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This paper has some scattered thoughts on the biblical subject of healing as a preface to the accompanying enclosed article: [HEALING AND MIRACLES](#).

Having arrived at a conference early, a pastor and I were visiting in the car. He said, “Ralph, I BELIEVE in divine healing. That does not mean I UNDERSTAND divine healing.” His young son, who had been prayed for many times, was afflicted.

While the Scriptures teach divine healing, certain questions and concerns arise. Is it *always* God’s will to heal? Does sickness come from *God* or *Satan*? Is *physical* healing in the Atonement? Are the days of miracles *past*? etc.

Some have taught that once the *apostles died*—or when the New Testament was *completed* (back in the first century)—that miraculous healing ceased. This is simply **not** true! The scholarly, highly-regarded *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (p. 1350), citing references from Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen, says:

“There is **abundant evidence** that *in the early centuries* the gifts of healing were still claimed and practiced within the church. . . . All down through the history of the church there have been. . . . earnest Christians. . . . who have reasserted Christ’s gospel on its physical side. . . . and claimed for the gift of healing the place Paul assigned to it among the gifts of the Spirit.”

To those who teach that divine healing is not for us today, I respectfully ask: Is **prayer** for us today? And if so, would this not include prayer for the sick? (James 5:13-16).

This passage in the book of James speaks of “anointing with **oil** in the name of the Lord.” In Catholic belief, this has to do with giving the Last Rites to someone who is about to die. But when Jesus sent out the Twelve to preach, they “anointed with **oil** many who were sick, and healed them” (Mark 6:13). Obviously, these people they anointed with oil were not about to **die**—they were about to be **healed!**

It may be of some interest to look at the great **variety** of ways people were healed in the Bible, some very *unusual*:

Naaman, a Syrian military leader, was healed by dipping seven times in the Jordan River. When the prophet Elisha told him to do this, he was furious, saying the rivers in Syria were better than any in Israel. But his servants encouraged him to give it a try. “So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan. . . . and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child.” He was so convinced that the true God was the God of *Israel*, he took two mule-loads of **dirt** back to his country on which he could kneel in worship! (2 Kings 5:1-17).

Under Moses’ leadership, people were healed of snakebite by looking at the image of a serpent (Num. 21:9). A man was raised from the dead when his body came into contact with the bones of Elisha (2 Kings 13:21). When an angel came down and stirred the waters at the pool of Bethesda, the first one in was healed (John 5:4).

In Jerusalem, during one period in the history of the early church, people were healed if even the **shadow** of Peter passed over them (Acts 5:15, 16). At Ephesus, special miracles occurred in Paul’s ministry through **handkerchiefs and aprons** (Acts 19:11, 12).

A woman was healed when she touched the hem of Jesus’ garment (Luke 8:47). Jesus placed **clay** on a blind man’s eyes, who, when he washed in the pool of Siloam, received his sight (John 9:7). Hezekiah was healed when he followed Isaiah’s instructions involving **figs** (Isa. 38:21).

In all these examples of healing, it was not the figs, clay, water, cloth, shadow, snake image, bones or oil that brought healing. Such things were only secondary symbols. Healing itself came by the power of God through faith!

When Jesus sent forth the Twelve, he gave them power to heal the sick; and there were many others who performed miracles (Matt. 10:7,8; Luke 10:17; Acts 8:6). Consequently, some have gone so far as to say that *everyone* God calls to preach, he also calls to heal the sick. But John the Baptist was a great man, definitely called of God. Yet “*John did no miracle*” (John 10:41). Not every preacher had a healing ministry. “Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing?” (1 Cor. 12:29, 30).

We read that Abraham, Moses, and Isaiah, each (on one occasion), prayed and someone was healed (Gen. 20:17; Num. 12:13; 2 Kings 20:7). But there is no indication that any one of them had a *fulltime* “healing ministry.”

Quite a few years ago, I attended a Canadian Bible Conference during which a couple speakers taught on divine healing. Both believed in healing, but there was a difference about the *source* of sickness. One taught that sickness comes from **Satan**: “**Satan**. . . smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown” (Job 2:7). **Satan** caused a woman to be deformed 18 years (Luke 13:16). Jesus went about doing good and “healing all who were oppressed of the **devil**” (Acts 10:38). **Demons** caused sickness (Matt. 8:16), seizures (Mark 9:20), and insanity (Matt. 8:28), etc.

But the other speaker said **God** puts sickness on people, as he did to the Egyptians (Exod. 15:26). **God** took away Ezekiel’s wife with a stroke (Ezek. 24:16-18). **God** smote a king with leprosy (2 Kings 15:5). **God** smote some people with blindness (2 Kings 6:18). **God** caused David’s infant child to become sick and die (2 Sam. 12:15). Israelites, if disobedient, were warned: “The **LORD** will strike you with consumption. . . inflammation. . . fever. . . boils. . . tumors. . . scab. . . itch. . . a trembling heart and failing eyes” (Deut. 28; cf. Micah 6:13). “Who makes the mute, the deaf. . . or the blind? Have not I, the **LORD**” (Exod. 4:11).

So, each speaker quoted **Scripture!** There are explanations as to how these verses can be harmonized. But our point here is simply this: If we would live “by every word of God” (Matt. 4:4), we should take the **total** testimony of Scripture and not form dogmatic conclusions based on *partial* evidence.

The following is an *alphabetical* list of preachers—many who were known as “Healing Evangelists”—who I heard in person in years past (some I met in person). Most have now passed from this life. Inclusion in this list does not imply agreement or disagreement—that *would be a subject in itself!*

A. A. Allen, William Branham, Paul Cain, Kenneth Copeland, R. W. Culppepper, Clifton Erickson, William Freeman, Velmer Gardner, W. V. Grant, Kenneth Hagin, Franklin Hall, O. L. Jagers, LeRoy Jenkins, J. Charles Jessup, Thea Jones, Kathryn Kuhlman, A. Earl Lee, Gordon Lindsay, David Nunn, T. L. Osborn, Oral Roberts, R. W. Schambach, Demos Shakarian, Lester Sumrall, C. M. Ward, and Thomas Wyatt.

Many of these were associated with what came to be known as The Healing Revival, which continued from the late 1940s to the 1970s. Christ was preached, healing was preached, there was a renewal of faith in God's promises. But in time divisions developed. Who has the biggest tent or the largest crowds? Who is the "greatest"? (cf. Luke 22:24). Some tended to draw disciples after themselves (cf. Acts 20:30). There were cases of financial abuse, moral failures, and exaggeration about how many were saved or healed. Cooperation from local pastors and churches dropped off.

With tears in his eyes, Gordon Lindsay, editor of *The Voice of Healing* magazine, reportedly asked: "What has gone wrong with so many of our Healing Evangelists?" This probably entered in to changing the name *The Voice of Healing to Christ for the Nations*.

Some preached an *extreme* healing message—that if one has faith and obeys God's commandments, he will have perfect health and will *never* even get sick. This did not prove out.

Did Jesus, "who committed no sin" (1 Peter 2:22), ever get sick? Some believe he never got a cold or had an ache or pain. But the Scriptures imply otherwise. *As a man*, he got thirsty, hungry, tired, wept, felt pain, suffered, and finally died on the cross. The Bible also says he was "*acquainted with grief*" (Isa. 53:3), which is the Hebrew word *commonly* translated "sickness" (Deut. 7:15, etc. cf. Matt. 8:17).

Some, believing they could receive divine health in this present physical body, taught they would **never die!** Passages like John 6:48-58 were quoted: Those who ate the bread (manna) in the wilderness died (*physically*), but if one partakes of the true bread (Christ) he will never die (*physically*). I knew a few people who believed this way. *Every one of them has now died!*

A pastor I knew in New Jersey, a strong believer in healing, was planning a missionary trip to an African country. A vaccination against malaria was recommended, which he took. Another pastor, who went with him to Africa, did not believe in vaccinations, contracted malaria, and died!

While maintaining a healing message, Oral Roberts discontinued his healing campaigns, as such, and founded Oral Roberts University (ORU), in Tulsa. Unlike some healing evangelists, he did not preach against doctors and medical science. In 1981, his ministry even built a **medical** center in Tulsa housed in three towers: a sixty-story clinic, a thirty-story hospital, and a twenty-story research facility. The hoped-for success did not materialize, however, and the hospital closed after 8 years, in 1989.

Years ago, I held meetings at a church on Long Island. The pastor was friends with a pastor near New York City. When one would have special meetings, there was cooperation. Two nights my meetings were held at the other church, which had strong beliefs about casting out demons. On one of those nights after I spoke, there was a "deliverance service."

A sweet-looking older lady (looked like she was right out of a "holiness" church), uncut hair in a bun, no jewelry, etc. came forward along with some others. In my own mind I questioned: Do they believe *she* has demons? When I laid hands on her head and started to pray, she suddenly grabbed my arm and started *biting my wrist like crazy!* In visiting with the pastor afterward, he admitted he was not sure when people actually had demons, or when they were just **crazy!**

Jesus said: "These signs will follow those who believe ... they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; **they will take up serpents;** and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover" (Mark 16:17, 18).

Some question whether the closing verses of Mark were the *original* closing, citing some variations in manuscripts. This is of no great concern to me in that everything mentioned is found in other verses. It seems the main offender (understandably) is the part about **serpents**. But in Luke 10:19, Jesus said to the Seventy: "I give you the authority to trample on **serpents** and scorpions." Manuscript evidence for this text is not in question. I am unaware that any believe this was intended as a **literal** trampling on serpents. Both John the Baptist and Jesus used "serpents" in a non-literal sense (Matt. 3:7; 23:33).

During the last years of his life, I knew a fine Christian man, James Hart, who lived in northern California. He loved the Lord and had been a part-time preacher over the years. When he passed from this life, he was in his 90s. I considered it an honor to conduct his funeral.

He grew up in a rural part of Kentucky. As a young married man, his life was impacted for Christ through the ministry of a couple who held revival meetings in his town. A year passed, and when he heard they would be coming to hold meetings again, he was excited. They had preached "believe and be baptized"—and also *healing*—as taught in Mark 16:15-18. At their meeting this time, however, they said they had come into *additional* truth—that this *same* passage of Scripture said to "take up serpents"!

At the front was a wooden bucket containing snakes. The Evangelist's wife went first, flipping open the lid and taking up a serpent and marching around with it. No one was pressured, but others (if they felt they had enough faith) were invited to come up and do the same. James had always been afraid of snakes. But in the emotion of the moment, he went forward and picked up a snake, marching up one aisle and down the other with the snake aggressively biting his wrist. His two daughters, though little girls at the time, talked about this incident many years later. James showed me the faint marks on the back of his hand from the bites. (Later there were reasons to believe the snake that bit him was not poisonous.)

That was a **onetime** experience. Soon after this he came to a better understanding. He recalled when Paul "gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand... but he suffered no harm" (Acts 28:1-6). This was *accidental*, not *deliberate*. James, though a baby Christian at the time, realized one would not *deliberately* sin, just to receive forgiveness; nor would one *deliberately* get sick, just to receive healing. He concluded this principle would also apply to a serpent encounter!