

Jesus and Healing

Healing Ministry Training

The Healing Attitudes

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 prefigurement 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:

(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. (Luke 10:1,9 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.'"

(Acts 5:16 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.

(James 5:13-15 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.

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's 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 sceptics 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, counsellors 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 then 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)