

The Doctrine of Healing

The first miracle of healing recorded in the book of the Acts, after the apostles had received the Holy Spirit, is of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple in Jerusalem. The miracle was a really dramatic event, as the lame man had lain outside the Temple, at that gate, begging for financial support for many years. Almost everybody would have known him, probably having suffered his demands for money and felt obliged at some time or other to contribute to his need. There could therefore be no hiding whether this healing was real, or not. The man was well known; one minute he was unable to walk, a beggar, almost the next, off he goes into the temple "walking, leaping and praising God". "The people were filled with wonder and amazement", the Bible tells us. Wow! What a start to healings by the apostles.

Some explanation was required as a large crowd had gathered, and probably they were going to make heroes out of Peter and John. So Peter, the spokesman as ever, sets out to explain the basis of this healing.. In the Bible we often find that the first time a thing happens God sets a precedent, a pattern. He sets out the principles for us to understand how this healing has taken place and how subsequent ones will happen also. For example, the first recorded healing of an individual person, as we read the New Testament, is found in Matthew's gospel, chapter 8. A leper comes to Jesus and says, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean". There was never a doubt in the leper's heart and mind that Jesus could heal Him, the question was, will He? Jesus' response: "I will!" Maybe right from the start of this booklet, looking at healing, we need to confirm in our hearts that the "Jesus who can", says "I will". Many believe that God can heal but doubt His will to do so. Here is the clear indication of God's will to heal; after all, He loves us.

So back to Peter's explanation. "Don't look at us, as if we did it through our own ability" Peter says. "This is how it happened. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it is the God of our Fathers who is responsible." The place was Jerusalem, the people were Jews, so Peter immediately puts them on to familiar ground. Peter goes into their history, to the God that made them the Nation they are. The God, from their history, that had brought them out of Egypt. The God who had worked many miracles among them, and because of whom they were living in Jerusalem. This God, to them the true and living God, had glorified His son Jesus. That was new. (The great central pillar of Christianity is that Jesus Christ died on a cross, has been raised from the dead and has ascended into heaven, and is now at the right hand of God). Peter tells us that God the Father has glorified Jesus, and He is now the Lord and has a "Name". Peter tells us "It is this name of Jesus, through faith in His name, that has made this man whole".

Why the "Name"? Everyone has a name. We are all called by something and by our names we are known. Almost every document we fill in requires our name, and usually our date of birth and address. That is how we are identified, as who we really are, distinct from anyone else. Of course, with the name is the reputation, and perhaps an authority. Restaurants get a "name for their food". A certain standard can be expected, or not expected, as the case may be. Businesses try to build up a name, a reputation, for being better than others, to attract a clientele. The name is so important as with it goes an expectation of what service you will get. The Bible tells us that "Jesus has a name above every name" His reputation and authority are such that no one else is greater. In the UK many years ago, the King would have a name, what he said would take place, there was no one greater, no one had a greater authority.

Peter had said to the lame man “In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk”. His declaration in those words identifies the authority for the healing. It is Jesus; He came from Nazareth, He lived on the earth, but now He is Jesus Christ, as God has raised Him from the dead, and made Him Lord and Christ. In that name be healed! Peter believed, John believed, even their faith had come from Jesus Christ, Peter pulled the man up and the weak bones in his ankles received strength from God. He could now walk. Simple and straightforward? In one way, yes, faith always makes the impossible straightforward. Faith is substance and evidence, it is the rock on which we can firmly stand, and be sure that God will do what we ask of Him.

Jesus was the perfect example of one who believed God, and the gospels are full of His testimony of how His Father blessed His life. He tells us “Whatsoever you ask in faith, believing, you will receive”. It is a good bench mark to know whether we are “really believing”, as Jesus says, if we do believe we will receive. There is no place for assumption but the need for real faith. It is helpful to know that even if we don’t have faith for a specific need we can still come to the Lord. Hebrews 11 tells us that, to come to God, all we need is “to believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those who earnestly seek Him”. That should be straightforward for every Christian. We will then find that God has all the faith we need, and can pass it on to us. Even Peter in his explanation says “the faith that is by Him”. In other words we have not dragged up the faith from within ourselves, but it has come from our relationship with the glorified Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives.

So we learn that Peter and John had a practical, not theoretical, knowledge of the Name of Jesus Christ, and were able to call on that Name in faith, and see the miracle accomplished. It is clear that the early apostles had, after being filled with the Holy Spirit, become really aware of the Name of the Lord Jesus, and what was available to both themselves and others through the Name of Jesus. It may be helpful to look at the use of the Name of Jesus in the chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, for us to understand what the apostles themselves understood about the Name.

In chapter 2, Peter preaching about what has just happened to them, in that they had received the Holy Spirit, quotes from the second chapter of the prophet Joel, “Whosoever will call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved”. Their whole salvation was based on the Name of Jesus, i.e. what He had done for them in His death and resurrection, who He was and what authority He had, (in fact, in chapter 4 Peter says “There is no other name under heaven by which someone can be saved.) At the end of the preaching, when asked by the listeners what they should do, Peter says “Repent, be baptised, everyone of you, in the name of Jesus for the remission of your sins and you will receive the Holy Spirit”. Just as healing was offered to the lame man in the Name of the Lord Jesus, remission of sins had been offered, and then regeneration by the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

When Peter went to Cornelius, (chapter 10, verse 43), preaching to them simply about the Lord Jesus, he again tells of the availability of the remission of sins through the name of Jesus. As those to whom He was preaching were Gentiles, Peter had never expected them to receive the Holy Spirit, so He did not offer the gift to them. God, of course, knew better, and the moment those of Cornelius’ household heard the good news and believed on the Name of the Lord Jesus, they received the remission of their sins and also the Holy Spirit, who of course God gives to those who obey Him.

Philip, in Samaria, (chapter 8), preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ, and many miracles of deliverance were worked. Many in Samaria then believed on the Lord. Paul, in Acts 16, delivers the young woman, in the Name of Jesus Christ. In other books of the New Testament, Paul, writing to the Corinthian Church in the first letter says “Such were some of you, but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God”. The basis for the change in their lives, their cleansing from sin, their

sanctification (separation unto God, making them holy) and justification (free from the guilt of past sin before God, as the basis of their peace with God) is the Name of the Lord Jesus, all this being worked by the Spirit of God. We are told that the Holy Spirit would take the things of the Lord Jesus and reveal them to us. The Holy Spirit reveals Jesus' righteousness so that we can be made free. Even Paul and Barnabus, we are told, had "hazarded their lives for the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ". So the apostles demonstrated real confidence in the Name of the Lord Jesus, believing that whatever the need in a life, there was one simple answer; the Lord Jesus Christ. God had glorified Him, they knew it, it was wonderful, and suddenly everything was possible.

There was persecution, of course. The apostles were dragged before the rulers and told not to speak any longer in the name of Jesus. Their reaction? It is better to obey God rather than men. In our times there are many threats, less obvious but nevertheless real, to really speaking in the Name of the Lord Jesus and offering Him as the answer to every need.

The work is finished. Isaiah tells us, "Surely He has borne our griefs/sicknesses 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". Matthew in his gospel, chapter 8 verse 17, quotes Isaiah and confirms that the healings are physical healings. Matthew quotes the "stripes" of the Lord Jesus as the basis for the healings in Jesus' own ministry. This confirms it is the work of the cross that makes all healing possible and that Jesus own ministry was based on His own death, not yet accomplished and yet available in the eternal workings of God.

Back in Acts chapter 4, the apostles returned to the church and reported what had happened. The response; they all prayed together and cried out to the Lord. Their opening, "Lord, you are God! who made heaven and earth". Such confidence, that is what true knowledge of the name of Jesus brings. They knew what was happening, "All the rulers are gathered together against the Lord and His Christ". The same happens in every generation. The powers of this world rise up and threaten. They rise up against the Lord Jesus, against His name, against His authority. They do not want this man to rule over them. The prayer request of the church in Jerusalem, "Give us boldness to speak your word, by stretching forth your hand to heal; that signs and wonders may be done in the Name of your Holy Son Jesus". They wanted miracles, they wanted a demonstration of the power of the name of Jesus in public, as a means of giving them boldness. Miracles, please Lord. A demonstration that what man cannot do, God can do and will do, all in the name of Jesus. Is that not again what is needed today?

The Lord answered their request. In chapter 5, we read, they put the sick in the streets and just Peter's shadow healed them. They brought the troubled ones from the area around Jerusalem and everyone was healed. How? In the name of Jesus Christ. He is glorified. The rulers complained that the apostles had filled Jerusalem with their doctrine/teaching. Some teaching! Not theory, but a practical lesson; a demonstration in the lives of many, many needy people that Jesus Christ is Lord and His name is above every name. They were all made whole.

The church was back to what David had written in Psalm 103. "Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all His benefits. Who forgives all our iniquities; who heals all our diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your strength is renewed like the eagles". All this of course is based on the grace of God. All healings, as well as all God's blessings, are because of His wonderful grace.

So the Lord heals all our diseases and He should be our first call, not the last, when we are sick. We should cry, "Abba Father", the cry of the sons of God. The Lord Jesus confirms this by His administration of the gifts of healings, a gift of the Spirit to the church. Both words are plural showing that the gift is not in a person but in the Lord, who gives a gift to the sick. The person with the gifts is merely the delivery person, passing on each gift of healing, from the Lord, to the sick

person. In each local church there should be some members with gifts of healings, as there will be other gifts, for example, prophecy, or tongues or words of knowledge. Therefore the place of healing is the church, the wholeness of the Lord Jesus being brought out in His body, through the members of that body. The church is the place of the power of the Lord Jesus, His members on the earth, to whom the sick should be able to come and find wholeness in body, mind, soul and spirit. Elders have a particular function, as they can be called for by a sick person. The elders should anoint the sick and pray the prayer of faith which shall heal the sick, (James chapter 5). "The Lord shall raise the sick up". This shows where the power lies, and always will lie. It is with the Lord Jesus. Elders too are the watchmen, they are the oversight, who should be watching for what would attack the church. They stand and pray to keep the enemy at bay, especially when, among other things, satan tries to afflict members of the church and/or families with sicknesses.

The Lord, in Exodus 15, talks of being the "Lord that heals". That is one reason why Jesus was the apostle to Israel. Peter, in Acts 10.38, says "That God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power; who went about doing "good" and healing all that were oppressed of the devil". Wonderful, the Lord had always wanted wholeness of body and mind for Israel (read the book of Leviticus to see how they were to offer sacrifices to God, and what they should eat etc. to be kept well, and in a right relationship with the Lord) and at last Jesus was there to bring it to them. Jesus even sent out 70 to do the healing and deliverance and was delighted to see satan fall like lightening from heaven. The oppression, at least at that time, was broken. Praise God!

So, I trust, there is understanding of the name of the Lord Jesus as it relates to salvation, cleansing, sanctification, justification, deliverance, remission of sins and healing. The early church members were effective believers in the power of the name of Jesus and saw the fruit of their faith in many practical and miraculous ways. ("Faith without works is dead"). God was bearing witness to their faith with "signs following". The Lord always loves to bear witness when His church "is believing" in His name. Those early believers had not drawn back from their place of faith. The writer of the book of Hebrews, in chapter 10, talks about "drawing back, or pulling back, as regards believing to the saving of the soul". When people draw back, they draw back into perdition. That means a place of loss, a position where what was gained is now lost. Armies retreat, they fall back to a position, but lose the territory gained. Paul tells the Galatians if they seek to be justified by the law, Christ is become of no effect to them. They had lost what they had gained, no longer solely believing on the Lord Jesus but looking for an alternative means of salvation. So it is, if we draw back as regards healing being available in the name of Jesus, we lose it. That is why many are "at a loss" to know how to deal with many needs in the lives of church members. They have lost that which would be the means of wholeness, by drawing back from a place of faith.

Hebrews tells us, "We are not of them that draw back into perdition but believe to the saving of the soul". Do we draw back into a place where we lose our salvation? Of course not, but let us not be of those who draw back about anything else either. The Lord is the one that forgives all our iniquities, heals all our diseases, who redeems our lives from destruction, who crowns us with lovingkindness and tender mercies etc. Let us leave nothing out, let us lose nothing at all from the wonderful gospel, and all it makes available in the name of our Lord Jesus. God has truly glorified His Son.

Impossible? Without faith, yes, but he that comes to God must believe that He is and is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Those that seek shall find. Let us seek the Lord, in our times, that He may stretch forth His hand to heal in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the Name of our Lord Jesus whom we love and serve may be lifted up. Jesus said "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me". Amen.