

### Faith, Healing, and Faith-Healers

Please turn in God's Word to Hebrews 11 and this evening I want to start in this faith chapter and move out from it to look at what God's Word says on the subject of faith and healing. I mentioned this morning this is a subject I was asked to teach on when I go to Congo later this summer, faith-healers. I have been to a Benny Hinn healing crusade in Southern CA and talked with a guy in a wheelchair afterwards disillusioned that he wasn't healed and I to this day can see the heartbreak. They carefully pre-screen who can get close to the stage and this guy's disability apparently didn't qualify him to be near the action, much less healed. But others were able to stand in line to see if they'd let go up. A guy in line collapsed with some medical issue. It was an eerie scene as paramedics rushed to him and rushed him out. Obviously, the guy needed healing and one of the supposed world's greatest healers was 40 feet this way, but the EMTs are taking the ill person the other way as fast as possible to get out of that healing service to get to a hospital for real healing

Apparently they knew better to be in Orange County traffic for miles with medical workers than with an alleged miracle worker a few feet away. How different, I thought, to those who had the real gift of healing in Bible times. In NT times dying people would be rushed to the healer. In Acts 20 a young man falls 3 stories to his death and Paul heals him. In Acts 3 Peter heals a crippled beggar who had been lame 40 years by commanding him to rise, grabbing his hand, and instantly his feet and ankles that have never worked are now strong, leaping for joy and it says he kept jumping as he walked. In Acts 8 as Philip came to Samaria it says '*many who had been paralyzed or lame were healed*' (v. 7 NAS). In Acts 5 there was no show with smoke and repetitive music, there was just the shadow of the apostle as he walked by a row of hospital beds in the street, and all the sick and afflicted in the towns around Jerusalem were brought in and it says '*they were **all** healed*' (5:16).

Today's Word-Faith teachers claim to have the same gift of healing as NT apostles and Jesus had, but it's not even a shadow of it. By the way, Benny Hinn spoke last year at Bethel Church in Redding, where Jesus Culture is from and Jesus Culture Church now meets in Folsom. Jesus Culture website has them hosting Joyce Meyer (Word-Faith) conferences this year. This weekend at the Sacramento Convention Center Kenneth Copeland put on his healing school (he just spoke last night). His website says 'It is God's will for you to be healed...God wants *you* well!...speak God's promises... taken daily like medicine...Pray God's promises concerning your healing'<sup>1</sup>

‘If you or a loved one are struggling with bronchitis, then begin confessing these scriptures over yourself immediately... There are seven scriptures for you to stand against diabetes...When You Receive a Bad Health Report: You can trust in God’s Word to bring healing...whatever illness you are facing...Speak this Bible-based confession confirming: God wants you well!...The power of sickness has been broken over your life. Say it aloud ...Speak this confession...He has healed ALL your sickness and disease.’<sup>2</sup>

In Africa some estimate a half billion follow a form of Word-Faith teaching, putting faith in words of positive confession, name it and claim it, say and pay them. But that theology also hits close to home. It’s held by music groups many listen to at home. It hits people close to us, whether family or our home church with those battling cancer or chronic health conditions and praying for healing and wanting to stand on the promises of God’s Word. I hope this message will heal misunderstandings and give a healthy grasp of what God’s Word actually says about healing and health. The Word-Faith movement puts faith in words to heal (as you give them money to sow a seed) and if you’re not healed, the implication is you don’t have enough faith (recent JAF event). But look at Heb 11 at those who had greatest faith.

Heb 11:8-19 talks about Abraham. The first time the word ‘heal’ is used in the Bible is with Abraham: Gen 20:17 *‘Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech, and also healed his wife and female slaves so that they bore children.’*<sup>18</sup> *For the LORD had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech...* So God healed the barrenness of women in Abimelech’s house, apparently shortly after Abraham prayed. But for Sarah his wife, they had prayed for years and she still wasn’t healed decades later. In her case, God even gave her a promise of children, but she wasn’t healed of her barren medical condition for 25 more years. Was that because of his lack of faith? No, Abraham’s the father of faith! Heb 11, the great faith chapter, says most on his faith. And in Heb 11:11 Sarah’s great faith is highlighted.

In v. 20 it mentions Isaac’s faith giving blessings to his sons. He was blind as he did that, God didn’t heal him, but *while he was blind* he exhibited one of the high points of faith for all time. v. 21 talks about Jacob’s faith as he blessed his son and grandsons. Gen 48 says his moment of great faith was *as he was ill, too sick to sit up* in bed without help. Was it because of a low level of faith on Jacob’s part that he wasn’t healed? No, it’s one of the high points of faith in history! Jacob’s eyesight was also dim so he couldn’t see as well as before, God didn’t heal that (beware televangelists with glasses!).

In v. 23, Moses, another great man of faith is put before us, who said he had a handicap of speech he wasn't healed of in God's sovereign plan, Ex 4:11. In v. 26 Moses did the opposite of health and wealth theology, it says he chose the reproach of Christ as his treasure instead of prosperity in Egypt. In v. 32 we read of David, the man of faith most after God's heart, but even in his inspired psalms in the midst of expressing his faith he says things like '*There is no soundness in my flesh...no health in my bones...wounds stink and fester...my sides are filled with burning...from my plague...*' (Ps 38). Ps 6 '*LORD, heal me...my bones are in agony...How long, O LORD...?*' (NIV)

Heb 11:32 also mentions the prophets, and the greatest miracle worker of all the prophets was Elisha, but he had an illness God didn't heal him of and he died from it (2 Kings 13). Arguably the greatest man of faith in the OT was Job, by God's own admission the most faithful man on earth, but Job had a nasty skin illness from head to toe God was sovereign over and left him in.

Benny Hinn's theology had no room for that, so he preached 'it's not even scriptural—all because of Job: "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away ..." I have news for you: that is not Bible, that's not Bible [Benny says the truth is:] The Lord giveth and *never* taketh away. And just because he said "Blessed be the name of the Lord" don't mean he's right. When [Job] said, "Blessed be the name," he was just being religious. And being religious don't mean you're right.'<sup>3</sup> Close quote. But being on religious TV don't mean Hinn's right, and anyone who can read can see what right's in Job 1 and verses about not adding to God's Word. I trust the Bible, not Benny. It says Job said '*the LORD has taken away; Blessed be the name of the LORD.*' [next verse] *In all this Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.*' And to his wife he says in Job 2: '*Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?*' *In all this Job did not sin with his lips*' (NKJV).

It's as if the inspired writer anticipated the prosperity heresy preachers who would say it's wrong to say the Lord takes away health or we're to accept adversity as from His sovereign hand. God's Word says Job did not sin with his lips or speak wrongly of God. Job was right and spoke right. God said in heaven after that, that Job was the most upright blameless God-fearing sin-avoiding man on earth. Job's friends held a form of health and wealth view that tried to blame sin or a lack of faith in Job's life. But God says to them in the end, in Job 42:7: *My wrath is aroused against you...for you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has...Job shall pray for you ...because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job...*

God rebukes in His wrath people who speak wrongly of Him and His will in sickness and suffering. People who prey on people financially, emotionally or otherwise, they're actually the ones who need people of true faith to pray for them like Job prayed for his friends who had bought into false teaching. We need to pray for those today caught up in wrong speaking of God and we need to speak rightly of God as Job did of His sovereign taking of health

Heb 11:33 talks about great faith that stopped the mouths of lions. Who do we know was with lions but the lion's mouths were stopped? Daniel. But even in the midst of his faith in one of the great visions he received, Daniel fell sick for many days (Dan 8:27). Sometimes God healed, sometimes not. Look at Heb 11:37, other heroes of the faith didn't end in health and wealth: <sup>37</sup> *They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, **destitute, afflicted, mistreated** — <sup>38</sup> *of whom the world was not worthy...* The world wasn't worthy of faith like that, God commends their faith, their affliction wasn't due to lack of it.*

They had the best faith in biblical history but they didn't have their best life now. Look at v. 35, it sums up these heroes of faith who died for their faith, and the end of v. 35 says their hope was to '*rise to a better life.*' The better or best life was to come. They were looking to the best world to come. They had assurance of what they hoped for and were convinced of what they did not see in this world as v. 1 says. They didn't put their faith in *their* words as having some creative power, like v. 3 they put their faith in the power of the words of God the Creator. They believed like v. 6, God rewards those who seek Him, and they knew some of those rewards were in heaven. There are Bible promises to us like inheritance and being healed of sin and all its effects – but the most faithful people in history didn't receive the fullness of those promises in their earthly bodies, they awaited an eternal glorified state

Heb 11:13 '*These all died in faith, **not having received the things promised** ...*' They could only see by faith from a distance and look forward to what awaited them in glory, they knew this the fullness or their final home, they were just passing through. v. 39: '*And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised...*' God commends their faith who didn't receive that in this life and eternally rewards all who seek Him. So friend, if you don't receive promised healing in this life, join the club of the great ones of faith! Don't be surprised or think there's something wrong with you or your faith or that God's punishing you if you experience things in Heb 11. We can't expect better than these in Heb 11 we're not better than

Heb 11 covers about 4,000 years of biblical history when God did signs and wonders like the world has never seen since, but even then with the greatest believers in this great chapter, miraculous healing is a relatively rare event. If you haven't been healed, that doesn't mean you don't have enough faith, Heb 11 is the more-than-enough-faith chapter! And in the OT narratives we find the word *heal* some 20x, but *heal* isn't used of names in the great faith chapter. Sometimes the word *heal* is used of those with no faith (like pagan kings). Sometimes God healed based on the faithful prayer of another for a sick person (Moses for *Miriam* in sin or Moses praying for *faithless Israel*). Sometimes there's healing without prayer or faith, or healing thru doctors.

The same word *heal* is used of natural bodily healing (Josh 5:8, Lev 13:18). I heard a doctor this week explaining doctors can't heal, they can only try to bring the body or body parts to a place where the body heals itself by God's design. So whether we heal naturally or supernaturally (something doctors can't explain naturally medically) we should praise God who fearfully and wonderfully made our bodies and sustains us in our inmost organs to heal. And some of the people of faith in Heb 11 (like David and the prophets), also used this word *heal* for our spiritual healing of sin and its effects on us.

Most notably Isa 53 says of Christ '*by his wounds/stripes we are healed.*' If you read the verses all around that, sin and its effects are the context. It's not a future tense promise '*you will be healed physically in this life if you have faith.*' 1 Peter 2 says it's a past tense reality for all believers in Christ, '*He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed*' (v. 24 NAS). So Peter didn't take that phrase as guaranteeing physical healing in this age, but it can include that in the world to come after Jesus comes again (the broader context of Isaiah) where we'll be healed physically eternally. Several places in Isaiah it talks about that curse-free sickness-free kingdom to come. Rev 22:2 says heaven will be the place for '*healing of the nations.*'

Isa 53 in context doesn't promise physical healing on earth. The Word-Faith preachers need to see the healing of Isa 53 like Peter saw it as a past reality spiritually for sin and only in heaven are believers promised perfect health. Jesus Culture website: 'How can God choose not to heal someone when He already purchased their healing? ... When He bore stripes in His body He made a payment for our miracle. He already decided to heal... There are no deficiencies on His end... All lack is on our end of the equation. If someone isn't healed, realize the problem isn't God... it's not God's fault'

Must be our fault? The deficiency, ‘all lack is on our end.’ He says ‘Pray for people - NOT “if it be thy will” kind of prayer. In the thousands of people I’ve seen healed, I’ve never seen anyone healed from that kind of prayer.’<sup>4</sup> That JesusCulture.com post was by Bill Johnson of Bethel Church, Redding (church they came from before they recently moved to Folsom). Bill says in a sermon at Bethel “I refuse to create a theology that allows for sickness.”<sup>5</sup>

But he’s created a theology that refuses what scripture says and won’t allow us to pray as Jesus taught and modelled ‘*Thy will be done...if it be thy will.*’ He refuses to create a theology of a God big enough to allow for sickness in His plan. He doesn’t quote any Bible verses in that post except to quote how the Lord prayed to say we shouldn’t pray that way. He’s created a theology that puts God in a box, a pretty small one where he’s not big enough to do much but want to heal, that puts Bill’s god in a bind. Bill creates a god who means well and means for us to be well, but isn’t really in sovereign control

Bethel’s associate pastor Kris Vallaton posted this quote from Bill Johnson approvingly on social media: “God is in charge but He is not in control. He has left us in control—Bill Johnson.” I much prefer the God of the Bible who does whatever He pleases and is in sovereign control of diseases and is big enough to work after the counsel of His will all things together for our good and His glory. Satan isn’t sovereign. If we’re in control, we’re in trouble! PTL God’s in control. He both gives and takes away, blessed be the name!

So let’s close with the true Lord Jesus of the Bible and His sovereign work and will. Remember how the OT narratives used the word *heal* 20-some times over 4,000 years for a few individuals. The NT gospel narrative when Jesus shows up has the word *heal* 60x over a 3-year period with thousands:

- Lk 6:17 ‘*a great multitude...to be healed of their diseases...the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all*’
- Mt 4:23 ‘*he went...healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease ...they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases...epileptics and paralytics; and He healed them*’ (NKJV)
- Mt 12:15 ‘*And many followed him, and he healed them all*’
- Mt 8:16 ‘*they brought to him many...he healed all who were sick*’
- Most of those Jesus healed it doesn’t mention any faith, and at times He did healings for people while rebuking the believers for their little faith
- For example, He healed 10 lepers, but later only 1 of them trusted Jesus
- Some Jesus healed not only didn’t believe, but weren’t even conscious
- Jesus often healed demon-possessed unbelievers cursing Him at the time

He healed thousands upon thousands but at the end only 120 followed Him. Jesus never was unable to heal someone because of their lack of faith and He never blamed sickness on personal sin but a couple times He spoke of an illness or disability as being for God's glory (John 9, 11). Jesus didn't need music for hours before He'd heal, people screening or keeping away the bad cases, His healings were almost always immediate, always the same day (a couple times minutes later to make a point). His healing were undeniable by His critics. On all those points modern healers don't match the gospels at all

What about the gift of healing He gave His apostles? Listen to Mt 10 to see if it matches faith-healers on TBN. It says Jesus gave to the Twelve power *'to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. <sup>2</sup> Now the names of the twelve apostles are these* [and it gives their names and those 12 guys aren't alive anymore today. But He told them] *Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers...Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts...* That just disqualified the televangelists making big money in precious metals and private multi-million dollar jets as they acquire gold and silver from poor people! Why don't they take their jets to visit leper colonies of the 3<sup>rd</sup> world or war-torn refugee hospitals? If they had the gift Jesus gave His apostles to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness why don't they use it? The gospels say when Jesus sent out those apostles, they *'went through the villages...healing everywhere'* (Luke 9:6).

If you had that gift like Jesus gave in the gospels, to not use or to abuse it for money, would be malpractice. I've seen the desperation in Congo and for the Word-Faith movement rich and famous to go there is horrifying to me. I'll say it stronger: I see prosperity gospel leaders as spiritual terrorists. It's not just a distortion of the NT healing gift, it's deception hurting people. If Jesus was angry about how the temple had become a den of thieves in NT times, Jesus is angry with charlatans and shenanigans in His church today!

But turn to Heb 2 and let's end on a positive note. Those 3 years of Christ's public ministry and the next 20-some years of the apostle's ministry were marked by unique and unrepeatabe healings like the world has never seen before or since. In over 6,000 years those 3 decades or so are the only time in human history with anything like that. What was the purpose of all that? Heb 2:3 says in the middle of the verse, of the salvation message *'...It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested [confirmed] to us by those who heard, <sup>4</sup> while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.'*

So the message of the Lord as it went out in NT times had signs, wonders, and miraculous gifts of the Spirit that went along with it. The purpose was to attest or accredit or testify or bear witness that the apostle's message was the same as the Lord's message. 2 Cor 12:12 says '*The things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you...*' (NIV). In Eph 2:20 it says the apostles and prophets are the church's foundation. You don't have to be a building expert to recognize a foundation is only laid at the start, you don't lay that over again 20 stories up (or 20 centuries later). Miraculous gifts marked the age of the apostles as the church was founded and in Acts 1-10 but then diminishes and disappears by later NT epistles.

Can God heal today? Absolutely. Does He? Absolutely, and often through a doctor. Should we pray for one another so we may be healed? James 5 says so and there may be issues besides the physical at work there for elders to be called on to pray for. But Jesus also taught us to pray for God's will to be done. Is it ok to go to a healer? I would say yes, but the Healer to go to is in heaven. Don't give money to someone who claims the NT gift of healing. But I want to close with a positive encouragement to any who in His will haven't experienced healing: Heb 4 says Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses as He experienced human weakness and frailty. Fix your eyes on Jesus even as you're surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses in Heb 11 who often weren't delivered from physical difficulty, but kept faith in God.

The NT cloud of witnesses includes Paul's most faithful coworker Timothy, who he says had 'frequent illnesses' and was told to use wine medicinally for it (1 Tim 5:23 NIV). In Phil 2 Epaphroditus Paul's beloved faith-filled messenger was ill almost to death in Paul's presence. At the end of 2 Tim 4 Paul says left Trophimus sick at Miletus (4:20, apparently by that time the gift of healing was already fading, and it's not mentioned after 60s AD).

Paul himself in Gal 4 said he came with '*a bodily illness...which was a trial to you in my bodily condition...but you received me...if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me*' (NAS). Whatever Paul's thorn in the flesh was in 2 Cor 12, and whatever your fleshly bodily illness or weakness, the principle there is this: It's ok to plead for the Lord to take it from you, as Paul did 3x, but be willing to receive the Lord's reply: "*My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.*" *Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me*' (2 Cor 12:9-10 NKJV). That's the power we need.



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.kcm.org/real-help/healing>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.kcm.org/real-help/healing/speak>

<sup>3</sup> As cited by Hank Hanegraaf, *Christianity in Crisis* (Harvest House, 1997), p. 98.

<sup>4</sup> <https://jesusculture.com/posts/1634-healing/>

<sup>5</sup> Bill Johnson, August 15, 2010 sermon clip,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UzAwFYKe3h0>