

Also, Paul prayed three times that a “*thorn in the flesh*” (what this was we don’t know exactly) should be removed from him, but God did not remove it, but rather said:

2 Corinthians 12:9

My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Paul acquiesced to God’s will after the third time of praying, and did not bother the Lord about it any more after that.

The Psalmist too says that there was a very good reason for him to be afflicted:

Psalms 119:67

Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

Many times the Lord is gracious and will heal us when we ask, but even then, there is only one thing certain about life:

Hebrews 9:27

....it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.

We must always be aware that maybe, in the Lord’s will, it is aunt Bessie’s time to die. We all die. Death is the only thing certain about life. Only Enoch, Elijah and all those who will be on the earth at Christ’s second coming won’t die. That is not most of us. We should all ordinarily expect one day to die. We should prepare for it. We need to embrace Christ as our only Saviour from the consequences of our sins, and make sure we are His, before it’s too late. In other words, we shouldn’t be obsessed with a “healing ministry,” thinking that if only we have enough faith we can be healed every time and live for ever. That is stupidity at its greatest. Who wants to live in this awful, sad, depressing world, full of suffering and trials, for ever, anyway?

John 16:33

In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

The Christian’s true home is in heaven. That is what we should be preparing for, not a long, comfortable life on this earth:

Colossians 3:1,2

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

This is why I have no time for so-called “healing ministries” in the church. However, if a ministry is offering prayer for the sick, of course that is good and useful and should be encouraged. But when people presume on God to heal every time, we have crossed the line. We should be thankful for anything the Lord brings upon us, even death.

1 Thessalonians 5:18

In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Healing Ministries in the Church Today

On the church scene today are many, many so-called “healing ministries,” which claim to offer miraculous physical healing in the name of Jesus Christ to anyone who wants to avail themselves of it. Sadly, this would include many weak, vulnerable people for whom the usual channels, such as a doctor or hospital, have not worked for them.

The people who set up these “ministries” get their ideas mainly from personal experience. What Biblical basis they have for their ministries they get from such verses as:

Isaiah 53:4,5

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

They believe, wrongly, that this talks about physical healing rather than spiritual healing from the burden of our sins.

I have a problem with all these so-called “healing ministries” in the church.

Firstly, it is important to note that every time we are healed, it is a miracle. I had a cold last week, but it cleared up. That in itself is a miracle, and we should be thankful.

Psalms 139:14

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

However, when we talk about miracles in the context of a healing ministry, we are talking about extraordinary

healing above and beyond the usual, natural means God normally uses. Of course, only God is free to do this:

Westminster Confession of Faith 5:3

God in His ordinary providence maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them at His pleasure.

Secondly, we must realise that no-one anywhere has miraculous powers to heal in this way, despite many churches claiming that people do. Jesus Christ had this power. Upon Christ healing a man born blind, the man said:

John 9:32

Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

Men having the power to physically heal miraculously was unheard of up to that point. Christ coming along and really having these powers was such a wonder. In fact, Christ called these abilities of His, “*signs and wonders,*” which were only there for one purpose, namely to point to Him as being the Messiah:

John 6:26

Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles [i.e. what the miracles were pointing to, i.e. that He was the Messiah], but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.

For most people who came to Christ, all they wanted was the physical healing. They couldn't care less about His teaching. Of ten lepers Christ cleansed, only one came back to give thanks:

Luke 17:15-18

And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

In Matthew chapter 10, Christ delegates some of His miraculous powers to His disciples, but it was only for a short evangelistic campaign to the lost sheep of the house of Israel:

Matthew 10:1,5-8

And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.... These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

Note their main task was to preach “*The kingdom of heaven is at hand,*” and the miracles were a sign that this was the case. Very many Christians today think this power to miraculously heal is for us today, but this is nowhere spoken of in Scripture, it was just given to the disciples for this short campaign. In fact in a later campaign, when Christ sent out seventy into all the villages where He Himself would later come, the disciples were again given some miraculous powers, but Christ rebuked them afterwards for boasting of them:

Luke 10:19,20

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.

After Christ's ascension, some of the apostles were also given power to heal, but this was limited to the apostles only, as they were specifically called the “*signs of an apostle*”:

2 Corinthians 12:12

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

But in the last letter that Paul ever wrote, to Timothy, we see that even the miraculous powers that he had, had

disappeared by that time, because he couldn't even heal his friend:

2 Timothy 4:20

Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.

After that, no more men performing miracles. Just enough around the time of Christ coming to this world to prove that He was the Messiah, and to point to the fact that it was His teachings that we need to follow.

So, no-one has magic powers to heal today, in fact no-one has ever had magic powers to heal at all, apart from Christ and some of His disciples for a short period of time. So Benny Hinn, Peter Popoff, Morris Cerullo and the like, not to mention all the Nigerian and African so-called faith-healers conning vulnerable people out of lots of money, are all fake.

Having said all that, of course God can heal. So, if aunt Bessie is sick in bed, one thing we should not be doing is laying hands on her and saying “Be healed, in the name of Jesus.” Such action won't work. However, we *can* sit beside her and pray. The Lord *can* heal. We are powerless to do anything, but the Lord can heal if He so wishes, and as Christians, we have access to His throne of grace:

Hebrews 4:16

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

But we must remember that we shouldn't presume on the Lord to heal every time.

Many times, it is NOT God's will for someone to be physically healed. This is a shocking thing to say to people in these “healing ministry” circles, but it is true. The man born blind was born blind....:

John 9:3

...that the works of God should be made manifest in him.

This doesn't only refer to the moment Christ healed him, but to all of his life while he was blind.