

have faith like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who realized that they might not be delivered in this life, but were going to obey God anyway (Dan 3:17-18). We can follow God's commands and have confidence and peace with the outcome, whether healing is instant or not:

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. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much (James 5:14-16).

We need to do as many of the things in these verses as we can. Many people forget about confessing their sins to others. It is hard to admit to our self, and harder to admit to others, that our suffering might be due to our own sins. But admitting it to oneself and then to others are the first steps toward healing.

Biblical elders are older, mature believers recognized within a congregation—they may or may not be "ordained" by a church organization. They should know you well. If, at some emergency, you are without oil, elders, or a "righteous man", do as much of this as you can with whoever is available.

#### **Faith Is In God, Doctors Hired by Choice**

Divine healing and doctors are compatible, but completely different in function. Our approach to God should be: "I know You can heal me, but if You do not, please show me what I need to understand. I will accept whatever You do." Our approach to medical professionals should be: "I appreciate your skill and your hard work in acquiring it. However, you do not have all knowledge and I am retaining the right to ask you about the certainty of your opinions or to seek the opinions of other competent individuals. I will make the final decision as to which procedures I will accept and which I will not. God has given me the ultimate responsibility for my body and of those he has placed in my care. I will not give up that responsibility and let a doctor take the place of God in my life. I look for doctors who are honest and respect the bodies God created."

A good doctor will acknowledge that people are different inside—a given treatment may not be effective on every person. He/she will be honest and

admit that they are wrong at times. Ask wise friends to help find such doctors.

If we follow what God says in James 5:14-16 (especially examining ourselves and confessing our sin), and also use the best medical help that we can find and afford, God will take care of us. Whether we receive instant healing or not, whatever physical ability He gives us is all that He expects us to use (Matt 25:22-23; Luke 12:48). We can be content with that, and look forward to a perfect body and our reward at the resurrection!

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# WHEN WILL GOD HEAL?

The Bible contains many stories of miraculous, instant healings. Some of those healed were believers; others were not. Even the last chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles records a mass healing:

... "the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came [to Paul] and were healed" (Acts 28:9).

Today, Christians from many denominations and congregations report some miraculous healings. But the same groups also report believers suffering with diseases and injuries for years—even though they have prayed for healing. We all probably know Christians who have died from a disease—even some at a very young age.

#### **What should we do about healing?**

How can a Christian have the biblical faith to be healed (Matt 9:22; 13:58; 15:28; Acts 14:9), knowing that God apparently does not heal in every case? What are God's promises? Does God always keep His promises? When will God heal? There are good answers to these questions in the Bible.

First let us examine reasons why people **were not healed immediately** in the Bible and why they **were healed immediately**. Then, we will see when healing is "promised", what we must do today and how doctors fit into biblical healing.

#### **Why Healings Sometimes Not Immediate**

1. **Our Own Sin.** God forgives our sins, but he does not usually undo the physical consequences of them. When a murderer repents, his victims do not come back to life. When an adulterer repents, illegitimate children do not just disappear. Stolen property does not miraculously reappear—though the repentant thief should choose to restore it (Luke 19:8). God wants us to see our sin's long-term bad effect and to desire His goodness instead.

When King David killed Uriah and took Bathsheba, God forgave David's sin but their child remained sick

and died after a week (2 Sam 12:13-17). David fasted and prayed and was forgiven, but there was no healing. Similarly, when Corinthian brethren were sinning against God, Paul said, "For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep" (1Cor 11:30).

2. **The Sins of Others.** Christ suffered only due to other's sins. We suffer for both our sins and other's. From this, we learn firsthand the importance of teaching everyone to obey God. If God miraculously removed the effects of suffering due to the sins of others, the world would be an artificial place with no accurate history of human activity.

Though He was a Son (Christ), yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered (Heb 5:8).

Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted (Heb 2:18).

Christ and the apostles suffered more from physical abuse than disease, but the two are very similar. People are physically injured in obvious visible ways when someone intentionally injures them or acts carelessly (e.g. drives a car too fast) in a way that results in injury. Similarly, many diseases come about because someone deliberately exposes a person to a dangerous germ, or because someone is careless with germs, food, environmental pollutants, etc. and causes many people to be sick as a result of their sin.

God did not immediately heal Christ from His beating or nail wounds of execution. Paul was not instantly healed of his beating while in jail (Acts 16:33). They suffered for the sins of other people:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (Rom 12:1).

And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together (Rom 8:17).

3. **God's Special Purpose.** Some sickness is not caused by anyone's sins:

And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him" (John 9:2-3).

This man had been blind from birth to early

adulthood (see v 20-21), not due to sin but because God had a plan. This author has read many stories of exceptional and nearly unbelievable human effort to help a sick or handicapped child. Handicapped individuals sometimes accomplish great things. People seem to have a hard time appreciating what they have until something is taken away.

#### **Why Healings Sometimes Are Immediate**

1. **God Shows His Power.** The blind man, above, and many other healings demonstrated that God's power was in the New Testament Church. If that healing power is not in the Church today, it is probably because we are not doing what the New Testament believers did and God is not quick to put His "stamp of approval" through his healing on our church groups. We need to study, learn and change. Nevertheless, this author has seen God display his healing power to believers—most often to new believers who really need proof of God.

2. **God Shows His Compassion.** Many times, Christ healed people simply because he had compassion for their suffering (Matt 14:14). These people were not necessarily "believers". This author has heard of healings of those in dire need today—of people with a variety of religious backgrounds.

3. **People want healing to serve God.** When people ask for a healing so they can serve God, He frequently (but not always) answers. David wanted to live so he could keep praising God (Psalm 6:4-5). Childless Hannah wanted a son to dedicate to God (1Sam 1:6,11). There are other examples, both in the Bible and among believers today.

4. **Sins are Stopped and Forgiven.** Jesus sometimes specifically forgave sins when he healed, and warned people that continued sin would bring the sinner more suffering (Luke 5:20-25; John 5:2-14)

#### **God's Time to Fulfill All His Promises**

Some people interpret the Bible to say that God promises to instantly heal every believer. One verse they use to "prove" this is:

Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases (Psalm 103:2-3),

But notice the next three verses of Psalm

103:

[God] who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your

youth is renewed like the eagle's. The LORD works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed (Psalm 103:4-6)

"The pit" (Hebrew shachath) is an expression used elsewhere in the Bible for "the grave" or the place of death. When David wrote this, were his readers redeemed from death? Were they crowned with love and compassion? Were all their desires satisfied? Was their youth renewed? Was God doing righteousness and justice for all the oppressed?

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power (1Cor 15:42-43)

And I [Apostle Paul] have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked (Acts 24:15).

This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares (Rom 2:16).

God's many great promises are not all given to us right away. Healing is one such promise. Hebrews 11 illustrates this very well. Of the men and women who had great faith in God, some of them received great healings and miracles; others did not. None received all of the promises of God:

These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect (Heb 11:39-40).

...The dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air...(1Thes. 4:16-17).

These scriptures show that many of God's important promises will not be fulfilled until the resurrection—when the righteous of all ages will be raised. Healing is one of those promises. The Bible mentions the resurrection frequently.

#### **When We Need Healing, Do This:**

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience (Jms. 1:2-3).

Also, we must have faith that Christ can do a mighty work. Christ "could do no mighty work" when people were doubting him (Mark 6:1-6). We need to