



# Healing Hints

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## What is Christian healing?

Christian healing is what happens when Christians minister in Jesus' name, enabling people to receive restoration to health of body or mind through God's great love and mercy.

This restoration of health is part of what is meant by the 'abundant life', which Jesus promised.

Before the coming of Christ, the Jewish people already knew that God was a restorer, and that his will was to bring to fulfilment the work of restoration. The Hebrew prophets foretold the coming of the messiah, and it was revealed that he would be one who heals:

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God,  
smitten by him, and afflicted.

But 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 53:4 –5

For three years, the priests and religious leaders rejected Jesus. Many despised him, but others received him and became his disciples. Betrayed by one of his own disciples, denied by another, and abandoned by all, he died. Never has anyone else achieved so much nor been subjected to so much contempt.

Jesus, the eternal Son of God, took upon himself on the cross all the evil that was due by justice to the entire human race—to Adam and all his descendants, including ourselves, so that anyone who believes in Jesus Christ and receives him as Saviour and Lord may receive all the blessings of God's kingdom, rather than eternal death.

This is the 'great exchange'.

We may divide the great exchange of Calvary into five sub-sections, thus making it a little easier for us to grasp its amazing extent.

Firstly, our punishment was exchanged for God's peace. As he died, Jesus bore the punishment that was due to us for our transgressions and all our iniquities, our acts of rebellion against God's laws. All the punishment for every sinful act committed by every member of the entire human race was brought onto Jesus. The blessing now available, the alternative to eternal punishment, is summed up in the word 'peace'. In place of punishment, there is peace for the

believer.

Secondly, our poverty has been exchanged for God's riches: that poverty with which we were cursed in our disobedience.

Because you did not serve the LORD your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity, therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies the LORD sends against you. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until he has destroyed you.

Deuteronomy 28:47 –48

Jesus took our poverty onto the cross so that we might have his riches. He was hungry, not having eaten for almost twenty –four hours. He himself said, "I thirst. " He was naked, for the soldiers had taken all his clothes for themselves, casting lots for his seamless robe. He was totally bereft of everything, a picture of total poverty, exhausting the curse. Jesus, who was rich with heaven's riches, became poor on the cross so that we might in turn share in his riches.

Thirdly, Jesus has exchanged our mortality for a share in his immortality.

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

Hebrews 2:9

Fourthly, through Jesus we have been offered his righteousness instead of our own efforts to be holy.

For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin. . . .

Romans 6:6

Fifthly, our sicknesses and pains have been taken on the cross so that we might receive healing through Jesus' wounds. He suffered terrible flogging and the imposition

of the crown of thorns, and was crucified. As those terrible wounds were inflicted, so the covenant remedy for the pains and sicknesses of the whole human race was given. In accepting those things, he has made complete provision for our healing. On the cross was a bleeding, torn, wounded body, bereft of all things, who took upon himself the punishment due for all our sins, as well as our curses and our poverty —all this so that we might be forgiven and reconciled with the Father, as well as inheriting his peace, receiving healing, deliverance from evil, and abundant life.

So Jesus said, "It is finished. "

Salvation includes all of these five benefits obtained for the believer by Jesus

Christ on the cross. We receive this salvation by the grace (free gift) of God, through faith in Jesus which we need to confess with our lips and believe in our hearts. He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, and, as Isaiah prophesied, by his wounds we are healed —Jesus was physically wounded so that we might be healed.

So the heavenly Father, our healer, sent his Son, Jesus, to earth, revealing his nature —and we saw the healing of the sick. Just as it is God's nature to love, so it is his nature to heal. He came as suffering servant and saviour, yet everything was placed under his feet. Jesus will return and be seen by all as lord of lords and king of kings. In the meantime, he has commissioned his people —the church, the company of believers —to preach the saving gospel and to heal the sick.

Everything flows from how we learn the patience to stand under the Cross of Jesus, because when we are there we see what he sees, the infinite glory and love of the Father. That is where the healing fountains start.

Archbishop Rowan Williams

We may wonder how Christian healing works. How can it be that God intervenes miraculously? Quite simply, though we do not understand how he does it, we know that our supernatural God is the Creator of the universe — from the largest galaxy to the most infinitesimal sub atomic charge or particle. He brought into being and sustains in being all matter that exists; so nothing is impossible for him. Without him, nothing would exist at all: no universe; nothing!

It is hardly surprising, then, that he who is Creator of all has the power to change things in this world that he created.

## Am I sick for a reason?

On one level, of course, medical experts will sometimes be able to provide 'reasons' why an illness occurs: genetic or environmental factors may be involved; there may be a variety of physical causes at work in and upon a person. But people often ask this on a 'spiritual' level. They wonder whether, in some mysterious sense, there is a supernatural reason for their sickness. This question sometimes arises because of a widespread misunderstanding of the Book of Job. Some suggest that God made Job ill in order to bring him to his knees—in order that a fresh relationship between them could begin. On that view, God had a purpose in seeing Job become sick, and it would then follow that we, too, can believe that we are experiencing sickness sent by God for our own ultimate good.

However this is a serious misapplication of the Job account. God has revealed his nature throughout both the Old and New Testaments as the One who heals; his will is to heal. There are countless passages that bear this out. Importantly, God did in fact heal Job—a point which seems to escape most people who know of his story. In the end, Job lived to be a hundred and forty years old and was greatly blessed by God after his time of sickness. He experienced a double restoration of all the things that he had temporarily lost at the hands of the devil. Satan robbed, killed, destroyed and afflicted, but God healed, delivered and restored.

So even if we do (mistakenly) think that our own sickness is some sort of act of God (or approved by God), we should still expect that the final result will be healing and health rather than further sickness or death. When someone known to us falls ill and dies, it should be very clear to the rest of us that they had not been experiencing anything that we might loosely describe as a Job-like experience, otherwise they would have recovered! We can also reflect on the fact that Job was only ill for a small part of his life (widely agreed upon to be less than a year of it). Less than one percent of Job's life is described in detail in the Book of Job, so the wrong-headed idea that God wishes someone to be ill for long periods finds no support. We are not to suppose that God prolongs the sickness of the righteous for his own purposes. Above all, such a mistaken view of God, his will and the way he acts, conflicts with all that Jesus Christ revealed to us about God's heart for healing.

There are always reasons of various kinds why we fall ill, but the cause of your illness is never God.

## Is illness some sort of punishment ?

Have I done something wrong? Do I deserve what is happening to me?

Even when there is true expectancy of healing (not just a belief that miracles do sometimes happen), it is sometimes the case that little or no improvement is visible after prayer.

Then there may arise a tension in faith, which can go on to become a crisis of faith. Other issues may begin to come to the surface.

At that point it is sometimes said, “God is punishing me”, or, “I deserve what I am getting”, or, “Perhaps God won’t heal me because I’ve been working too hard and not taking proper care of myself, smoking too much, eating either too much or all the wrong things.” Or it may be that friends are trying to help by suggesting that some sin or some backsliding, or a period of irregular attendance at church, may be the problem.

In time the crisis passes. Sometimes a ‘blockage’ is revealed and dealt with. The supplicant finds, or has restored, a simple faith in Christ as Healer. A properly equipped minister can often help the supplicant deal with the crises and blockages by explaining the nature of the Father, as revealed through Jesus in the Gospels. As the word of God is spoken and received, the supplicant begins to be able to receive healing much more easily.

We speak to the sick about the nature of Jesus. He shows us what the love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control of which we learn in Galatians chapter five really look like. The love of Jesus; the compassion of Jesus; the mercy of Jesus—all reveal to us the heart of the Father towards us.

Those whom Jesus healed in his earthly ministry were not perfect by any means. They simply had faith, or others had faith, for their healing. The supplicant may need to be reminded that ‘. . . he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault. . . .’ (See James 1:5. )

Isaiah described in advance what was going to happen to Jesus. (See Isaiah 53:1 –6). Clearly, any punishment that is due to us has already been dealt with by God: his wrath against us has been exhausted on the cross. The idea that God wants to strike people with sickness in order to punish them is foreign to the New Testament.

Of course, we sometimes become aware that an illness we contract has been due wholly or partly to some sin or foolishness for which we bear some responsibility. If that is revealed to us, then we do need to repent, and God will forgive us. But 'sin hunting' and 'working down checklists' is not how the healing ministry should be conducted. The Holy Spirit will do any convicting that is necessary. In the end, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

A common mistake is to think that God may be using or prolonging sickness as a mysterious form of Discipline. After all, we reason, Scripture does teach that God disciplines his children.

A more careful reading of Hebrews 12:7, though, reveals that it is hardship, not illness, that may be used by God to discipline us, and this would be done in the same way that a good earthly father might discipline us, and for the same good, loving motive. Jesus explained that not even a human father would give his son a snake instead of a fish, nor a scorpion instead of an egg. (See Luke 11:11 –12).

God really does love us as his children. He does not make you ill!

To summarise:

firstly, it is extremely unlikely that your illness is a punishment. When you received Jesus, his work on the cross included taking the punishment for your sin;

secondly, if you contributed to your sickness by your own wrong actions, you can repent and be forgiven and restored;

thirdly, it makes little sense in the healing ministry to talk of what we deserve, for all good things are in any case the free gifts of our Creator and Redeemer.



## Why did God allow me or a member of my family to get ill?

This is not an issue of punishment. God's will for his people is that they should have abundant life, not condemnation.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son

into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Whoever believes in him is not condemned. . .

John 3:16 –18a

Behind the question is, often, a sense of unfairness. Sickness sometimes seems to us to be so random. So the age –old question haunts many who suffer: “Why me?” Add the statement, “It's all so unfair ” and we touch something of the rawness of life.

But please remember this: God is not the author of sickness; he did not place sickness on you or your loved ones. Sickness itself is the outworking of a kind of enemy activity which is one of the many consequences of the Fall. Do not blame God for what the devil has brought about, nor for the harm mankind has done to itself. God is not the cause of any ill –health or injury; he is the one who rescues us from sickness —who heals our diseases.

It is somewhat misleading to reduce this issue to ‘God's permissive will ’because sickness is not what God wills at all. His revealed will is both to heal us and to draw us to himself and to bring us into his kingdom of love.

Had he made mankind to be merely automatons, pre-programmed never to make the wrong choice to sin, never to have the choice of disobeying or obeying, there would have been no fall and no sickness either —but nor would there have been any possibility of a response of love for God. If God were to make man in his own image and to be capable of a love response to the Creator, then man had to be endowed with kinds of freedom that could be open to misuse.

So it is most helpful to see an individual's sickness not as imposed by God, but rather as an outworking of living in a fallen world, in which mankind's own disobedience has all sorts of negative consequences. We are affected not only by our own sins, but by the sinful acts of others, the general sinfulness of mankind and the demonic activity to which man's disobedience has opened so many doors.

God's answer to this mess which we and the rest of the human race have made was to reveal his nature as the healer, deliverer and redeemer of all who turn to him. With God, fresh starts are available. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (including all forms of ill –health), to bind up the broken –hearted and to set captives free. We enter into all this, which Jesus won for us by grace, through faith in him, believing in our hearts and confessing with our lips.

## **But what about life –threatening diseases?**

This is a question which deeply affects our expectancy of God —that expectancy which acts as a 'lightning rod' in the heavenly places. This 'lightning rod' has to poke up just a little above the roof top, and fears that illnesses are life threatening may detract from an undoubting trust in Jesus to solve the problem.

When people hear the medical diagnosis that a disease is incurable or life threatening, terror and sadness may come in and become a weighty burden. Then it is vital to cling to God's promises —if only as a man clings to a tuft of grass on the cliff edge over which he has just fallen. Our hope may become thinner as time wears on, and our child –like expectancy that God is going to heal us smaller than a mustard seed. Our natural reaction to the threat of a dreadful disability is to lower our lightning rods of faith expectancy.

From the point of view of the minister, the more threatening the illness, the harder we tend to feel we will have to work in prayer, fasting and in ministry. As many die, despite all our efforts, we become confirmed in our view that some things are going to be harder work for God than others.

Cancer is a much bigger nut to crack than a passing headache, we suppose. Here we can see yet more forces at work that would lower our expectancy. The more the minister worries about his own role in the healing, the more he wrongly supposes that he or she carries responsibility for the process. The greater this assumption, the less reliance is placed on God —and the mustard seed may grow yet smaller.

However, this measuring of the severity of an illness flows from our own experience and ideas, rather than the truth about what God can do. The medical profession might, on the evidence of their research, classify some diseases as incurable, but in the kingdom of God no disease presents the Lord with greater difficulty than another. We tend to think about our past experience of prayer and the levels of apparent success and failure we have seen, as the measure of God's power and willingness to see healing done. But the revelation of God the Father comes only through Jesus, so to really know God's will and power we must watch the ministry of Jesus in the Gospels —and we see there that he never failed to heal anyone on the grounds that the problem was too hard for him. People's unbelief could be a hindrance, but Jesus never let anyone down who came to him for healing on the grounds that their problems were too huge, or that God wanted them to

suffer or to die before their time.

Power was coming out of Jesus and healing all who came to him. The same is true today. Jesus was raised from the dead; he is alive and he is the same tomorrow and today as he was then, in the Gospel accounts of healing. Power is still flowing from him for all of us. Moreover, he has given power, authority and a command to his disciples to heal the sick, with the promise that they will do even greater things.

He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

Luke 6:17 –19. 21

## How should I approach God for my own healing?

To seek our own healing from God, first and foremost we need to believe that it is his will to see everyone receive healing who comes to him. We must expect it to happen. The sum 'our faith minus our doubts' has to leave us with a 'mustard seed' of faith that healing is for us before we are in a place to begin to receive. Then we need the persistence and the humility to reach out for him, and to keep reaching out, until we receive what he has for us. We need to walk humbly with him, putting aside our questions, our doubts about God's power and love, and our criticisms of any abuses we may have seen, and fall on our faces before the Lord.

Secondly, we need to know and believe ourselves to be in the presence of God, not merely as one might entertain or give credence to a theological concept, but because we are aware of the awesome and almost tangible nature of his presence with us. This supernatural reality is expressed powerfully in this passage, providing us with a clear 'window': After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb. "

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"  
Revelation 7:9 –12

In the presence of God, how does one pray? How does one express needs to the Lamb on the throne? Amongst the holy throng how do we even open our mouths? The awesome presence of God is such that we can do nothing but worship him. So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.  
Matthew 6:31 –33

How should we approach God for our own healing? With expectant and child-like hearts, as out of our mouths comes worship, thanksgiving and praise.

## Do I have enough faith to be healed?

Most likely, yes. Many Christians who have not yet received the promised healing feel rejected by God, even let down by him in their hour of need. This idea that there has been a 'failure' to meet their need may then turn into self-blame.

The self-accusation emerges from the feeling that one does not have enough faith. Sufferers sometimes say that they will not attend healing services because they do not have the faith for that sort of thing.

In the context of Christian healing it is not right to think of our lack of faith, as we understand the meaning of that word today, as being a faulty belief system which will turn God away in judgement, withdrawing his healing hand. Faith, when simply described as the supplicant's belief in Jesus as Son of God, and belief in his virgin birth, his death and resurrection, is not in question here. It is not lack of such credal faith that limits our ability to receive healing, but rather our lack of simple and child-like expectancy that he will do it.

All the philosophical, cynical, sceptical and scientific reasoning that we use to avoid or bend the simple truth about God's healing heart makes many of us, to use the biblical term, 'double-minded' about such things. On the one hand, we believe in Jesus as Saviour and accept that he is quite capable of doing healing miracles, but on the other hand we have grave doubts about his readiness to do it to us, now, and we feel that there are so many unanswered questions.

This puts us in two minds. We have sufficient faith and yet we also have doubts—the word 'doubt' being translated from a Greek word meaning 'alternative viewpoint'. In this doubting frame of mind we appear like a man trying to row a boat along a waterway with an oar (his faith) in one hand and a canoe paddle (alternative views) clasped firmly in the other. He is actually going around in circles, not because of FAITH IN GOD any weakness in the oar but because of the use of a paddle in the other hand. His rowing is distinctly 'double-minded'!

He has one mindset that tells him that Jesus healed everyone who came to him and is the same good God today as he was yesterday; but in another, concurrent, mindset he has his 'Ah, but. . .'s. Unless he stops being double-minded, he cannot really expect to get anywhere fast!

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer. "

Matthew 21:21 –22

## What is the 'prayer offered in faith'?

And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

James 5:15

Does this phrase 'prayer offered in faith' mean that we should wait until we have some sudden or great influx of faith that assures us so mightily of an imminent healing that we have almost to do nothing but stand and wait for it? Or, on the other hand, do we speak out the prayer of faith when we have understood in our minds that Jesus heals and that we have authority over sickness and disease? If we then speak the words 'Be healed!', will it happen for us? We may look very foolish if it does not! How do we pray an effective prayer of faith? How do we do the works that God intends us to do?

We should forget what is in our minds and consider what is in our hearts. In John's Gospel we find the followers of Jesus facing the same misunderstandings. Jesus told his disciples that the work of God is to believe in the one he has sent (see John 6:28 –29). In other words, we can be used by God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to heal the sick if we simply believe that Jesus did do it, that he can do it and that he will do it. If we trust enough to rely totally on him then we begin to pray in faith, whatever the form of prayer we use. But how to deepen our trust?

One most important way is to move more deeply into the heart knowledge that Father God wills healing for everyone.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him. "

John 14:6 –7. 27

Here Jesus is impressing on Philip that we can see the Father heart of God if we watch his words and works. In verse eight Philip says, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us. "Philip is struggling to understand. Then Jesus answers him, "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father' ? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me the words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. . . . "



Jesus points out that it is the Father, living in him, who is doing his work; nowadays it is Jesus living within us who is doing the work. So what exactly do we have to believe if we want to pray the prayer of faith and heal the sick as did Jesus and the apostles?

In verse eleven, Jesus continues, “Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. ”

So the fuel for the prayer of faith is our believing that Jesus, by doing miracles of healing, is showing us the ‘heartbeat’ of God. .

Amazing things will start to happen if we really get this under our belt: that the heart of God is to see everyone who comes to him healed. In vv. 12 –14, Jesus assures us:

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. ” So there is no method of praying —no prescriptive answer —only a compassionate ache for those who suffer, and a concrete trust in the will of God to heal. There are \FAITH IN GOD.

There are often times when we cannot pray in words at all, nor even feel that we can pray in any way as we ought to. However, our inarticulate longings for a more abundant life for the supplicant in front of us are the Spirit’s intercessions on our behalf. These silent yearnings are audible to God who searches all our hearts, and are both intelligible and acceptable to him because they are the voice of his Spirit.

It is, after all, in accordance with his will that the Spirit should intercede for us. Jesus himself never prayed for the sick; he simply gave healing to them. He lived his life in complete dependence upon the Father, as we all ought to do. To appear before him, to stand in the kingdom in his healing presence, may often limit the minister entirely to worship. This can be what happens as the ‘prayer of faith ’takes place. It is then that the person ministering knows exactly where they are and what is around them, and is reacting the only way that they can to the presence of God.

## What is the power?

The power to heal is not a thing but a person. The apostles, and the early church disciples, did not believe that the risen, glorified Jesus was passive or inactive; on the contrary, they knew that he was at work in his body, the church. In their experience he was powerfully changing lives. Signs and wonders were following the preaching of the good news.

In the beginning, John the Baptist had been teaching his disciples to expect from Jesus the baptism of the Spirit —not of water only, as in his own baptismal rite. Before his death on the cross, Jesus continued to fill his disciples' minds with the expectation of this gift of the Spirit; and, some ten days after Jesus disappeared from their sight, that Spirit had come in power upon them. This same Holy Spirit was the Spirit of God, and also, and therefore, the Spirit of Jesus.

Jesus could not be thought of merely as a perfect past example, or a remote Lord, but an inward presence and power. World history shows us that the impact of mere examples, whether they be people or an experience of some massive event, becomes more and more feeble as time progresses. The example of Jesus, however, had become something much more than a memory. He who had, in the past, taught them how to live in the kingdom, was alive in the heavenly places and was working within them by his Spirit, to extend that very same kingdom. And the result? There is now great power for those of us who believe.

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Ephesians 1:17 –19

And how should we think of this Jesus within? He is the Son of God, the

Creator of the universe who makes all things new; the one who healed everyone who asked him, because he knew that it is the will of the Father that all who respond to this Jesus should have salvation. And this salvation includes physical and emotional healing for all who respond like little children to the Good News.

## How much can we rely on God to do it?

The miracles of Jesus and the benefits of his death on the cross are a focused reflection of God's heart for his hurting children. We are totally dependent on him for the power to heal, but God has decided already what his will is on the matter; and that will is clearly revealed in the character and ministry of his Son, Jesus. He was always willing to heal all, and this consistent disposition is a reflection of the Father's heart towards all of us. While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

Luke 5:12 –15

It was always so. Even before New Testament times, before God was fully revealed to us in Jesus, the people of God always knew that he was an unlimited healer:

Praise the LORD, O my soul;  
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.  
Praise the LORD, O my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits —  
who forgives all your sins  
and heals all your diseases,  
who redeems your life from the pit  
and crowns you with love and compassion,  
who satisfies your desires with good things  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.  
The LORD works righteousness  
and justice for all the oppressed.  
Psalm 103:1 –6

If we believe that we must prayerfully find out about God's will from healing situation to healing situation, then we have not seen clearly enough that God has already revealed his will in his Son. Anyone thinking that they must determine the will of God afresh as to whether he will or not heal the supplicant will have problems maintaining any sort of consistent ministry of healing the sick and injured.

The implicit belief that God's will might change, depending on the individual case, only serves to produce doubt in the hearts of both the minister and the

supplicant, interfering with the consistent flow of good results.

We need to cultivate a much more Christ –centred view of healing. We can be assured that all who came to Jesus received from him, and we must be alive to the fact that God’s will on the matter has been settled in heaven and revealed in his word.

## What must I believe in to see healing?

First of all we should define what is meant here by a miracle. We might say that God has always been turning water into wine. He created vines and the soil in which they grow. He has organised our climate so that rain falls on the vine, is sucked up into the plant and fills the budding grapes. Collected by men and fermented by God –created processes, wine emerges, to the enjoyment of man and the glory of God.

A miracle is seen to have been done when God supernaturally speeds up the process, as Jesus did at the wedding at Cana. Within our bodies we have a number of systems ready –built to provide healing forces within us. Where these are damaged or prove inadequate, and God is involved through prayer, such systems are supernaturally speeded up, to give us a healing miracle. Jesus consistently refers to such miracles as ‘works’, the inference being that his healing miracles were the work of God, the sort of thing that happens regularly and fruitfully in the kingdom of God. There were many in Jesus’ time, as there are today, who sought to work miracles too, people who wanted to do these works of God in the same way that Jesus was doing them.

Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent. ” John 6:28 –29

What does it really mean —to ‘believe in. . .’? If it means merely that we must have head knowledge that Jesus is the Christ, a person of the Holy Trinity, subject of the Virgin birth, resurrection and ascension, and that he once had the power to heal (and still does) then the entire Christian church would find healing the sick an easy thing to do. Many do believe those things. What really matters is our relationship of trust with him.

Justification by grace through faith (or coming into a right relationship with God) is not something that happens by virtue of our believing in the doctrine of justification by faith; but, rather, because we have come to the cross and received Jesus as Saviour and Lord, and been born again by the Spirit of God. So we begin to love the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and strength. Similarly, we are not healed simply because we believe Jesus was a healer and is still alive today. We come in love and simple, child –like trust to our Father in heaven who loves us and whom we love.

Expectancy in our hearts that Jesus can be trusted to let mercy flow every time —without exception into all who ask, is a working belief in the healing context. The understanding that God does not make individual decisions about healing which may vary from one person to another has to sink very deep into the hearts of all involved. We have to believe in the Jesus of the Gospels, the totally reliable one, and not some other concept of Jesus who has to be somehow persuaded by clever, well thought out prayers, sent up to heaven by 'experts'. We have to believe that God wishes healing for all who ask us to minister it in the name of his Son.

These concepts are not necessarily easy to grasp or apply, and the disciples found the task daunting. From John 14:6 onwards we can read about Philip's struggle to understand.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him. "

Philip just has not yet got hold of this idea. Jesus is telling him that we can see the Father heart of God if we watch his words and works. In verse 8, Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us. " Jesus answered:"Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father '? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me the words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

Now it is Jesus living in us who is doing the work. So what exactly do we have to believe if we want to heal the sick like Jesus did? In verse 11 Jesus says:"Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. "

So we have to believe that, by doing miracles of healing, Jesus is showing us the heart of God. Now what will start to happen if we really get this under our belt, that the heart of God is to see everyone who comes to him healed? That is: EVERYONE. We are to apply verse 12: I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

## **Does God need a faith environment into which he can heal?**

For the purposes of healing the sick and injured we may define a 'faith environment' as being a meeting together of hearts who trust in Jesus as Lord, Saviour and healer.

Jesus is the perfecter of our faith and the perfect revelation of the Father. If we ask 'Does God. . . 'we can always ask 'Did Jesus. . . ?'—and arrive at an accurate answer. This may, at first glance, lead to the most child-like theology, but this is infinitely preferable for those who seek to heal and be healed.

Much complex theology sows doubt.

There are certainly specific occasions in the Gospel accounts of Jesus healing the sick and injured where Jesus points out to the healed supplicant that it is their faith that has made them well again. There are also a number of occasions when Jesus checks in advance to make sure sufficient faith (a mustard seed) is present. An example of this approach can be found in Matthew 9:28. When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"

"Yes, Lord," they replied. .

There are both general and specific miracle workings recorded in Jesus' ministry where the seed of faith already existed and may well have been the factor that drew the supplicant to Jesus for healing in the first place.

Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (that is, the Son of Timaeus), was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Mark 10:46 –47

There are also occasions when miracles were worked where there is no specific evidence that any faith existed at all. There are a number of instances where the faith of family and friends was present, but others where as far as we know it was completely absent, such as the healing of the man who had been born blind. (See John 9:1 –7). There we have some interesting discussion on the subject of sin (Jesus made it clear that the blindness was not caused by sin in the man or his parents), but there is no hint that the blind man came into the situation with any faith, nor that any was raised up in him by listening to the conversation going on around him.

However, the most quoted passage on the subject of the need for the presence of faith is to be found in Matthew 13:54a, 57 and 58.



Coming to his home town, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. . . . And they took offence at him.

But Jesus said to them, “Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honour.”

And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.

Jesus is not always depicted as having to create a faith environment in the supplicants: sometimes the people brought one with them. Accounts of healing where there is little or no evidence of any faith environment at all are comparatively rare.

We might be well advised to consider in this context the nature of the culture in which we are attempting to minister. Some churches would need no faith building, whilst some may need extensive teaching on the kingdom of God to have their expectancy sufficiently raised. Even within the congregation of expectant churches there will be those who would love to be healed but whose doubts will limit their own openness to receive.

On a much larger scale, the level of the general ‘water table of expectancy’ among Christians can vary considerably between nations —levels of basic scepticism being higher or lower among different national cultures. Taking all this into consideration, it may always be wise to spend some time in lifting the expectancy of those who would come to Jesus.

In view of the growth of complex healing theology over the centuries, and the church’s reliance on its own experience to prove the will of God, simple and Christ-centred faith building is always a good thing to do. The gift of faith then flows into the people through that teaching, and their faith grows.

## Should we really expect it to happen?

The problem with ministering healing is that, too often, we want to make it so much more complicated than it needs to be.

A lifetime's experience of unanswered prayer can so often be the thing that has led us away from ministering God's goodness into the 'easier' way of interceding for it in the presence of the supplicant, and that can be counter-productive because it raises doubt. This is not to criticise intercession as such; it is to say that it has largely become easier and safer, in front of the supplicant, to ask God for healing than it is to simply invite that person to step into the kingdom and receive what has already been given. Prayers of request in the presence of the supplicant may tend to give the impression that we presuppose God might not decide to heal on this occasion.

We develop all sorts of spurious reasons as to why God (sometimes) might not heal us; we play the 'blame game' of laying fault at God's door, or at the feet of the supplicant. All this so-called 'deeper understanding' of spiritual things (which is anything but), only leads to scepticism and doubt. Unbelief has all too often made the healing ministry of the Christian church into a hit-and-miss, 'religious' affair —trying it now and again, to see if God will 'do the business'.

But the fact is that wherever we see God at work in miraculous power we also see a childlike, simple, trusting expectancy into which the river of grace can flow.

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. "

Matthew 19:14

When a meeting can take place between our simple, child-like expectancy and divine grace, it is as though heaven 'explodes'. We might say that 'grace plus expectancy' triggers heaven's dynamite, because when real, expectant trust is there, and God is moving amongst his people, his power begins to flow. We begin to see sick people healed in New Testament proportions. This is not to think in a mechanistic way about divine, supernatural power. We are considering here the flow of mercy. Our intercessory requests may sometimes be hopeful, but are much less often marked by real, confident, trusting expectancy.

There is incomparably great power available to us who believe, who are God's 'new creation'.

We Christians have all been given the awesome and exciting responsibility of carrying the revealed word of God, together with the signs and wonders accompanying that word, to the world.

Every church, of course, in various ways, prays for those who are sick, but perhaps more out of Christian hope, love and duty than the real expectation that God will act, according to his promises. But add the particular ingredient of expectancy, along with persistence and humility, and those around the church begin to be healed of their sicknesses in numbers only dreamed of before.

But there is a supplementary question. Sometimes a person who really does have great expectancy that God heals and wants to heal them, but who has not yet received healing will ask: "How often should I ask for prayer?" The supplicant may (mistakenly) think that to repeat requests for healing for oneself is to display a lack of faith. The conviction may take root that God has heard our prayers, and is in the process of meshing our requests in with his great plans for the world, but that other things may have to drop into place first before the desired healing will come. To go on asking, they think, is to presume that God may not have heard, or at least not begun to do something about it. This logic is rarely applied to praying for others; in those cases, persistent and faithful praying is readily approved as being right.

Consider again the teaching and example of Jesus. He consistently taught the need for continuous and persistent prayer until our object is achieved. Most healing is missed for want of such persistence. One of the major reasons for ineffective ministry is that we do not, or will not, press on into what has already been prepared for us. It is in persistence that we truly demonstrate our expectancy, the largest ingredient in our faith that opens us up to receiving healing.

Nowadays, we expect instant solutions, and, as these rarely happen where expectancy is in short supply, we turn away with wistful thoughts of, 'Maybe one day. . . .'

Having begun to sow seeds of doubt in our own minds, we become even less persistent and less expectant. The downward cycle of doubt into despair (or, worse, to the dismissal of the healing power of Jesus) begins.

To counteract such negativity, if this is your problem, I suggest reading or re-reading the biblical account of Elisha's dealing with the Shunammite woman, recorded in 2 Kings 4. That incident, and the healing of Naaman in chapter .

ve, provide powerful encouragement to us, demonstrating that God has always looked with favour on persistent faith and faithful action.

