

HEALING



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The Baptism and Early Ministry of Jesus

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. {14} And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" {15} But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. {16} When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. {17} And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17 NKJV)

It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. {10} And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. {11} Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Mark 1:9-11 NKJV)

When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. {22} And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased." (Luke 3:21-22 NKJV)

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! {30} "This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' {31} "I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." {32} And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. {33} "I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' {34} "And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God." (John 1:29-34 NKJV)

The Redemptive Qualities of The Baptism of Jesus

The baptism of Jesus represents His initiation into Spirit-empowered ministry. Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit and indwelt by the Holy Spirit from His mother's womb. This gave Him exceptional natural giftings unmarred by sin and a clear mind, filled with exceptional wisdom that could challenge the rabbis of His day from an early age. But as wonderful as these gifts were He still needed something more if He was to bear the burdens of the world in ministry. His identification with sinners at the Jordan and His plunging Himself into the stream of human misery and conflict represent a moving into public life and the bearing of not just His own burdens but the burdens of all the lost.

Jesus needed an empowering by the Holy Spirit before He moved out to proclaim the Kingdom of God. This may sound slightly heretical - after all wasn't He God - the fulness of Deity in bodily form, the incarnate Word full of grace and truth? (Col 2:9, John 1:14-18) Yes!! Absolutely, He was, is and always will be God. He did not "become divine" at His baptism or any other time. He was the "Lamb slain before the foundation of the world" - He was God before the world began and was intimately involved in its creation. (John 1:3, Col 1:17). However, as God He "took on the nature of a Servant" and in this limitedness He was born of a woman, grew up as a child in submission to His parents and like anyone else entering ministry needed the anointing of the Holy Spirit before He took on the burden of proclaiming the Kingdom, healing the sick, raising

the dead and suffering for righteousness' sake. In some way he limited Himself to what "a perfect believer" can do. He even said to His disciples that: (John 14:12 NKJV) "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father." Somehow in the economy of God the believer ("he who believes in Me") CAN accomplish the works that Christ did on earth ("the works I do he shall do also") plus a bit extra (and greater works than these he will do because I go the Father).

Now let's put that in context - Jesus is talking about the works He did in front of the disciples, during His earthly ministry but before He went to the cross (the words were uttered during the last supper). We cannot work the works He did while in heaven - such as Creation. Neither can we take the sins of the world on our shoulders. He has done that and that is His glory alone. But in the power of the Holy Spirit which has been given to us since Jesus has gone to the Father we can work the works He did between His baptism and the cross. Don't take my word for it - it's Jesus who said it! And the book of Acts certainly reinforces the idea that the Spirit-empowered believer can do great things for God. Now turning this on its head for a minute... if Jesus said "those who believe" could do what He did during His ministry then His earthly ministry must have been "limited" to that of the "perfect believer". It is as the "perfect believer" that Jesus went and got baptized and it is as the "Spirit-empowered perfect believer" that he went forth in ministry. This leads me to a little theological hypothesis, that the life of the "perfect believer" has two stages. Stage one is that of perfect piety when we fear God and grow in wisdom. We become good in ourselves. Stage two is the stage of public proclamation when we receive God's power in ministry and our piety and wisdom becomes the foundation for a Spirit-filled life where we become "rivers of living water" to a world in desperate need. I must very quickly add that stage two is not "superior" to stage one. Without a foundation in ethics and goodness ministry can be a dangerous place. It's the wrong place to learn wisdom. No-one despises a doctor for going to medical school even though he may minister to no-one there. We understand preparation in secular things and we should be prepared to do the preparatory work on our own life. Power without ethics and wisdom is the last thing God wants in your life. Both stages are necessary if "the perfect believer" is to do and be all that God wants.

New Testament Christians were generally baptized immediately upon profession of faith. The day of their conversion was also the day of their water baptism. So they spoke of the day of their conversion as "the day of my baptism", not because baptism saves us but because it was the unique external event that occurred on the day they professed faith in Christ. Also, in the revival conditions of the early church their baptism was often accompanied by the laying on of hands and the impartation of a spiritual gift to the new believer in Spirit baptism. This occasionally was not the case. (Acts 18:24-19:7) Apollos was a believer with a great deal of natural speaking ability yet still needed to understand the baptism in the Spirit if he was to proclaim the gospel "accurately". Also some believers who knew only the "baptism of John" and had not "even heard that there was a Holy Spirit". This is not unusual even today as some Christians receive very little teaching due to isolation, misunderstanding or inadequate ministry. Ideally all three aspects of baptism belong together. But they have wandered apart. We have people who are baptized but not changed. We have converts who have never had water baptism. And we have strong Christians who have not received the empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit. We need to press on and to desire to be Spirit-filled proclaimers of God's Kingdom. If we are to move beyond this accumulation of wisdom and truly minister to others in an effective way we need a "baptism in the Holy Spirit". This simply means we need an all-encompassing immersion in the God-head that empowers us for ministry. Baptism in the Spirit is not a private thing and it doesn't belong to any one denomination. It is not always accompanied by speaking in tongues or prophesy. Jesus' baptism had neither. The miracles came after the baptism. This baptism is

an initiation not just into the church but into the power of the Kingdom. This baptism is what happened to Jesus as he moved from an obscure life to center stage. It happened to the disciples at Pentecost who finally got plunged into full revival ministry themselves. And it happened to Wesley and countless other leaders of the Christian faith. The Jordan is a place where we get the power to stand in the flood of human souls and minister Christ to them.

The "baptism in the Spirit" is real, powerful and moves us out of our private pietism into public proclamation of the Kingdom of God. For me this happened unsought when God confronted me with the utter self-centeredness of my faith. I saw that I needed to cleanse out the filthy black mess of sin that remained in my life. It was an encounter with the awfulness of selfishness. It was evident that I had no hope apart from what Christ could do in me and with me. This was not a conversion, it was a dealing with the sin that entangled me, I was set free to run the race and I did. I led a huge number of people to God in the ensuing weeks. I was on fire with God because I had met Him in power. It was Jacob at Bethel all over again. This encounter with God, this "deeper experience" was not ecstatic - except that in the middle of it I did have a vision of my sin and of God. It took my faith from the private realm to the public realm; from self-edification to spirit-filled ministry; from a complaining Christian to a proclaiming herald.

Jesus did not have all this selfish sin to deal with, but He did need the power that God would provide in response to humble obedience. And He identified with sinners and "went down the front" with all the people being ministered to. I still struggle with "going down the front", how can I, a Christian leader, admit that I too have needs. I should "be an example" a stainless steel "there's nothing wrong with me" Christian. There is a real live Pharisee in me just waiting to get out. Its hypocritical to say I don't need ministry, that somehow my faith puts me a cut above the ordinary Christian. I do need ministry - lots of it. I go down the front now perhaps more than ever. It still hurts to do it. But Jesus wandered out there and said He was in need of God. He said that "it was fitting to fulfill all righteousness". Many preachers have felt like John the Baptist when they give an appeal and some real saint of God comes down the front and wants prayer to be a better Christian. I think "I need ministry from you, not you from me..." but the saints attitude is "this is fitting..." It's a humble person who can accept ministry from someone who is "unworthy to untie the thongs of their sandals".

A few quick correctives - the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" that we speak of here is NOT the same as the initial indwelling. All believers are indwelt with the Holy Spirit from the moment of their "new birth" just as Jesus was indwelt with the Holy Spirit from conception. Perhaps a better term would be "the empowering of the Holy Spirit", it is certainly less confusing. Three things are united in one term in the New Testament - water baptism, conversion and Spirit baptism. At Pentecost they all seemed to occur together. Water baptism is associated with repentance from sin and the appeal to God for a good conscience (1 Peter 3:21,22 Acts 2:38). Conversion represents the change of being old man to new man that comes as God re-creates the sinner into a "saint" (holy one, believer) (Eph 5:8,9; Col 1:13,14).

"Spirit baptism" involves being empowered to take up our place in the body of Christ in the exercise of whatever spiritual gifts have been imparted to us. (1 Cor 12:13) Just as it is bad manners to see a person as a lesser Christian if they have not had water baptism so it is not gracious to categorize people as "spirit-filled" and "un-spirit-filled". Such distinctions are divisive. Certainly to do as Priscilla and Aquila did and take someone aside and explain the way of God more accurately (and in love) is fine and helpful. However, I sense a certain spiritual pride in some believers in spirit baptism that leads me to urge caution in the way we approach the issue. Also there is no hint in the New Testament that "tarrying", seeking, or any prolonged anguish is necessary as preparation. It is not some exalted spiritual but a frequently misunderstood part of

the gospel along with water baptism and conversion. It is for all believers and like everything else is received by faith in the proclaimed word of Christ.

The Early Ministry

The early ministry of Christ is an outworking and authentication of His baptismal experience. I will deal with the temptations separately next month but here in His early ministry he comes primarily as the anointed one with the power to resist evil and to bring in the Kingdom of God in power.

(Matthew 4:13-25 NKJV). And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, {14} that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: {15} "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: {16} The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned." {17} From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." {18} And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. {19} Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." {20} They immediately left their nets and followed Him. {21} Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, {22} and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. {23} And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. {24} Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. {25} Great multitudes followed Him; from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

The anointing received at his baptism leads Him into a widespread ministry of proclamation. Matt 4:23a "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom,". From Galilee in north of Israel the word went out and many people were attracted to the "great light" (Matt 4:16). His fame caused people to travel hundreds of miles to see Him, people came from Syria in the north, Jerusalem in the south and from beyond the Jordan to the west. People came from the Greek speaking Decapolis and the Hebrew speaking Judea. Like moths to a flame multitudes were drawn to the ministry of Jesus. The anointing has "drawing power".

Secondly, the baptism of the Spirit produces a public and obvious concern with holiness. Not that Jesus was unconcerned with holiness before! But now it is out in the open - His message is "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand..". This holiness is also reflected in a calling of others into ministry to lead lives separated from worldly concerns in the pursuit of the Kingdom. Simon and Andrew are called by Jesus not to be "nice people" but to be "fishers of men", to be apostles of a new Kingdom not just improved worldlings. The baptism in the Spirit imparts that eternal perspective that makes the Kingdom the only thing that really matters.

Thirdly, the anointing has power to heal - after His baptism He healed "all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease...". Before His baptism not a single healing is recorded. After it He puts the physicians out of business. All who came to Him were healed not by His diagnostic ability or His knowledge of herbs but by the power that flowed from Him that He received when the Spirit came upon Him. If we desire to heal others in body or in soul we will end up struggling to heal a

handful by our own strength but we may heal thousands if God so chooses to impart His Spirit of healing in power upon us.

The final authentication of His baptism in the Spirit is the possession of extraordinary spiritual authority over the powers of darkness. This was, of course latent in Jesus from the beginning but it became obvious to all when His public ministry began and He moved in the continual power of the anointing of God. After Pentecost the apostles moved in this same power to heal the sick and to exorcise demons. These abilities are "graces" - no ordinary mortal by their own knowledge can heal the sick with a word or cast out a demon by their own authority. And they certainly cannot do it on the scale that Jesus or the apostles did it. And on Jesus authority we can know that we who believe can "do these works" and "even greater works" not because we are special but because Christ has gone to the Father. Because of this the Holy Spirit - who is God and who can do these things, has been poured out upon us. Jesus early ministry clearly shows that our effectiveness is not of ourselves but lies entirely in the power of God.

Summary

The "baptism in the Holy Spirit" as experienced by Jesus resulted in :

- (1) The proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom.
- (2) An attractiveness to others that draws people widely to hear God's message, this is not natural attractiveness (of which Jesus apparently had very little) but a supernatural blessedness that draws people in like moths to a flame.
- (3) A concern with holiness that calls others to lead a repentant and separated lifestyle.
- (4) Healing of the sick that is way beyond normal expectations in its scope. This wide scope is both in the numbers healed and in the great range of maladies that are cured -including "incurable" conditions such as epilepsy and paralysis. (Matt 4:24)
- (5) Authority over the powers of darkness.

These five things are among the works of Jesus that we can replicate and even exceed (John 14:12) though few have done so or gone anywhere near it. They are the marks of an authentic baptism of the Spirit. They are the fruit produced by an empowered and prepared believer whose character is without fault. Next month we will take up the relationship between tested character and spiritual empowerment when we look at the temptation in the wilderness - the subject of Milton's "Paradise Regained".

Prayer

"Lord, so work in me that I may be a fit vessel for your empowering. I acknowledge that any results I may see are because You indwell me or anoint me. I place myself before You and in obedience ask for an empowering of the Spirit suited for this hour and this time and for the mission you have called me to. Proclaim Your Kingdom through me in holiness and in Truth. May I testify to your Kingdom through healing and deliverance. May I set You forth so clearly that many flock to find You. Amen."

The Healing Ministry of Jesus

The healing ministry of Jesus is one of the most acknowledged and most controversial parts of His redemptive work. There are those who see healing as being "in the cross" and thus automatically and instantly available to the believer. Others see physical healing as outside of redemption which they confine to dealing with sin. Both views are, to my mind, a little less than fully biblical. Jesus did indeed bear our illnesses - but not first of all on the cross, but during His earthly ministry to the sick. Matthew clearly sees the fulfillment of the prophecy being while Jesus was alive and ministering!

When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, {17} that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses." (Matthew 8:16-17 NKJV)

However, that fact that Jesus has ceased His earthly ministry does not mean that He has ceased His healing ministry because healing is part of the nature and goodness of God and that does not change. The ministry of healing is as unchanged as Christ Himself.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. (Hebrews 13:8 NKJV)

The healing ministry of Jesus can be broken into two parts:

That which He did before the cross and which He taught His disciples to do (Matthew 10:8, Luke 10:1,9, Acts 5:16) and which we can participate in by faith today (John 14:12, James 5:13-15) That which He did in the cross itself. This is a unique and completed work and we simply proclaim its benefits. This is the healing of our spirits from sin, death and going astray. (1 Peter 2:24,25).

I will deal with the second part in a later part of this series on redemption. For now I will concentrate on physical healing, exorcism and raising the dead as typified by Jesus earthly ministry before the Cross and which He continues today through His servants. (Acts 4:22, 30; 5:16; James 5:13-15)

Physical healing

Even among unbelievers there is a general perception of Jesus as a healer of the sick. It is closely entwined with who He is and how He acts towards needy people. People see Jesus as someone who is supposed to meet their deepest needs including the need for physical healing. When people see healing take place in Jesus' name it strengthens their faith in His nature and in the gospels thus enabling many to believe for salvation. Healing the sick and preaching were often associated in Jesus' ministry. But to confine healing to something that validates the gospel is to miss Christ's compassion for the sick and to turn healing into little more than an attention-gaining religious publicity stunt. Jesus was genuinely moved out of compassion for the sick. For Him healing was an essential part of His ministry to hurting people and not merely an "opener" before the message. Jesus associated healing with the Presence of His Kingdom (Luke 10:9). The Kingdom has not yet arrived and still needs to be proclaimed with power and authority. Jesus through His body the Church needs to confront evil in all its forms - physical, emotional, spiritual and systemic. Thus we can expect His healing ministry to be manifested today to some degree in the redemption of our physical bodies from the effects of evil. This will be finally

accomplished at the resurrection but is accomplished in part and as a foretaste through His healing ministry today. So we see that Jesus is still the same yesterday, today and forever and is still healing the sick. Each day thousands of people around the world experience healing in answer to prayer. Sure not all are healed, sure a lot more should/could be healed, but the Church is reawakening to the Presence of Jesus in our midst as our healing Redeemer. The following six points provide a brief theological tour of the reasons underlying Jesus' healing ministry. I am sure you can diligently search the Scriptures to find even more!

As the incarnation of God. One of the names of God is YHWH Rapha "The Lord Your Healer". Our God has always been a healing God and this is His nature. Therefore Jesus as incarnate deity represented this by healing the sick. **(Exodus 15:26 NKJV) and said, "If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you.**

As an intercessor against evil and bearer of sin. Jesus confronted all forms of evil and lifted it off people. (This is perhaps a more literal translation to bear). As the Confronter and demolisher of evil He took on sickness and the toll it takes on suffering humanity. (1 John 3:8 NKJV) He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. [See also Matt 8:16,17, Isaiah 53:4,5]

As One who did "the Father's will" and only did what He saw the Father doing He enacted God's "Father-heart" toward His Creation. If as human fathers we want our children well how much more does God want His images healed - both physically and spiritually? (John 5:19-21 NKJV) Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. {20} "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. {21} "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. **[See also Luke 11:10-13] Note: These verses tell us that all His works flowed from an intimate relationship of obedience to the Father so that Jesus knew His actual will in all things. This was not some quick presumption of what His will "should be" (like we tend to do) and knowing the Father's will from an intimate relationship with Him is perhaps one of the keys to healing people today.**

Out of mercy - God's relenting in judgment on sinners - and consequent bestowing of blessing. The blind men cried "Have mercy on us Son of David..." and were healed. Many of Jesus' miracles flowed from His compassion for hurting humanity.

As a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and His nature as the Messiah. For instance in Malachi it says: (Malachi 4:2 NKJV) But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.

As a demonstration of the Spirit's power and the Presence of the Kingdom of God. (Luke 10:9 NKJV) "And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

Exorcism

Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. {23} And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" {24} Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." {25} But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. {26} "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? {27} "And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. {28} "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. {29} "Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. (Matthew 12:22-29 NKJV)

There is increasing recognition today of an evil spiritual kingdom arrayed against the Kingdom of God. Movies such as "The Exorcist" and "The Omen" and sensationalized reports of exorcisms gone wrong have done little to help the Church. They have instead created a paralyzing fear of tackling the demonic realm. Yet for Jesus His authority over the demonic realm was undisputed and absolute. He cast out demons with a word (Matthew 8:16; Mark 1:27) and relieved the symptoms of their possession (Luke 13:11-13). He also passed this authority to the Twelve and later to the 70. (Luke 10:17-22 NKJV)

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." {18} And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. {19} "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. {20} "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." {21} In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. {22} "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."

This is a great perspective statement. It puts authority over spirits in the second rank of blessings behind those associated with salvation (v. 20). Yet it clearly states that even "babes" - the ordinary Christians who are neither "wise" or "prudent"(v. 21) can operate in spiritual power and authority providing they operate within the scope of Jesus' redeeming Name (v. 17-19). Demons do not respect knowledge. They only respect authority and power. God gives His authority and power to all who believe and operate in his name. The humblest believer can be endowed with great authority from God. The apostles were certainly "unschooled" miracle workers (Acts 4:13,14).

The power to deal with the demonic comes from God through faith in the name of Jesus and is part of His works that He trained His Church to do (Matt 10:8). The Presence of the Kingdom demands the absence of the demonic and evicting evil powers is a battle of heavenly proportions that the Church is called to wage. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NKJV) For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. {4} For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, {5} casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and (Ephesians 6:10-12 NKJV) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. {11} Put on the whole armor of

God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. {12} For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

We cannot wage this battle in our own strength but only with weapons that are given to us from God and with His delegated power and authority. We only have a right to this authority because of what Jesus did on the cross in "spoiling" , capturing and defeating and "looting" the "principalities and powers...". (Colossians 2:15 NKJV) {15} Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.(the cross). **The Christian is by definition "in Christ" and participates in this victory of his Master just as a mere private participates in the victory of a General. When one wartime commander defeats another even a private in the winning army has authority over a general in the losing army. Christ has won the battle for us and God has given us authority to defeat evil (Luke 10:19, Romans 16:20). Demons are afraid of 1)The blood of Jesus Christ 2)The bold testimony of Christians 3) The authority of Christ and His saints. (Revelation 2:11; Ephesians 1:20; 2;6).When Christians resist evil even Satan himself is forced to flee (James 4:7).**

How can we tell if a demon is involved? In brief demonic activity most frequently stems from the person's or their immediate families involvement in occult activity, destructive addictions or promiscuity/pornography. These are very strong life-controlling things that affect our spirits directly. When illness results from such a lifestyle and proves largely untreatable (some alleviation may be experienced but never freedom) then pray and ask God if evil spirits could be involved in the person's subjugation. There were two main groups of symptoms of demon activity that were alleviated when Jesus cast out evil spirits - 1) Chronic untreatable illness 2) Mental instability , inner torment and derangement. On liberation from demonic activity epileptics were healed (Mark 9:17-27), infirm cripples straightened up,(Luke 13:11-13) blind and mute people received speech and sight (Matt 9:32-34) and people were relieved from inner torment (Luke 6:18, 8:29-35). This is not to say that all chronic illness or mental instability is due to demonic activity but merely that when it is due to evil spirits that we have the authority in Christ Jesus to alleviate the distress. I can recommend Ed Murphy's "Handbook of Spiritual Warfare" for a balanced and thorough treatment of this topic.

Raising the Dead

One of the most obvious effects of Jesus redeeming us is that we will all one day be raised from the dead. (1 Corinthians 15:51-55 NKJV) Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; {52} in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. {53} For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. {54} So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." {55} "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

Jesus is "the resurrection and the life"(John 11:25,26). He is able to impart life to our mortal bodies through the power of the indwelling Spirit (Romans 8:11). The final wonder-filled resurrection to glory is pre-figured in gospel events such as the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-45). However, raising the dead in the here and now as a result of the faith-filled prayers of the saints is in the category of "great wonders". Raising the dead was a rare event even in the ministry of Jesus and the apostles and only occurred a handful of times. It is never implied that all who die should be raised to life. It always seems an extraordinary mercy of God

toward some person "deserving" of that mercy because of great need or a life of good works. While the New Testament amplifies at length on the healing ministry of the church and the gift of healing and commands the elders to pray for healing there is only one recorded injunction to "raise the dead" - that given to the twelve by Jesus when sending them out into ministry (Matthew 10:8). Thus the New Testament raises the possibility of believers being able to do this work of Jesus but seems, frustratingly, to leave it there. There have been various reports of the dead being raised even today. However, they are nowhere near as common as that of healings or exorcisms. Those raising from the dead that have occurred in modern times seem to have mainly been in conditions of exceptional revival. I think this is generally its proper context.

Despite all this caution we should remember that Jesus is the Lord of Life - in all its forms (not just spiritual life) and that He can raise the dead and give people a second chance at life. After all "nothing is impossible with God"(Luke 1:37). The possibility of the dead being raised in answer to prayer exists because Jesus has chosen to confront and defeat Death "the last enemy"(1 Cor 15:26). While Death will be the last enemy to be defeated some victories are possible here and now though most will undoubtedly wait until the resurrection of the dead when Christ returns.

Summary and Conclusion

Jesus' redemption of mankind has opened up possibilities for the believer in healing the sick, raising the dead and in casting out demons. Two of these - healing and exorcism seem to have been common place in the early church while raising the dead seems to be much rarer. Jesus confronted evil in all its forms and has borne not just our spiritual afflictions such as sin and judgment but our physical illnesses and emotional griefs. He began to bear these latter things during His earthly ministry (Matt 8:16,17) and culminated this lifting of burdens on the Cross. Since then He has continued to heal the sick through the ministry of His body the Church.

Where to from here? There is not sufficient space for me to fully outline a balanced and compassionate and Biblical theology of healing. That would take a book. What I can recommend is starting with a concordance or computer Bible program go through and study every biblical reference to healing, exorcism and raising the dead. Test your theories against the biblical data and pray, pray, pray for the sick. They need your prayers and Christ's help.

Jesus and Healing

Introduction

Jesus' attitude is always the "plumbline" for our attitudes. Things "straighten up" when we see things from His point of view. This study aims to work out what Jesus' attitude was towards healing. It's a controversial area for us today but it was very much part of Jesus' life and ministry and as we watch Him in action - we may just learn something. May God bless you as you read this.

Let's start with the obvious!

Jesus always saw sickness as something to be healed

Whenever Jesus came across sickness His attitude was to heal it. (Matthew 4:23-25, 8:16,17, 9:35) Jesus had compassion on the sick. Just as we automatically have compassion on our own children when they are ill. It would be a most cruel and unusual parent that seeing one of their own children ill would think "This child should suffer some more in order to learn a lesson". These natural instincts we have are part of the image of God in us and reflect the heart of God. All who came to Jesus for healing, were healed. None were told to wait until ... (put whatever you like in the gap).

Jesus sometimes saw sickness as the direct work of the devil.

Sickness can come from the Devil in two main ways - as a direct attack on the life of a righteous person, permitted by God but not "God's will". Job's sores (Job 2:4-7) and the sickness of the woman bound in the spirit of infirmity (Luke 18:10-16) seem to be in this category.

Jesus sometimes saw sickness as the direct result of sin.

Throughout the Old and New Testament there has always been a strong connection between sin and sickness. Except for the book of Job and some cases of barren but righteous women there was an almost universal causal connection between the disruption of fellowship with God and bodily illness. This flows from the Bible's view of the person as a whole being body-soul-spirit knitted into one with each part affecting the other. Consequently spiritual health can also impart physical health and quicken our mortal bodies. (Romans 8:11) There is no record of Jesus being ill, though He was mortal and human and subject to the normal exigencies of human flesh. While Jesus broadens the OT understanding so that not all sickness was due to sin he twice indicated that a person's illness was based in prior sin. (Mark 2:5, John 5:14) Paul is more explicit about it in his writings to the Corinthians who had a strong triumphalistic streak. He indicated that sickness could be the result of Church discipline for gross immorality - "handing someone over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh.." (1 Corinthians 5:1-5) . The abuse of the Lord's supper was also seen to result in physical illness (1 Corinthians 11: 28-32). In extreme cases sin may even result in physical death. (1 Corinthians 11:30; Acts 5:5-10; Romans 1:26-28). The normal aim of such illness is repentance and the soul being saved on the day of salvation. (1 Cor 5:1-5; 11:28-32). Thus it is wise for the person seeking healing to confess any known sin and to get right with God before prayer is administered. This naturally leads to the question **Should we heal someone that the Lord is chastening?** The answer to this is simple. If they turn to God in their illness and submit themselves to the elders of the

church, confessing their sins and asking for healing (as in James 5) then the chastening has done the work of leading them to repentance and we should heal them. Thus there is no contradiction between "healing all who ASK for it" and allowing the Lord to chasten people unto repentance. The very act of asking is a sign of seeking God. Later we will cover how to help people when repentance is needed prior to healing. *While Jesus and the apostles acknowledged a connection between sin and physical illness they never blamed anyone for being ill (or even lacking faith in their healing) but rather always sought to heal them.*

Jesus often drew a direct connection between faith and healing.

Healing is a manifestation of the kingdom of God in our mortal bodies and I think a pre-figuration of the resurrection. Like all Kingdom realities healing is received by faith. Jesus explicitly acknowledges this in Matt 8:10, 9:28,29; 15:28; Mark 2:5; 9:24; 10:52 and the parallel passages.

Jesus saw healing as one of the signs of the Presence of the Kingdom

In Matt 4:23, 9:35, and Luke 9:11 healing and the preaching of the Kingdom are tied together in Jesus' ministry. The ministry of the disciples (the 12 and the 70) is to have both aspects: the Kingdom proclamation and the demonstration of Kingdom power (Matt 10:7,8, Luke 9:2). Luke 10:9 is quite explicit (Luke 10:9 NKJV) "And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'" In Matt 12:28, Jesus associates exorcism in His name with the Presence of the Kingdom (Matthew 12:28 NKJV) "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you." This role of healing in demonstrating the validity of the gospel and the Presence of the Kingdom is graphically demonstrated when the imprisoned John the Baptist sends his disciples to Jesus... (Luke 7:19-23 NKJV) {19} And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to Jesus, saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" {20} When the men had come to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'" {21} And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. {22} Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. {23} "And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me." Jesus saw healing as a demonstration of the real Presence of the Kingdom that would encourage those who struggled to believe.

Jesus saw healing as a work that His disciples and His church could also work

This is partly covered above. Here are a few verses indicating the spread of healing from the 12 to the 70 to the wider church:

And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. (Matthew 10:1 NKJV) After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go... "And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'" (Luke 10:1,9 NKJV)

Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed. (Acts 5:16 NKJV)

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. {14} Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. {15} And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven (James 5:13-15 NKJV).

The theological mandate for this is found in the empowering Presence of God experienced by Jesus at His baptism and experienced by the Church at Pentecost. With this in mind Jesus could say to his disciples (John 14:10-12 NKJV) "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?...{11} "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. {12} "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. "The works" spoken of here are the works Jesus did between His baptism and the cross. It is indicated that the Spirit-filled believer (discussed elsewhere in this chapter and very much in mind) "will do also" some of these works and perhaps do "greater works" because the Spirit's power will be manifest in the believer and in the believing community. We cannot do Jesus' works of creation or redemption but we can do the works He did during his ministry -preaching the Kingdom, healing the sick, driving out demons etc. Jesus seemed disappointed and in fact angry when His empowered and called disciples failed to do these works (Luke 9:39-42) and doing them seemed to be an integral part of his approach to training them for ministry (Luke 9 and 10).

Jesus saw healing as a demonstration of God's mercy and compassion, it was never "earned".

Mercy is a somewhat neglected concept. It means that you have the right to punish or destroy but do not do so. It was used technically when someone had lost a duel and the victorious party had every right to kill them. The victor could lift his sword point thus showing mercy. God's mercy goes much further than "not killing" but even unto restoring the person to wholeness. Jesus gladly responded to those who appealed for healing on the basis of the mercy of God (Matthew 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; 20:30,31). Jesus also frequently healed out of compassion (Matt 14:14; 20:34; Mark 1:41; 5:19; 9:22-24; Luke 7:13-15). *Compassion is Christ's practical response to human need.* It includes the practical action of the Good Samaritan and of Christ feeding the hungry multitudes (Luke 10:33; Mark 8:2) it is never just an empty sentiment. The power of God is linked to the compassion of God. However, God's mercy and compassion is His to command and should never be taken for granted (Romans 9:15). The gospel record though should lead us to believe that His compassion is readily available to all who seek it. Remarkably it was this aspect, more than almost any other, that enraged the religious leaders of His day. They often sternly opposed Jesus' healings being angered at the mercy He demonstrated.(Matt 9:9-13; 32-34; 12:10-15; Jn 9:13-34) The Pharisaical mindset sees healings as "rewards" perhaps due to the saintly righteous but certainly not due to sinners. I cannot recall a single Pharisee being healed. This leads to three rough rules of thumb "You will only receive as much grace as you think you need." (Luke 18:9-14) and "No grace comes to those who think they deserve it."(Luke 18:9-14; Galatians 3:2-5; 5:1-11; Romans 11:6) and "You receive more grace than you give but you have to give it first" (Luke 6:35-38).

Jesus saw healing as a sovereign work of the Father not as an act of "Christian magic".

There is a fine line between the "magical" and the "Christian" uses of supernatural power. Supernatural power becomes "magical" when it is seen to operate separately from the will of the Father. For instance the bronze serpent that Moses held up in the wilderness eventually had to

be destroyed because its healing properties were attributed to it separately from YHWH and it thus became an idol (2 Kings 18:4). A similar thing happened to the ark of the covenant in the days of Eli (1 Samuel 4:3,4) when it, not the Lord, was credited with victory for Israel. Consequently it went into captivity for a while (1 Samuel 4&5). The temptations Satan used on Jesus were temptations to achieve the purposes of God by means divorced from the will of God. He was asked to turn stones into bread for his own gratification. He was asked to use His new endowment of supernatural power for the purposes of showmanship and jump from the Temple. Finally He was to conquer the world - but acknowledge Satan as the source of his Kingdom. The word of God and fasting kept Jesus from these temptations. It strikes me that these must be very powerful temptations to be able to be used on Jesus and it does seem that certain Christians are in their grip - to their very great spiritual peril (Matt 7:21-23). Jesus kept His integrity in ministry by only doing that which He saw the Father doing (John 5:19,20; 36; 10:32,37,38; 14:10-12). Relationship with God and obedience were keys to His overcoming this most subtle of temptations. Thus the safest way to minister is to minister in an attitude of holy fear, reverence, praise and worship. Therefore preparatory worship is more than emotionally satisfying it also draws us into the necessary state of humility and obedience that can safeguard us from wrong desires. Paul Tournier treats this aspect of the temptation to magic in healing well in his book "A Doctor's Casebook In The Light Of The Bible" pages 113-116 (written in 1954!). He finishes up by saying " There are then two contrary errors: to refrain, for fear of magic, from every kind of bold and sensational act, even when God requires it of us; this course has been all too common in the Church, and is what has made us as poor as it is today in manifestations of God's power. And, on the other hand, through zeal to demonstrate that power, to run after the sensational, even when God does not will it, and so fall into magic; certain religious sects are guilty of this. In the Gospel, the skeptics sneered at the miracles in Galilee and at the Cross: 'He saved others; let Him save Himself, if this is the Christ of God, His chosen' (Luke 23:35). Neither the miracles nor the Cross can be taken out of the gospel without distorting it."

Jesus always healed what the person wanted healed

There is a tendency to be wiser than the patient when one is in healing ministry and doctors, counselors and psychiatrists are particularly guilty of this and I am afraid some Christians are getting in on the act. If a person wanted to be healed of leprosy or blindness that was what got fixed. Even though Jesus knew the hearts of people He did not say "Your real problem is...". Jesus took people's problems at face value and healed them. He was not an arrogant know all and He left people with their dignity.

Jesus remembered the social context when He gave instructions after healing.

Jesus treated the sick as part of a social structure that needed to accept that the person had been healed. Lepers had to show themselves to the priest and be certified as clean so they could resume their place in society (Matthew 8:2-4; Luke 17:12-19). Certain illnesses can relapse (particularly schizophrenia) if the family does not incorporate the person as "healed" but still views them as "sick". Jesus frequently gives instructions to the family or the sick person that initiates a resumption of normality. (Matt 8:14,15; 9:6; Mark 5:43; 10:52; John 11:44).

Even though Jesus had a powerful healing ministry it was not His top priority.

His redemptive work on the cross, the training of the disciples and the proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom were all given a higher priority than healing the multitudes at various

times. Healing was an integral part of the whole and a visual and practical demonstration of His message but it was never of ultimate importance. (Mark 6:12,13, 30-32 ; Luke 4:40-43; 9:51).

Jesus saw healing as a manifestation of Divine authority and power.

The original commission to Adam was to "subdue the earth" to bring about God's order and perfection in Creation. As the last Adam Jesus subdued evil spirits and even illness which represents a serious imperfection in God's created order. To do this He exercised spiritual authority which He also passed on to others.(Matthew 8:9-13; 9:6; 10:1; Mark 3:15; 6:17; Luke 5:17; 6:19; 9:1; 10:19). Healing requires power and authority to flow from God. Sometimes evil spirits can strongly resist this power and a "power encounter" may take place such as that with the Gadarene demoniac in Mark 5. Healing is a miniature exertion of God's restoring power and is a way of "doing His will on earth as it is done in Heaven" - where there will be no more sickness or crying or pain (Rev 20:1-3).

The Mercy of God and Healing

Introduction

Healing is a merciful act of God towards the sick. This is shown in numerous Bible verses which are quoted below. However, first we need to clarify what "mercy" is.

In the days of duels, when the loser fell to the ground and the sword was at his throat he could cry "Mercy". The victorious duelist had every right to run his opponent through but the more noble-hearted duelists would heed the cry for mercy and lift the sword and grant life to the defeated foe. Mercy was granted a) to those who asked for it b) who had given up the fight and mercy was c) at the complete discretion of the winner. God shows us mercy but also says "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy and compassion upon whom I will have compassion".

In Jesus we see that He chose to have compassion and mercy upon all who asked for it. In the previous articles in this book we saw that ALL who came to Him were healed and that the sight of the sick moved Him with compassion so that He healed them (see opening article on the Basics). In the Psalms it says God has "mercy on all he has made" (Ps 145:9). Here are some verses that demonstrate the close relationship between mercy and healing.

EXAMPLES

Two Blind Men

As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, crying loudly, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" (Mat 9:27 NRSV)

Demon-Possessed Child

Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." (Mat 15:22 NRSV)

Epileptic Son

And said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly; he often falls into the fire and often into the water. (Mat 17:15 NRSV)

Another Two Blind Men

There were two blind men sitting by the roadside. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, "Lord, have mercy on us, Son of David!" The crowd sternly ordered them to be quiet; but they shouted even more loudly, "Have mercy on us, Lord, Son of David!" (Mat 20:30 NRSV)

Gaderene Demoniac

But Jesus refused, and said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you." (Mark 5:19 NRSV)

Blind Bartimeus

When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:47 NRSV)

Elizabeth's Pregnancy - Removal of Disgrace

Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. (Luke 1:58 NRSV)

Ten Lepers

They called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" (Luke 17:13 NRSV)

Epaphroditus

Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; {26} since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. {27} For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. (Philippians 2:25-27 NKJV)

Mercy & God's Sovereignty

However, God always retains control over His mercy and does not cast it around carelessly. He does not give mercy to the rebellious or to the cruel. Going back to the illustration of the duel the victorious duelist would not give mercy to an opponent he knew would get up and continue fighting him at every turn or who had been cruel and merciful to him or others he knew in the past. Such a person had forfeited any claims to mercy - in fact it would be foolish to be merciful to a rebellious or cruel person. God longs to have mercy on us but the hardness of our hearts can prevent Him showing us mercy for salvation - and presumably for healing also. James says that: "(James 2:13 NRSV) For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment." From this we can see two things - if we are unmerciful we will not receive mercy. However, if we are merciful than we will receive mercy and this mercy will deliver us from judgment. In fact mercy will not only deliver us it will "triumph over" judgment. See the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18 for a good illustration of both these principles. On a practical level many people have testified that it was after that had forgiven someone that they received mercy for inner healing and sometimes for physical healing as well.

God's Sovereignty

For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God who shows mercy. (Rom 9:15,16 NRSV)

So then he has mercy on whomever he chooses, and he hardens the heart of whomever he chooses.(Rom 9:18 NRSV)

The Wonderful Availability of Mercy To Christians

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us. (Eph 2:4 NRSV)

Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb 4:16 NRSV)

He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32 NKJV)

Receiving/Forfeiting Mercy

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. (Mat 5:7 NRSV)

"For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. {15}

"But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions. (Matthew 6:14-15 NASB)

"Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. {33} 'Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave,

even as I had mercy on you?' {34} "And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. {35} "So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart." (Matthew 18:32-35 NASB)
 For judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:13 NRSV)

Crying Out For Mercy

In many of the examples above people "cried out for mercy" and indicated they were serious both about God and about their problem - the Syrophenician woman, Blind Bartimaeus, the lepers, the father of the epileptic boy and many others had an air of absolute desperation as they approached Jesus. Desperation seems to be part of the true faith that breaks through for healing. Desperation does not lie back in luxury with a sense of arrogant entitlement and expect God to be the convenient provider of blessing. Desperation abandons all dignity, all pretense, all pride and independence and flings itself towards God crying out for the mercy needed.

Conclusions

We can ask for God to show His mercy to us when we are sick.

God's mercy, expressed through Jesus is partly due to Jesus being a "Son of David". David was noted for being a merciful King with a heart like God's own heart. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of this "type" - that is Jesus is the perfect Merciful King.

If we are a Christian we have access to mercy through access to the "throne of grace" .

We can forfeit mercy by being hard-hearted.

We receive mercy by being merciful ourselves.

Ultimately mercy is God's decision.

If we are a Christian we are already a recipient of God's mercy in Christ therefore we can be confident that God wishes to be merciful to us.

We should therefore be CONFIDENT of God's mercy and go to God for healing based on His merciful nature.

Jesus never refused to show mercy and heal.

He may ask us to press in for that mercy so we do not take it for granted.

Our Bodies Are Temples of the Holy Spirit

God loves your physical body and it is very precious to Him. Jesus showed God's love for our bodies when He healed so many people. God states His care and love for our body in Psalm 139 where he says we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" and that our physical bodies are amongst the concern of His thoughts. Finally God has made a future for our bodies when He will resurrect them from the dead. God dwells in our physical bodies and calls them His temple. Our bodies, like temples, are sacred sites where God dwells. Other people should be able to go to us as temples of the living God and meet God there! What an amazing thought! This article will look into the analogy of our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit and attempt a start on a Christian attitude to our physical bodies.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. {14} I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. {15} My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, {16} your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. {17} How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! {18} Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I am still with you. (Psalms 139:13-18 NIV)

1. We are continually told that our physical bodies are the almost meaningless products of time, chance, genetics, radiation, chemicals and our mother's moods in pregnancy. Here David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit speaks about how God knows all things about him. The first statement he makes is that "you knit me together in my mothers womb". This is not a statement of ignorance. This is not "the God of the gaps" filling in because David did not understand genetics. This is a faith statement that God is personally involved as our Creator in making our bodies. And, yes, this does apply to those born with disabilities as the following incident from the gospels shows...

As He (Jesus) walked along, He saw a man blind from birth. {2} His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" {3} Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. {4} We must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. {5} As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:1-5 NRSV)

Jesus went on to heal him. In this case both the disability and the healing were from God. In my own case I was born a moderately severe epileptic which resulted in some very painful years. Over the past five years I have seen an enormous improvement as the direct result of prayer. I believe that again both the disability and the healing were of God...We need to adopt a Christian perspective that sees our bodies through the eyes of faith. By faith David saw that we are deliberately formed and fearfully and wonderfully made. By faith Jesus took away the blame for disabilities. By faith we are healed and by faith we know that God is involved with and deeply loves our physical bodies.

2. Psalm 139:16, "Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."

God has a plan and purpose for your life that involves your physical body and which commenced from when you were within the womb. God is better than ultrasound - He sees your unformed body in the womb with the eyes of love. God does not behold us with impersonal

detachment or scientific curiosity. (Psalm 33:18) God's beholding is a beholding of the lover gazing, the father yearning, the heart following the eyes to the object of love. There is no such thing as "just a fetus" to God; the child in the womb is a person He loves in progress towards plans He has made. No matter what the circumstances of your birth were, whether you were wanted or unwanted, planned or unplanned, loved or abandoned or rejected there is One who was watching all of this and yearning for you. There is One who loves you even God, and He has a plan for your life.

3. Psalm 139:14, "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

David looks on his body with the eyes of faith and says "I am fearfully and wonderfully made". This is something I struggle with. I look on my skinny frame and distinct lack of biceps and feel that I have missed out in the handsomeness stakes. It was only as I did some reading about artificial intelligence and computer programming that I began to realize that my arm is a marvel that no robot arm can match, my eyes are wonders no camera can ever come close to. My ability to walk over all kinds of terrain, ride bicycles, climb cliffs and swim through water is not matched by any vehicle that man has made despite billions of dollars of research. And with my nervous system I got a free multimedia super-computer with self-programming capacity! At birth! For free! Unearned! My first degree was in chemistry and the ability of the liver to synthesize complex macromolecules out of last night's dinner is mind-boggling. No chemist could go anywhere near it. A Japanese company apparently attempted the commercial replication of the "simple" transformation of glucose into glycogen, a reaction fundamental to life which the liver performs every day. Before they gave up they had built a factory occupying a square mile and costing a vast sum of money (some billions of dollars). This is just one of the countless molecular miracles that happen as your fish and chips and cup of tea become muscles, bone and brain cells. As skinny as I may be it is by faith and in truth and with much love that I can say "I am fearfully and wonderfully made".

"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. {13} "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. {14} And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. {15} Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! {16} Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." {17} But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. {18} Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. {19} Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? {20} For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:12-20 NRSV)

4. 1 Corinthians 6:12, "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything."

Our bodies are meant to be under our control. The Corinthians had latched onto grace but not onto discipline and constructive living. Culturally Corinth was sophisticated, debauched and "liberated" it was renowned throughout the Roman Empire for "broad-minded promiscuity" and the use of prostitutes in pagan religious worship was very common. The new converts to Christianity came from backgrounds that naturally turned grace into license and used slogans such as "all things are lawful for me.."Knowing human nature it would be remarkable indeed if

they made a smooth transition to a godly and disciplined lifestyle. So Paul lays down some very basic principles for them concerning our bodies. The first of these is that we are to be masters of our bodies and dedicate them to good godly purposes. Therefore, life-dominating addictions to alcohol, sex, drugs, binge eating or physical "adrenaline highs" are major problems for the Christian life. This leads to the second of Paul's principles.

5. 1 Corinthians 6:13, "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."

The body is meant for the Lord and the Lord for the body. The purpose of our bodies is found in God - not in sexual pleasure or the indulgence of appetites as the Corinthian slogan "food is for the stomach and the stomach for food.." implied. God is greater than our earthly appetites which will pass away. Our bodies have an eternal value which is found in the Lord. Thus we need to take a radical "counter-cultural" view and see our bodies are temples - not amusement parks. The Lord is "for the body". He is "for" your body, not against it! Here we have to make a distinction between "the flesh" (Greek "sarx") which God opposes and the "body" (Greek "soma") which He love sand will raise from the dead. "The flesh" (sarx) is the spiritual principle of self-centeredness and disobedience to God that has been biologically worked into our present bodies through habit, training and memory. "The body" (soma) is God's vehicle for self-expression in a material world. It is with our bodies, given to God, that we speak words of truth and love , touch, comfort, heal others, express practical care and love and worship Him. God love sour bodies as they glorify and serve Him. We will see that He has an eternal plan for them too!

6. 1 Corinthians 6:14, "And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power."

The destiny of our bodies is in heaven. Just as Jesus physical body was raised from the dead so that the scars still showed and He could eat fish so our bodies will be raised. There will be a continuation between this present body and the body we receive in heaven , as well as some very significant differences! God will not leave us to rot. He will not just make new bodies for us out of nothing. He will raise our bodies from the grave and then work a transforming miracle on them. Our present bodies are in some way the starting point for our eternal bodies. Later on in Paul's epistle to the Corinthians he answers the question "How then are the dead raised..." lets look at what he wrote.

But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" {36} Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. {37} And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain; perhaps wheat or some other grain. {38} But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. (1 Corinthians 15:35-55 NKJV)

We see the principle that our present bodies are connected to our eternal bodies just as a seed is connected to the plant that comes after the seed dies. It is the life within the seed that continues on and God gives it a body that he has appointed. Yet the seed is not unimportant, in fact it is vitally necessary and to be prized. We are not to despise our mortal bodies any more than a farmer would despise his seeds.

{39} All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. {40} There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. {41} There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star

differs from another star in glory. {42} So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. {43} It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. {44} It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Though there is a continuity between our present mortal bodies and our glorious resurrection bodies there is also a discontinuity. There will be a great variety of resurrection bodies and each shall receive the body that the Lord has prepared for him or her. These bodies will all be incorruptible, glorious, powerful and spiritual. They will perfectly express our love of God and perfectly receive the knowledge of God. However, they will differ in glory - presumably as a result of the different rewards that Christians will receive.

There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. {45} And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. {46} However,, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. {47} The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. {48} As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. {49} And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.

The "last Adam" is Christ who heads up a new race of men and women. Just as Adam's descendants ended up going from 'dust to dust' so Christ's "born-gain" race has a heavenly destiny and "bears the image (stamp) of the heavenly. When we are born again even our bodies are headed for heaven. Just as Jesus' resurrected body went into heaven on the Mount of Olives as His disciples gazed on so we will ascend into heaven and meet the returning Christ in the air in our resurrected physical bodies. Paul describes this moment as a sudden and glorious change.

{50} Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. {51} Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; {52} in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. {53} For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. {54} So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." {55} "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

Our present physical bodies shall come out of the grave and the Death's temporary victory will be over. Furthermore, they shall take up a new immortal nature that is no longer subject to death so that death is completely and permanently defeated. Our present "seed" bodies shall suddenly "in the twinkling of an eye" be changed into the "full grown plant" which will be imperishable, incorruptible and immortal. The destiny of our body is in heaven. It is not to be despised as "the prison of the soul" or abandoned to promiscuity as if it did not matter. While flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God or the corruptible inherit incorruption it is still important. Our bodies are like a seed that dies and bears fruit within the Kingdom of God.

7.1 Corinthians 6:15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!

Here Paul makes the statement that our bodies are "members of Christ". Now we are used to thinking of ourselves as "members of the body of Christ" but this, however, is quite different. Paul is talking about our physical bodies being the "members", the limbs, of Christ Himself. If

Jesus wants to hug someone He does not send the Holy Spirit to give a hug He sends you or I. If Jesus Christ wants to feed someone He does not generally drop a hamburger from heaven in their lap - He sends you or I to physically, practically feed them. When Jesus smiles it is through your eyes and my eyes. We are the physical interface of Jesus with this world. We are His members, we are His physical body on earth. Have you ever had your computer monitor crash so that everything else was working but you could not see your computer screen? You feel helpless, so little can be done without that interface. That's how it is with our bodies they are like computer monitors, interfaces indicating Jesus activity in us and through us. They make Jesus accessible to others. What use is a deep spiritual life that goes completely unexpressed and is unreadable by others? It's like a super-computer with no output. Useless! As good as dead! For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also (James 2:26 NKJV). Open rebuke is better than secret love (Proverbs 27:5 KJV). Our inner world should show through and be expressed so that others can see it, hear it and understand it. This is God's role for our bodies. Your body is part of Christ therefore it should never be "joined with a prostitute". Our bodies are for expressing Christ's love - not human lust.

8. 1 Corinthians 6:16, 17 Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." {17} But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him.

There are difficulties with this passage. It seems to indicate that even the most casual sexual act is an indissoluble "one flesh" commitment on the same level as marriage. Certainly sex is a very intimate act with deep spiritual and emotional consequences and a "bond" is established. Sex is serious - and that is what I think Paul is trying to state here. He is saying "there is no such thing as harmless casual sex.." I am cautious about stating that, on the basis of this verse, you have to marry anyone you have sex with (as some argue). If Paul was intending that then he would have exhorted single male Corinthians to marry the prostitutes they had slept with. He made no such recommendation! His next statement builds on the image of intimacy and unity: "But anyone united with the Lord becomes one spirit with Him". Our spirit and God's spirit are indissolubly joined, never to be separated, in eternal spiritual intimacy. Though a prostitute may temporarily satisfy a desire for carnal intimacy the Christian can experience permanent deep spiritual intimacy with God. The groundwork for our union with God was laid by Christ's death on the cross which gave us access to the Father. This union was sealed by the reception of the Holy Spirit - God's intimate, loving, indwelling Presence, at Pentecost. We are one with God even though we may not sense it. God has made us one with Him in a union that no power on heaven or on earth can separate. It takes a lifetime to fully grasp that! How does this affect how we use our bodies? Two things 1) The spirit animates the body. If our spirit is one with God's Spirit then that relationship is what should animate our bodies and direct the life that is within them. 2) Our desire for intimacy should be directed heavenward and find at least a very substantial part of its satisfaction in God. It is a very misdirected desire for intimacy that uses prostitutes or engages in casual sex. Thus immorality is inappropriate for someone who is joined to God..

9. 1 Corinthians 6:18 NRSV, "Shun fornication! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body; but the fornicator sins against the body itself. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body."

Sexual immorality is so blinding and persuasive that we cannot linger around and "play with fire". We need to take Paul's advice and flee! Though this may lead to damaged relationships, anger and recriminations from the "rejected" party God will honor us. Joseph fled sexual immorality with Potiphar's wife and was falsely accused by an angry and vindictive woman. He

went to jail and really suffered for being good. It must have seemed that being pure did not pay. However, God did not forget him but remembered his godly heart and elevated Joseph to the position of Prime Minister of the only super-power in the world at that time. The pragmatic reason we are to flee sexual immorality is that it is a sin against our own bodies. The medical toll from promiscuity is high - abortion, infertility, AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, urinary tract and bowel infections, emotional and psychiatric disorders plus the side-effects from various contraceptives are just part of the cost that our bodies are paying for a sexually liberated lifestyle.. Our body does not like being sinned against.

10. 1 Corinthians 6:19 NRSV, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?"

A temple is a sacred site where a deity is supposed to dwell and can be accessed and experienced. Your body is a temple. It is a sacred site. It is holy. It is never to be violated or profaned. The God within the temple is not some god of thunder or wind, a monkey god or a good luck charm. The God within is the Holy Spirit. Therefore in the temple of your body dwells the God who was brooding over the waters at Creation, who is the source of wisdom, who is love on fire with holiness, the God from whom all lesser gods flee in terror, who is mighty, powerful, majestic and righteous. Defile His temple and beware! This Holy Spirit is our possession from God, our treasure. Human beings were always meant to be Spirit-indwelt beings, indwelt with the Holy Spirit as images of God. Our bodies were part of this design. We are temples, sacred, wonderful, filled with the power and presence of God. People should be able to come to a Christian just as an idol-worshiper goes to a temple to find the god there. People should be able to come to us and find Christ in residence. They should be able to come to the Christ-indwelt bodies of Christians and sense the holiness and presence of God. People go to temples with needs -and I think they should have their needs met by Christ in us. People should be able to come to Christians for wisdom, a word from God, guidance in life, healing, encouragement etc. and we should be able to minister to them not in our own strength but out of the power of Christ who indwells us. We cannot do this if our bodies are given to immorality.

11. 1 Corinthians 6:19b-20 NKJV, "And you are not your own? {20} For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."

Paul goes on to ask "And whose body is it anyway?". It is God's ! He bought it and He can do what He likes with it. If I buy a car I can do what I like with that car. I can drive it or leave it in the garage or even take it on a testing rally drive. Its my car and I say what I do with it and where it goes. God bought your body on the cross. He paid a very high price for it - His own beloved Son. It is His - He can say what happens to your body, where it should go and what it should do. He has leased it back to you with strict instructions as to its use and in many cases a few improvements and healings. He has filled it with the Holy Spirit. He has a plan to raise it from the dead and give it back to you in a glorious state - but that depends to no small extent on what you choose to do with it now. God's plan for your body, which belongs to Him, is good. Most of the time He likes to heal it and see it prosper! However, the plan includes holiness (Hebrews 14:12).Therefore, "glorify God with your body".

12. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NKJV, Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, {10} nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. {11} And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

Now let's jump back a few verses to some tough verses of Paul's. In verse 1-8 Paul is arguing that Christians should not go to court against each other - and be judged before unbelievers. Paul points out that "the unrighteous" are not members of the Christian kingdom and therefore should not be our judges. Why don't they inherit the Kingdom of God? Because, amongst other things they practice sexual immorality and abuse their bodies. Most of the above sins involve the abuse of the body in some way. These sins disqualify people from heaven. Sure they can be forgiven if we repent. However, they are meant to be left behind at conversion and never indulged in again. "Such WERE some of you" – it's in the past tense. The Corinthians had been very immoral before Christ came into their lives but now Paul says of them :But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. As we have just seen the Corinthians were in grave danger of being overwhelmed by their immorality once more and some were still visiting the temple prostitutes. Paul takes their doctrine of liberty and cautions them "Do not be deceived", evidently they were being deceived and were playing fast and loose with the holiness and judgment of God using a false doctrine of "grace" to justify license. This is not innovative theology - it is deception (at least that is what Paul calls it). We cannot play with sexual sin. We have to get rid of it and accept the washing, cleansing, and sanctification that are from God.

Twelve Points on Healing

And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. (Acts 3:16 NASB)

For the first twenty years of my Christian life I prayed for healing without seeing any tangible and immediate results whatsoever. I read innumerable books on healing, believed in healing and prayed for healing, I even started a healing service and yet I saw no results. I used to say to people "Don't ask me to pray for your healing, you will probably drop dead if I do, it just doesn't work for me". I had about 27 good reasons why "not everyone was healed". I had all of the excuses and none of the results. I knew all of the Greek verbs but no-one was healed by my knowledge. Finally after two friends of mine died of cancer I got angry and started seeking an answer. I faced the fact that I did not have authority over sickness, I was powerless. Theology could not beat cancer.

As I started to seek for an answer God showed me that all of the healing prayers in the new Testament were in command form "Be healed", "Rise up and walk", "Be made whole". Not a single one was "Father, if it be thy will heal Joe". I mentioned this fact as an aside during a sermon I was preaching in a small Anglican church. To my astonishment the entire congregation came forward for healing prayer and because of what I had said I was trapped into using "commands" and I did. And as I did people started getting healed with about a third of the service receiving some kind of definite and immediate healing. This was a lot better than zero percent! I then went back and looked at the NT and concepts such as "he gave them authority to heal" and "power was on Jesus to heal" and I began to realize that healing depended on a complex of things. Firstly, the healer had to be given the power and authority to heal and be willing to exercise it. Secondly the sick person had to cry out for healing in some way either by coming to Jesus or calling for the elders of the church and thirdly that healing could be obstructed by unbelief and hardness of heart (see the article on mercy and healing).

The following twelve points are a very condensed summary of my beliefs regarding healing in the New Testament and in the life of God's church. They start off with the ideal - Jesus healing all who came to Him of all their diseases and then moves on to the question of whether we can expect to be healed today and finally how we can go about it with a measure of power and authority and with "ever-increasing faith". They are not meant to make you feel guilty or for me to show off my theological knowledge. They are meant to empower you to start healing people and to move from zero percent or ten percent healed to maybe thirty or forty percent healed. If you see 100% healed praise the Lord! I'm aiming at improving things for you and mostly improving things for those who are sick in the body of Christ.

It is God's will that all the sick be healed of all their diseases and afflictions. I find four main reasons for this: (a) Jesus healed all who came to Him (Matthew 8:16, 12:15, Luke 4:40 6:19) and this was passed on to the ministry of the apostles. (Acts 5:16). (b) Jesus healed any and every different kind of affliction (Luke 4:40, Matthew 4:24) (c) Jesus' Kingdom is a Kingdom that has good health and great hospital care! In Heaven there will be no sickness or crying or pain. When we ask 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven' we are, among other things, asking for a healed world. When we say "Thy Kingdom come" we are talking about a realm of healing, restoration and authority over disease, demons and afflictions. (Luke 10:1) (d) God is a loving heavenly Father and we are in His image. Any earthly father wants their child healed of any and every disease and affliction. This is implanted in all people and in all cultures and is thus part of

the image of God and the heart of God, thus we can deduce that we have a compassionate, kind and merciful God whose natural tendency is to heal which was Jesus' (God in human flesh) response whenever He saw illness. (Matthew 14:14 NKJV) And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.

Jesus healed without reference to how good a person was. All who came to him were healed. Many were later ungrateful (Luke 17:12-19), disobedient (Mark 1:43-45) or even treacherous (John 5:1-15). Healing is for ALL not just for those who "deserve it". It was a matter of compassion just as we would help an orphan in Romania simply out of compassion and not asking if they had been good. Since our love and compassion is the "lesser" then God's love is "greater" then we can assume that God will heal out His nature and compassion without reference to our moral state.

Jesus never said "Not today, you need to learn more patience". He generally healed "in the instant" all who came to Him. The only deliberate delay was with Lazarus - and dead people don't need to learn patience! The Christian's cross that they bear is not sickness or suffering (otherwise we would lose our cross in Heaven) but innocence - the life of the Lamb to the slaughter, the suffering of the persecuted righteous. Your sickness is not your cross to be borne patiently. There is not a single verse in the New Testament that supports that view.

Healing is included in the proclamation of the Kingdom of God as evidence for its out-breaking in human existence. (Matthew 10:8, Luke 9:1, 10:9) and when revival occurs - that is when the Kingdom is most manifest, then healing follows. (Acts chapters 2-5). Church History clearly attests that when the Kingdom is most manifest then healings follow as well. Healings follow the authority of Jesus being realized over human hearts and bodies through the power of the Holy Spirit. 'He gave them authority to heal'. Healing is thus the exercise of Jesus authority by those He has delegated it to (see above verses). Being an exercise of His authority it follows that it is a sign of His Lordship and His Messianic Presence - thus His reply to John The Baptist. (Matthew 11:1-6). Healing is thus an integral part of Jesus being Lord.

Since healing is embedded in the nature of God, the conditions of the heavenly realms and the Lordship of Jesus Christ in His Kingdom then we can expect healing whenever the kingdom of God is manifest today for Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8) Jesus can heal, here, now, and today.

It's the name of Jesus that heals not Peter or John or Paul or the pastor. (Acts 3:12 NASB) But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk? We have no problem with saying its "not our power" but "not our piety" really hurts!

The name of Jesus operates in combination with "the faith that comes through Him". (Acts 3:16, 14:9) Jesus (not us) is the source of healing faith as well as healing power. Faith is a gift that comes through humility (Luke 17:5-10) hearing God's word to us (Romans 10:17) and asking for it as a free gift. (Ephesians 2:8).

Healing is never prayed for it is commanded. "Take up your mat and walk", "Be healed", Be cleansed" "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.." etc. You never see a NT healing prayer in request format e.g. that goes "Dear Father if it be Thy will heal Joe Bloggs" . They are all commands. Healing is thus a matter of having authority "and He gave them authority to heal the sick, cast out demons.." etc.(Matthew 10:1, Luke 9:1) If you are not seeing healing it may be because you have not asked God for the authority to heal or understood that

all authority (including the authority to heal) has been given to Jesus Christ to be exercised in His Kingdom, by His body, for the glory of His name. It is only as I have sought God for both authority and power in healing and exercised them by giving commands that I have seen any real healing at all. We can validly seek God for the pre-conditions but we must do the work (Acts 4:29-31) God "stretches forth His hand" extending the power and authority and the church proclaims and heals.

Healing commands are focused and powerful, generally brief, often less than ten words eg "Lazarus come forth" and are very "ordinary" without special words or the drama of magic formulas - for instance they are not poetic. They are simple clear faith-filled commands that are focused on the envisioned end result e.g. "be opened", "Take up your mat." "Rise up and walk" not on the symptom "blindness be reduced". Generally commands are addressed to the whole person not to the sickness (except for demons which are addressed and told to come out). So Jesus talking to a leper says "be cleansed" not "leprosy depart". Jesus is not reductionistic or clinical. He treats people as whole persons and is relational not magical.

The faith that heals is totally realistic and does not see disease as imaginary or to be ignored. Rather faith sees the whole of Reality - the person, the problem and the God who saves (and heals). Faith redefines Reality as including a loving, healing, kind and gracious God. My favorite verse on this is: (Romans 8:32 NASB) He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Reality includes a God who has already given us Jesus and with Him will give us "all things" including healing of body, mind and spirit. It can very difficult to grasp that Reality includes Jesus hence the "ye of little faith rebukes" e.g Peter on the water with Jesus. When the primary reality included a powerful Jesus then the wind was just a nuisance. When Peter "saw the wind" and Reality was what was in front of his nose and fear came in - Peter sank. Like Peter we sometimes get dunked learning faith.

Healing faith is often absolutely desperate and focused. The Syrophenician woman (Mark 7:26-30) is a good example as is Blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52). There seems to be a certain intensity to faith that breaks through and achieves things "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16 NKJV).

Faith is not a general thing. It is faith at various critical points and in various different situations. Like the disciples we can have strong faith in one situation and little faith in another. We can have faith for salvation but not for healing, or faith for healing but not faith for the Lord's supply. Our beliefs are complex and contradictory and contain both biblical faith and absolute unbelief. We can even simultaneously have faith and unbelief e.g. the beliefs "I am sure God heals today" plus "but he wouldn't heal me, at least not now". Most unbelief is disguised as either "theology" or "common sense" or "what everyone thinks". Only a very small percentage of unbelief leaps out as "heresy" and it may even sound pious e.g. "I am unworthy to be healed" (did Jesus say that?) etc. Our beliefs are not just what we write in our bible college exams - they are what are written in our hearts - the things we say to ourselves about God, life, etc. We fence God out with our unbelief. His operation is "not here, not now, not in this dispensation, not me, only on the mission field etc". Nazareth saw few miracles because they thought "we know him and he is no Messiah." (Mark 6:1-6) These day to day ordinary whispers of our heart need to be repented of and rejected. I do NOT mean to imply that we have to get rid of all our wrong theology and unbelief before we can be healed. What we do have to do is get rid of our unbelief at that critical point e.g. healing. We need to change "Jesus heals today but only emotionally and spiritually " to "Jesus heals the whole person body, mind and spirit today" OR "Jesus heals on the mission field but not here" to "Jesus heals everywhere and everyone, all who came to

Him no matter how unworthy or of what race." It is having increasing faith and decreasing unbelief at the point of operation, the critical point that counts. Peter knew Jesus was the "son of the living God" but on the water it wasn't theology that kept him afloat but faith in Jesus in storms, faith to walk on water at that time. When that critical point was surrendered and "common-sense" took over Peter went under.

Re-framing...

We need to re-frame healing from a Kingdom perspective so that the question is not "Why isn't everyone healed?" but "How can we have the Kingdom out breaking with such intensity and power that everyone is healed." When the early Church saw incredible healings it was because they prayed from that faith framework. (Acts 4:29-31 NASB) "And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Thy bond-servants may speak Thy word with all confidence, {30} while Thou dost extend Thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Thy holy servant Jesus." {31} And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak the word of God with boldness...(Acts 5:12 NASB) And at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico. It is like getting a flat tire in a car. You can spend all your time arguing about the problem (how it got punctured) or you can ask "how do we fix it" (where's the spare etc). The second is a more constructive solution and puts you back on the road a lot faster. I don't know why so and so was not healed but I do know how to see much more healing than we are seeing. The practical question I ask is "How can I develop faith for healing and receive power and authority to heal?" and its natural extension "How can I develop a Spirit-filled community of believers that have faith for healing and who have received power and authority to heal? - through humble belief in the word of God and crying out to Him to endow us with this gift.

Common Questions About Healing

If what the Bible says about healing is true why don't we see more of them?

Unbelief definitely pays a part (Matthew 13:54-58 NKJV) And when He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works?...Where then did this Man get all these things?" {57} So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." {58} **Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.**

Jesus' baptism had so changed Him and so endued Him with power that He could no longer fit into the mental boxes that people in His home town had put Him in. They said "Where then did this Man get all these things..?." they did not appreciate the equipping he had received (perhaps just received - see the parallel passage in Luke 4). I think **wrong mental boxes** are a large reason why we see so few healings today. Here are a 12 common misconceptions put in "lay language" that I think stand in the way of a powerful healing ministry today...

(i). **The healings were "due to Jesus' divinity" were a "one off"** and are not repeatable by us today. (Covered in the first few articles). The early church healed. They weren't God or divine. It's a gift to the body of Christ to be exercised by ordinary Christians.

(ii) **Jesus wandered around in a beard and sandals then vanished.** His ministry in Heaven and the power He can send from Heaven are forgotten. Hebrews 4:12-16 tells us to get "grace in time of need" from the ascended Christ. He is still accessible to us today.

(iii) **The material world is solid and the spiritual world is sort of weak and fuzzy and not really real.** Therefore we can't expect something weak, fuzzy and spiritual like prayer to really move something as solid as a disease. Yet by a word were the heavens and earth created and with a word they will be dissolved. The material world is upheld by Jesus and "the Word of His power" and all things are made "by Him and for Him" and "without Him nothing was made". If its His Creation He can heal it.

(iv) **You have doctors for physical diseases and priests for the soul.** Healing has been taken out of the province of religion and is no longer expected from it. People have been mistakenly divided into separate spiritual and physical compartments which "do not interact". But God is Lord of all.

(v) **Healing is something that saints do, it happens in the past and it leads to building shrines.** This is a bit like number 1 except that it involves bringing "the magical" element in and can lead to idolatry, relic worship, etc. This leads to two opposite dangers 1) darkness and superstition 2) thoroughgoing skepticism about the miraculous. Both cause damage to the manifestation of a genuine healing ministry by the laity.

(vi) **Respectable Christians don't engage in a healing ministry.** This is something that pressures me. Charlatans and "snake-oil salesman" have given the area such a bad name that people need a lot of courage to enter it and learn it.

(vii) **The Bible stories make me feel good but I'd be mad to take them too literally or to attempt to do them.** Many Christians treat the Bible as little better than motivational literature that "picks them up". It is like reading an inspiring biography that we can pick and choose the

bits that we will align ourselves with. However, it is a New Contract that we have been given and it should be studied like any contract to see what compliance is expected and what benefits can be gained. The Word activates the Spirit - but it must be the Word taken seriously and believed.

(viii) **I have to be in the right emotional state before God can use me and I am not there very often...** We are to preach the gospel in season and out of season and to heal even when we are tired, hungry, harassed and exhausted just as Jesus and the disciples did. (Mark 6:31, 2 Timothy 4:2).

(ix) **Healing is a product of something within myself; my own power, piety, intelligence, emotional intensity, fasting , rituals etc and if I do them at greater intensity then one day I will break through and see people healed...** This is a terribly pervasive lie. It leads to enormous spiritual frustration and discouragement when the results don't show. When you are tempted to believe it just remember Jesus before His baptism – perfect in every respect in piety. Yet without miracle working power (at that time). Human perfection cannot work the works of God until it receives the power that is from God. (Acts 3:12 NKJV) So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?" and...(Galatians 3:3-5 NKJV) Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? {4} Have you suffered so many things in vain; if indeed it was in vain? {5} Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Somehow, believing, even naively, that our "goodness" merits God's power kills the "faith connection" stone dead. Hence Jesus warned about the "leaven of the Scribes and the Pharisees" and how even a little could ruin the whole lump of dough. (Matthew 16:6-16, Luke 12:1, Galatians 5:9).

(x) **The Good News has become just Good Advice.** The gospel is something we live in not something we live up to. It is "Good News" - the only thing you can do with news is accept it as true or untrue, to believe it or disbelieve it. We can live in it and take advantage of it or we can choose to ignore it, but we do not "live up to it". If you saw an advertisement advertising free Christian music and you believed it then you might get enthusiastic, tell your friends, then go out and get as much as you could. That is an appropriate response to good news. An inappropriate response would be to try to open your own shop or to pay for the music. The good news is that Jesus has made healing available. We need to accept this, believe it and live in it. The gospel is an accomplished fact that you announce so that others can take advantage of the offer. (Hebrews 9:12, 26-28; 10:10; Col 1:23; 1 Thess 1:15)

(xi) **This disease is too much for my faith.** The size of your God, not the size of your faith is what matters. When faced with cancer we forget that the Good News has been announced, that healing is available, that God is in heaven and Almighty. Like the ten spies we look at the size of the problem relative to something in us (our faith, resources, knowledge) rather than measuring the giants against the Lord. However, Jesus said to his disciples after they had failed to heal someone... (Matthew 17:20-21 NKJV) So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. {21} "However,, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." Mountains are bigger than disciples but smaller than God.

(xii) **I can't see how God can do it....** Many people need a "mechanism" to be explained to them before they can believe. "Just believe" is too nebulous an explanation. "How" God heals a cancer is important. For such people I take them back to Genesis and God's mighty Word activating the Spirit which created the Universe and transformed and ordered matter. God can create matter, destroy matter and renew matter. (Psalms 104:29-30 NKJV) You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. {30} You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; And You renew the face of the earth. (John 6:63 NKJV) "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

He can give Creation its shape and form. The spoken Word of authority can impart life, strength, healing and in combination with the Holy Spirit produce awesome transformations. (Genesis 1, 2 Peter 3:5-13, Colossians 1:16-17, John 1:1-3, Revelation 4:12)

2. What is the difference between the "gift of healing" and the normal Christians ability to heal? The gift of healing is a "charism" or "gracelet" as someone called it. All gifts are given "as God wills" (1 Cor 12:1-11) though they can also be sought (1 Cor 14:1). There seems to be two ways of gifts operating a) as temporary bursts that are "one offs" like Mary's prophesy.(Luke 2) B) As abiding gifts (like the prophetic gift on Isaiah etc). This also seems to be true with regard to healing. Most Bible-believing Christians have a "burst" when they pray for someone's healing and it occurs, much to their amazement. For a few it becomes a regular ministry and affects the whole way they view the church. There is no sharp dividing line between the gracelet and the full-blown gift and it seems that one can sometimes grow into the other with time, practice and an increase in faith. The gift is part of the Body and is to be used for its up-building in love (1 Cor 12-14). All Christians should be able to exercise healing prayer, particularly the elders of a church.(James 5:14). All Christians should be able to minister healing to some degree though not all are "healers". We cannot leave all healing up to the healers any more than we should leave all evangelism up to the few evangelists among us.

3. What is the role of the local church?

There is also a healing ministry role for the church as a whole. The assembled body of Christ is a powerful army and things happen in Bible study groups and in services that do not happen with just one on one ministry. One of the aims of this training is to increase the general level of faith for healing in the church so that we may become a community regularly ministering healing. Jesus wanted others in the community of faith to be also able to heal and sought to empower them to do so. The person with the gift of healing should ideally operate within a faith-filled believing community that is also being trained to heal the sick. Even Jesus had little success when the community around Him was filled with unbelief (Matthew 13:54-58). The church does not just provide a platform for healing to take place, it provides a praying, believing community that exercises healing through its eldership, its gifted members and through the Spirit working through it when it is gathered for worship. (James 5:14 ff; Acts 5:12-16; 1 Cor 12:4-11)

4. What about those who are not healed?

There were "unhealed" people in the Bible, Timothy had "frequent ailments" and Trophimus was left ill/recovering at Miletus. Paul's response to the first was sanctified common-sense "take a little wine for your stomach and do not exclusively drink water..". The second seems just to be acceptance of the fact (1 Tim 5:23; 2 Tim 4:20). Some of the Corinthians were sick because of unrepented sin such as immorality and abuse of the Lord's supper. In such cases repentance was called for. If I may rephrase this question to be "How can we love those who are not healed.." I think the answer becomes easier. This shifts the emphasis from power to love and brings us back to center (1 Corinthians 13). The still sick person needs (1) To be loved,

supported and cared for. (2) Have good common-sense applied including the use of appropriate medication. (3) Be able to confess any sin privately and with dignity. (4) Be encouraged to grow in faith as part of a believing community that is also growing and faith and praying for their healing. Jesus only blamed the disciples for lack of faith - never the sick person.

5. What about Paul's thorn in the flesh?

The "stake in the flesh" was a Greek equivalent of a "sharp pain in the neck.." a metaphor for real hindrance and nuisance. It is disabling, painful and causes anguish of the soul and it brings the mighty low (as in the lion in Aesop's fable that was brought low by a "thorn in the flesh"). The "messenger of Satan" seems to be an angelic hindrance. Some recent commentators have speculated that "the thorn" was someone who went around "rabble-rousing" inciting the Jews to kill Paul and hindering his ministry - perhaps Alexander the copper-smith. It could be either (1) a malicious human/group of people banded together against Paul (2) a malicious spiritual entity that aroused people against him. The opposition was so fierce and relentless that Paul was constantly thrown back on God in weakness. The consequence of the "thorn" is persecution and distress not physical sickness. (1 Cor 12:1-10)

For questions 6-10 also see the article Healing, Health and Medicine which was written 5 years after this article.

6. Should Christians use medicine?

Some couples in Australia and America have been charged with manslaughter and child neglect for refusing medication to seriously ill children "in faith". Such well publicized cases do not help the cause of the gospel. The gospel has four main aspects wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. (1 Corinthians 1:30 NRSV) He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption,. These four aspects of the gospel are not in competition but part of one seamless Whole - which is Christ Himself. Healing is a part of our redemption - the buying back of our body from the dominion of sickness. The wise faith-filled use of medicine can be Wisdom - which is also from God, in Christ. Proverbs urges us to use wisdom and to acquire it - and Biblical wisdom was always practical and effective. Luke is called "the beloved physician" and there are no injunctions in Scripture to put aside medicines. At least twice in the NT "household remedies" are invoked, wine for Timothy's stomach ailments and "oil" for wounds and bruises (the Good Samaritan) which is seen as an appropriate act of compassion. There will even be medicine in heaven! The leaves of the tree of life will be used for the healing of the nations. Who these nations are is a puzzle but the fact remains that their healing is provided for - by a medicine. (Rev 22:2). Though medicines existed in Jesus day He never exhorted the faithful to abandon them. He simply provided a more effective alternative. The refusal of medicine to a child merely to prove a religious point is seriously wrong and I believe "contrary to the faith". It seems close to Pharisaism.

7. Should Christians trust in doctors?

Our first trust should always be in God. Many people seek the doctors first then, if they are in really big trouble, they then go to their church for healing. May I tactfully suggest that it should perhaps be the other way around with prayer being the first reflex when one is ill. (2 Chronicles 16:12.) Doctors can be used and their advice heeded but they must not become the sole repositories of our faith.

8. What about home remedies, vitamin pills, physiotherapy etc?

The general attitude of Scripture is that of empowering people to live prudent, healthy, independent lives. I believe that a good knowledge of safe folk remedies - cures for hiccups and

bee stings etc makes good Christian common sense and I would love to collect them and put them in a book one day. We need a Christian challenge to alternative medicine. Part of the reason for the Sabbath and the OT dietary restrictions was a physically and spiritually healthy lifestyle. A "kosher" diet is virtually free from parasitic infections, disease and association with the more common occult practices of the time. However, Jesus made it clear that our diet does not make us clean or unclean before God. It may help our health but it has nothing to do with our spiritual status (Mark 7:14-23).

9. Can a Christian participate in the use of alternative medicine?

There was a great deal of 'alternative medicine' around in Jesus' day and in the Gnosticism that pervaded Asia Minor. None of it was recommended for the Christian and some of it seems to have been actively preached against particularly in Colossians 2. This is incredibly complex. If this is a real issue for you or your family the best I have read is the chapter "Christian Healing and Alternative Healing Movements" in "Sent To Heal" by Harold Taylor. My brief response is to divide "alternative medicine" up into a few compartments (1) Folk remedies outside of conventional medicine but which do work (eg aloe vera for stings). (2) Things like the "Kambucha mushroom" which claim to cure everything and are highly suspect. (3) Cures that require subscribing to a non-Christian or anti-Christian philosophy such as yoga . (4) Occult cures such as reiki, pendulum divination, use of divining rods for healing, magic crystals, the use of spells, sorcery or "white magic", channeling, witchcraft, color therapy, use of diagrams with "special powers" etc. Category one is OK, category two mainly damages your hip pocket and your pride but can occasionally endanger your health,. Categories 3 and 4 are always wrong for a Christian. If in doubt -don't, seems good advice here.

10. What about Christian use of psychologists, counselors and psychiatrists?

Gifts of wisdom and knowledge are given to the Church by Jesus to help the members edify each other. Part of Jesus' mission was (Luke 4:18-19 NIV) "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, {19} to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Spirit-filled counseling can bring real help and release the oppressed. Bad counseling oppresses people yet further. When seeing a counselor ask yourself: Is the goal of their counseling compatible with Christian sanctification? Is their philosophy reasonably "Christian" or does it draw heavily on other religions? Do they explain their technique to you so that you can understand and evaluate it? Are they open to questions? Are they competent, disciplined, on-time and properly certified?

Healing, Health And Medicine

In a perfect world we would all be healthy and in Heaven there is no more crying or sickness or pain. Death - the eventual and final result of sickness will be no more - in Heaven. The victory has been won. However, in a fallen world God has made certain obvious provisions for healing:

God designed our bodies and their immune systems to defend us, heal us and repair us. I am not a medical practitioner but I am told by them that the immune system is so good that ""its amazing that we ever get sick".

He has given us wisdom on how to stay healthy - especially by obeying His laws and lifestyle.

He has, in the answer to the prayers of millions of Christians, "given the doctors wisdom" so that at a societal level we are seeing amazing medical breakthroughs.

He has created certain plants which have healing properties and even in Heaven the leaves of the trees there will "be for the healing of the nations".

He has given the Church the mandate to heal the sick in the name of Jesus Christ.

God has designed this multi-faceted healing system so that those without the gospel might not also be without help for their illnesses. God places some form of healing within reach of every person and the most powerful and instantaneous form of healing in the hands of His Church. He is a God of compassion.

God wishes that those who call upon His name might call upon Him first when they are sick. The instructions to sick Christians are found in James (James 5:14-16 NKJV) Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. {15} And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. {16} Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Thus the first port of call for a sick Christian should be the healing ministry of the local church. However, this has fallen into disrepair. Few churches have a reliable and powerful healing ministry though some do. Even in this paucity of effective healing we should call on God first of all.

Secondly God has placed within us an amazing immune system that will protect us if we keep ourselves healthy. Therefore we should remember our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and live in holiness, and with a lifestyle that is free from over-indulgence, gluttony, drunkenness and promiscuity. These three things – drunkenness, gluttony and promiscuity cause many of the health problems in Western society.

Good, Neutral and Bad Medicine

"Bad medicine" is the medicine of the witch-doctor, shaman or medicine man, the medicine of the quack healer, the New Age hypnotist, the witch and the magician. It has no intrinsic value - the medicine man's rattle will not heal anyone by itself. This kind of medicine requires some kind of occult influence such as a spell or incantation in order to work. It is witchcraft. In the Old

Testament when people turned to such sources for help they were severely rebuked. It can harden the spirit to God and in some cases precipitate mental illness.

"Neutral Medicine" is the medicine of doctors, hospitals and home remedies. This medicine relies neither on God nor on spells. It works by itself. Anti-venene works in a believer, unbeliever, Buddhist or Christian. However, it tends to only heal the body and not affect the soul or spirit. No-one gets saved through pills. The Bible makes no comment in general except for a few "home remedies" such as "take a little wine for your stomach.." etc.

"Good Medicine" is the healing that is available in Christ Jesus and which points to God and which can cause someone to find Jesus and be saved body, soul and spirit. It is quite capable of working in combination with "neutral medicine" but not with "bad medicine" with which it is in direct conflict.

The Health Food Shop

The question arises - is the stuff in the health food shop "bad medicine" or "neutral medicine". Here you have to show discernment. If it requires a spell or incantation to be said or is labeled as being an item for Wicca, Magic or Witchcraft then avoid it! If it is Vitamin C that works on its own then that is neutral medicine. Things like vitamins, rose-hip oil, camomile tea, and valerian are neutral - they work by themselves and are natural, plant-based medicines. I personally take the precaution of saying a quick prayer over anything bought in such a shop which goes "I bind any occult influences that may have been put on this product in Jesus name. Amen" - then I use it - providing it is neutral to begin with. 1 Corinthians chapters 8 and 10 and Romans 14 are very instructive in this regard.

Do I Throw My Pills Away "By Faith"

No. God has given people wisdom to produce pills and to diagnose and treat illnesses and we need to receive His grace through them as well as directly through the healing ministry of the local church. To argue that divine healing is the only "spiritual" way to be healed is poor theology. To be blunt - if you are going to throw away your pills why not throw away your immune system as well so you can really rely on God? If healing by 'natural' means is wrong then your immune system is wrong too! The only healing that is wrong is healing through occult sources.

Demons Defeated

Demons are variously caricatured as "naughty spirits" and even portrayed as "sources of wisdom" in some New Age teachings. The Bible, however, sees demons as truly evil and deceptive beings arrayed in rebellion against God and whose fate will be eternal torment imprisoned in a lake of fire. This latter view is far closer to the reality experienced by demon-possessed people and those who have dealt with demons in others.

A demon possessed person is often deeply deceived - thus showing the deceptive nature of demons, a demon-possessed person often engages in activities that display a lack of conscience toward others or a delight in the evil and the bizarre. This betrays the evil, amoral and actively wicked attitude of the demonic. A demon-possessed person is often angry at ministers, scornful of Scripture, fearful of communion, mocking at morality and may hold bizarre views of Christ. Christian praise and worship can cause strong negative reactions. This displays the demonic hatred of God and rebellion toward His legitimate authority over this Earth that He made. Those who deal with demons sometimes find that demons are both aware of and terrified of the eternal fate that awaits them. They believe in the lake of fire even if some theologians do not. This article will look at what the Bible says about demons, their fate, and how we can stop them hindering our Christian life.

Let's start with the positive...

Jesus' Triumph over the Demonic Realm

He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8 NKJV)
You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (1 John 4:4 NKJV)

We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. (1 John 5:18 NKJV)

The book of 1 John was probably written when the persecutions of the emperor Diocletian really began to bite. Satan and his instrument - the pagan Roman Empire seemed to be indefinite ascendancy over the church, God and all the forces of good. 1 John is thus a very radical and bold epistle in its claims to victory in Christ. There are three realities described here:

1. The reality of Christ's mission in particular His incarnation. The reason Jesus Christ was manifested in human form was so that He could tackle Satan on his own turf and destroy all his works. Like a hand-grenade exploding in the Devil's face the incarnation brought the awesome power of the Son of God into proximity with evil so that it might completely destroy it.
2. The reality of Christ in us the hope of glory. He who is in us is He who came to destroy the works of the Devil. Jesus overcame the world then, and now, He is in us, and continues to overcome the world.
3. The reality of the indestructibility of our real eternal selves which are based on Christ in us. A person who has been born again has a new self that is created on a new order and a higher plane. It is eternal, imperishable and indestructible, it cannot be defiled. It is sinless and cannot

sin. It is born of God and partakes of the very principles of the nature of God (but on a much different scale). (1 John 3:9 NKJV) Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. This new self battles with the flesh in a life long struggle for dominance (Galatians 5:16-18) so Christians still do sin but this sin is not a part of them that will still be with them in Heaven. There will be no need for Purgatory, the new self has been sinless from the "new birth". This new self cannot be "touched" by the evil one. The person we will be for the next ten million years cannot be affected by sin, defilement or temptation and it has already passed out of the judgment of God (John 5:24, Romans 8:1,2). While Satan can destroy your flesh (1 Corinthians 5:5) he cannot touch the real eternal you. (See article on the Inner Man for more detail)

These three powerful realities mean that even though Satan and his demons are at times quite formidable foes they ultimately cannot harm us. They are defeated rebels whose rebellion will come to nothing in the end. Jesus Christ came to destroy ALL the works of the Devil and through His church that task is being completed and will be finally climaxed at the return of Christ. Let's look at how the Devil lost the weapons from his armory.

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil. (Hebrews 2:14 NKJV)

The incarnation gave Jesus the flesh and blood He needed so that through death He could defeat Satan's ability to wield the power of death, keeping the world in fear and abject slavery.

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, {14} having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. {15} Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. (Colossians 2:13-15 NKJV)

(For further expansion on this verse see the article "The Cross In Colossians"). These verses in Colossians indicate that the weapon of accusation has been removed. Satan has been disarmed by the forgiveness we have received. He no longer has any basis for accusing us. The Charge sheets are all nailed to the Cross.

Satan's ultimate defeat will be an ignominious vanquishing (Revelation 20:10 NKJV) The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The Christian's Power And Authority Over The Demonic Realm

The Christian's power and authority over the demonic realm is not based on having more "might" than the demonic realm (I do not know of any Christian with the spiritual might anywhere near that of Satan) but on authority. The distinction is important. Joash became king of Israel when he was 7 years old. Though physically puny and intellectually hardly a match for bad queen Athaliah he had more authority than her or nay of his rivals. He was king. Similarly even a "baby Christian" has more authority in the spiritual realm than the biggest baddest demon on the block. As a small child is more important than the largest fiercest lion so God has deemed that even the least Christian outranks the mightiest power and principality. The authority comes because of their position in the heavenly hierarchy. In God's household we are the "sons" and angels, even the mightiest of them are just servants of God. And sons outrank servants.

Are they (i.e angels) not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:14 NKJV)

Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? (1 Corinthians 6:3 NKJV)

We have undergone a spiritual transformation as a result of the gospel. In the Old Testament we were " a little lower than the angels", we were like children who, in their minority, have less status than say the butler and are expected to treat the household servants with respect. But with the gospel we have come of age and are now full-fledged sons of God

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name. (John 1:12 NKJV)

Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. {25} But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. {26} For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:24-26 NKJV)

This transformation means that a huge change in status has occurred so that inhabitants of the Kingdom of God are truly awesome spiritual beings.

And raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, {7} that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:6-7 NKJV)

Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, {21} far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. (Ephesians 1:20-21 NKJV)

Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (Matthew 11:11-13 NKJV)

We have been raised up with Christ and seated at His right hand in the heavenly realms far above all principalities and power and might and dominion so that Jesus could say of us that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than the mightiest of the Old Testament saints. This is "amazing grace" and is God displaying His kindness for all the world to see.

Wielding Our Weapons

With this in mind let's look the authority we have been given and how we are to wield it.

Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. (Luke 9:1 NKJV)

After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to....Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." {18} And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. {19} "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on

serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. {20} "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." {21} In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. {22} "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." {23} Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; {24} "for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it." (Luke 10:1, 17-24 NKJV)

Jesus commissions the twelve and then the seventy to have power of evil. In these verses we discover three things:

1. The power we have over the demonic realm is a gracious gift from Jesus "I give you..." to equip us for ministry (it is in the context of a ministry trip).
2. This power is both offensive I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. and defensive and nothing shall by any means hurt you.
3. That our operating principle is not to be power consciousness but instead humble gratefulness for the grace of God. "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Binding and loosing...

The Apostle Peter

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. {19} "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:18-19 NKJV)

Christians in general

"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. {19} Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. {20} For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:18-20 NKJV)

Binding Satan and his demons

(Matthew 12:27-29 NKJV) "And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. {28} "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. {29} "Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

"And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. {20} "But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. {21} "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. {22} "But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils. (Luke 11:19-22 NKJV)

Thus we see that the power to bind and to loose has been delivered over to God's church (Matthew 16:18-19) and can be exercised by any two or three Christians coming together in agreement before God (Matthew 18:18-20). Because of the authority we have been given on the basis of the completed work of Christ we can come against Satan as "someone stronger" and overpower him, binding his activities (Matthew 12:29), neutralizing his weapons (Luke 11:22) and taking back the things he claims ownership of. (Luke 11:22).

In The Name Of Jesus

"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. {14} "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. (John 14:13-14 NKJV)

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. (John 15:16 NKJV)

The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" {18} He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. {19} See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. (Luke 10:17-19 NRSV)

She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. (Acts 16:18 NRSV)

The name of Jesus is the delegated authority of the Son of God. In the Gilbert and Sullivan opera "The Pirates of Penzance" the pirates are arrested and the police say "We charge you yield in Queen Victoria's name...". They confront the pirates in the delegated authority of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. When we come against Satan and his demons we can say "We charge you yield in the name of Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords". The "name that is above every other name" is the ultimate source of authority. Say the pirates in the opera had answered...we resist in the name of the Pirate King..then there would have been a clash of authority (in fact they said "we love our Queen..it was very sarcastic..) In such a clash of authority it is the "highest name" that wins. A queen outranks a counts who outranks knights of the realm that outrank commoners etc. So it is in the heavenly realms. Such is the privilege of Christians that we are allowed to use "the name that is above every other name" when we challenge demonic authority. We come bearing the highest authority in the Universe. (Philippians 2:8-11 NKJV) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. {9} Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, {10} that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, {11} and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So to use the name of Jesus in prayer is a declaration of authority. Even Jewish exorcists found it had enormous authority until it was challenged (Acts 19:13-18). They were operating on "bluff" they were not converted and had no right to use the authority of Jesus name in exorcism. The basis of praying in Jesus name is , first of all, being converted. Jesus name can be used in two ways 1)In declarative mode "In the name of Jesus I command..." e.g. when Peter healed the lame man at the Gate Beautiful (Acts 3:6 NKJV) Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.". Secondly it may be used to request things from God eg, in the verses from John's gospel above

"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." The difference between command mode and request mode is that we command lesser beings but command greater ones. So when addressing a demon, a disease or a mountain or a storm we operate in command mode as sons of God proudly bearing the authority of Jesus name. When addressing the Father or Jesus we do not presume on the authority we have been given but we come humbly as expectant children with every right to ask and to receive but always in wonder and awe for we have a majestic God.

Go boldly into the battle armed with the name of Jesus Christ.

Tearing Down Strongholds

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. {4} For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, {5} casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NKJV)

Strongholds are built out of thoughts (Gk. noema). When Satan builds a stronghold in a human heart, a church, a nation or across a whole planet he uses thoughts. Thoughts of fear, hatred, envy, enmity and strife. Thoughts that create jealousy and distrust. Thoughts that turn people against God. Thoughts that entice to pride and rebellion. Greedy thoughts, lustful thoughts, evil and cruel thoughts. Brick by brick, thought by thought, constellating together into a demonic aggregate, a wall that blocks out the light and keeps a world in darkness. Note that they are described as "arguments and every high thing that exalts itself". A spiritual stronghold is often characterized by a form of pride known as hubris that exalts itself against God. Herod in the book of Acts is an example of this when he accepted worship from men and was struck dead by God. (Acts 12:21-23) The Gnostic heresies of Colossae (Colossians 2:8, 18-23) the bizarre "knowledge" of Corinth (1 Corinthians 8:1-3) and the "teaching of The Nicolaitans (Rev 2:6,15) seem also to fit this category. Those with religious delusions are nearly always full of pride and impossible to reason with. That is why Paul calls it a "stronghold" . Bible-based apologetics has its place here on demolishing the "lofty arguments" and replacing them with truth. Jesus' confrontations with the Pharisees and Sadducees and His teaching on the Sermon On The Mount were real "stronghold busters" (You have heard it said..but I say. to you..)

Thoughts control emotions and actions. If your doctrine tells you that you are no good then you will feel worthless. If your doctrine demands perfection you will feel constantly guilty. This will lead to actions based on your thoughts and feelings e.g a life of constant striving. A stronghold can become so intense that the person loses touch with reality. To see this in action we need only look at the severely demon-possessed with their destroyed thought life, shattered emotions, lack of contact with reality and constant fear.(Mark 5:1-20) Satan controls us to the extent that he can control our thinking. Yet God has given us weapons against this that are "mighty in God for the pulling down of strongholds" so there is no problem with our weapons! Let's learn to use them. The weapons are listed in Eph 6:10-18.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. {11} Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. {12} For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. {13} Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. {14} Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, {15} and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; {16} above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to

quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. {17} And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; {18} praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

The strongholds of Satan are pulled down by people whose lives show moral integrity and faith and who know the word of God and can pray in the Spirit at all times. It is a soldierly combat. For example say Satan has established a stronghold of lustful thoughts in your mind. You need to pull down those lustful concepts about the opposite sex through a thorough study of God's word and knowing what the human body is, and is not, meant for . (see article "Your Body is a Temple of the Holy Spirit"). then you need to fill your mind with things that are noble and lovely and true (Phil 4:8) praying in Jesus name for God to demolish this stronghold in your life. If the stronghold is in your church - say a spirit of parsimony and greed then you may need to teach on generosity and giving prayerfully wielding the sword of the Spirit until the false concepts of stewardship have come tumbling down and the church is renewed in faith. If the stronghold is in your nation you may need to debate publicly, use the media and refute the lies that keep people bound while guarding yourself and your own life from the counter-attacks that will come. As I said earlier our weapons are "mighty in God" they are amazing weapons if wielded rightly. Do not be intimidated the authority of Jesus and the "big guns" of God's weaponry are on our side.

A Tactical Armory

The following table summarizes the ways Satan attacks and the way we should respond to these attacks. I have called it a tactical armory since it tells us which weapon to select for the battle. You may notice that many of the Scriptures for Satan's tactics also contain the remedy for it close by or in the same verse! God is wise.

Scripture Ref	Satan's Trick	Our Victory
John 10:10	Steal, Kill, Destroy	Take hold of the abundant life in Christ
1 Timothy 3:6,7	Pride leading to condemnation	Wise appointing of those in spiritual authority
Rev 12:10,11	Accusation	The blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony..testifying to what the blood of the Lamb has done for you.
Luke 4:1-13	Temptation through misapplied Scriptures that seem to validate fleshly desires for physical appetite, specialness to God and power.	Knowing the Scriptures so well that you can spot the lie and counter it with a more appropriate Scripture.
1 Timothy 4:1-7	Deceptive false teachings	Reject fanciful tales, teach the Scriptures, sound doctrine, thankfulness, prayer
James 2:17-26	False assurance of salvation	A godly life of good works based on

Matthew 7:15-28		Jesus teaching is evidence of having true faith.
Deut 7:25, 18:10-13, 32:7, Lev 19:31 Isaiah 47:13, Acts 19:19 1 Corinthians 10:14	Ensnarement in the occult , divination astrology, and the worship of false gods.	Destroy all objects associated with it. Complete disassociation from it.
2 Corinthians 10:3-5 Ephesians 6:10-21 Romans 8:4-6,.12:1,2 Philippians 4:8 Colossians 3:1-4.	Strongholds made of thoughts that oppose God -especially prideful thoughts and unbelief. These thoughts can control the life and emotions of a person, church or country.	Biblical apologetics, renewing the mind. Setting the mind on the things of the Spirit Use of our spiritual armour combined with faith, the word of God, prayer in the Spirit and humble submission.
Matthew 23:17,19,24,26 Luke 4:18 John 9:39 Romans 10:7-10,25 2Corinthians 3:14-17, 4:3,4 Ephesians 4:17-24, 1 John 2:10,11	Blinding the minds of unbelievers. Especially those who stubbornly refuse Christ.	Turning to Christ. Having a willingness to accept the light and seek it further. Renewal of the mind. Loving your brother in Christ Good teaching and intercession can "open the eyes of the blind".
1 Corinthians 10:14-22	Religious ceremonies that appear "cultural" but are in fact demonic.	Awareness of the spiritual realities that under gird such things. Not participating in them.
Matthew 12:27-29, 16:19, 18:18-20, Luke 11:19-22	Unrestrained Satanic activity. Spiritual wickedness in the heavenly realms. Spiritual "strong men" occupying a person, place or nation.	Binding and loosing in Jesus name which may often have a corporate dimension to it.
Matthew 9:32-34 Luke 13:11-16 Matthew 8:16,17 Mark 9:14-29	Disease caused by demons (not all disease is meant)	Healing. Prayer and fasting. Faith. Use of command prayers in the name of Jesus.
Luke 10:17-19 Acts 16:16-18 Mark 5:1-20, 9:14-29 Luke 11:20-26 Acts 5:16, 8:7	Demon-possession	Use of the name of Jesus with authority. Command the demons to leave. Sometimes it may help to identify the demons. Then the delivered person must live a Holy Spirit filled life. Faith and prayer are necessary and sometimes fasting.

Conclusion

I hope you are feeling a bit more confident in spiritual warfare by now. Please answer the following revision questions. They will help you learn the material.

What was one of the purposes in Christ's coming as a human being? (1 John 3:8 , Hebrews 2:14)

What victories did He win? (Eph 4:8 , Colossians 2:13-15, John 16:33, 1 John 5:4)

What change took place in the heavenly status of believers between the time of John the Baptist and the day of Pentecost? (Mt 11:11-13)

Are Christians greater or lesser than angels in authority? (1 Cor 6:3, Heb 2:14, Eph 2:6,7)

What is the importance of authority in spiritual warfare? (See section on the power and authority of the Christian)

What are strongholds made of? How do we combat them? (2 Cor 10:3-5)

What are the two ways of using the name of Jesus? (Acts 3:6, 16:18 John 14:13,14, 15:16)

What is meant by binding and loosing? (Matt 12:27-29, 16:19, 18:18-20)

Why can the demonic realm "not touch us"? (1 John 4:4, 5:18)

What is the right tactic for combating involvement in the occult? (See diagram above)

Bible Verses On Healing

(Isaiah 61:1 NKJV) "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me To preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

(Jeremiah 3:22 NKJV) "Return, you backsliding children, And I will heal your backslidings."
"Indeed we do come to You, For You are the LORD our God.

(Jeremiah 17:14 NKJV) Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; Save me, and I shall be saved, For You are my praise.

(Jeremiah 30:17 NKJV) For I will restore health to you And heal you of your wounds,' says the LORD, 'Because they called you an outcast saying: "This is Zion; No one seeks her.'"

(Jeremiah 33:6 NKJV) 'Behold, I will bring it health and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth.

(Hosea 6:1 NKJV) Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up.

(Hosea 14:4 NKJV) "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from him.

(Malachi 4:2 NKJV) But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.

(Matthew 4:23 NKJV) And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

(Matthew 8:13 NKJV) Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour.

(Matthew 8:16 NKJV) When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick,

(Matthew 9:35 NKJV) Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

(Matthew 10:1 NKJV) And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.

(Matthew 10:8 NKJV) "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

(Matthew 12:22 NKJV) Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw.

(Matthew 14:14 NKJV) And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.

(Luke 6:19 NKJV) And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all.

(Luke 9:6 NKJV) So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.(The twelve are sent out)

(Luke 10:8-9 NKJV) "Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. {9} "And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'(The seventy are sent out)

(Luke 17:15 NKJV) And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God,(The story of the ten lepers)

(Acts 3:12 NKJV) So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?

(Healing of the lame man at the Gate Beautiful) (Acts 4:29-31 NKJV) "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, {30} "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." {31} And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

(1 Corinthians 12:9 NKJV) to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit,

(James 5:14-16 NKJV) Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. {15} And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. {16} Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

(Revelation 22:2 NKJV) In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

(Luke 8:47 NKJV) Now when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before Him, she declared to Him in the presence of all the people the reason she had touched Him and how she was healed immediately.

(Luke 8:48 NKJV) And He said to her, "Daughter, be of good cheer; your faith has made you well. Go in peace."

(Luke 5:17 NKJV) Now it happened on a certain day, as He was teaching, that there were Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting by, who had come out of every town of Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

Healing Service Procedure

The following is a recommended healing service procedure and is a brief service that is easy for an unwell person to cope with and which ministers healing, hope, love and comfort to the sick through faith-filled prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. The main part of the service is 45 minutes, the ministry time 15 minutes and the supper 20 minutes - feel free to adapt it to suit your own needs.

Note: The service should be something that you are comfortable with and perhaps initially a "once per month" event until it gathers momentum. Behind this order of service are two concerns a) That sick people will feel cared for and thought of and not be asked to engage in an unduly long service or in a high level of physical activity. b) That the church will operate out of truth and genuineness not out of "hype".

Before The Service(45 minutes) 6:15-7:00

The team meets for prayer, Bible study and personal encouragement. The team prays specifically for Jesus to be manifest among them and through them. They ask for the authority and power to heal all sicknesses and all people. The team is thus "prayed up", faith-filled and ready before the service. Specific known needs can also be prayed for at this time of pre-service intercession.

Introduction 7:00-7:02

Because of the unusual nature of the healing ministry a brief word of explanation at the start of each service is in order. I would anticipate it going something like this:

"Welcome to the SmithTown Church and our healing ministry. We want you to feel at home here. We are just ordinary Christians who believe that God has called us to pray for those who are ill. We just do the praying - Jesus does all the healing. If you are a visitor we would like you to feel at ease. You won't have to pray aloud, give money, or join the church. We will sing a few songs which you can join in if you feel like it, then there will be a short sermon on healing and a time when we pray for the sick. We will not ask you to do anything embarrassing, dangerous or foolish. We want you to feel the love of God in this place and to be made whole."

Worship 7:02-7:15

Three songs plus a two minute personal testimony of healing. Songs should not just be personal favorites but be deliberately chosen to connect people to God and make them aware of the healing power that is in Jesus Christ. Songs that have good Scriptural content and that faith can "latch on to" are very helpful. Avoid songs that merely consist of a connection of unsubstantiated claims of power. They produce the sensation of unreality and people feel they are being "hyped up" and start to distrust the service and God.

Communion 7:15-7:25

Focus on the **wounds of Christ** and their healing power (Isaiah 53). Focus also on sins being dealt with through the cross. A time of confession is appropriate as forgiveness and healing are often linked in the NT. (see James 5:14-16 for one example).

Sermon/Homily 7:25-7:45

A twenty minute factual presentation of God's Word focusing on healing, forgiveness, answered prayer etc. Should be a convincing presentation of what God can do for those who call upon His Name. No rash promises just words you can believe in.

Prayer Ministry 7:45-8:00

People can either come to the front for prayer or just raise their hands where they are. The prayer team moves around praying quietly and confidentially with each one. Difficult cases can be taken to a side room.

Supper 8:00-8:20

Just coffee and biscuits. Allows contacts to be made and follow up to occur.

How to Minister Healing

First of all it must be said that there is no such thing as a "magical" healing technique that works every time for every person. If there was it would have been discovered centuries ago and passed down as something of great value. Nevertheless there are better and worse ways of going about healing. Firstly I will share the method that works for me, then I will share the method that worked for John Wimber.

My Technique (based on authority)

1. Ask Jesus for the power and authority to heal to be given to you for that hour/that person.
2. Ask the person what is wrong.
3. Then ask them what they desire as an end result.
4. Then take authority and command the end result into being in Jesus name.
5. Listen for anything the Holy Spirit is saying to the person in the situation.
6. Check to see what is happening for the person.
7. Don't take "No" for an answer. Keep praying until the result is achieved or its obvious that nothing is happening.
8. After praying I give the person directions that I feel God is saying to them about their healing. This is pretty much identical to the post-prayer instructions of Wimber discussed below so I will leave it until then.

For example: a person comes along and you ask them "What do you want?" (Like Jesus did) and they say "I am blind". You ask "What is your desired end result?" That I might see." So you might command "Sight be restored in Jesus name" or "Be healed in Jesus name" or "Eyes be opened in Jesus name". You then listen for what God might be saying as you do this. Somewhere in the procedure you might ask "What can you see.." and they might say "Nothing" or "Its blurry" and you keep praying until either the see clearly or there is no improvement. You then give post-prayer instructions as the Lord leads. Here is an example of this in the Bible:

(Mark 8:22-26 NKJV) Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. {23} So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. {24} And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking." {25} Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. {26} Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town."

John Wimber's Technique (From his book Power Healing) based on spiritual perception.

John Wimber's technique is considerably more complicated than mine and takes into account factors such as unforgiveness and "the real reason" why people are sick. The problem I have with it is that I don't see Jesus telling people that the "real reason they are sick is because they have a poor relationship with their mother" or "your arthritis is caused by bitterness". This may very well be so because we are creatures of body, soul and spirit but I am reluctant to do this because a) Its very powerful psychologically and may create a "guru" mentality b) Jesus just heals them c) I could be horribly wrong d)It requires a lot of tact. However, John Wimber is FAR more experienced than I am at healing so I'm including it for what it is worth.

1. The Interview - Where does it hurt? What's wrong?

2. The Diagnostic Decision - What's really wrong? What's the cause of the illness? Ask God to reveal it. Ask questions.

3. The Prayer Selection - How should I pray in this situation? Wimber talks about prayers of petition, command, pronouncement, rebuke and agreement. The prayer of agreement is where you get others to agree with you for the healing and it helps add authority and power to the battle. (Matthew 18:19-20 NKJV) "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. {20} "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

4. The Prayer Engagement - Wimber lays his hands on the person (or, in the case of sensitive areas on top of the person's hands which are placed over the afflicted area). He then prays "Holy Spirit come and minister healing to this person". A wide variety of possible responses and reactions are reported in his book including trembling, laughing and shaking. If a demon manifests the person is taken to a side room and the demon is dealt with. The prayer engagement continues until there is a sense that it is over.

5. Post-Prayer Instructions - Just as Jesus said "Go and sin no more" (John 8:11) and (John 5:14 NKJV) "Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you." So Wimber exhorts people to holiness and gives them instructions on how to keep their healing or pursue its completion.

Books

There are hundreds of books on healing. I have read a dozen or more. Here are two excellent books on healing that I think are the best in the field (other than this one!). The second one is marvellous but may be hard to get hold of.

John Wimber - Power Healing , London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1987

Harold Taylor - Sent To Heal, Ringwood: Order of St. Luke The Physician, 1993