

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT
PART 7
THE GIFTS OF HEALINGS

Over the past several months we have been in a series called Foundation of Faith and we have been looking at the foundational truths of the Bible. Who God the Father is, what the Trinity is all about, who is Jesus, who is the Holy Spirit. And now, in this series on the Holy Spirit we have begun looking at the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit has given to us. We have looked at the gifted men that Christ has given to the church, the Apostles and Prophets and we have seen that these primary offices have passed off the scene. They laid the foundation for the Church. Now the Church is being built upon Evangelists, Pastor-Teachers and Teachers to equip the saints to do the work of the ministry.

We have also looked at the following spiritual gifts, Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge, the Gift of Faith and now, in this study we are going to be looking at the supernatural Gifts of Healings that is spoken of in I Corinthians chapter 12, where we read, **“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given . . . gifts of healings by the same Spirit.”** I Corinthians 12:7-8a, 9b.

What I want you to notice in this description of this gift is that it speaks of, **“gifts of healings”** and not the, “gift of healing.” It is in the plural form. Why would Paul do that? Because there are different types of gifts and different types of healings that take place as the Holy Spirit gives us this gift as He wills.

We love to place God in a box and have Him work just in a pre-described way, but with the gifts of healings there is no set pattern. And I think the reason is simple, we can't come up with some formula to market the gifts of healings. These are grace gifts given to us by the Holy Spirit. And I love the way that James has us pray as someone is sick. He tells us this. **“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. 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 5:14-15.

James says we are to call for the elders, not that they alone can heal, but a group of people praying together so that no one man can get the glory or the credit, only God. Now God does not always heal this way, sometimes it is with the prayer of one, it is as He wills.

We can look at the life of Jesus and see how He healed people. And as we study this we will see the variety of ways He worked. You see, it is not a, “Do it this way and God has to act this way” theology. Let me show you what I mean with just a few examples of how Jesus healed people in many different ways and how others healed in different ways. There was no formula to follow and that is important for us to understand. People were healed as God desired, as He willed and not as we willed!

VARIOUS WAYS GOD HEALED PEOPLE

1. CENTURION'S SERVANT HEALED - MATTHEW 8:5-13

Here in Matthew chapter 8 we see Jesus heal the centurion's servant at a distance. Jesus said to this 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 8:13. I think many times we think that this gift of healing has to be done as you are in contact with the person. But here we see Jesus clearly heal this centurion's servant at a distance!

2. PETER'S MOTHER-IN-LAW HEALED - MATTHEW 8:14-15

Again in Matthew chapter 8 we find Peter's mother-in-law very sick with a fever. And we are told in Matthew 8:14-15, "**Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever. So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them.**" And so what we see here in this healing is that as Jesus comes by and He touches her hand and she is healed.

3. TWO BLIND MEN HEALED - MATTHEW 9:27-31

In Matthew chapter 9 we see two blind men come to Jesus, desiring to be healed, to receive their sight back. And we are told, "**Then He touched their eyes, saying, 'According to your faith let it be to you.' And their eyes were opened.**" Matthew 9:29-30a. Here we see that Jesus touches their eyes and they are healed.

4. **A BLIND MAN HEALED - JOHN 9:1-7**

In John chapter 9 Jesus encounters a man who was born blind. And we see Jesus spit on the ground, make some clay out of it, and then place it upon this mans eyes, and then He tells this blind man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. And this man, who was led to the pool blind, came back seeing! Now don't go spitting on the ground and making some clay and place them on someone's eyes unless the Lord tells you to. What I am showing you is the many ways this gift is in operation. There is no set way; it is according to the Spirit of God!

5. **ANOTHER BLIND MAN HEALED - MARK 8:22-26**

In Mark chapter 9 we see Jesus heal another blind man and this time He spat on this mans eyes. Now I don't know about you, but healing at a distance would have worked for me, but Jesus spat on his eyes! Now as Jesus did this He also touched this mans eyes and asked him if he could see. And this man said, "**I see men like trees, walking.**" Mark 8:24. And Jesus touched his eyes again and his sight was completely restored. It was not that Jesus was short on power the first time, but this is the way the Holy Spirit wanted to work in this mans healing.

6. PETER'S SHADOW - ACTS 5:15-16

Now this is kind of a strange one when you think about it. In Acts 5:15-16 we are told, **“so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. 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.”**

We see here that people are getting healed as Peter's shadow passed by. A very unique way to heal and that is what the Holy Spirit chose to do.

7. PAUL'S SWEATBAND - ACTS 19:11-12

Notice this one in Acts 19:11-12, **“Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.”** So here we see another unusual way to be healed, they took Paul's sweatbands and placed them upon the sick and demon possessed, and they were healed. And Luke tells us that God was working, **“unusual miracles by the hand of Paul.”** Acts 19:11. This was not a normal way, but again this is how the Holy Spirit desired to work.

So as you can see, there are many ways that God will use to heal people as He sees fit, as He desires and not as we desire. Now, let me ask you this. What is the difference between the gifts of healings and the working of miracles? Healings deal with the ability to restore health and to even restore someone temporally from death. Miracles, on the other hand, deal with everything else, as we will see next time when we look at the gift of miracles!

Before we go any further, let me put away some myths about this gift. The first is that this was only a temporary sign gift that was given to the church and to the early apostles as a way to confirm their calling. The only problem with that is we see the gifts of healings occur from the first century on into our own day, into the 21st century. In fact, Dr. A. G. Gordon, who is the founder of Christian Missionary and Alliance churches, wrote a book, *The Ministry of Healing*. And in this book he documents that throughout church history we see this gift in operation. Even John Wesley saw many people healed through prayer. In fact, Gordon concludes his book by saying that to say this gift, to say that healings ceased with the apostles is to deny what has been recorded by many reliable witnesses. Don't limit what God can do according to His Word! So that myth is blown away, we have evidence for it today!

The second myth regarding healings is that if you are not healed it is because of a lack of faith on your part. In other words, it is our faith in our faith that will heal us and we have taken God out of the picture! Benny Hinn tells his followers, "The Bible declares that the work was done 2,000 years ago. God is not going to heal you now – He healed you 2,000 years ago. All you have to do today is receive your healing by faith." And thus, if you are not healed, it is because you lack the faith to be healed.

Now that is interesting and it is wrong. But what these faith teachers do is blame you for not being healed, it is a lack of faith on your part, it is not their fault but yours! That is funny if it were not so tragic because many people have been hurt by these false teachings. In fact, Oral Roberts suffered a heart attack just hours after supposedly being healed of chest pains by Paul Crouch on TBN's live television show on October 6, 1992. So was it a lack of faith on Oral Roberts part that caused this heart attack? No! In fact, I wonder if he would have suffered a heart attack if he went to the doctor to be checked out for his chest pains! Here's the thing, whether we like it or not, as Walter Martin use to say, "The death rate is still one per person and we're all going to make it!"

If all are healed and it was based upon our faith, then why did the apostles all die? They had great faith and yet, they are all dead! You see, that makes no sense and it is not a lack of faith but God's sovereign will! He is still on the throne and He will decide all who are healed and all who are not. So this myth is also blown out of the water, it is not true!

The third myth, and this one goes along with the last one, is that God wants everyone to be healed, no one is to be sick, no one is to die! That is just foolish and contrary to the Scriptures and we will see that as we look at that later on this morning. But there were those that were sick in the church, like Timothy had a stomach problem, Paul had a eye problem, a thorn in the flesh and he prayed three times and he was not healed! So this myth is also blown out of the water, it is not true!

Now let me also say this. The gifts of healings are probably one of the more popular gifts which also makes it one of the most controversial and abused gifts. As I have said, this gift is the supernatural ability to restore someone to health, not because of you, but because the Holy Spirit desired to use you to work through. Thus, this gift should not draw attention to us, but to God. And this is where we see the abuse many times, men and women marketing themselves to make a profit off of God! You see, if we use the gift to draw attention to ourselves, if we promote ourselves as healers, people are not going to know Jesus better, but they sure will know you better. And that focus is totally wrong. We should always be pointing people back to Jesus!

Now why do we need this gift? That is easy, it is because there is sickness, there is disease, there is death in the world. Why is that? Because **ALL** sickness is a result of sin! Let me explain. When Adam sinned he set into motion the entropy law or the second law of thermodynamics. And this law basically says that in a closed system all things are moving from order to disorder. All things are wearing down, decaying, rusting, and falling apart. We see that in our own lives as we get older, we are wearing down, moving from order to disorder.

You see, prior to Adam disobeying God, the earth was, “**very good!**” There was no death, no sickness. Paul makes that point of what happened when sinned entered the world in Romans 5:12 when he said, “**Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.**”

And God warned Adam what would happen if he disobeyed. He told Adam that he could enjoy everything, **“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it dying you shall surely die.”** Genesis 2:17.

And when Adam took that step and disobeyed God, he started a process of death and disease that has affected us all. You see, the result of Adam’s sin was threefold. And keep in mind that when we were created we were created with a spirit, soul and body. Thus, sin has corrupted that and placed the body in control instead of the spirit and thus, man lives to satisfy his flesh rather than please God. Let’s look at what happened to the spirit, soul and body when Adam sinned because each one of us has been affected by it today!

1. **SPIRIT**

When Adam sinned he was immediately spiritually dead, separated from God. Since Adam all who have been born are spiritually dead, separated from God by this inherited sin. Remember what Isaiah said, **“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.”** Isaiah 59:1-2. You see, our spirit is no longer in communication with God because our sin has separated us from God!

2. SOUL

The soul speaks of our emotional make-up. And when Adam sinned the first thing he did was try and cover himself up, hide himself from God, make himself acceptable to God. He made fig leaves as his clothing because sin brought about guilt in his life and in the lives of all his descendents.

3. BODY

When Adam sinned it also set into motion the death process. Adam didn't die immediately, but now sickness, health problems, would eventually lead to death, something that was not around prior to Adam's sin. And you can look around and see how we all have been affected by this. And since the spirit is dead, it is the body appetite that control our lives apart from Christ and that is not a good thing. That is why, when we come to Christ, we are born again or our spirit is alive once again and we can have fellowship with God because all our sins have been paid in full by the shed blood of Christ on the cross of Calvary! It is all Paul wrote in Romans 5:19, "**For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.**"

Now God never intended to leave us in this condition. In Revelation we read, **“. . . of the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world.”** Revelation 13:8. God’s plan was to redeem man from this condition by sending His Son to pay the penalty for our sins. Redemption is to restore man spiritually, emotionally, and physically - his spirit, soul and body! In the spiritual sense, this occurs when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are born again. Our fellowship with God has been restored. Our soul or emotions have been healed because we no longer have the guilt of sin in our life. They have been washed away by the blood of Christ.

In Psalm 103:12 we read, **“As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”** Also, in Isaiah 43:25 we read, **“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.”** The result of that is expressed by David in Psalm 32:1-2, as he said, **“What happiness for those whose guilt has been forgiven! What joys when sins are covered over! What relief for those who have confessed their sins and God has cleared their record.”** (The Living Bible) The guilt of sin is removed!

You see, God has redeemed us spiritually, emotionally, and one day He will redeem us physically. This is in the future, when the Lord comes back to ***“catch up”*** or receive His bride, the Church. It is then we will get new bodies, we will be moving out of this tent of flesh into mansions that God has prepared for us.

As many try to deny the fact that we still have sickness, disease and death, the evidence speaks for itself. Paul said in Romans 8:22-23, **“For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”**

We wait for that day when this physical body will be redeemed. And Paul tells us when this will occur in I Corinthians chapter 15, beginning in verse 51, where we read, **“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 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.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’ The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”** I Corinthians 15:51-58. At the time of the Rapture of the Church our physical body will also be redeemed!

HEALINGS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

1. BLESSINGS FOR OBEDIENCE

In the Old Testament we do see God promise to bless His people; keep them healthy if they will obey Him. Let's look at a couple of verses that relate to this idea of blessings, healings and health for obedience.

A. EXODUS 15:26

We read in Exodus 15:26, “**... ‘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.’**” The promise is to heed the Words of God, be obedient, and God won't place upon you the diseases that He placed upon the Egyptians. He is the Lord who heals or JEHOVAH -ROPHE!

B. EXODUS 23:25-26

We read in Exodus 23:25-26, “**So you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days.**” God says if you obey He will provide your physical needs, keep you healthy, keep you fruitful with many children, and cause you to live a long and prosperous life!

C. PSALM 103:1-3

We read in Psalm 103:1-3, **“Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases.”** Here David says that God will heal all our diseases! So many take what David has to say and come to the conclusion that no one should be sick, and some even go as far as saying that we shouldn’t even die! First of all we can’t take what God has promised to Israel and claim that for ourselves. God told David that he would be king of Israel, and we can’t claim that for ourselves. And yes, there are spiritual principles that we can gain, but we can’t take what God has promised to Israel and claim it for ourselves. Keep in mind that in the Old Testament God promised blessings for obedience. In the New Testament God has given us everything up front, and now tells us to obey! And we are going to see that sickness was a part of the early church, just as it is today and it is not because they lacked the faith to be healed!

2. HEALINGS*A. HEALING OF THE GENTILES SON BACK TO LIFE - I KINGS 17:17-24*

In I Kings chapter 17 we see Elijah staying at a widow’s house in Zarephath. And one day her son got sick and he died. And Elijah prayed and stretched himself out on this young man three times, and life was restored to him. This young man was brought back from the dead, he was healed!

B. HEALING OF NAAMAN OF LEPROSY - II KINGS 5:1-27

In II Kings chapter 5 we read of the story of Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army, a good man, who had leprosy. And he is told by his Jewish servant girl to go and see Elisha the prophet in Israel for he will heal you. And Naaman goes and after he humbles himself, he obeys the words of Elisha, dipping himself seven times in the Jordan River. We are told in II Kings 5:14, **“So he went down and dipped seven times in the Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God; and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.”** Naaman was miraculously healed of leprosy, an incurable disease!

Now we are going to take a few minutes to look at some healings in the New Testament and as you will see, these healings are not based on human intellect or power, but it is the supernatural power of God working in the lives of these people.

HEALINGS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**1. THE HEALING OF THE MAN WITH A WITHERED HAND - MATTHEW 12:9-13**

In Matthew chapter 12 we see Jesus go into a synagogue and there he met a man with a withered hand. And word had gotten out of what Jesus could do and the people knew, even though it was the Sabbath, Jesus was going to heal this man. And that is exactly what Jesus did, as verse 13 of Matthew chapter 12 tells us. We read, **“Then He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other.”** Here this man with the withered hand was healed!

2. HEALING POWER GIVEN TO THE APOSTLES - MATTHEW 10:1

In Matthew chapter 10 we read, “**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.**” That healing power that Jesus had was given to His apostles. Thus, some will argue that this is where this gift ends, with the apostles! That is wrong as we will see in a minute. First let me say this, the apostles, as with Jesus, did many miracles and yet they did not heal everyone. Thus, the sovereignty of God was the issue then as it is now!

3. POWER TO HEAL GIVEN TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE - MARK 16:15-18

In Mark 16:15-18 we read, “**And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.’**” Who can heal? Jesus says all those who believe! That includes us, not just the apostles. Again, that doesn’t mean we can heal at will, but the Holy Spirit gives this gift as He wills. That is very important for us to understand! And it is important for us to understand that God still heals today, in fact, He has healed everyone of us who have come to Him. He has cured us of our sin and brought us to the Father and that truly is the best healing, an everlasting healing!

4. **PETER HEALS THE LAME MAN - ACTS 3:1-11**

In Acts chapter 3 we see a lame man who sat at the gate beautiful at the Temple begging for alms. This man was 40 years old, and sat at this gate during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, and I'm sure Jesus saw him every time He went to the Temple, and yet Jesus did not heal him. But here we see Peter and John going to the Temple to pray and they encounter this man. And Peter says to him, "**... '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.'** And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them - walking, leaping, and praising God." The lame man was healed!

Think about this for a minute. When you read the book of Acts it seems like one miracle is taking place after another. The thing we fail to recognize is that these 28 chapters cover a period of time of about 30 years. And we can find about 30 miracles mentioned in the book of Acts, which means we see about 1 miracle per year! We need to keep that in mind. God is sovereign; He is in control of this gift.

Now why isn't God healing more today? There are a few reasons we can look at, and we have covered some of them, but I think it is important to understand this so we don't become discouraged.

WHY GOD DOESN'T HEAL ALL

1. GOD IS SOVEREIGN

We need to understand that God is sovereign and we have talked about this already. But He is in control and He does as He pleases. In Matthew 4:23-24 we read, **“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. 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.”** And then in Matthew 8:16 we read, **“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.”**

And when we read these verses we get the idea that Jesus healed everyone He came in contact with. That is not true as we have seen. Let me give you a few more examples. In John chapter 5, at the pool of Bethesda we see all the lame, the crippled, come and wait for the waters to be stirred, because the first one in when this occurred would be healed. That is what they believed. And there was a large crowd of lame people just waiting for this healing to occur in their life and Jesus healed only one lame man!

And we can look at Acts chapter 3 where we saw the lame man sitting at the gate of the Temple during the time of Jesus and he wasn't healed by Jesus. The point being is God is sovereign and He heals in His time and He heals those whom He wants to heal. We must not forget that. Those in the positive confession movement believe they can use a positive formula to get healings from God. But, if you say anything negative, then those negative words you spoke will create a negative power and it will happen to you. That is foolish!

Maybe you have heard of this story of three men traveling in a car and the driver asked the friend next to him, "How's your brother doing?" The man responded by saying, "He's really sick!" Quickly the driver responded, "Don't say that negative thought, say that he thinks he is sick!" The driver then turned to the man in the back seat and asked, "How's your sister doing?" And he responded by saying, "She thinks she's dead!" Silly, yes, but that is the reality of what they teach.

Also, we must understand under this section of the sovereignty of God, that God doesn't give us what we want, but what we need. He gives to us what is best for us even though we may not see it that way. And thus, when we pray, we should pray according to His will, in His name, representing Him, the things He would ask for. It is as John says in I John 5:14-15, **"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him."**

2. UNBELIEF

Here is another reason people are not healed many times. It is that they refuse to believe that God can and will heal people. And this is very true when we pray for someone with a terminal illness. Since it is beyond mans ability to do anything, we bring God down to our level and feel it is too late for this person. We may pray, but we also think, “Their dead!” That is wrong, for the God who created us can and does heal us many times.

In Matthew chapter 13 beginning in verse 53 we read, **“Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these parables, that He departed from there. 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? Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?’ 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.’ Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”**

Matthew 13:53-58. You see, Jesus wanted to do mighty works but their unbelief hindered His work. Now please understand this, I am not talking about the power of faith controlling God, but just the faith of a mustard seed, the slightest amount of faith that opens the door for God to move as He wills. Lord, help us in our unbelief!

3. THE ABUSE

Today we see all kinds of abuse with this gift of healing. We see healers using sideshow tricks, growing a leg longer; pumping people up to make them think they are healed, and-so-on. This does not negate what God is doing, but it does dishonor Him. And what happens is we see people following after signs and wonders instead of signs and wonders following after those that are in love with the Lord. Let me show you that when this gift is abused, it can cause someone's faith to falter. We are told,

Even back then I was searching for hard evidence of God as an alternative to faith. And one day I found it- on television, of all places. While randomly flipping a dial, I came across a mass healing service being conducted by Kathryn Kuhlman. I watched for a few minutes as she brought various people up on the stage and interviewed them. Each one told an amazing story of supernatural healing. Cancer, heart conditions, paralysis - it was like a medical encyclopedia up there. As I watched Kuhlman's program, my doubts gradually melted away. At last I had found something real and tangible. Kuhlman asked a musician to sing her favorite song, "He Touched Me." That's what I needed, I thought; a touch, a personal touch from God. She held out that promise, and I lunged for it.

Three weeks later when Kathryn Kuhlman came to a neighboring state, I skipped classes and traveled half a day to attend one of her meetings. The atmosphere was unbelievably charged - soft organ music in the background; the murmuring sound of people praying aloud, some in strange tongues; and every few minutes a happy interruption when someone would stand and claim, "I'm healed!" One person especially made an impression, a man from Milwaukee who had been carried into the meeting on a stretcher. When he walked - yes, walked - onstage, we all cheered wildly. He told us he was a physician, and I was even more impressed. He had incurable lung cancer, he said, and was told he had six months to live. But now, tonight, he believed God had healed him. He was walking for the first time in months. He felt great. Praise God! I wrote down the man's name and practically floated out of that meeting. I had never known such certainty of faith before. My search was over; I had seen proof of a living God in those people on the stage. If he could work tangible miracles in them, then surely he had something wonderful in store for me.

I wanted contact with the man of faith I had seen at the meeting, so much so that exactly one week later I phoned Directory Assistance in Milwaukee and got the physician's number. When I dialed it, a woman answered the phone. "May I please speak to Dr. S _____," I said. Long silence. "Who are you?" she said at last. I figured she was just screening calls from patients or something. I gave my name and told her I admired Dr. S _____ and had wanted to talk to him ever since the Kathryn Kuhlman meeting. I had been very moved by his story, I said. Another long silence. Then she spoke in a flat voice, pronouncing each word slowly. "My . . . husband . . . is . . . dead." Just that one sentence, nothing more, and she hung up.

I can't tell you how that devastated me. I was wasted. I half-staggered into the next room, where my sister was sitting. "Richard, what's wrong?" she asked. "Are you all right?" No, I was not all right. But I couldn't talk about it. I was crying. My mother and sister tried to pry some explanation out of me. But what could I tell them? For me, the certainty I had staked my life on had died with that phone call. A flame had flared bright for one fine, shining week and then gone dark, like a dying star.

- Philip Yancey, *Disappointment With God*, Zondervan, pp. 38-40

That is very sad and yet, this is happening in many people's lives because of the abuse of this gift. May we have a correct perspective of what the Gifts of Healings is all about! And because of the abuse of this gift or the misuse of this gift, may we not negate it!

4. THIS GIFT IS NOT GIVEN TO ALL

In I Corinthians 12:28-30 we read, "**And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?**"

Paul is asking a rhetorical question, and the answer is, “No!” You see, not all of us have these gifts. The Holy Spirit gives this gift as He wills to whom He wills! Obviously this is a very outward gift and there can be much abuse with it, as we can see. We have people that feel they can heal at their own will, and so they tell you when a healing service is going to be, and yet they could not go to a hospital and empty it out, healing everyone. And remember, the faith teachers tell us that all should be healed, none should be sick!

Their reasoning for this goes like this: through the blood of Christ my sin and my sickness have been removed. And so we should never be sick, never have a cold. Benny Hinn teaches, “Sickness does not belong to any of us. . . . He promises to heal all - everyone, any, any whatsoever, everything - all our diseases! That means not even a headache, sinus problem, not even a toothache - nothing! No sickness should come your way. . . . God’s greatest desire for the church of Jesus Christ...is that we be in total and perfect health.” That is not what the Lord wants for His church because we cannot enter the kingdom of God in these bodies of flesh!

But again, this is what they believe, if you have enough faith you will never be sick because that is part of the curse that was taken away by Christ. First of all, these faith teachers get sick, have surgery, and even die. And yet they make people feel guilty about their own sickness, that it is a lack of faith on their part, and that is why they are not healed. Wrong! Secondly, death is also part of the curse and yet we will all die one day. The death rate is still one per person as I have said. Yes these bodies will be redeemed some day but not yet. But now some faith teachers are saying that if you had enough faith we would never die. How foolish. Hebrews 9:27 says, “**And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.**”

In speaking of sickness lets look at some examples of this occurring in the church by people of faith, and yet we will see that some became sick.

SICKNESS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

1. PAUL - II CORINTHIANS 12:7-10

We talked a little about this one but we are told in II Corinthians that Paul had a “**thorn in the flesh,**” not the spirit. This was a physical problem that was not a small thorn, but literally a “tent spike.” And many believe it was a severe and painful eye problem. (See Galatians 4:15, 6:11). The reason God allowed Paul to suffer this way was to keep him humble and trusting in the Lord. And Paul even believed in physicians, he had his own personal one, Dr. Luke! And Paul was a man of faith and yet he was sick!

2. TROPHIMUS - II TIMOTHY 4:20

In II Timothy 4:20 we see Paul leave Trophimus sick in Miletus. If Paul only knew of the faith formula, right? Wrong! If Trophimus only had more faith he could have been healed and traveled with Paul, right? Wrong! I'm sure Paul prayed for this man and in the sovereignty of God, he was still sick and Paul left him in Miletus to recover from this illness.

3. TIMOTHY - I TIMOTHY 5:23

Timothy had some kind of amebic dysentery from the water that gave him some bad stomach problems. We call it Montezuma's Revenge today and they had not Pepto Bismol to correct this problem! So Paul told him to add some wine to the water to kill the bacteria. Was that a lack of faith on Paul's part? No! Why didn't Paul pray for him? I'm sure he did and he also used the resources they had to help him and that was adding wine to kill off the bacteria, which would help his stomach problem!

Now we just touched upon why God allows sickness, but let's look at these a little closer to help us to understand this more. Because we all will or have faced illness in our lives and we have known people who have become sick and have even died!

WHY GOD ALLOWS SICKNESS

1. GOD ALLOWS SICKNESS TO CORRECT US

God does allow sickness in our life to correct us, to get us back on track. Hebrews 12:5-6 says, “**And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.’**”

Isn't that one of the big problems in the Christian life, we have forgotten what God has said, especially when we are going through difficult times. Here Paul is speaking of “**chastening**” or discipline. It is the Greek word PAIDEIA, (pahee-di'-ah) and it speaks of the training of a child so that they may grow and mature. Now, please understand that God's chastening is not punitive or retaliatory but it is corrective to His children, to believers. Yes, outside of Christ there is judgment, it is punitive, but not in Christ! Paul said in Romans 8:1, “**There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**” Thus, Paul, in quoting out of Proverbs 3:11-12 is showing us that God's chastening is not a sign of rejection but of love towards us, and folks, none of us are above this kind training!

In fact, David in Psalm 119 said that when he wasn't afflicted, he went astray, he transgressed the Word of God. We read in Psalm 119:67, “**Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word.**”

Sickness does tend to get our attention but you must understand this, it is very important. Sickness that God allows into our life is not punitive, not punishment, but is a chastening that brings us back on track, back to God. And keep in mind that all sickness is not a result of our sin, something we have done. These bodies are falling apart and will go back to the dust of the earth one day! And you can't do anything to cause God to love you more and you can't do anything to cause God to love you any less. He chastens you because He loves you and wants what is best for your life.

I like the way Arthur Pink comments on this. He said, "Remind yourself of how much dross there is yet among the gold and view the corruption of your own heart and marvel that God has not smitten you more severely. Form the habit of heeding His taps, and you will be less likely to receive His raps." I like that, and it is true. May we be sensitive to what He is showing us as we are going through situations, learn those lessons so we can move on! And God will use sickness many times to get our attention! He did that with me with diabetes. I thought my strength was in my health, my physical ability because I was in good shape. I had muscles that I thought would help me to do anything and then the diabetes took over my body and through that I saw that in my weakness His strength would shine!

2. IT BUILDS UP OUR FAITH

When we are weak, sick, we tend to lean more upon Him, depend upon Him more. Job saw this in all that he was going through and said, “**But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.**” Job 23:10. And in Isaiah 48:10 God says, “**Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.**” Trials, sickness, tend to build us up in the faith.

3. TO BRING GLORY TO GOD

This is an important one to remember. The way we handle sickness, various situations, can either bring glory to God or not. When I first got diabetes my mom said to my wife, “I bet his faith is shaken now?” And Julie replied, “No, it has only strengthened his faith!” And that has been very true some 22 years later! You see, we need to let our light shine even and especially during those difficult times for it shows that our faith is real!

Yes God does heal today and the Holy Spirit does give this gift as He wills. Why are some of the most wicked people healed and dear saints of God get sick and die early in life? That is the sovereignty of God, and to try and figure it out is futile. Job spent many chapters trying to figure out the how’s and why’s of God and finally he learned the lesson, to trust God. You see, if you don’t trust Him, you will make Him your adversary. If you know God, you won’t have to know all the how’s and why’s, but you will learn to just trust in Him.

Let me leave you with this thought from Acts chapter 4, as we see the disciples pray beginning in verse 29. We read “**Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.’ 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.**” Acts 4:29-31. Healing was part of the early church, and the gifts of healings are in operation today, as the Holy Spirit, **“... works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”**

I Corinthians 12:11. The Gifts of Healings!