

## Graceful Healing Part 2

Next Sunday our friends Jeff and Kay Lucas are going to be with us for a great day of ministry and then we are going to talk about the healing power of love toward the end of the month, but I wanted to share some additional thoughts this morning about healing for our physical body. Healing remains a rather controversial subject in the church. Some churches and bible scholars, dispensationalists, believe the gift and ministry of divine healing ceased with the apostles. Some believe that it is God's will to heal everyone and the only reason we aren't healed is our own fault - either sin in our life or our lack of faith. (Reminiscent of Job's friends, isn't it?)

I don't believe healing is an all or nothing issue - in other words, either God heals everyone or he doesn't heal anyone. We know God heals and we also know that not everyone is healed. Life is too complex and God's faithful dealings with us are too wonderful and often too mysterious to explain it all by formulas or by simple explanations of cause and effect. Any doctrine or teaching concerning healing must include consideration of God's sovereignty along with his power. Throughout this year I hope to talk more about the theology that lies at the heart of our understanding of healing, but let me share a few additional thoughts about healing today.

I find a lot of people are quick to believe that God still heals people today, it's just that they don't believe God would want to heal them. Here are a couple of reasons I hear occasionally as to why people think God wouldn't heal them:

**I don't deserve healing because of the sinful things I've done.** Congratulations. You're starting at the right place. You recognize you are a sinner and in need of his mercy and grace. So am I. The bible says in Romans 3:23 says "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." All of us were sinners and breakers of God's law and none of us deserved anything from God except judgment and death. But God's great love reached us and He chose to save us, not because of anything we did but because he was so merciful. **"He saved us not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy," Titus 3:5** We don't deserve healing anymore than we deserve salvation. We don't deserve any of the good gifts of God. I said it last Sunday and I will say it again. We are saved and healed by his grace through faith!

Look at the story of the man at the pool of Bethesda in John 5. He had been an invalid for 38 years. Jesus healed him, but the man didn't even know who Jesus was. When Jesus found

him later he said to him, “See you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” John 5:14. Healing doesn’t come because we are perfect, it comes from his compassion and grace. Here is the truth: we’ve all failed and made mistakes, but God is not against you because of your failures. If you’ve repented and turned away from the sins of the past, those sins are forgiven and forgotten. Because of your faith in Christ as your Savior and Lord you find God is for you and not against you! Read Romans 8:31-32.

**God won’t heal me because I don’t have enough faith.** We addressed this in part last week but let me ask again: how much faith do you need? The bible says he has given to each of us the measure of faith (Romans 12:3). Matthew 17:20-21 says we only need faith the size of a mustard seed. There were certainly times when Jesus said to people, “great is your faith” but that wasn’t very often. Most of the time it seems to me, he healed and delivered people just like us, maybe not “great faith people” just people that believed he could do anything, including heal the sick.

You’ve probably figured it out, but it’s a spiritual pet peeve of mine, the people that are so quick to tell others they just don’t have enough faith. Whose faith does God respond to anyway? The faith of the sick person? What about the faith of the one who is praying? Look with me at what the bible says about faith and healing.

The bible indicates there are at least three contacts for healing faith. First, consider: **The faith of the one being healed.** Look with me at **Matthew 9:27.** Matthew tells of two blind men who cried out to Jesus, “have mercy on us, Son of David.” The bible says Jesus went indoors and the two blind men came to him. “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” “Yes Lord,” they replied. Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith will it be done to you”; and their sight was restored.” Interestingly enough, for those of you worried about earning your healing or losing your healing if you aren’t good enough, Jesus warned these two men sternly the bible says, not to tell anyone about what had happened, “but they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.” They disobeyed him after he healed them. They just couldn’t keep it quiet.

The point is, Jesus said to them, according to your faith will it be done to you. It was the faith of the blind men that Jesus was able to heal them that led to their healing. But does healing always depend on the faith of the sick person?

Consider: **The faith of others on behalf of the sick.** Look with me at **Matthew 8:5**. Matthew tells of this Roman soldier who came to Jesus asking for healing for his servant who was paralyzed and suffering terribly. Jesus offered to go and heal the man but the centurion said “I do not deserve to have you come under my roof (He knew Jews didn’t go into the houses of the Gentiles) but just say the word and my servant will be healed.” The Centurion explained that he understood about authority and knew Jesus had authority to heal. Jesus said to him, **“I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith....Go! It will be done just as you believed it would. And his servant was healed at that very hour.” Matthew 8:5-13**

It wasn’t the servant’s faith, it was the Centurion that had faith to go to Jesus and ask for healing. It was the centurion’s faith to which the Lord responded. You may not feel like you have enough faith, or you may be too sick to believe for healing, but there are others that are praying and believing for you. James 5 tells us that the elders of the church are to pray for the sick and he implies it is the elders’ prayer of faith that raises up the sick. For all those folks who said you just didn’t have enough faith, my question would be, what about their faith?

Thirdly, **The faith of the one who is praying for the sick.** We mentioned the story of the crippled man at the pool of Bethesda in **John 5:1-15**. In verse 7 he tells Jesus he has no one to help him into the pool to get his healing so he didn’t have the faith of others to pray for him or help him. Verse 13 tells us the man had no idea who Jesus was so it wasn’t his faith in Jesus that healed him. He had other problems besides his illness since Jesus tells him to stop sinning. So if faith is required for healing, whose faith was at work here? Jesus’ faith.

Paul tells us that among the gifts of the Spirit given to the church were gifts of healings and the gift of faith. We’ve seen the operation of the gift of healing, those who seemed to be especially anointed of God to pray for the sick and to see miraculous results.

My point is, don’t beat yourself up about your lack of faith. Pray, read the word of God, let faith arise in your heart, but to condemn yourself or to condemn others for a lack of faith, or to allow yourself to be condemned by someone for a lack of faith, remember, your faith is not the only faith at work when it comes to healing. I’m not saying faith is unimportant, but rest your faith in God, not in some formula or some mechanism of faith. Believe and trust God!

You can probably come up with plenty of reasons why God won’t heal you, but let me

share a couple of reasons why I believe he will heal you.

**God's word reveals him as a healer.** He has lovingly revealed himself as a healer from the beginning of time. It is his nature to heal. It's not just what he does, it is part of who he is:

**"I am the Lord who heals you." Exodus 15:26.**

The psalmist declared, **"Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases." Psalm 103:3.**

**"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." Psalm 147:3**

**"He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed." Isaiah 53:5**

The New Testament declares that Jesus "...is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." Hebrews 1:3. Whereas God revealed himself in the Old Testament as the Lord, the gracious God, the healer, full of compassion, in the New Testament he reveals himself in Christ. The Scripture testifies that **"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 10:38**

The gospels give us the picture of Jesus seeing the multitudes, then moved with compassion and pity he heals the sick and sets free those who were oppressed by the devil. He is the healer and that healing flows out of his compassion and grace. It is his very nature to heal. Not only does God's word reveal him as a healer, but...

**God's word reveals healing to be part of the life of the church.**

It wasn't just Jesus healing the sick. The gospel of Matthew tells us Jesus gave authority to his disciples to "drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness." He told them in Matthew 10 **"As you go, preach this message: The kingdom of heaven is near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give." Matthew 10:7-8**

That authority, given to the disciples, was then given to all those who believe. **"These signs shall follow them that believe...they will place their hands on sick people and they will get well." Mark 16:18**

After the day of Pentecost, the empowered church continued to see miracles and healings occur when they prayed. The bible lists healing as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to the

church. Why would the Lord have given the gift of healing to the church if he didn't intend for people to be healed?

He gave instruction to the church concerning what to do when illness comes. In addition to laying hands upon the sick in prayer, instruction is given for the sick to call for the elders of the church as we mentioned. They are to anoint the sick with oil and the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise them up. James 5:16 tells us that it is not just the responsibility of the elders, but that the church is to pray one for another that you may be healed.

Why would God command the church to pray for the sick if he didn't intend to bring healing to the sick? Does everyone that is prayed for get healed? No. That crippled man at the pool of Bethesda wasn't the only man in need of healing that day. The bible says "a great number of disabled people used to lie there..." Why did Jesus pick this one guy? I don't know. I'm not supposed to know. It's beyond me. Did everyone the disciples prayed for get healed? No. Did everyone Paul prayed for get healed? No, he left Trophimus sick in Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20). Paul himself had opportunity to preach to the Galatians because of an illness in his own body. He told Timothy to take a little wine for the stomach problems he was having. The point is, it is not my responsibility to heal the sick, it is my responsibility - our responsibility - to pray for the sick in faith - it is the Lord's responsibility to provide healing in his timing, in his way, according to his will. This is not a new dilemma for the church. One of the early church fathers, Augustine wrote in the late 300's, "Who can search into His purpose, or the reason why these miracles occur in some places but do not occur in others?" He wrote some of these things, the divine purposes and the means of God may be "incomprehensible to the minds of men." The point is, for all of us, from the early church to now, it is in the very nature of God to provide healing for his people. He is the healer and he has made provision for his church to continue to show his loving, healing nature to the world and to the members of his body.

**Healing remains a sign of the kingdom of heaven.** Healing is a sign to the lost as well as to the church of God's power, provision and presence. The bible declares, "**How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.**" Hebrews 2:3-4

**Acts 8:4-13** tells of Philip preaching in a city in Samaria. As a result of healings and miracles many were saved and baptized. God is still confirming his word with signs and healings. I don't think healing is just given to the church so we can feel better. He delights in giving good gifts to his children and that means he cares about us and our aches and pains, but healing is a sign of the kingdom of heaven and the presence of God at work among us. Healing is not always a sign of someone exercising faith, sometimes healing is the precursor to faith, the event that produces faith. On the mission field the gospel has been preached and healing miracles have often been the sign that brought people to saving faith in Christ.

Jesus told his disciples and I believe that includes us, to go into all the world and preach the good news. Mark 16 tells us Jesus said these signs shall follow them that believe: **“In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues...they will place their hands on sick people and they will get well. After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat down at the right hand of God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.” Mark 16:20**

Healing is still a part of that message we are to carry to the whole world. Healing is still a part of what God desires for his body the church.

There is faith for healing in this place. There is a gracious and loving God who's very nature it is to heal and to show compassion to his people. There is a Heavenly Father in whom we can place our trust. I believe he wants to bring healing to his people today.

We used to sing a simple little chorus, Only Believe - all things are possible, only believe. Believe what? Believe that God is a healer. Believe that he made provision for his church to minister that gift of healing still today. Believe that out of his mercy and grace and compassion he is still healing, still performing signs and wonders today. All things are possible, only believe.