

Healing Grace

Part Two

From: Overcoming the Overwhelming:
A 40-Day Journey toward Rediscovering Faith in God

Taken from Day 39: Healing Grace
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Gifts of Healing

I don't pretend to understand everything about what the Bible calls "gifts of healing". We know from Scripture that they are given by the Holy Spirit "as He wills". It could be that He gives such a gift to someone, and they continue to operate in it, and it may also be that at times, as is needed, He gives a gift of healing to someone for a specific person.

I believe it exists because Paul taught that it does, and I have both witnessed it in operation and been healed as a result of it. My grandfather had a gift of healing. I'd heard about it all my life, and as a young child, I attended one of his ministry meetings and remember someone getting out of a wheelchair. These memories served me well when, as a teenager, I was dedicating myself to trying not to believe in God. I just could not deny what I had seen.

One day, as my husband and I were visiting my grandparents, I had a really bad headache. My grandmother gave me aspirin, but as we continued our visit with them, it hadn't helped at all. As we were leaving, my grandmother asked me if I'd like my grandfather to pray for me, and I said yes. He placed his hand on my head and prayed, but I don't remember a word he said because the second he touched me, all of the intense pain in my head went away. I remember that as he continued to pray, I sat there stunned. After he stopped praying, I turned my neck this way and that to see if I could get the headache to return, but it was completely gone! I believe this was an operation of a gift of healing.

Another time, we were attending a teaching conference. At the end of the session, they invited people up for prayer. Instead of the main speaker praying for people, they had a team lined up in front. The minister asked that if anyone had pain in their back to come forward. I remembered that my husband had been experiencing pain in his back for quite some time. A chiropractor told him that his discs were compressed. So, I encouraged my husband to go up for prayer. Since he wasn't having any pain at

the moment, he hesitated. I nearly pushed him out of his chair to go up there, and he finally did. When he returned to his seat, I asked him about it. He said, "I believe I am healed," but since he didn't have any pain, he couldn't physically tell.

For many days, he had no back pain, but one day after he went out jogging, his back hurt him again. He felt discouraged because he had great hopes that he would be better. He made an appointment with a different chiropractor who took new X-rays.

He brought them out to show David saying, "Look here. You have the back of a 30-year-old. (David was about 50 then.) David looked at the films, and sure enough, each disc was in perfect condition. At first, he was a little disappointed. Being focused on the pain he was experiencing, he was upset that the chiropractor couldn't help him, but then it hit him! He'd been healed.

We don't know in this instance if it was because David believed or because someone who prayed for him had a gift of healing. We do know it was an amazing miracle, and to God be all the glory for this great thing that He did.

In Jesus' Name

It is beautiful how pure the faith of children is. In their eyes, if God says it, it is true. They don't have the disadvantage of hearing for years that maybe God's Word isn't always true, or that it might not be true for everyone. Here is the story of our dear friend, Don Harris.

"In 1983, I was dealing with a constant cough. It had been going on for nearly two months. My chest was hurting, and breathing was getting difficult. Due to our financial situation at the time, seeing a physician was not an option.

"My daughter, Vicki, who was nearly four, was already tucked into bed and had heard me coughing. When I came into her room to hug her and pray with her as we normally did, something unexpected happened.

As I was leaning over to hug her, she grabbed my shoulder with one hand and placed her other on my chest just as I was about to start coughing again.

Before I could get the cough out, she said, 'Be healed in Jesus' name,' and instantly the cough stopped. The pain in my chest also was gone.

"I was amazed. To my daughter, it was just matter-of-fact. You pray. Jesus heals. Since then (for 35 years) I have not suffered from coughing or

pain in my chest. I get a cold occasionally, but there is never any coughing with it."

Was this a gift of healing or the simple faith of a child? Whichever it was, to God be the glory for His precious gifts to us.

Call for the Elders of the Church

James 5:14

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.

Perhaps the idea of the grace of divine healing is new to you. You might need time to study about it and hear this good news before having the courage to believe. Perhaps as you learn, you could avail yourself of this verse. Are you sick? Then call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. There is no shame in receiving from God via the faith of another. If the elders of your church don't believe in this practice, visit a church that does.

Ifs, Ands, and Buts

Over the years, I have heard many arguments against the grace of divine healing. One of them that I find particularly weak is that of proving that believers in the early church got sick. I don't know of anyone who believes in divine healing who claims that they didn't get sick. So, the premise is odd to begin with. Still, I'll address it.

This argument usually includes pointing out that Paul advised Timothy to "take a little wine" for his frequent problems with his stomach. This doesn't negate divine healing; rather, it demonstrates that natural remedies can also be used by God for our healing.

Those who object to the belief that the grace of divine healing is for us today will also bring attention to the fact that Epaphroditus was sick and almost died.

Philippians 2:25-30

Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; ²⁶ since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. ²⁷ For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have

sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. ²⁹ Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; ³⁰ because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

Yes, Epaphroditus was sick—very sick. Did God make him sick? No. Why was he sick? Like many of us sometimes, he nearly worked himself to death. He was so intent on accomplishing the task of providing for Paul what the Philippians had not been able to provide, that he weakened his body and got sick—but did God heal him? Yes! Many things can be learned from this story, but surely this story supports the truth of healing rather than negating it.

The other argument, which is one of the most ill-extrapolated, is that of saying that Paul's thorn in the flesh was an illness in his eyes and that when Paul asked the Lord three times to remove this sickness, God refused, telling Paul that His "strength is made perfect in weakness".

First of all, when Paul shared his experience of the Lord refusing to remove his thorn in the flesh, there is not one hint that he is referring to his eyes. Clearly from context, Paul is talking about the frequent troubles and persecutions that he experienced (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Consider also the parallel of Paul's account with that of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus asked God three times, if possible, to "remove this cup" from Him. We all know that He wasn't talking about being sick. He knew he was going to be scourged and suffer crucifixion. Paul, in like manner, asked the Lord to take away his sufferings three times, and it wasn't sickness. As we've said, we are promised persecution as believers (2 Tim. 3:12). While God will deliver us out of our troubles, we will still have them.

Did Paul have an ongoing disease in his eyes? Let us examine the facts. First, let's look at the verse often used to "prove" that he did.

Galatians 4:12-16

Brethren, I urge you to become like me, for I became like you. You have not injured me at all. ¹³You know that because of physical infirmity I preached the gospel to you at the first. ¹⁴And my trial which was in my flesh you did not despise or reject, but you received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. ¹⁵What then was the blessing you enjoyed?

*For I bear you witness that, if possible, **you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.***¹⁶*Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?*

In verse thirteen, Paul states that the reason he came to them was because he had physical weakness. So, it is fair to conclude that even the great apostle Paul suffered pain and was in need of healing. Do we have any clues as to if there was a **reason** for the weakness he mentions? Consider this passage.

Acts 14:19-20

*Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, **they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.***²⁰*However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.*

There is no pretty picture to be painted here of what Paul experienced. The purpose of stoning is to kill the one being stoned. Often the person to be stoned would be pushed off a sufficient height to render it impossible for him to escape or protect himself. No one stone was to kill the victim, but it was an execution carried out by the community. Stoning could take from ten to twenty minutes.

His persecutors stoned him until they thought he was dead. After this, the disciples gathered around Paul, and amazingly, he rose up and went with them. The next day he went with Barnabas to Derbe.

Where was Derbe? It was a province of Galatia.

Derbe was a city in the district of Lycaonia in the Roman province of Galatia in south central Asia Minor. It sat on a major route connecting Iconium to Laranda and was about 60 miles from Lystra. Paul and Barnabas fled to Derbe and Lystra on his first missionary journey when city officials of Iconium plotted to stone them (Acts 14:6-21).¹

When someone has been pushed over a small cliff and battered by stoning to the point of death, what would be the condition of his body? Paul's body was exceedingly weakened. No doubt he had multiple injuries to his head, including to his eyes,

¹ <http://www.bibleplaces.com/derbelystra.htm>

since it was common for the executioners to force the victim to take his punishment face up. His recovery from this experience was painful and lengthy, causing him to remain in Galatia where he preached to them through it all. The Galatians were doubtless concerned about Paul's weakness and would have done anything within their power to help him, including plucking out their own eyes to bring healing to his. Certainly, this is a better explanation of what Paul meant. His infirmity in his eyes was a result of having been stoned, not an illness which God refused to heal.

Did this experience affect Paul's vision permanently? There are hints of this possibility but no clear proof. If Paul did have poor vision, the stoning could certainly have been the cause. Yet, consider the more provable point that Paul's vision was restored to him after this experience. Here are two passages that took place later that make reference to what Paul saw—in other words, that he could still see.

Acts 17:16

*Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he **saw** that the city was given over to idols.*

Acts 28:15

*And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul **saw** them, he thanked God and took courage.*

Another explanation sometimes given for Paul's supposed eye problem is that of when he lost his vision on the road to Damascus when he first encountered the Lord and became blind. This example is extremely flimsy because the Lord told Ananias to lay hands on him so that he would receive his sight again.

Acts 9:11-16

*So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. ¹²And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, **so that he might receive his sight.**"*

¹³*Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. ¹⁴And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." ¹⁵But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. ¹⁶For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."*

Notice that Jesus tells Ananias that Paul would suffer many things for His name's sake. This is clearly speaking of persecution, his actual thorn in the flesh.

Whatever it is we conclude, there is zero connection with Paul's eyes and his account of his thorn in the flesh. They are not mentioned in the same context anywhere in Scripture.

God does not give each one of us some weakness to keep us humble. On the contrary, He provides for our needs, restores our souls, and heals our bodies. What is true is that we all will suffer persecution, and some will suffer more than others.

We have to ask ourselves, why go to such great lengths to prove that early Christians got sick? Of course, they got sick. The good news for us to realize is that God provided and promised that they and we could be healed. Either they could believe for healing themselves, or be near someone who had a gift of healing, or call for the elders of the church to pray for them to be healed. There is no point in emphasizing that believers got sick except to try and negate this glorious grace for us today. How much more powerful is it to recognize that they were healed?

For Those Who Are Suffering

We hear people say, in an attempt to discredit the truth that God is still healing today, "If divine healing is true, then let's go into the hospitals and heal everyone there and close down the hospitals." This makes no sense. Let me counter the question with the same harshness. If we really believe that Jesus will save anyone, why aren't we pronouncing salvation on everyone we meet? Can you see the comparison? Salvation is not something we thrust on people, and neither is healing. Not even Jesus forced healing on people. They came to Him. In fact, there were some instances where it says that He could not heal people. On the other hand, if someone feels God is calling him to go to the local hospital and offer to pray for people, let him go.

Matthew 13:54-58

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? ⁵⁵Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? ⁵⁶And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" ⁵⁷So 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.” ⁵⁸Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.

Jesus didn't roam the earth waving a magic wand of salvation and healing! He taught them the good news. Those who believed were healed. Those who didn't were not. How shall people today who don't even believe in God believe in healing when those who do believe in God don't believe in this grace? How can faith come to them if we don't preach it, and how can we preach it if we don't believe?

This strawman situation should not in any way discredit the provision and promise of healing. It speaks more of where we are today in the body of Christ. Just as we nearly extinguished the gospel of the grace of God, so even those who now understand the gospel of grace still hold to the practice of nullifying the fact that He now freely gives us all things. Healings happen in the lives of those who believe, but how can people believe when they are being taught that the grace of divine healing “is not for today”, that sickness and weakness are God's way of “teaching us” something, that He allows us to be sick so that He can keep us humble, that He uses sickness to punish us, or that God “allows” sickness to bring about good?

Grace preachers, don't we sometimes feel frustrated that the church at large is still resisting the grand news that we are saved by God's grace alone through faith in Christ alone and that we do not need to add our works to improve on what we've been given? Do you ever feel like a lone voice in the sea of unbelief? This is how those who are sharing the good news of the grace of divine healing also feel. Please hear. The same Jesus who saves you also heals you! He was wounded to give us healing. **Shall we refuse and even ridicule anything that He suffered to give us?**

There are many things that are difficult to understand when it comes to the topic of the grace of divine healing. Many Christians are deaf or blind. Some were born with disabilities. Others are currently struggling with their health. Many of them do believe, and yet have not yet seen the result. For many, their health is their overwhelming circumstance. What is the encouragement for them?

I believe this to be the wisdom of God, not only for those who are tackling physical challenges but for anyone who is facing a circumstance that is overwhelming: We walk by faith and not by sight. Our situations are on the natural plane, but we can live above our circumstances on the supernatural plane, knowing that we are dearly beloved of God and that He is working all things together for our good. He is with us in our struggles. If we don't know or understand why “things” aren't right this minute as we believe they should be, we can still live an abundant life while we either

improve our understanding, or God speaks something directly to our hearts.

Worthy to Be Praised²

*You are worthy,
Worthy to be praised.
You are worthy
Each and every day.
You are wonderful,
Marvelous,
Amazing,
Mighty.
You are worthy
No matter how I feel.
You are worthy.
Your promises are real.
So, no matter what I feel today,
You're worthy, Worthy
To be praised.*

Only Believe

If you are sick and want to be healed, and are not yet convinced that healing is a grace for you today, or you sense that perhaps your understanding of it might be incomplete, let me encourage you to get out your Bible and a notebook. Begin to read through the entire Bible without one bias or another. Find out what is written on this topic. Ask God to show you the truth. Write down every verse you find that has to do with someone getting healed. I trust that God will speak to you. This is what I set out to do in 2002. In 2004, I wrote a book entitled Healing Verses that I printed out and bound with ribbon for dear friends that I knew were struggling with their health.

In 2007, when we began teaching in a church-based Bible school, I wrote a prayer entitled, "Healing Confessions" which is a summary of that book. You can access that teaching by going to <https://graceandfaithministries.org>. Select the tab for 24-7-365, and then select April 7th. I pray that you will find it a blessing. May the Lord speak this good news to our hearts and enlighten our eyes to the truth about this glorious grace of divine healing so that we may receive it.

² A song by C. D. Hildebrand

