpretation of this verse will be apparent.

The context of these verses is revealing. At the end of the previous chapter, Paul is relating all the suffering, dangers, beatings, and imprisonment that he endured for the sake of the Gospel. He does not mention sickness. In that context in chapter 11, Paul speaks of being *weak* but certainly not as a reference to sickness but as a reference to the difficulties that he endured.

At the beginning of chapter 12, Paul begins to explain that he had special revelations of Paradise, of the third heaven. Then he begins to speak of a thorn in the flesh given to keep him from *exalting himself* as a result of the *surpassing revelations* of the *third heaven, paradise*. Therefore, by implication, a thorn in the flesh is given when someone has special surpassing revelation from God. A truth emerges that should help most people's faith:

Most people would not qualify for a thorn in the flesh no matter what the thorn may be simply because they are not having surpassing revelations of paradise like Paul describes.

Paul says that he asked the Lord three times to remove the thorn but the Lord answered that His grace was sufficient for Paul and that *power was made perfect in weakness*. The Greek word translated *weakness* is again used. There are a number of Greek words used in the New Testament used exclusively for sickness. This word is not one of them. It was also used a few verses earlier in the previous passage in a context that has to do with persecution. Paul is probably using *weakness* again in this way. A verse in the next chapter seems to indicate this strongly. Both words, *power* and *weakness*, are also used in this verse. In this verse, Paul says:

For indeed He (Christ) was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, yet we shall live with Him because of the power of God directed toward you. 2 Corinthians 13:4

Paul is not saying that *weakness* is sickness. In fact, Paul says that Christ was crucified because of *weakness*. It puts the term *weakness* into the context of what unbelieving people were able to do to

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Christ. They were able to persecute Him to the point of crucifixion. Paul uses this word in the same way. Paul's *weakness* was *the suffering that he had to endure at the hands of enemies*.

The ordinary Greek words exclusively used for sickness in other passages do not appear anywhere in this context. Additionally, just a few verses after writing about the *thorn* Paul writes that the *signs of the apostle* were present in his ministry. He mentions *signs, wonders and miracles*. It is unlikely that Paul would tell his readers about his own sickness and then a few verses later reveal his ability to do miracles. The context reveals that this *weakness*, the *thorn in the flesh*, must be something other than a sickness or a medical condition of some type.

What does the verse actually say that the thorn is? The verse actually does reveal what the *thorn* is. Paul says that the *thorn* is *a messenger of Satan*. The Greek word that is translated *messenger* is the same word that is often transliterated as *angel* elsewhere in the New Testament. Paul tells us that the *thorn in the flesh* is *an angel of Satan*. It is a *leap-of-logic* to say that this is sickness. Paul is describing a fallen angel as his *thorn in the flesh*. Since Paul tells us through the context of all the persecutions he received, a more reasonable interpretation would be that Paul was asking the Lord to stop the actions of a fallen angel who stirred up persecution against Paul wherever he went. In the same way that the devil stirred up trouble leading to the crucifixion of Christ, Paul was suffering trouble caused by this fallen angel. This seems to be validated by further study of the words used in this context.

What does the Greek word that is translated "thorn" reveal? The use of this Greek word reveals a great deal. The Greek word that is translated *thorn* is *skolop*. This Greek word only appears in the New Testament in this verse. However, this Greek word appears three times in the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament. A great deal of evidence exists that suggests that Paul and other First Century preachers used the Septuagint to preach from throughout the ancient world. The apostle Paul was probably very familiar with how *skolop* was used in this ancient version of the Old Testament. *Skolop* is found in three passages in the Septuagint; Numbers 33:55, Ezekiel 28:24 and Hosea 2:6. In Numbers, this word is used in reference to the enemies of Israel.

But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall come about that those whom you let remain of them will become as pricks in your eyes and as thorns (skolop) in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land in which you live. Numbers 33:55

This use of *skolop* above supports the interpretation that Paul's *thorn in the flesh* had to do with persecution from enemies stirred up by a fallen angel. The passage above does not support the idea that sickness was in some way involved.

The second place where *skolop* is used is found in the Book of Ezekiel. In that context, God declares that Sidon and other enemies will no longer be a *thorn* in Israel's side. This usage supports the idea that the *thorn* has to do with enemies rather than sickness.

And there will be no more for the house of Israel a prickling brier or a painful thorn (skolop) from any round about them who scorned them; then they will know that I am the Lord GOD. Ezekiel 28:24

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In Hosea, the use of this word is not as clear as the previous two uses. The verse simply says that God will prevent His people from going after false lovers by a wall of thorns.

Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, (skolop) And I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths. Hosea 2:6

This particular use does not reveal anything else to help except that the verse does not reveal *skolop* as having a connection to sickness. None of the three uses of this word in the Greek Old Testament relate to sickness and two are related to difficulties with enemies.

In summary, a close analysis of this verse does not reveal that Paul had a sickness or injury. The verse itself reveals that an *angel of Satan* was the problem and the context reveals that *difficulties from enemies* is the *weakness* that Paul asks the Lord to remove. Suggestions from other verses that Paul had eye problems, or other conditions such as speech difficulties, are often built upon the assumptions that Paul's thorn in the flesh was a medical condition. However, the biblical foundation for these speculations and theological doubts is very weak. It is unlikely that Paul's thorn in the flesh was a medical condition. We are not saying that Paul never had a medical condition to deal with. We know that he did like any other person. What we can conclude is that Paul could receive healing like any other believer. Paul does not provide an example of someone that God was not willing to heal.

What about the four examples of people not being healed in the New Testament. Don't these prove that God doesn't always heal? No. What these examples prove, if anything, that healing is not automatic or always instantaneous. There are four believers in the New Testament who are often used as examples of believers who were not healed. They are:

- *Timothy* had frequent ailments.
- *Epaphroditus* was a sick Christian leader at Philippi.
- Paul left *Tropimus* behind because he was sick.
- *Paul* describes a time when he was sick.

We will examine these examples briefly and then comment on how they are being used today. The first of these examples is a verse found in Paul's first letter to Timothy. There Paul writes:

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

Some have noted this verse indicated that Timothy had not been healed but actually this verse does not really say that at all. It does not indicate that healing prayer had been ineffective either. It does not indicate that Timothy had any particular problem at the time of the writing of this verse. It does indicate that Timothy had some reoccurring physical issues. Paul was recommending to Timothy a natural *preventative* measure, a way of staying well. Paul's comments here do not mean that Paul thought his prayers for healing of Timothy were not effective. Timothy might have been repeatedly healed but the ongoing stress of his life might have caused him to need additional physical help. This is not contradictory. Paul may have thought that preventative measures were wise. For example, someone asks for prayer for blisters on their heels from badly fitting shoes. We can pray in faith for

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healing of their wounds and wisely recommend a preventative measure, a new pair of properly fitting shoes without contradiction. The examples may differ but the principle is the same. If we can successfully prevent illness through natural means, then isn't that wiser than seeking healing after we are sick? If we are ill, then we can count on the will of God being healing for us because of what Christ consistently reveals of the Father's will.

The apostle Paul in the book of Philippians writes about Epaphroditus who apparently was *sick to the point of death*. This is the second of these four examples. Paul writes:

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, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. Philippians 2:25-27

Epaphroditus recovered from this sickness. Paul credits *God* with his recovery by writing that *God had mercy on him*. Since the word *mercy* is often connected with the healing of individuals in the Gospels, it is evidence that Epaphroditus was healed. In fact, this example is not really of someone who was not healed, but could be an example of someone who was seriously ill for a season before they received healing. These first two examples do beg the question: *Does healing from God always have to seem instantaneous and miraculous?* We must answer *no*.

The third of these examples comes from a single verse. This verse reveals that Trophimus had not received healing at the time it was written. Paul writes:

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

Of course, the weakness of this verse is that we do not know what happened the next day. This is a snapshot of a moment in time. We have to assume that Paul had prayed for Trophimus without apparent success up to the point of writing this verse. Beyond that, we can only speculate about the details of this situation. We don't know how sick Trophimus was. We don't know how many times Paul prayed for him. We don't know if he quickly recovered from a simple ailment that would not allow him to travel or he had something more serious for a longer period. We don't know if he simply recovered in a natural way, died, or was miraculously healed. The unknown outcome of this situation makes this situation a questionable one to conclude anything about healing upon with one exception. The one fact that we can glean from this verse is that not everyone that Paul prayed for received healing immediately. This is not a surprise.

Paul reveals in the book of Galatians that because he was ill, he was able to preach the Gospel to the Galatians. This is the fourth example. He writes:

...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

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them to me. Galations 4:13-15

This situation is similar to the previous one with Tropimus. We do not know the specifics of the situation. We do not know what the outcome of this situation was. It does appear that Paul recovered. He might have been healed miraculously. It does not appear that he was healed immediately. This situation is also a snapshot of a particular moment in time with no details as to what happened afterward. The fact of Paul being ill, even for a season, does not reveal that the will of God was not to heal him. All ideas of that sort are simply speculations and are not based on what Christ reveals of the Father's will. Christ revealed that the Father wants people well.

These four examples are often cited to support the view that God is selective about who He heals. This is a very wrong conclusion from these passages. The right conclusion would be that these believers had not yet received healing. The reasons that they had not received are unclear and unrevealed by the passages. All four seemed to live beyond these recorded events. Even if these examples included someone who had died from sickness, they still would not reveal the will of God for that person. The perfect will of the Father is not revealed by anyone but Jesus Christ. The Church's individual experience with healing, good or bad, does not reveal the will of the Father. The fact of the early Church's mixed experience with healing being recorded in the New Testament does not change anything. We can build nothing of theological value on the mixed experience of the Church receiving what Christ has done. Some in that day did not receive Christ as Savior either. We cannot assume since that is true that this means that it is not God's will to save all. We can only build reliably on Jesus Christ and He reveals that the will of the Father. He reveals this repeatedly by healing everyone in a multitude. He reveals this consistently by never turning anyone away unhealed.

The apostle Paul is the author of all the verses used in these four examples. Paul would have never used these verses in the manner that they are being used. He was not trying to teach believers that God is not willing to heal some people by these examples. He says nothing at all like that in any of these examples. He was not teaching doctrine by telling us about these people. He was simply relating to the Philippians, the Galatians and Timothy personal news about people that they knew.

It is likely that Paul had prayed for healing for each person and of himself. Instead of Paul believing that the will of God was being revealed when people were not instantly healed, he was having a similar experience with healing that many of us have: *Not everyone receives healing immediately*. Sometimes, healing follows over a period of days or months. Sometimes, more prayer is needed. Sometimes, a crisis of faith erupts in a person and they experience a profound dealing of the Holy Spirit that leads to healing. Sometimes persistent prayer is what is needed to see a complete healing. Assuming it is not the will of God because someone is not immediately healed makes it impossible to persist in praying in faith.

These four examples are often cited to support the view that God does not always heal. This is a misstatement. More properly, some do not receive healing instantly or may not receive at all. God is still willing that they receive healing even if they don't receive. In two of these situations (Epaphroditus and Paul) the New Testament reveals that these believers did recover. *So how can anyone use them as examples of someone not being healed?* They were healed although perhaps not instantly. The right conclusion would be that we simply do not know if these other two believers

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(Timothy and Trophimus) received healing eventually or not. Two of these situations (Timothy and Trophimus) are simply snapshots of a particular moment in time in the life of these believers. We do not know what happened in the hours and days after those verses were written. The assumption that they were not healed is not based on the New Testament and may reveal a theological bias.

Is healing in or through the atonement? Two of the apostles who walked with Christ, Peter and Matthew clearly connect healing with the atonement. Isaiah Chapter 53 mixes healing verses with atonement for sin verses. In other words, three places in the Bible clearly connect healing with the atonement. Two of these places consist of primary apostolic witness and teaching. The third is from a primary messianic prophetic passage quoted numerous times in the New Testament about Jesus. Some want to balance against this double apostolic and prophetic witness Paul's silence on the subject of healing in the atonement but it doesn't work. The fact that Paul doesn't say anything at all about the subject doesn't seem to be a good argument for or against healing in the atonement. Most, if not all arguments against healing in the atonement are coming out of theology, reasoning and experience rather than the teaching of the apostles found in the New Testament.

It is important to come to the right conclusion on this matter. If healing is *in* the atonement, then we can always be sure that God desires to heal when we receive Christ as Healer in faith. If healing is only *through* the atonement, then healing is some sort of add-on given at God's sovereign choice. It should be evident that it would be difficult to ever be sure that God would heal if healing is *only* through the atonement. If healing is *only* through the atonement, then consistent, personal faith for healing would be difficult to obtain. It is not enough to believe that God heals. One must believe that God wishes (wills) for them to be healed. Faith would be based on less than a stable foundation for the one who believes that healing is through the atonement. It would require a personal revelation, some sort of proof, that God wished the person to be well to inspire faith for healing. Otherwise, doubt would always be present and could prevent reception of healing. On the other hand, if healing is in the atonement, then a believer can always be sure that God wishes them to receive healing. The price would already be paid and healing would be received just like salvation is received.

There is much biblical evidence to believe that healing is *in* the atonement. First of all, two of the Twelve apostles, Matthew and Peter, quote from the Isaiah Chapter 53 passage in their New Testament books. Both apostles connect the passage with healing. The Isaiah Chapter 53 passage is widely accepted to be a description of what Christ would accomplish at the cross. Matthew writes:

(Christ) healed all who were ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases. Matthew 8:16-17

This is a quotation from Isaiah 53:4 that Matthew directly connects with Christ healing all the sick in Matthew Chapter 8. Matthew obviously believed that Isaiah's prophecy was being fulfilled by Christ healing the sick. He obviously believed that Isaiah prophecy was also describing physical healing rather than spiritual. The second quotation is from the apostle Peter. Peter writes:

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness, for by His wounds you were healed. 1 Peter 2:24

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Peter quotes from Isaiah 53:5. First of all, Peter connects the work of the cross very closely to healing in actual words of the verse above. Secondly, he quotes from the prophecy of Isaiah about healing that also connects healing with the atoning work of Christ. We conclude without any difficulty at all that both Matthew and Peter believed that healing was *in* the atonement. Thirdly, a quick study of the passage in Isaiah Chapter 53 should reveal a few simple linguistic facts. The language of Isaiah Chapter 53 does not lend itself at all to the idea that Isaiah was trying to separate the work of atonement from the work of healing. Only the phrase below separates the two quotes about healing with Matthew's quote just before it and Peter's quote just after it:

But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities. Isaiah 53:5a

Again, the quote above is between the two quotes from Isaiah Chapter 53 used by Matthew and Peter. This portion of the verse is unmistakably about the atonement. Isaiah is not separating healing from atonement for sin but is mixing them. Just after Peter's quote about healing this phrase is found:

All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way but the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. Isaiah 53:6

In other words, every other statement in these verses is about healing or atonement for sin (forgiveness). This is how this part of the Isaiah Chapter 53 passage is constructed:

Verse 4... *bore/carried- sickness/pain* phrase quoted by Matthew
directly followed by...

Verse 5... *pierced-transgression* phrase about payment for sin
directly followed by...

Verse 5... *wounds-healed* phrase in verse 5b quoted by Peter
directly followed by...

Verse 6... *iniquity-on Him* phrase about payment for sin.

Isaiah's prophecy mixes the ideas Christ paying the price for healing with Christ paying the price for the forgiveness of *transgression* and *iniquity*. To then say that healing is not in the atonement, is an arbitrary statement that is not based on the linguistic facts of this passage. The passage does not separate the ideas. Theology separates healing and forgiveness in the atonement is without biblical license to do so.

Thirdly, the fact that Christ used forms of the Greek word *sozo* eighteen times where someone is healed is striking evidence that healing is part and parcel of salvation. Other forms of this word are translated as *salvation*. This was discussed in detail in a previous chapter.

Fourthly, bad logic often plays a part in the decision to believe that healing is not *in* the atonement but *through* it. A summary of some of that reasoning is this:

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No one who has believed for forgiveness has ever been denied, but multitudes who have believed for physical healing have been denied. Therefore, healing cannot be in the atonement like forgiveness is in the atonement.

This logic sounds convincing but contains many assumptions that cannot be proven. This statement assumes that *no one who has believed for forgiveness has ever been denied*. While this statement is scriptural and certainly acceptable, it cannot be observed and proven. Neither *faith* nor *forgiveness of sin* can be observed or measured in people. Neither can they be proven experientially. They must be assumed by an outside observer. This makes this statement a statement of sincere belief and nothing else. There are some who would contradict it out of their understanding and experience. Some people think that they have believed but have not received forgiveness. Most of us would immediately reject this as being untrue. We would kindly correct them that they had not believed in a proper biblical way. We would tell them that intellectual assent to the facts of the Bible, desperation, being good, church attendance, and sincerity are not the same thing as saving faith in Christ and if they truly had believed, they would have experienced forgiveness.

The statement that *multitudes who have believed for physical healing have been denied* is not observable or proven either. It is a statement of belief and nothing else. Believing on the part of these people cannot be observed either. We cannot know what is in another person's heart and cannot righteously make the judgment that they properly believe in Jesus as Healer and yet are not healed. Many things are confused with faith for healing. Intellectual assent to the fact that God heals is not the same thing as overcoming faith in Christ as Healer. When someone who appears to believe and has not received healing is interviewed about their beliefs, they often have significant doubts that need to be addressed before they receive healing. A person may appear to believe and even believe that they have faith in Christ as Healer, but this is always an assumption on their part and others. Receiving healing alone proves that they have believed properly in Christ as Healer.

Fifthly, beyond this, when we teach about forgiveness, we teach with conviction that God will always forgive. When the Church teaches about healing this is not the case. The Church often imparts all its doubts and unbelief such as the statement that we are analyzing. If the Church taught about forgiveness in similar ways that it teaches about healing, then many would have trouble receiving forgiveness. It is not surprising today that some who theoretically believe in healing have difficulty receiving healing. If healing were taught with the same assurance that God would heal as easily as He would forgive, then those hearing would receive healing easily. It is not uncommon to see those who have serious theological doubts about healing in the atonement to have problems receiving healing.

Sixthly, there are a few unwise Christian leaders who theoretically believe in healing who *do not want to believe* that healing is in the atonement. They recognize the significance of this belief. If healing is in the atonement, then *God's will is healing* in the same that *God's will is salvation*. These beliefs will put pressure on them to help people receive healing and a few leaders do not want this kind of pressure. Some are afraid of failure. Some of these leaders have told me that they will not try to get anyone healed if it means that they will fail at times to achieve healing for some. A few leaders would rather that no one is ever healed than for them to fail occasionally to get someone healed. Their fear of failure and concern about their reputation outweighs their concern for the well-being of

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their people. This is often masked religiously by their concern about disappointing their people. They have developed skills for helping people die with assurance but have little skill at risking themselves to help someone be healed. Humbling yourself to others when healing doesn't happen as you would wish is actually good for the soul and nothing is lost of reputation when people realize that a leader is doing all he can to do to help. Skills can be developed in this area as well.

Is it possible that the power of suggestion is the cause of what appears to be supernatural Christian healing? Assuming this would be placing a great deal of undeserved faith in the power of suggestion rather in what the Bible reveals about healing. There is no doubt that positive thinking and emotions have a supportive effect on the physical body's ability to heal itself just as negative thinking and emotions have a destructive effect. Research has shown this is true as well as that which has been described as *the placebo effect*. Improvement of medical conditions has been shown when someone simply *believes* that a medication or treatment is helping them even if the "medication" is really a *placebo* that is not really affecting their condition. Belief seems to reinforce the body's limited ability to heal itself even if that belief is not placed in Christ as Healer. For a number of important spiritual reasons we do not recommend hypnosis but acknowledge that hypnosis does seem to help some people with pain and addictive and destructive habits. What hypnosis and the placebo effect are able to accomplish are the limitations of what the power of suggestion is actually able to do. *If healing ministry is being accomplished by the power of suggestion then why don't we see secular experts on suggestion healing the seriously ill and seriously injured?* We do not see hypnotherapists, psychologists, and psychiatrists healing seriously ill or injured people physically or regularly. On the other hand, these limitations are removed when biblical healing is considered. Multitudes of seriously ill or injured people worldwide are being healed each year through faith in the name of Jesus Christ. Most of these healings are instantaneous and cannot be explained by the body's natural limited capacity to heal itself. Additionally, some that are unable to believe because they are so seriously ill or injured are being healed because someone else prayed and believed for them. The power of suggestion could not have played a part at all in many healings like these.

Is all supernatural healing from God? No. Supernatural healing that comes from any source that does not acknowledge Jesus Christ as the only Savior, Lord, Deliverer and Healer is not from God. The occult, other world religions and new age sources all would fit into this category. The deceptive power behind these religions is the god of this world, Satan. The devil will do things through his sincere but mistaken servants that deceptively appear to be good. Since demonic activity is the cause of much sickness, Satan simply removes the sickness temporarily to deceive the unwary. Satan does these things to keep people bound by false religions and beliefs that will not save them eternally.

Are manifestations necessary for healing ministry? No. Simple and uncomplicated faith in Christ as Healer is all that is necessary for healing. Healing can and often does occur without anyone feeling anything. However, manifestations allow the believer and the minister of healing to know that healing has taken place. Manifestations of various types, such as heat or electricity (strong tingling) in the hands of the one praying or in the area of the body needing healing, are an ordinary way that the Holy Spirit communicates with us that healing is occurring. Other manifestations are possible but in our experience are not as common. Manifestations such as falling down (commonly called being *slain in the Spirit*) or *holy laughter* are legitimate expressions of the work of the Holy Spirit at times. However, these manifestations can be counterproductive to mass healing ministry if too many people

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adjust psychologically to performing these particular manifestations when they feel the presence of the Holy Spirit. Often they will fall down *before* they are healed or be unable to cooperate with the healing minister if they lose control laughing. When these things happen, often people that could have been healed are not.

Can anyone heal the sick? What if I don't have the gift of healing? Yes. Anyone who is a true believer in Jesus Christ can heal the sick since Christ the Healer is living within them. Some believers might be better equipped and spiritually gifted. Some believers might have more faith than others. Some believers might have more experience. Some believers might have better overall or ongoing results but anyone who believes can heal the sick. The apostle Paul records in 1 Corinthians 14:1 that we should *desire earnestly spiritual gifts*. This strongly suggests that we can obtain gifts from God that we don't presently have. Paul reveals in Romans 1:11, 2 Timothy 1:6, and 1 Timothy 4:14 that spiritual gifts can be imparted from a gifted person to someone who is not gifted previously. Ephesians 4:11-12 says that believers are *to be equipped for ministry*. So we can expect to become increasingly more gifted than we are presently if we are truly Christ's disciples in heart, word and deed.

Is deliverance ministry necessary for healing ministry? Yes and no. If we are going to have consistent results in healing the sick, then we must understand and practice deliverance ministry. This is simply because some of the sick, injured, or disabled people that they encounter are being afflicted by demons. About one-quarter of the healings in Christ's ministry appear to involve deliverance from evil spirits. We must work through our theological doubts concerning deliverance ministry if we are going to have consistent results in healing ministry. However, since the majority of medical conditions are not being caused by demonic activity, it is possible to accomplish a great deal of healing without practicing and understanding or even believing in deliverance.

Is the inner healing of the emotions or a revelation of the root causes of sickness needed before physical healing can be obtained? No. We must defer to Christ's example. Nowhere in the Gospels do we see Christ making the healing of emotions or the revelation of root causes a prerequisite for physical healing. He doesn't command the Twelve apostles to make these things a priority either. Christ does heal the brokenhearted but there is not a scriptural reason revealed that would make healing of the emotions or anything else a primary concern before healing of the physical body of sick or injured persons. This idea that inner emotional healing or the root cause must be located first is not reflected in Christ's ministry or the apostles. This doesn't mean that emotional healing will not occur if physical healing is the focus of ministry. God knows all the needs of people. God heals people and not just conditions. God does not separate these things and make one a prerequisite for another. There may be one exception. Deliverance from evil spirits seems to be a prerequisite for lasting physical healing and emotional healing since some physical sickness and emotional problems is a result of the destructive work of demons.

Is there any opposition between divine healing and medical care? No. The body itself reveals that it is God's will to heal. God has so designed the body that it has its own limited ability to heal itself. When that innate power to heal requires assistance through medicine, herbs, diet, rest or any other natural means, it is within the will of God to obtain that help. We encourage anyone sick or injured to seek all the medical help that they need in the process of believing in Christ as Healer. This would

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include following your physician's instructions until healing is completely received. Christ is not limited to the natural or to the supernatural. Christ may use a doctor and a minister of healing together to bring wholeness. The only caution that should be given is where medical care crosses over into supernatural methodology. When caregivers use techniques borrowed from other religions such as Buddhism or Hinduism, this kind of "medical care" should be questioned by the patient. A second opinion should be sought if the technique seems to be occultic, spiritual or supernatural rather than just medical.

What is the relationship between lifestyle and healing? There is an obvious relationship between lifestyle and sickness. One can live in such a way to break down their health. However, lifestyle and healing have a different relationship. Healing can be received because of faith in Christ no matter what the previous lifestyle has been. Forgiveness of sins must be acknowledged as a foundation for the entirety of what God does. However, conscience also plays a part in the matter of faith. If one lives a lifestyle that produces sickness in them, then a guilty conscience makes it more difficult to believe for healing. Likewise, if a person lives a righteous lifestyle, seeing their life and body as stewardship from God, then the conscience is clear and healing is much easier to receive. It is generally easier for people who live righteously to receive healing when they need it. This is not because they deserve healing but simply because their conscience is clearer. Healing is a matter of the unmerited favor of God. It is a matter of mercy and grace and cannot be earned. We cannot earn healing by living righteously. Unrighteous living cannot disqualify us for healing either. Healing is available for all because of Christ's sacrifice at the cross, no matter what their previous lifestyle has been. Repentance and the reception of forgiveness will cleanse the conscience of one that has abused their body and allow them to receive healing as well.

Many have understood healing as a *grace* from God but some have failed to see healing as a *mercy* from God. In the Gospels some received healing from Christ after crying out for *mercy*. Asking for *mercy* strongly suggests that the person realized that they were the cause of their own conditions. If they had been unable to change, then they would need mercy. Some teach that if a person doesn't repent of a health damaging lifestyle then God will not heal them. This idea creates faith-destroying doubt. Many who have health destroying habits are healed in our experience. Sometimes they are delivered completely from the habits, sometimes not. Christ never hesitated to heal anyone because they had a health destroying habit. There had to be people in the multitudes that came to Christ that still had bad health habits. He healed them all.

Christ compared sickness and injury with a farm animal falling into a ditch. The implication was that the animal could not get out of the ditch on its own because the sides were too steep or too slippery. He compared healing with someone lifting the animal out of the ditch. Many people are unable to quit doing the destructive things that ruined their health to begin with. They are in the ditch and can't climb out. Only God can get them out of the ditch. A person, who works too hard, doesn't exercise and eats too much may need healing from conditions caused by this behavior. They may not be able on their own to change their behavior. Christ will still heal them and, if necessary, heal them again and again. God's mercy will still lift them out of the ditch. If they fall into it again, God's mercy will lift them out again. Christ revealed that the Father is willing to heal all who come to Him no matter how their condition came and no matter how powerless they are to change their behavior. Teaching that God is not willing to heal us until we change our behavior means that many good people will not

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be able to receive Christ's help out of the ditch. This idea creates serious doubts and makes it difficult for many to receive healing. These doubts need to be captured by what Christ reveals in the multitudes. He heals all who come. He shows mercy to all who need help even if they caused their own problems and still have the same behaviors. Christ's *mercy* needs to be exalted repeatedly where this false belief has been present in the past.

You say that God wants people well. What about a sickness leading to death? Death will eventually come to every man and woman. However, death can come without sickness or disability being involved. One can die in their sleep. One can lie down in health in their home and wake up in heaven. Sickness, injury or disability are not prerequisites for death. Death comes to the completely healthy also. There are thousands of relatively healthy people who die each year of unexplained physical causes usually referred to as *sudden death syndromes*. With those who are elderly, normally speaking the cause of death is attributed to *organ failure*. In many of these cases, there was no apparent illness. They just went to bed and woke up in eternity. Sometimes an autopsy does not explain their deaths and only rules out outside causes.

While many wonderful believers may die from sickness, this is not a proof that God wanted to use sickness to bring them to heaven. Healing and health were available in Christ whether they received before their deaths. After the death of a believer, it is certain that they will receive what Christ has provided. The resurrection of believers will also be an eternal healing of their physical bodies. It is simply unfortunate for them and their loved ones that they did not receive healing before their deaths, but it is not tragic in an eternal sense for a believer to die by sickness.

Sometimes a tragic thing occurs after the death of a beloved Christian leader. If he died by sickness, then sometimes other leaders feel the need to protect the reputation of that leader. They may honor that leader in an unhealthy way that is destructive to the faith of others and in a way that the dead leader would never allow if he were living. They may suggest that if that beloved leader could not receive healing then it is clear that God did not wish to heal them. This, of course, undermines the faith of others that hear this justification of the beloved leader. In turn, other people begin to have trouble receiving healing because they believe that if this beloved leader was not healed, then what hope would have (with all their sins and failures) to receive healing. In actual fact, many of these beloved but sick leaders struggle with theological doubt and the death by sickness of other leaders that they have known.

Our experience is the opposite of what most people would believe. It is generally more difficult for leaders, beloved or otherwise, to receive healing than the ordinary believer. God is not the problem. These beloved leaders are loved by God just as much as everyone else but they *do not* have an advantage with God. They must receive through simple faith in Christ just like everyone else. These leaders simply have more theological and emotional things to work through than the ordinary believer.

What about curses, unforgiveness and other issues that affect healing? The Holy Spirit may supernaturally reveal other issues that prevent the reception of the grace of Christ in healing. However, it has been our experience that when faith in Christ as Healer is taught and doubts scripturally assaulted and destroyed that the vast majority of people can be healed. If we place

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emphasis where Christ placed emphasis, then our results will be more Christ-like in healing. Christ frequently taught about faith and doubt in direct reference to healing. He also taught about unforgiveness several times in His general teaching. He once cursed a fig tree but didn't teach about curses affecting people. We believe that faith is the primary issue in healing but other matters may also occasionally play a part. In the atmosphere of faith in Christ, the Holy Spirit often deals with these matters by a revelation. Sometimes a "counseling session" may be required to get to the heart of the problem. Sometimes people who quickly lose their healing need this additional kind of ministry. They need to deal with the faith issues but may have another issue to deal with that blocks God's grace to them.

On rare occasions, a season of ministry may be necessary to resolve various issues in a few peoples' lives. With a few sick people there is hidden desire to remain sick because of laziness, irresponsibility or desire to control others. These people will outwardly present to everyone that they want to be well. Inwardly, however, they will have mixed motives and will understand that being sick has its advantages. Until the hidden desire to be sick is repented of, no healing will take place. These people are often skilled manipulators and deceive practically everyone, even themselves, since their sickness is real. These unfortunate people often get worse until the sickness is more than they can bear and then they repent of wanting to be sick. They often require a great deal of deliverance ministry and teaching in order for them to stay well. In our experience, these people probably are no more than one in a hundred Christians. They require compassionate confrontation and very patient ministry.

If God wants everyone healed, why does He need human beings to accomplish this? God does supernaturally heal people without another human being involved. However, in the Bible, God much more often uses human beings to heal. The question above is probably best answered by posing a similar question. ***If God wants everyone saved, why does He need human beings to accomplish this?*** The answer involves God maintaining the *free-will of human beings*. God could openly reveal Himself, override our wills and save and heal everyone. If God were to use this forceful means beyond the testimony, preaching and prayer of people, then people would not be able to freely choose to believe. They would believe because there would be no other choice. Faith, hope and love would no longer be the universe's ultimate values but would be replaced by abject terror of God and servitude to avoid the consequences of not serving Him. Our Father has no wish for humanity to relate to Him in this manner. The Father wants people to love Him and to be loved by Him through Jesus Christ. God has, in His wisdom, chosen to work through human beings.

Most in healing ministry admit that they do not get everyone healed. Could this be because it is God's will not to heal some? Christ did not get all the sick people in His own hometown healed either. The reason, however, was not that it was God's will but rather their unbelief. There was others who did not believe in Him, such as the Pharisees and Sadducees, many of which who could have been healed but were not. The Bible does not support the idea that God's will in healing is always done. After all, the Lord tells us to pray *thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. If God's will were always done, why would we pray in that manner? Additionally, there is no sickness or injury in heaven. Praying that *God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven* reveals that God's will on Earth is healing of all sickness and injury. Beyond this, Christ teaches His disciples that persistent militant

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prayer is necessary to receive an answer in some situations. The will of God in many matters is not automatically received without persistence in prayer. Healing is no exception.

What about God's sovereignty? Doesn't sovereignty mean that God can choose not to heal if He wishes? Occasionally, someone will assert the idea that God's sovereignty means that He does not have to heal even if someone has faith for healing. This is a misuse of this theological idea and is in conflict with what Christ revealed. Christ understood *exactly* what God's sovereignty actually meant. Christ revealed the Father's sovereignty perfectly in healing. God sovereignty, His kingdom, and His rule were being perfectly expressed by Christ saving, healing and delivering *everyone* who came in faith. Most of us would not accept the idea that God would not save someone if they came to Christ with saving faith. In the same way, we must not accept the idea that someone who had faith for healing would not be healed by God's sovereign choice. The belief that God could choose not to heal even if the person had proper faith creates a serious accusation against God. It makes God unfaithful, arbitrary, unpredictable and untrustworthy. This belief seriously undermines faith in God. We must be able to trust and believe in God. He must be entirely and consistently faithful to His Word. His promises to heal must be firm and unshakable. The example of His Son must reveal His ongoing intentions for us all. Otherwise, we are adrift in life's storms with no place to drop anchor. Many believers and some leaders who have accepted this misuse of God's sovereignty are adrift like this. They have no firm place to rest. They will have trouble finding faith and capturing doubts when they need healing or in ministry to others. They need to return to a Christ-centered view of the will of God. Christ reveals the Father perfectly and this includes His sovereignty. Christ heals all who come to Him.

Is there a "rule of thumb" to help determine what is the will of God in matters when someone is suffering? Yes. There is a significant principle (beyond Christ's own very clear example) that He revealed that should be used as a *rule of thumb*. Christ in Matthew 7:11 said:

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in Heaven give what is good to those who ask Him.

Christ is inviting us to compare what a normal parent would want for their children with what the Father wants for us. Christ is telling us that our common sense about what is good or bad is reliable in spiritual matters. If we would not do something harmful or bad to our own children, then the Father will not do it to us either. If we would not injure or make our children ill, then Father will not injure or make us ill either. This principle cuts through complex theological thought that confuses good with evil. If common sense says the circumstance is bad, then our Father is not doing it to us. The Father will save, heal and deliver us through Christ reliably and consistently. This is certainly not mysterious for anyone who really knows our Father. It is because we are greatly loved.

This file is part of the book by Roger Sapp entitled *Performing Miracles and Healing* and was found on www.allnationsmin.org where there are many free files like it available for download.