

Bible Study on Hermeneutics – Handout Session 9

Controversial Doctrines, Practices, and Passages

Grace Bible Chapel

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The Gift of Healing

The last time we met we reviewed the work of the Holy Spirit and Spiritual gifts. One of the gifts listed is the gift of healing. We defined the **gift of healing** as - the supernatural ability to heal every and all afflictions of men (1 Cor 12:30). This is referring to a person who had the specific gift given by God to heal others. This must be distinguished from the non-controversial belief that God continues to heal. In fact, all healing comes ultimately from God (Ps 103:3). That He heals, and in some cases does so unexplainably, is a fact of history and experience. Most of the healing today is through what we would call normal circumstances using medicines and specific care. However, sometimes the healing occurs where there is no scientific explanation for the healing. This study will deal with the “gift of healing” which is a biblical Spiritual gift shown to be present in the early church and used by some persons whereby they had the ability to heal others. The issue is – are there Spiritual healers today, or persons who have the gift of healing?

Last time I also made the following statement:

God has no command, practice, or issue that is focused on man, promotes man, supports man's selfishness, or does not otherwise make sense because it is outside the revealed will of God's personal glorification and plan. All rules of hermeneutics must be exercised in evaluation.

- **Brief History in the church (from Wikipedia)**

“At the turn of the 20th century, the new Pentecostal movement drew participants from the Holiness movement and other movements in America that already believed in divine healing.

During the 1920s and 1930s Aimee Semple McPherson was a controversial faith healer of growing popularity during the Great Depression. Subsequently, William Branham has been credited as being the founder of the post World War II healing revivals. By the late 1940s Oral Roberts was well known, and he continued with faith healing until the 1980s. A friend of Roberts was Kathryn Kuhlman, another popular faith healer who gained fame in the 1950s and had a television program on CBS. Also in this era, Jack Coe and A. A. Allen were faith healers who traveled with large tents for large open air crusades.

Roberts's successful use of television as a medium to gain a wider audience led others to follow suit. His former pilot, Kenneth Copeland started a healing ministry. Pat Robertson, Benny Hinn, and Peter Popoff became well-known televangelists who claimed to heal the sick. Richard Rossi is known for advertising his healing clinics through secular television and radio. Whereas, Kuhlman influenced current popular faith healer Benny Hinn who has adopted some of her techniques and wrote a book about her.

Teaching and popularity (from several websites)

From “CBN.com” – the 700 Club

Healing Crusade Brings 4.8 Million Attendees

Benny Hinn recently conducted a healing crusade in India that drew one of the largest crowds ever. People came from all areas of the country February 13-15 in Bandra Kurla Complex in northwest Mumbai for an event called “Festival of Blessings.” They came from other countries. They came for many reasons – some to witness this historic gathering, some for healing, some out of curiosity, and some to get answers to prayer and miracles. More than 1.3 million attended the first night services; 1.5 million came by the second night. The crowd swelled to 2 million by the third and final service, making

the final night's services the largest recorded in history for a healing service. Many notable officials attended.

From "bennyhinn.org"

"After you have received your miracle, Surround yourself with faith-filled believers who will agree with you, strengthen you, build your faith, and rejoice with you because of your miracle.

Continue to see yourself well and whole, healed in Jesus' name. Experience the rich inheritance that is yours through Jesus Christ! Learn what God's Word promises, and stand on those promises.

Say goodbye to doubt and unbelief by trusting the God who healed you to keep you today and every day. How can you do this? By faith! Faith is not mentally produced. Faith in God is born by the Spirit. He is the Spirit of faith. The moment the presence of God comes in, faith is born. Faith is not produced with you pushing your mind to believe that what God said he meant. In other words it is not saying, "I'm going to confess a hundred times that 'by his stripes I'm healed' and when I do that, faith will be born."

"Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:19). Let's stand on the Word of God in Jeremiah 30:17, "For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD." In prayer, we believe with you for a mighty healing touch from the Lord."

By Oral Roberts (on the website "bennyhinn.org")

"Jesus Christ did not come with a life-shortening suggestion but with a life-saving power. His highest wish is for us to prosper and have health in both soul and body. He said, Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth (3 John 2).

The story of Jesus is the story of deliverance. In the power of His pure and healthy being and in the strength of an undivided personality, the Master of men came into this world to bring release to man from his fears and frustrations, from his spiritual, physical, and mental illnesses, and to make him a whole man....

Six steps for you to take for your healing (from Oral Roberts):

1. Look to Jesus as a Life saver, delighting to bless and heal you.
2. Believe that God's abundance of life is for you and that you may have it by believing and continuing to believe.
3. Know that it is God's will to heal not only others but also you. Healing is in the Atonement; therefore, it includes all.
4. Remember that healing begins within. You reach God and He reached you through your inner man.
5. Know that the only way you can overcome fear is through your faith in God.
6. Use a point of contact for the release of your faith."

From website "jimfeeney.org" A Pentacostal website

"One consistent manifestation of that Pentecostal power then and now is divine healings. Illustrations of such supernatural healings can be found throughout the *Book of Acts* in the time subsequent to the Acts 2 Pentecost (for example, Acts 3:6-8, Acts 5:16, Acts 8:5-7, Acts 9:33-34, Acts 14:8-10, Acts 19:11-12, Acts 28:8-9)."

Looking Biblically at Healing:

The fact of pain, disease, aging, and deterioration of the physical body ultimately leading to physical death is a fact of life resulting from the fall of man that took place in the Garden when Adam & Eve sinned, and cast all of mankind under a sinful curse (Gen 3:17-19). It is no wonder that people want to overcome the effects of disease. This is only natural. Ultimately, the only lasting and complete hope and cure is found in a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Eternal life is not a cure to physically overcome the curse in the present world, but a cure promised for the age to come (Rom 6:23; John 6:40). Sadly, the people going to

faith healers are so desperate they are vulnerable to those who claim to have the gift of healing. These are people who will do anything for relief, or hope in a cure. The bottom line for understanding if there is a “gift of healing” for today is whether or not it can be supported from the Bible. That there have been persons in history who have exercised the gift of healing is non-disputable. The question is whether or not there are “gifts of healing” being exercised today according to the Word of God.

The Gift of Healing in the Word of God

- Christ healed many different people during His earthly ministry (Mat 4:24; 8:13; 8:16; 12:15; 14:14; 15:28; 15:30; 19:2; 21:14; Mk 1:34; 3:10; 5:29; 5:34; 6:5; Lk 5:15; 6:18; 8:47; 9:42; 17:15; 22:51; Jhn 5:13 etc.).
 - The purpose of Christ healing is made clear (Jhn 5:36; 10:25; 37-38; 3:2; 9:30-33; 14:11; 15:24; Acts 2:22; Mat 11:4). Christ performed the miracles of healing among other signs, not primarily to make people well, but to be a sign or proof to the world that He was the Son of God.
 - The healings were real, complete, obvious, permanent (in this life), and other than supernatural unexplainable (John 9:13-34; Acts 3:6-10).
 - The healings sometimes rewarded faith, but faith was not required as many were healed without any indication of faith on the part of the person healed (Mat 4:24; 8:16; 12:15; 14:14; 15:30; 19:2; 21:14; Mk 1:34; 3:10; 6:5; Lk 5:15; 6:18-19; 9:42; 22:51; John 5:13).
 - Many of the healings were unsolicited (Mat 14:14; Lk 22:51; Jhn 5:13).
 - Christ was selective in who He healed – He providentially went to certain places and healed all who came to Him. This shows no lack of ability, but shows His purpose was to identify Himself as Messiah, not to clear all the hospitals in the world (Mk 3:9-19).
 - Healing by Christ was performed in many different ways and settings but always instantaneously, and completely (Mk 7:33; 8:23; Lk 7:8-10; 8:44; 17:18).
- The gift of healing was given to the disciples and apostles (Mat 10:1; Lk 10:17; Acts 3:3-16; Acts 5:12-16; 8:6-7; 13; 9:32-34; 14:8-10; 19:11-12; 28:8-9; etc.).
 - The purpose of the healing (like that of Christ) was to verify or show apostolic power and authority (Rms 15:15-19; 2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:3-4).
 - Philip (Acts 8:6) and Stephen (Acts 6:8) are the only non-apostolic persons mentioned that may have had the gift of healing beyond the Gospels. Both were stated to have been performing signs, a validation of their calling. We also know that Philip did other miraculous things such as mysteriously appear and disappear to teach the Ethiopian Eunuch. Both of these men were very close to the apostles, and instrumental in the founding of the early church.
 - In 1 Corinthians 12 we have the last reference to healing as a gift in the New Testament. A brief overview of the context helps us understand the nature and purpose of these gifts.
 - Vs 1-3 – Provides the base for Paul’s reasoning. He states that the purpose of all the gifts is not mindless as in pagan worship. God has given gifts that show His reality and power, in contrast to the impotence of pagan gods. All gifts exclusively originate from God, and are for the purposes of God, and all for the glory of God.
 - Vs 4 –6 – God has given varieties of gifts, ministries, and effects but as He is One Lord and Spirit they are all for His singular plan and purposes. God works the gifts according to His purposes in each recipient.
 - Vs 7 – All gifts are given for the common good of the body of the chosen. The phrase “common good” means to *bring together in a profitable manner*. There are no gifts meant to glorify or show off any person other than Christ who is the center of

all worship and honor. The gifts are not for selfish purposes, instead, the gifts are to serve God to the profit of the whole body of Christ (the church). So the church may effectively be established and serve God.

- Vs 8 – 11 lists the gifts of which all are given by the same unified and purposeful Spirit, and that God distributes them just as He wills (according to His sovereign plan and purpose). The remainder of chapter 12 through 14 is a rebuke primarily of the misuse of tongues (speaking in foreign languages) that was being used selfishly and non-edifyingly by many in the church. This immediate section has a similar context to Eph 4:11-13 where Paul makes it clear the purpose of giving ministries (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers) is for the equipping of the saints, building up the body of Christ, into unity, into knowledge, into maturity, into love, and as Paul continues in Ephesians so that Christians will be able to stand firm and fight the good fight of faith.
- Vs 14-31 God has made the church into a living organism that is to function as a unit. No individual member is there merely for himself. All are important because God has placed them into the body just as He wills. All are different, but each performs with the gifts God has given with “care one for another” (vs 25).
- Vs 28-30 is the last mention of “the gift of healing” in the New Testament. In fact James mentions healing in James 5:13-18 not by asking for the person in the church with the gift of healing, but for elders who will gather around the sick person to pray.
- In the context of 1 Corinthians that follows (especially 1 Cor 13 – 14), Paul not only explains the right use of the gifts (especially tongues, but the same principles apply to all gifts), but that temporary gifts will cease once their usefulness, or purpose is complete. The temporary gifts were given as a blessing to establish the church.

What do we learn from this?

- The purpose of healing was always foremost a sign of validation of ministry.
- The healings were real, complete, obvious, permanent (in this life), and other than the fact of their supernatural action unexplainable.
- The healings were often but not always in conjunction with the faith of the recipient.
- The gift of healing was a sign for the validity of God’s work through Christ, in His apostles, and in the establishment of the ministry of the early church.
- Christians later even in the early church were not always healed (2 Tim 4:20), and Paul could not heal himself (2 Cor 12:7-10). This means even the gift of healing either expired in the apostle’s later life, or God would sovereignly pick and choose when the gifts were enabled for use.

Additional Study

- Hebrews 2:3-4 addresses the purpose of miracles as signs, and speaks of them in the past tense. Hebrews was written in 67-68 AD whereas 1 Corinthians was written in AD 56 (Acts 18). It would therefore appear obvious that by the time the epistle of Hebrews was written this gift had ceased, and this would also explain why it is not mentioned in any other epistle. The book of James is considered by some to be the earliest writing in the NT (around 46 AD), on the other hand others claim it was written close to the end of his life. James died sometime between 62 AD and 66 AD (according to Josephus, and Eusebius). If it were written near his death, it would further explain the reason James does not mention the “gift of healing” in James 5.
- 2 Cor 12:12 – Paul references the ability of apostles to perform “signs, wonders, and miracles.” Within this list is the concept of the “gift of healing” of which Paul used in Ephesus (Acts 19:11), and makes reference here to works in front of the Corinthians. The

significance is that these works were used to validate Paul as a “true apostle.” That was the purpose of the miracles.

- The healings performed after Pentecost were characterized by the following:
 - Persons were immediately and completely healed. The healing was obvious to anyone, and there was no need for further treatment (Acts 3:1-11; 9:32-34; 14:4).
 - The healings were most often unsolicited, and were performed most often on previous unbelievers (Acts 3:1-11; 5:14-16).
 - The healing was always done, not to glorify or accommodate men, but to glorify God (Acts 14:8-17). They were to use the gift of healing to serve as a witness (vs 17).

What do we learn from this?

- The gift of healing is only found beyond Acts in the epistle of 1st Corinthians. Both James, and the writer of Hebrews would indicate it was no longer available.
- The healings were like those performed by Christ, they were complete and obvious.
- The healings were often unsolicited on unbelievers.
- The signs including healing had a specific purpose of validation of God’s ministry or minister.
- The gifts were ultimately always to glorify God by supplying signs of validation of His Son, ministers, or ministries at appropriate times within His overall providential plan to establish His kingdom.

The method employed of the ‘gift of healing’ today

- Any casual observance of the so-called healing ministries of individuals claiming divine ability to heal is accompanied by a lot of careful organization, planning, and staged presentation. Those to be healed are carefully selected.
- The method of supposed healing is a very dramatic presentation coupled with music. Those selected for healing are screened. Those chosen have ailments that cannot be physically observed by those present.
- The manner of conduct of the healers brings more attention to them than to Christ. The gospel is often omitted, and where it is presented it is poorly or shallowly stated. The real focus is on the supposed gift of healing, which is contrary to Paul’s very instruction in 1st Corinthians.

From the book Healing: A Doctor in Search of a Miracle by William Nolen M.D. (New York: Random House, 1974). This doctor did an exhaustive study of faith healing.

"Search the literature as I have, and you will find no documented cures by healers of gallstones, heart disease, cancer or any other serious organic disease. Certainly, you'll find patients temporarily relieved of their upset stomachs, their chest pains, their breathing problems; and you will find healers, and believers, who will interpret this interruption of symptoms as evidence that the disease is cured. But when you track the patient down and find out what happened later, you always find the 'cure' to have been purely symptomatic and transient. The underlying disease remains" (pp. 250, 256, 257, 259, 260).

“Now consider Kathryn Kuhlman. In a letter sent to me by Marilyn March, Kathryn Kuhlman's secretary, Ms. March says that Miss Kuhlman conducts `approximately 125 healing services in a year's time.' Attendance at these services varies; Ms. March mentions that `there are always 7,000 in attendance at the once-a-month services at the Shrine Auditorium [in Los Angeles]'; in Tulsa, Oklahoma, `18,000 people in Mabee Center with 3,000 viewing on closed-circuit TV'; in Atlanta, 8,000; in Ottawa, 16,000. Let's assume that Miss Kuhlman has an opportunity to treat an average of 10,000 patients per service, or 1,250,000 patients a year. We will have to guess, but I think it would be reasonable to say that one third of these patients are cancer victims -- about 400,000 cancer victims a year. Miss Kuhlman, therefore, may treat 4,000 times as many cancer patients as I treat in one year, and I have, by national standards, a very busy surgical practice. It would be highly likely that in the approximately 400,000 cancer victims that come to her every year, there might be one patient who would fall into the

spontaneous regression category. I know Kathryn Kuhlman (or Norbu Chen, or Tony Agpaoa or any other healer) will never find among the patients she treats a spontaneous cure of a cleft palate, a hernia, gallstones, heart disease, paralysis due to injury, or any of the hundreds of other organic ailments for which patients seek help. What I find most unusual is that there are no well-documented spontaneous cancer cures reported in her books. You'd think, among the millions of cancer patients healers treat, at least one or two would demonstrate a spontaneous regression.

My point, in case I haven't made it clear, is that even if we were to find isolated cases of documented cancer cures in the files of Miss Kuhlman or any other healer, it would prove nothing; isolated spontaneous cures of cancer occur with or without the ministrations of healers. The chances of being cured of cancer by Kathryn Kuhlman or any other healer are the same as the chances of being cured if you do nothing and go to no one at all. To be logical, the cancer patient should go to a healer only if the healer had a cure rate of 50 percent or better -- the cure rate physicians can achieve. But cancer patients who go to healers are emotionally distraught and for this reason don't act logically" (pp. 266, 267).

Passages most often used to support the "gift of healing" (Is 53:5; Jer 30:17; Mat 18:18-20; 3 John 2; Acts 3:6-8, 5:16, 8:5-7, 9:33-34, 14:8-10, 19:11-12, 28:8-9; 1 Pet 2:24).

- Is 53:5 "by His stripes you are healed" – a clear reference to healed from the penalty of sin
- Jer 30:17 "I will restore you to health" – God will yet restore Israel from their disbursement
- Mat 18:18-19 "two agree on earth about anything they may ask, it shall be done for them" – this is in a context of church discipline and the seeking of wisdom on how it should be handled with the assurance by Christ that God would honor their seeking wisdom in prayer and guide them.
- 3 John 2 "may prosper and be in good health" – prosper means "to have a good journey" the letter is written to encourage Gaius in ministry, and this is the purpose of John's prayer for his well being. It has no bearing on God's will or decree.
- Acts references – all accounts in the book of Acts must be taken in the context of the establishment of the church during the transition from the prior dispensation to the development of the New Testament church. The fact of these accounts of miraculous healing served as a sign that verified the church as the work of God. Once the church was established the sign was no longer required.

Putting it together

- The "gift of healing" was used as a sign in Scripture that God was in the person or ministry. For the early church the sign had relevance at its establishment. The gift ceased early-on and certainly ceased with the last apostle. The modern "healing movement" has no relevance in relation to the same sign at the founding of the church.
- The Scriptural healings were genuine, complete, and supernaturally obvious to all. This is not the case with the modern "healing movement."
- Paul exercised his gift of healing early in his ministry, but his last letter to Timothy expresses no ability to heal Trophimus. At the least this shows the gift was only to be utilized under certain situations, and as expressed elsewhere for the purpose of a sign.
- All passages used to support the modern healing movement are taken out of context, and have no validity toward supporting a gift of healing today.
- The gifts of healing have not been seen in the Christian church from the first century until the modern movement in the early 20th century.
- Any close examination of the reality of the supposed healings from the "healing movement" of today will show that it is a fraud, and especially by comparison to the complete and absolute supernatural remedies that took place by Christ, the apostles, and founders of the early church.