

Chapter 14

The Problem with Healing Today.

The Lack of Healings in Today's Church is Epidemic

The question naturally comes up whenever I preach or teach about healing. “Why don’t we see more miracles and healings like we see in the New Testament?” It is a good question and a fair question. The conclusion you come to will influence your opinion about whether healing is available today for every believer.

First, did Jesus heal everyone?

The answer is no, he did not. He could do few healings in Nazareth because of their unbelief. At the pool in Bethesda, he healed only one crippled man, not the entire crowd. When Jesus encountered a Syrophenician woman, a Gentile, he seemed to have no intent to heal her daughter, but said healing was the children’s bread. She reasoned she was willing, like a dog, to take crumbs from the table. Then Jesus, seeing her faith, healed her daughter. Jesus healed all who came to him. But not everyone came to him.

When the disciples began their post-Pentecost ministry, we see miracles of healing as when Jesus walked among them. But there certainly were not as many healings as when Jesus was alive. In Acts 5, people brought their sick on beds and couches in the streets so that even the shadow of Peter passing over them brought healing. There were special outpourings of the Holy Spirit with gifts of healing, as in Acts 19, when God did special miracles at the hands of Paul, so much so that people took handkerchiefs and aprons from him and diseases departed from them. Those weren’t standard procedures, but special events.

Throughout the history of the church, for centuries after the Apostles died, healings were common and a normal part of the believers’ experience. They only diminished when the church drifted into formality and ritual. But even then, when the Spirit of God would ignite the hearts of the faithful, healings once again became prominent.

I. The Problem of Real Faith

Do we really Believe God for healing?

Real Faith is Missing – *“He (Jesus) could do no miracle there except lay hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their unbelief.”* (Mark 6:6) *“O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.!”* (Luke 24:25) *We deliberately “...limit the Holy One of Israel.”* (Psalm 78:41)

Many new believers wonder why there are no (or very few) miracles and healings in the church today. It is because we have developed theologies and doctrines that defend our powerless Christianity. They say those things were for another time, another dispensation. But their dispensation for today is a God far off; a Jesus who doesn't interfere with our daily lives; a Jesus who does no miracles; a Jesus who stays up in heaven; a Jesus who leaves us alone to work out our own salvation; a Jesus who doesn't whisper to our hearts; a Jesus who stays locked up in the Scriptures where he belongs. We like a storybook Jesus safely kept inside a book, not the real resurrected living Savior.

The primary sin of the church today is UNBELIEF. We grieve and hinder the Spirit through unbelief. Israel “limited the Holy One of Israel” by disbelieving He was able to do what He promised. We doubt that miraculous gifts of healing can operate today. We say those things ceased with the Apostles, or God's miraculous gifts are rare. Some people hold the belief that God's presence is only experienced during special revivals, rather than in everyday church settings. God has not changed. Jesus has not changed. The Holy Spirit has not changed. We changed. We drifted away from Him. We don't go to church to meet God anymore. We go to worship and hear a sermon. There is little or no expectation of a supernatural visitation. We are taught to lower our expectations. Don't expect miracles. Don't expect dramatic healings. Don't expect God to show up in our meetings. Don't expect God to always answer prayer. Is it any wonder we don't see New Testament miracles?

The problem is not just a theological one. Jesus asked, *“When the Son of Man comes again, will he find faith on the earth?”* (Luke 18:8) Good question. In an age of science, humanism, and rationalism, the church has discarded faith like an old worn-out pair of shoes. Our faith, if it is there at all, is a liturgical faith, it's a confessional faith. It's a doctrinal faith in the Apostle's Creed or The Lord's Prayer,

but it doesn't go beyond that. Those are affirmations of doctrinal faith, but not active faith.

Doubt Is Exalted and Honored

Exalted Skepticism – In the current *Progressive Church* movement, they prefer skepticism over faith. They consider faith as immature naïveté. Their idea is that no one can be absolutely sure of anything. The Word of God is suspect of being fables, unreliable, opinions of men, expressions of cultural norms of a bygone era. Therefore, truth is flexible, pliable, changing, always adapting to the culture around us.

No Faith – Doubt reigns, questioning and doubting have more value than faith. Our teachers instill in us the value of questioning everything. There is no testing of everything to be sure of the truth, but an effort to debunk everything. We are afraid of the supernatural. Miracles scare us.

Little Faith – We are very suspicious of the miraculous. Faith is a gossamer thread rather than an anchor chained to Jesus and His word.

Unbelief – Agnosticism is when we are not sure God can or will do what He says. We aren't really sure of the truth of God's promises.

Slow of heart to believe – Intellectualism, naturalism, rationalism, and humanism reign in our hearts. We want to see proof before we can believe. We are holy skeptics.

The Problem Is Not New

The lack of faith in his disciples often grieved Jesus in his spirit. How often did Jesus groan in spirit and sigh, *"Oh, you of little faith. How long will I put up with you?"* When the disciples were caught in a sudden storm, they cried out, *"Lord, don't you care we are perishing?"* Even while Jesus was in the boat with them! After the resurrection, two of the disciples met Jesus on the road to Emmaus and he asked them what things made them so sad. When he listened to their lament and disappointment he said, *"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!"* Then he opened the Scriptures to them concerning himself. (Luke 24:25). After the resurrection Jesus had appeared to the disciples and many

others. Thomas, who was not with them, refused to believe and adamantly said, *“Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”* Talk about stubborn unbelief! Then seven days later, Jesus showed up again with Thomas present. Jesus went directly to the point of Thomas’ doubt and said, *“Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”* Then Jesus pronounced a blessing on those who don’t need to see to believe, *“Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

Unbelief, skepticism, and doubts hinder the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Luke 4, Jesus introduced his ministry by reading from Isaiah 61 concerning Messiah’s mission to heal and restore men and women. It wasn’t that they didn’t need healing. They did, some of them desperately. But their theology got in the way.

Luke 5:17 *“And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching... the power of the Lord was present to heal them.”*

Mark 6:5-6 *“He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith (their unbelief).”*

Matthew 8:26 *And he said unto them, Why are you fearful, O you of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.*

Mark 9:19 *He answered him, and said, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me.*

Luke 18:8 The Passion Translation (TPT) *“God will give swift justice to those who don't give up. So be ever praying, ever expecting, in the same way as the widow. Even so, when the Son of Man comes back, will he find this kind of undying faith on earth?”*

John 20:24-29 *Now Thomas (also known as Didymus) said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Jesus said to Thomas, “Stop doubting and believe.” Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Then Jesus told him, “Because you*

have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Our problem is that we do not believe that God will show up on Sunday! We don't really believe that Jesus is alive, well, willing and able to do what he promised to do. Programs, not power, are the essence of 21st Century Christianity.

II. The Problem of the Church's Drift

The apostles predicted that *"in the latter days men would depart from the faith giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils."* (1 Timothy 4:1) The church of Laodicea was certainly an example of a congregation that drifted away from their original faith and became lukewarm. Jesus spoke to them of their need to be healed. *"anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see."* (Revelation 3:18)

1) Abuses – There are many charlatans who peddle the word of God and healing as if it were an elixir for baldness. These false prophets do miracles in Jesus' name, but their hearts are greedy thinking the gospel is a means of profiteering, *"They are deprived of truth (distort the gospel) imagining that godliness is great gain."* (1 Timothy 6:5)

2) Excuses – Bad theology has eroded the Gospel so completely that we *"have a form of godliness, but deny the power of God."* (2 Timothy 3:5) Cessationist theology has invaded the pulpits with preachers who say that all the miraculous gifts ceased with the Apostles. They deny that *"Jesus is the same, yesterday, today, and forever."* They make theological excuses for a powerless Christianity. They squeeze Jesus into their theological bottle and keep him there, bound, impotent, and silent.

3) Deceptions – There are many dangerous detours and deviations from the truth of the Gospel. Today's church more and more looks outside of the word of God for direction and counsel. They believe truth is everywhere, and all truth is God's truth, so they turn to Dianetics of L. Ron Hubbard, which is Scientology, and to mind games like Enneagrams and astrology. The church is a hodgepodge of errant theological deviations from pop-psychology to Eastern mysticism. They combine Christianity with philosophies and religions of the world, specifically eastern religions. Science, humanism, and rationalism characterize the church more than *"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever."*

III. The Problem of Superficial Healings

Prayer meeting is 90-95% about requests for physical needs—we have a flesh-focused mentality. We are obviously more concerned about physical health than the souls of men. We are more concerned about keeping people out of the hospital

than out of hell. We are more concerned about the healing of our bodies than the healing of our hearts, yet for Jesus, the two go hand in hand. Jesus wants to touch our hearts, minds, spirits, and souls, not just our bodies. The body will perish, but the soul lasts forever.

According to Jesus – Healing of the body tends to be our main concern, when God is concerned with the heart, mind, soul and then the body. *“Go and sin no more lest a worse thing happen.”* (John 15:14) *“He granted their request but sent leanness to their souls.”* (Psalm 106:15)

According to Jesus – Healing and dealing with personal sins walk hand in hand. Most of our communion services and any healing services ignore the statement *“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you and many have died.”* (1 Corinthians 11:30) *“No man cares for my soul.”* (Psalm 142:4)

Jesus states that healing and deliverance are closely intertwined. I don't believe you can have a healing ministry without a deliverance mentality.

“Ought not this daughter of Abraham who Satan has bound 18 years be loosed on the Sabbath?” (Luke 13:11-14) *“God wrought miracles by the hands of Paul...evil spirits departed from them...they believed and brought their cultic books and burned them before all men.”* – Acts 19:11f)

The lack of any tangible evidence of the real resurrected Lord Jesus Christ being present in our meetings is an indictment against us. We are so used to lukewarm, legalistic, rational, and ritual based Christianity that we are not even aware of the lack of His presence. We are satisfied with crumbs from the table when we could be dining with the king!

IV. The Problem of Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Easy-believism has given way to shallow commitments to Christ. Jesus said, *“If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.”* Jesus promised, *“Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you.”*

The problem is what we are seeking first. We seek first our own needs and wants. We seek healing rather than seeking the Healer. There is a difference.

We have become a people who are *“lovers of themselves more than lovers of God.”* (2 Timothy 3:2) We have become a “me” centered generation. Everything is about my needs, my hurts, my wants, my health, my happiness, and my success. Jesus is only a means to self-fulfillment. Christ is not the center of our faith, we are.

We have bought into the *Sesame Street* jingle, “The most important person in the whole wide world is you, and you hardly even know you.”

Holiness, sanctification and Lordship are rare topics in our preaching. Self-denial is a bad word. There is no cross to bear, so we sing songs that make us feel good about ourselves. We delight in self-exaltation. We love to sing about who I am, how great I am that God loves me.

A few years ago, I was at a prayer conference where the lecturer was encouraging us to spend quality and quantity time alone with God in intimate fellowship. It was not about asking God for things or healing, but seeking to know Him more intimately. At one of our breaks, a young pastor confided to a few of us and said, “I didn’t come here to learn about intimacy. I came to find out how to get God to do things when I pray.” If that is a pastor’s viewpoint of prayer, I can’t help wonder what he is teaching his congregation.

Healing With a Purpose

A man in my church received a diagnosis of stage four prostate cancer. He came to the altar asking the elders to anoint and pray for his healing. As we discussed his case, I asked a question I frequently ask those seeking the Lord for healing. “John, what are you going to do with your health when the Lord heals you?” John had just retired that year from a long life as a brick mason. He had recently bought a house in Florida where they could go for the winter. He thought for a moment and responded, “Pastor, if the Lord heals me, I know what I’m going to do. I am going to sell my house in Florida and dedicate my life to building churches here and overseas!” I responded, “Okay, let’s pray.” We prayed. Two weeks later, he came running down the aisle with a note in his hand and tears in his eyes shouting, “God healed me! I am free of cancer!” With a twinkle in his eye, he looked at me and said, “Pastor, I remember my covenant with the Lord. My house in Florida is up for

sale and I'm planning a mission trip to Mali, Africa, to help build a church." And he did. He built churches in Mali and then travelled yearly to Cambodia to help the struggling churches there. He served until years later the Lord called him home.

We set conditions and build fences to keep Jesus out.

We say, "I want to be healed but..."

Conditions we set on God

- Heal me but don't talk to me about my lifestyle
- Heal me but don't convict me of willful sins
- Heal me but don't tell me to forgive so-and-so
- Heal me but don't tell me about my secret sin(s)
- Heal me but don't tell me I've a bad attitude
- Heal me but don't tell me to stop complaining
- Heal me, but don't tell me to praise and thank
- Heal me but don't address my carelessness
- Heal me but don't ask me to apologize to a bro or sis
- Heal me but don't ask me to admit an addiction

Heal me but don't ask me to give up...

- TV shows I watch
- Movies I like
- Books I read
- Magazines I buy
- Web sites I visit
- Playing golf on Sunday
- Burn my idols
- Swearing and temper
- The affairs of my heart

Heal me but don't ask me to...

- Go to church regularly
- Join a Bible study
- Teach a class
- Go on a mission trip
- Tithe my money
- Love my spouse as I should
- Forgive an ancient wrong
- Confess my sin(s) to another
- Spend more time in daily prayer
- Read my Bible more
- To step out on faith

**The reality is, if you want to be healed
you've got to do business with God.**

It can be painful, humbling, embarrassing, time consuming, and costly. It is a grave error to think that your sickness is only about your body and not about your soul as well. Soul and body are intricately bound together. Only the Lord can discern between soul and spirit, and He is the discernor of the thoughts and intents of our hearts. We are body, soul, spirit, and mind.

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

– Hebrews 4:12

The response of Peter at the Last Supper when Jesus washed the disciples feet was, *“No, you shall never wash my feet.”* Jesus answered, *“Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me.”* Simon Peter replied, *“Then, Lord,” not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well!”*

Wouldn't It be a wonderful response to come to Jesus saying, “Lord, heal me inside and out. Wash me thoroughly that I might be whole?”

Jesus wants more than body healing. He wants you to be whole in body, mind, spirit, and soul.

Think About It

Chapter 14: The Problem with Healing Today

Why do you think we see so few people healed today?

Do you have any Progressive Church tendencies? Temptations?

Is it ever wrong to go to the doctor?