

CIO Statement on Healing

Does God heal today? No other conclusion is possible for Christians who hold to the inerrancy of Scripture. He can do it.

But is it always the will of God to heal? If I am not healed, is it because of my lack of faith? If I am sick, is it because of sin or perhaps even demonic activity in my life? There is much confusion in the church today over these matters.

What does the Bible say about healing?

By God's own declaration He is ultimately responsible for health or sickness, life or death (Deuteronomy 32:39, Job 5:17-18). In the Old Testament God afflicted believers and unbelievers — sometimes in punishment and sometimes to illustrate a divine message. Remember that the plague upon the first-born of Egypt (Exodus 12:29-30) was punishment for Pharaoh's disobedience to the instructions of God. Recall the experience of Ezekiel who became a widower in the midst of his ministry (Ezekiel 24:16-18). His wife died by the hand of God so Ezekiel could become a model for mourning for the nation. As he grieved over his wife's death, so Israel was to sorrow over their sin and God's judgment on the nation.

God not only afflicted in the Old Testament, He also healed. Many different techniques were employed. Moses prayed that Miriam would be healed of leprosy (Numbers 12:13) and she was. Nebuchadnezzar, a pagan king, was healed after God afflicted him according to the time schedule God promised (Daniel 4:28-37). Naaman, also an unbeliever, was healed after dipping seven times in the Jordan River (2 Kings. 5:1-14). The children of Israel were healed of poisonous snake venom in the wilderness when they looked at a brass serpent placed on a pole in the middle of the camp. There does not seem to have been a consistent method used for healings in the Old Testament. Some illnesses in the Bible were the product of personal sin, although not all sin resulted in affliction. Aaron apparently was not afflicted after making the golden calf (Exodus 32:35). On other occasions the one who sinned received God's physical discipline. Miriam was smitten with leprosy (Numbers 12), and Korah died after his rebellion against Moses (Numbers 16). Even one who did not sin was sometimes the subject of God's affliction. Most prominent was the child born to David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12).

And in some cases, those closest to God suffered. Job — referred to as a blameless man — was afflicted severely, and then God healed him (Job. 42:10). Isaac (Genesis 27:1) and Jacob (Genesis 48:1) became ill and died.

The Old Testament experiences revealed saints who suffered, some with afflictions sent by God. Healing methods varied, unbelievers were healed, some sinners went unpunished, and innocents suffered. What is significant is

that Satan was insignificant in these accounts — save the story of Job — and faith requirements were never mentioned for healing. It all lay in the sovereignty of God!

At no other time in human history were so many people healed from so many different diseases in as short a time as during the earthly ministry of our Lord. His healing ministry was unique and unequalled to this day. His miracles were many, but He did not perform them indiscriminately. He did not always heal everyone who needed healing (John 5:3-8).

All but three of Christ's healings were instantaneous. No recuperation was needed; full health returned immediately. None of those healed lapsed back into illness. The three healings that were delayed involved minutes only, but the people were totally healed (Mark 8:22-25).

The physical presence of Jesus was unnecessary for the healing to occur. With a thought or a spoken word healing was accomplished. A centurion's slave (Matthew 8:5-13), a Canaanite's daughter (Matthew 15:21-28) and the son of a Capernaum official (John 4:46-53) were healed in this way.

Jesus also used various methods. Since all healing was done by the power of God, there was no magical or sure-cure way to bring healing. He touched (Matthew 8:15), He spoke (John 5:8-9), the sick touched Christ's garment (Matthew 9:20-22), He used spittle (Mark 8:22-26), and He plugged a man's ears with His fingers and placed spittle on his tongue (Mark 7:33-35). He even anointed with mud (John 9:6).

Nowhere do the Gospels attribute all sickness directly to personal sin. In two accounts, Scripture teaches us that illnesses occurred so God could receive the glory (John 11:4, 40). Those miracles were beyond question. Even the enemies of our Lord could not deny them (John 11:47-48).

The disciples also healed individuals and this continued into the first years of the church. Personal faith was not a necessary requirement for healing (Acts 3:1-10). Sometimes the faith of others was honored (Luke 5:18-20). Again, the record in Acts reveals that a variety of methods were used in these healings. Those healed were immediately restored to full health. And unbelievers were also healed (Acts 3:1-10, Acts 8:6-7). As in the Gospels the faith of those who were ill was honored (Acts 3:16). And even the Sanhedrin could not deny these miracles (Acts 4:15-17).

Even though all sickness wasn't the result of sin, sometimes God afflicted individuals because of personal sin (Acts 5:5-10) Sometimes God healed people without the healer being present (Acts 19:11-12). These supernatural

healings were signs to attest to the authority of the apostles as revealers of truth (Acts 2:42-43).

As the church matured there was a noticeable decline in divine healings. In Galatians 4 Paul was ill. In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul was afflicted. In Philippians 2 Epaphroditus was ill. In 1 Timothy 5, Timothy was sick, and in 2 Timothy 4, Trophimus was ill.

The conclusion is obvious. Healings were occasional in the Old Testament, overwhelming in the Gospels, frequent in Acts and negligible in the remainder of the New Testament.

What can we learn from all of this that applies to us today?

First, all healing is from God. We may see a healing process where an individual is restored to health over a period of time. This is the most frequent expression of healing today. However, we are concerned in this article with miraculous healings. This is when God sets aside the normal laws of recuperation which he has set in motion and instantaneously heals and restores to full health.

Second, it is simply not true that God's will for every Christian is for them to remain perfectly healthy. God works in the midst of all circumstances for His glory and for our good.

Third, there is no one method that is always used when God does move with miraculous healing.

Fourth, God is ultimately responsible for all of life and death.

Fifth, when God does heal it is always undeniable. Biblically no one questioned the fact of the healings, even the enemies of the Christians.

Sixth, personal faith was not necessarily a prerequisite for healing. Often faith was honored, as with the woman who touched the Savior's clothes (Mark 5:34). But sometimes no faith was involved at all (Acts 3:1-10; 9:32-34).

Seventh, there are times today when God acts in such a manner that only His direct intervention can adequately explain the physical healing. He still heals today, and always in a way that is consistent with His nature. We should pray for His healing touch on our lives and trust Him to do what is His will for us.