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## Can Christians Heal Disease?

**Isaiah 53:5:** (NASB) *But he was pierced through for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon him, and by his scourging we are healed.*

Sickness and disease are a scourge of humanity. Far too often we witness good and decent people contract some serious disease or malady and we watch as their quality of life goes from bad to worse. Science and medicine have worked wonders in the fight against such things, but the battle still rages on. The Bible reveals many examples of healings - miraculous healings that overcome sickness. Are we as Christians privy to that miraculous healing power today? Can we and should we stand in the path of illness, claiming the name of Jesus as our rightful miracle cure?

### Where does the idea of healing come from?

(Source: *Funk & Wagnall's New Encyclopedia, 2006 World Almanac Education Group*) History of Faith Healing: Faith healing was known among the ancient Greeks and Romans, who believed that Asclepius, the god of medicine, might appear in the dreams of sick people who slept in the temples devoted to his worship, and that the god then cured them or prescribed a regimen of treatment for them to follow. In contrast, the Old Testament has few references to faith healing...

In the New Testament Gospels; however, are perhaps the most famous faith healing stories of all time. In the stories of Jesus' miracles of healing, illness is regarded as the sign of the presence of evil spirits, and Jesus' power to heal is proclaimed as evidence that God's kingdom has come in his person.

The Role of Faith: Although the faith of a believer is generally regarded as the channel of cure, Christian theology insists that the actual agent in healing is God's Spirit. Thus, faith, in the sense of trust and expectancy—rather than in the sense of subscription to orthodox doctrine—is the prerequisite to healing. The association between sin and disease is traditional in Christian theology (see James 5:14-16), and in Christian practice the confession of sin has usually preceded the anointing of the sick, the laying on of hands, and the prayers that constitute the Christian liturgy of healing.

### Something was happening here, *The Psychology of Faith Healing*, HBO

- *Religions offer us the possibilities of short term victories over disease and death. And in spite of the many advances in modern medical science, millions of people are still turning to religious healers for miracles. Although we could find no evidence of cures at these events, something was happening in the heat of the moment. On and off stage, people were breaking through pain barriers and performing feats they had hitherto thought impossible. Many remained convinced they had been cured, whatever doctors and specialists said to the contrary.*

The Old Testament *does* give us indication of healing, but is it different than what we have discussed so far? Psalms 103:1-3: But how come this didn't really happen? Exodus 23:25: In context, God was saying to the physical nation of Israel that if they did certain things, He would keep them healthy.

There are only 12 examples of individual healings in the Old Testament. They were primarily regarding the Jewish nation and most involved the intercession of a prophet.

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### Who and how did Jesus heal? Was it based on people's faith? The severity of their disease?

If we say that healing is our Christian responsibility, we should then be modeling it after what Jesus did. We will review some of his healings and it may be startling to note what was *not* present in those models.

### Submerging the individual into the group, *The Psychology of Faith Healing*

- *Something physical, something chemical happens to us when we are in a large crowd. I don't want to draw the comparison too far, but Hitler understood*



*this. Hitler understood that you can say things to a crowd of 100,000 that are more effective than saying them to a crowd of 100. The steps of soldiers marching in the street -they are marching in unison, doing the same thing at the same time. The entrainment of the drums, of the marching steps, of the chant, of the song, of the gesture - the salute, all these elements have the effect of submerging the individual into the group.*

Hitler was a master of mob mentality, guiding people to a very evil end. We are not suggesting that every faith healer has an evil motive (although some do). A mob mentality creates followers, and it even shows up in the Scriptures.

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Luke 6:17-19: Notice: Jesus healed the masses, not his disciples. The disciples followed him and watched. So, the healing in this instance was meant for people who were not already following Jesus. Also, it doesn't say anything about a requirement of faith. Matthew 8:5-8

Matthew 8:13: Jesus heals a Centurion's servant based on the faith of the Centurion (a Gentile). Neither were followers, there was no great faith on the part of the one who was sick and there was no physical contact. When Jesus healed, circumstances were not all the same. There was not a "cookie cutter" operation.

Luke 17:12-19: Jesus healed 10 lepers. They were acting out of desperation and not great faith. He healed nine based on mercy and one based on faith. We have no record that any followed him after they were healed. They got what they were looking for, driven by a great need. Jesus does a lot of healing based on mercy. (Should Christians today call it, "Mercy Healing" instead of "Faith Healing?")

Luke 22:48-51: Jesus heals Malchus, who had no faith in Jesus. He was coming to take Jesus to prison! He did not even ask for the healing and was a non-believer. There was no faith involved in this healing.

If we are to be doing what Jesus did, should we be doing it the way Jesus did? We do not believe faith healing today is part of the Christian calling. Jesus did not heal his own followers. He gave mercy to unbelievers to show them something different. Why do people today say that you need the right kind of faith to be healed?

John 5:2-9: Jesus heals the lame man. There is no faith in Jesus mentioned, just hope. He didn't even address Jesus as, "Lord," but rather he called him, "Sir."

So, can we really call what Jesus did "faith" healing?

### Did the Apostles follow the same protocol as Jesus?



#### Three observations of New Testament healing done by Jesus, the Apostles and Disciples:

- Healing done by Jesus, the Apostles and Disciples was meant for the general public, not for believers.
- Healing done by Jesus, the Apostles and Disciples was in public for all to see.
- All healing was for the purpose of drawing attention to the Kingdom and the Gospel of Christ.

Let's compare this with typical Christian healing that goes on today:

- Involves prayer and music of praise and worship
- "Laying on of hands" by a powerful preacher
- Repetition
- During a Christian worship service - a large service usually with thousands
- Done only for the benefit of believers

We see a disconnect between the context, the methods and who is healed between Jesus and his apostles and today.

There is no record in the New Testament where people touched by healing fell over onto the ground.

Acts 9:32-35: (NASB) <sup>32</sup>Now as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. <sup>33</sup>There he found a man (note - not a believer) named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed. <sup>34</sup>Peter said to him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; get up and make your bed. Immediately he got up. <sup>35</sup>And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord. (Note - they didn't turn to Peter because Peter put the focus on Jesus.) This was a *public* display for non-believers. Note that the man's *faith* was not a factor, and the result of this act of healing was to turn the public to Jesus. Peter did *not* use the power of suggestion. There was no hype, mighty preaching, music, or drum beats. Why aren't the healers today standing on street corners, healing the general public who walk by?

People who are in need of healing suffer greatly as a result and want relief. This is not wrong! But how do we seek whatever relief is available to us? What does God's word tell us about how to find relief? Should we as Christians be healed from all our diseases? When we follow after the patterns of faith healing today, are we seeking to make ourselves whole, rather than follow the pattern in the New Testament to take our whole self - even in our beleaguered situation - and follow Christ?

**Peter at Solomon's Portico: Stunning miracles in the face of dire opposition!** Acts 5:14-20: Just the shadow of Peter healed the people. This was done without the drama of laying on of hands. He was literally just walking by! Again, faith is not a factor. But the people healed here ended up dying anyway. The whole purpose of these healings was to be a metaphor to show something greater than the moment. Jesus dying and paying the ransom price would eventually cause the healing of the entire world. These healings were a precursor to something even greater! **The most extraordinary miracles didn't require Paul and Peter to even touch the afflicted:** Acts 19:11-17

#### Did anyone besides the Apostles heal?

**Yes, though it was not a common occurrence:** Acts 8:3-8: Same pattern! Healing done in public and for the public. Faith again is not a mentioned prerequisite. If we are supposed to be healing now, why don't we follow the pattern set up by Jesus and those authorized by him?

Acts 8:12-13: Simon the sorcerer followed and wanted the gifts of the spirit so that he could get a lot of attention for entertainment's sake. **The gifts - including healing - were being misused early on and were being unduly elevated:** 1 Corinthians 12:27-31: The warning was not to focus on the things of glitter but instead of those of substance. Paul was going to show them an even more excellent way - the way of Christian love. **If any Christian should have been healed, wouldn't the Apostle Paul have been a good choice?!?** 2 Corinthians 12:7-9: Here we have one of the greatest examples of faith we have ever seen and he is told NO. He was to be strong in God instead, and not in himself.

On the other side of the issue, if Jesus' grace is supposed to be sufficient and his power is supposed to be made stronger in weakness, then DON'T HEAL ANY FOLLOWERS! You will do them damage by taking away the opportunity for Jesus' power! This is what is shown to us in the life, example and experience of the Apostle Paul. Let Jesus' strength carry you in your trials.

#### But aren't we told in James 5:15 to pray for healing?

James 5:13-15: (NASB) <sup>13</sup>Is anyone among you **suffering <2553>**? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. <sup>14</sup>Is anyone among you **sick <770>**? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; <sup>15</sup>and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is **sick <2577>**, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

**Suffering:** Strongs #2553 kakopatheo (kak-op-ath-eh'-o); to undergo hardship

2 Timothy 2:3: Thou therefore endure **hardness <2553>**, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 4:5: But watch thou in all things, endure **afflictions <2553>**, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

So, it doesn't necessarily have to mean physical illness, but rather suffering in trials of faith.

**Sick:** Strongs #770 astheneo (as-then-eh'-o); to be feeble (in any sense)

2 Corinthians 12:10: *Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am **weak <770>**, then am I strong.*  
Romans 14:1-4: (NKJV) <sup>1</sup>Receive one who is **weak <770>** in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. <sup>2</sup>For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is **weak <770>** eats only vegetables. <sup>3</sup>Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. <sup>4</sup>Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

The word *weak* is used in the sense of being spiritually overrun, weak in faith. The James' Scriptures (James 5:13-15) refer to spiritual weakness.

**Sick**: Strong's #2577 *kamno*; properly, to toil, i.e. (by implication) to tire (figuratively, faint, sicken):

**Only other uses of this word**: Hebrews 12:3: *For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be **wearied <2577>** and faint in your minds.*

Revelation 2:3: *And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not **fainted <2577>**.*

So, this James text really has nothing to do with physical illness at all, rather it has everything to do with spiritual exhaustion. We are to bear the burdens of one another.

1 Corinthians 11:28-31: This isn't talking about physically sick, nor is it talking about actual sleeping. There is a spirituality that needs to be healed and guided. This reminds us of the Apostle Paul teaching us, 2 Corinthians 12:10: *When I am weak, then I am strong.*

**What about Paul's own spiritual son Timothy?** 1 Timothy 5:21-23: The Apostle Paul was not healed and did not heal Timothy. He could have if it was appropriate! The Gospel is not there so that we can physically be made better. It is there so that we can spiritually be sacrificial. We believe faith healing is a misrepresentation of the Gospel, Jesus and his work.

People go to these events with terrible pain and suffering, but when they are not healed, they blame themselves. This creates additional difficulties. This is not about faith. This was ONLY done in the New Testament for a period of time by Jesus, the Apostles and selected people they chose. The gifts were to introduce people to the magnitude of the Gospel.

If you have gone to such an event and are discouraged because "you don't have enough faith," you are going to somebody who is telling you incorrect information. Most of the time when Jesus and the Apostles healed, it was not about faith. It was generally in public without dramatic ceremonies. It is about what God wants for us as Christians. We are to rely entirely on Him.

Isaiah 53:4-5: The healing prophesied was of Jesus and a comprehensive healing that all will yet experience as a result of Jesus' sacrifice! This is the overall magnitude of the healing experience.

**Jesus healed lepers to show the mercy of his paying the ransom price. Leprosy is a representation of sin, and we are all in need of healing.** Luke 5:12-14 Isaiah 61:1-4: This prophetically speaks of Jesus and the world-changing work of his life, death and resurrection. This is a future healing of the world that has yet to be fulfilled. The healing of the world is coming to all and coming on a permanent basis!

Healing in the New Testament was used to "jump start" the Gospel. The Apostles were given the ability to speak in other languages so that they could communicate the Gospel in languages they did not know. The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians said *once that which is complete is come*, all of these healings would cease. What is *that which is complete*? Perhaps having the Gospel written so that anyone could read it. Once the Gospel is written, you don't need all the miraculous displays because we now have a historical record. Physical healing in our world today is not what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about. Instead, it is about self-sacrifice. It is not about making yourself whole, but taking your whole self to follow Christ.

**So can Christians heal diseases...?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!**