

Faith Healing



*A Collection of sermons preached by
W. E. Best*

Distributed Freely by:

Spring Assembly of Christ

<http://springassemblyofchrist.org>

October 2014

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Faith Healing - Part 1

Is physical salvation purchased the same way as spiritual salvation?
W.E. Best

Satan, the great imitator, has a counterfeit message (Gal. 1:6-9), counterfeit ministers (II Cor. 11:13-15), and counterfeit assemblies (Rev. 2:9). There are magicians with their enchantments (Ex. 7-8), false Christs and prophets (Mark 13:22), sorcerers (Acts 8; 13:8-12), workings by evil spirits (Acts 8:5-11), beasts (Rev. 13:13, 14), and demonic spirits (Rev. 16:14).

All false teachers are guilty of flagrant perversions, obvious distortions, and inexcusable unscriptural statements concerning God's word. So-called faith healers are demonically led to claim that sickness passed from the individual to Calvary, and salvation passed from Calvary to the individual. They assume that since the cause was removed, the effect ceased. Their opinion is that our attitude toward sickness should be the same as our attitude toward sin. They question God's justifying a person and requiring him to remain under the curse from which he is delivered. One of their arguments is that since Christ who knew no sin was made sin for us, He who knew no sickness was also made sick for us. They believe we receive the firstfruits of our physical salvation the same way we receive the firstfruits of our spiritual salvation. They say that the command of James 5:14 is a positive ordinance of healing that is as sacred and binding on every assembly today as the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Job 2:4 is the key to understanding the modern "faith healers." "And Satan answered the LORD and said, Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will he give for his life" (NASB). Although these words were spoken by the father of lies (John 8:44), the truth is that man is ever searching for the cure of disease and the suffering entailed by it. Between the medicine man and the highly educated physician with his science of therapeutics, there are all kinds of practitioners.

1. Informed Christians agree that nature is the chief restorer to health. The best any doctor can do, whether by surgery, setting broken bones, or administering medication, is to assist the recuperative power of nature. It has been said that eighty percent of all sick people get well normally.

2. In the middle of the fifth century before Christ, Hippocrates is said to have introduced medicine into the healing of disease. However, Isaiah directed Hezekiah to a remedial agency for his healing before the time of Hippocrates (Is. 38:21). (Study Luke 10:30-37; I Tim. 5:23.) Paul's advice to Timothy to use a little wine for his stomach's sake was a medicinal treatment.

3. Psychotherapy is recognized in all medical practice. Mental therapy plays a large and legitimate part in the ministry of healing. The power of the mind over physiological conditions is an undeniable fact. The interference with the unconscious process of life by the entrance of disturbing elements into the mind is profound. Here, we encounter a

mental force known as suggestion, which is either internal or external. The former is known as autosuggestion; the latter is called heterosuggestion. The latter represents the process by which an idea or impression is given to one by another. The idea becomes deeply impressed so that it dominates the person's thinking and produces a reaction in habit or action, sometimes both. Hypnotic suggestion is only another phase of heterosuggestion, which finds its sphere of operation in the subconscious mind.

Religious psychology is sometimes called faith healing or divine healing. Many make this the major part of their religious program. Their cause is promoted by such religious institutions as Spiritualism, Unity, Christian Science, Charismatics, Four Square Gospel, Christian Missionary Alliance, Transcendental Meditation, etc.

A correct understanding of miracles will enable Christians not to be led astray by false teaching on the subject. A miracle is not against nature, but it is above and beyond nature. Both "healing the sick" and "raising the dead" are called nature by men, because they think sickness and death are natural. However, sickness and death are discords brought by sin and depravity into a world of original harmony. On the other hand, every miracle by our Lord and His disciples was as a flower picked from the paradise when all things are made new. Bible miracles teach us that we cannot be satisfied with this world as it is under the curse.

Sign-miracles (a sign taking place to prove that what is taking place is miraculous) are connected with either the beginning of a new dispensation, such as Pentecost (the foretaste of the kingdom) or the establishment of the kingdom. After Pentecost, Peter continued preaching to the Jews (Acts 3). He began with the public miracle of healing the lame beggar at the gate of the temple: "Now Peter and John were going up [imperfect active indicative of anabaino] to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. And a certain man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along [imperfect passive indicative of bastadzo], whom they used to set down [imperfect active indicative of tithemi] every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. And when he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. And Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze upon him and said, Look at us! And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk! And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. And with a leap he stood upright and began to walk [imperfect active indicative of peripateo]; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God; and they were taking note [imperfect active indicative of epiginosko] of him, as being [imperfect active indicative of eimi] the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened [perfect active participle of sumbaino] to him" (Acts 3:1-10 NASB).

The Jews admitted that a notable miracle had been done. Like the gift of languages at Pentecost (Acts 2), this miracle prepared the audience for a Divine proclamation to the people of Israel. As before, Peter delivered the address. His message began with Acts 3:12 and extended to the end of the chapter. Peter ascribed the power of the miracle to the God of Israel who glorified His Son, Jesus Christ. Peter's reference to Moses in the latter part of Acts 3 confirms the meaning and reality of the kingdom. Christ was set forth as the antitypical realization of Moses' well-known prediction of the Messianic Prophet—"like me" (vv. 22, 23). Moses was the first mediatorial ruler in the historical rule of God on earth. Peter concluded his address with reminding the Jews that by descent they are the primary objects of the prophetic utterances.

Two disciples, Peter and John, went to the temple. Two is the number of testimony's confirmation (Luke 10:1; I Tim. 5:19). Someone may question their going to the temple, since Christ had died and all the things typified in the temple had been fulfilled. This is Jewish territory, the transitional period between the Gospels and the assembly Epistles. The message had not yet extended to the Gentiles. Peter and John selected this place at the time of prayer when the Jews were assembled. The Lord Jesus spoke from the same place to the rebellious Jews. After declaring Himself the good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep, there was a division among the Jews (John 10:19-23). Peter delivered his second message to apostate Jews at the same place (Acts 3:11). They had already rejected Jesus Christ and ridiculed what took place at Pentecost.

The disciples wrought many signs and wonders among the people during the transitional period: "And at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico" (Acts 5:12 NASB). The portico was the only remnant of the original temple. It was destroyed in 70 A.D. by Titus. By Peter's speaking from Solomon's portico, the Jews would recall what happened during the time of Solomon.

The character of the lame man is described in Acts 3:2-5. Character and money are not interchangeable terms. Christ does not promise His people material gain but His own richness in faith and heirship that will be experienced only in the earthly rule. The healing of the lame man is described in Acts 3:6-8. The beggar was near and yet far from the holy place. This is a picturesque description of Israel, to whom Peter was speaking (Matt. 23:38). Acts 3:9-10 tells what the people saw as a confirmation of Peter's message.

Many describe miracles as public vindications of God. They assume that the Bible is full of sign-miracles. However, sign-miracles are not continuous throughout human history. Biblical history reveals that sign-miracles have been few and far between:

1. Within the 1,656 years from creation to the flood, the only sign-miracle was Enoch's translation in 987 B.C. after Adam's creation (Gen. 5:24).
2. Abraham was born 2,008 years after Adam was created. From the flood to Abraham, the only sign-miracle was God's judgment at the tower of Babel when one language

was changed to many languages. This miracle took place about two years after the flood about 1658 B.C. It was the beginning of the various nations of the world (Gen. 11:1-9).

3. From Abraham in 2008 B.C. to Moses in 2433 B.C., sign-miracles were uncommon. During the 400 years of Israel's bondage in Egypt, not one, single sign-miracle is recorded.
4. There was a great outburst of miracles during the times of Moses and Joshua. Between the years 2433 B.C. and about 2553 B.C., a period of about 120 years, there were such sign-miracles as the plagues, the Passover, the Red Sea, the smitten rock, the manna from heaven, the red heifer, the serpent of brass, and Korah being swallowed up.
5. Miracles were spasmodic during the time of the judges, which covered the period between the conquest of Canaan and Joshua's death to Samuel's judgeship and the introduction of the monarchy in Israel. This was between the years 2553 B.C. and 3051 B.C. after the creation of Adam. The outstanding miracles during this time were manifested in the lives of two men—Gideon (Judges 7) and Samson (Judges 16).
6. From the time of King Saul, who was the people's choice, to the division of the kingdom, sign-miracles were rare. This was between the years 3051 B.C. and 3143 B.C. There were no sign-miracles during the time of Solomon.
7. From the division of the historical kingdom to the Babylonian captivity, the two sign-miracles were Elijah on mount Carmel (I Kings 18) and the shadow going back ten degrees (II Kings 20:9, 10). These miracles were between the years 3743 B.C. and 3521 B.C.
8. From the captivity to the close of Old Testament history between the years 3521 B.C. to about 3600 B.C., the three miracles were the furnace of fire, the den of lions, and the whale swallowing Jonah.
9. There was a period of 400 years between the Old and New Testaments, known as the time of God's silence, of which there is no record.
10. John the Baptist did not perform one sign-miracle (John 10:41).
11. Jesus Christ did not perform a sign-miracle during the first thirty years of His life on earth. His first sign-miracle was turning water into wine (John 2:1-11). His sign-miracles were not to make sick people feel better, crippled people whole, blind people see, or make physically dead people alive. They confirmed His power and authority to deal with the sins of those the Father gave to Him in the covenant of grace.

12. Sign-miracles accompanied revelation (Mark 16:20). (1) A sign-miracle proved Peter's message to be true (Acts 3:1-11). Peter was preaching to the Jews, most of whom were apostates. The miracle symbolized Israel's impotence. God's message was first to the Jews who looked for signs. (2) The healing of the impotent man at Lystra confirmed Paul and Barnabas as ministers to the Gentiles (Acts 14:8-10). (3) Sign-miracles were credentials of God's extraordinary messengers. These messengers were known by their words and works.
13. From the time of Stephen's death, Christ prescribed a course of silence respecting His miracles. Immediately after Stephen's death (Acts 7), the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, received his commission. This was a crisis akin to that which marked the ministry of Christ when the council at Jerusalem decreed His destruction (Matt. 12:14).

Christ's teaching became veiled with parables. This continued in the record of Acts. The apostle to the circumcision, Peter, gave place to the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul. The key is that God's great power was exercised not only to accredit the testimony of the apostles, but also to deliver them from outrage and to rescue them from prison (Mark 16:20; Acts 4; 5; 12). Paul was not behind the twelve apostles in this respect; however, do not fail to compare the record of Pentecostal days and Paul's imprisonment in Rome. When carried to jail at Philippi, God delivered the apostle (Acts 16). This was a sign-miracle confirming his work. Conversely, God did not deliver him from the Roman prison (II Tim. 4:6-8). Both Peter and John the Baptist were God's servants. Peter was rescued from prison (Acts 12), but John was killed by Herod (Matt. 14:10).

Silence is neither weakness nor indifference by God. In character, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. However, He changes His methods of operation. It is not so much what God has done in the past or what He will do in the future, but what He is doing through His Divinely chosen servants now that His word is complete. Since God's word is complete, we are to speak His words, not perform miracles (Is. 8:20; I Pet. 4:11; Jude 3).

God never performed miracles to gratify curiosity, but to satisfy the reasonable demand for evidence that His power is Divine. The miracles of the Bible bear no resemblance to the lying wonders of today that are often grotesque displays of magical tricks, liquefying blood, nodding and weeping madonnas, uncontrolled laughter, so-called healing of all kinds of diseases, and other such follies. The uncertain, indefinite, and unreliable cures of neurotic cases so much in evidence bear no resemblance to the miracles recorded in God's word.

Bible miracles have the following characteristics: (1) The cures were instantaneous, perfect, and permanent. (2) Miracles consisted of both signs and wonders. (3) They were signs of attestation. (4) They were examples in the physical realm of what the Lord came to do in the spiritual realm. The few He raised from the dead signifies that the born-again ones have been raised from death in trespasses and sin and have been made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. The few healed from blindness

points to our being given eyesight that we may see and understand the spiritual things of God.

The signs of an apostle must be distinguished from the signs of discipleship. Paul proved his claim of apostleship (I Cor. 9:1; II Cor. 12:12). There were apostolic signs (Gal. 1:15-24; Acts 26:16-24), which lasted as long as the apostles. The signs of discipleship do not include signs and wonders. Men are now measured by the complete revelation of God's mind.

Those in whose midst most of the sign-miracles were performed crucified Christ as an imposter. At Pentecost, Peter reminded them of this sin: "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death" (Acts 2:22, 23 NASB). When Christ was challenged to perform miracles to support His claim, He refused (Matt. 12:38, 39; 16:1-4).

No Christian denies that God heals, but there are two kinds of healing: (1) Sign-miracle healings are recorded in Scripture to confirm the authenticity of God's message (Mark 16:16-20). These were spectacular and undeniable because they were instant, complete, and permanent. (2) Other healings have nothing to do with the confirmation of God's message. They are associated with a believer's confession of sin for which God chastened him with illness (James 5:13-18). God's gifts have changed. They are no longer revelatory and confirmatory. No sign or miracle has ever brought faith to any individual. Faith is the gift of God. It is the fruit of regeneration. Miracles were never meant to create faith, be the origin of faith, or sustain faith.

The Hebrew root word *rapha* means healing of all kinds, particularly of wounds by outward application. It means to cure, heal, or make whole. At the beginning, the word meant binding and sewing. "Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and, behold, it has not been bound up for healing or wrapped with a bandage, that it may be strong to hold the sword" (Ezek. 30:21 NASB). The word also means to heal a distressed nation. In a moral sense, it means to cure the mind or pardon the soul. Metaphorically, it refers to healing a person, healing people, or healing a land (II Chr. 7:14). Between Genesis 20:17, the first Biblical reference to healing, and Exodus 15:26, there is only one reference to *rapha*. There, it is translated physicians (Gen. 50:2). It also refers to physicians in II Chronicles 16:12. Metaphorically, the word refers to a person, a people, or a land being healed, or to restore to pristine felicity (II Chr. 7:14; Hos. 7:1; 11:3). The word *rapha* is used for comfort (Ps. 147:3; Jer. 6:14; 8:11).

Many Scriptures are quoted by so-called faith healers to affirm that they have the oracles of God on their side. Exodus 15:26 in connection with Psalm 103:3 is one of their favorite texts. However, this verse does not substantiate their view. God's covenant of healing is not for the assembly of Christ. It was for Israel who enjoyed temporal blessings. The assembly enjoys mainly spiritual blessings. Therefore, the Lord

said to Israel, after her national deliverance by blood and by power, "...I, the LORD, am your healer" (Ex. 15:26 NASB).

Faith Healing - Part 2

Scripture Does Not Teach Faith Healing
W.E. Best

A series was started last week on the subject of faith healing, which is much in vogue today among religionists. Observe the word “If” in Exodus 15:26—“...If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your healer” (NASB). The promises that God gave to the Israelites were conditioned on their obedience to His precepts. If they did not obey, the results are recorded in Deuteronomy 28. “Once God has spoken; Twice I have heard this: That power belongs to God; And lovingkindness is Thine, O Lord, For Thou dost recompense a man according to his work” (Ps. 62:11, 12 NASB). When Israel delighted in the Lord, He caused her to ride on the high places of the earth (Is. 58:14). If she kept God’s commandments, He promised, “And that He shall set you high above all nations which he has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the LORD your God, as He has spoken” (Deut. 26:19 NASB).

Historically, God started the Israelites without a feeble person in their number: “Now the sons of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children. And a mixed multitude also went up with them, along with flocks and herds, a very large number of livestock” (Ex. 12:37, 38 NASB). “Then He brought them out with silver and gold; and among His tribes there was not one who stumbled” (Ps. 105:37 NASB). Who ever heard of such an army with no need for physicians or nurses as they began their journey from the land of bondage?

At the conclusion of the Israelites’ journey, afflicted and poor people were among them: “But I will leave among you a humble and lowly people, and they will take refuge in the name of the LORD” (Zeph. 3:12 NASB). (Study Is. 1:3-6.) They were rich and unafflicted at the beginning; but because of their disobedience, they were poor and afflicted at the conclusion of their journey. Since the people of Israel did not meet God’s conditions, He put these afflictions on them. When Jesus Christ came, He found many of the Jews lame, palsied, leprosy, blind, deaf, dumb, etc. (Matt. 8; 9). Jesus Christ healed some of them to confirm His Person and His message.

Christ came into the world to confirm the promises made to the fathers (Rom. 15:8) and to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). He performed miracles while the multitude of people exclaimed, “...God has visited His people” (Luke 7:16 NASB). They filled up the measure of their guilt by saying, “We do not want this man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14 NASB). From that day to this, diseases, deaths, burials, tears, and groans will accompany God’s people until the second coming of Jesus Christ (Rev. 21).

The Hebrew word for “disease” or “sickness” is found several times in the Old Testament. It refers to bodily ailments in each instance (Ex. 15:26; 23:25; I Kings 8:37;

II Chr. 6:28; 21:15; 24:25; Prov. 18:14). In the light of the context of Exodus 15:26, Jehovah advocated the use of means instead of discrediting them.

The erroneous teaching that healing of the body is included in the atonement is refuted by the very Scriptures used to confirm that belief (Lev. 12-14). Those who follow this teaching believe that since the priest made atonement for the cleansing of the leper, healing of the body is in the atonement of Christ. They say that Leviticus 14:18 was a type of bodily cleansing and healing through the death and resurrection of Christ: "While the rest of the oil that is in the priest's palm, he shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed. So the priest shall make atonement on his behalf before the LORD" (NASB). Anyone who includes healing of the body in the atonement must of necessity include healing of garments and houses, in other words, cleansing. Leprosy is presented in these three areas: (1) the flesh of the individual, (2) his garments, and (3) his house.

The book of Leviticus was given to the children of Israel, God's covenant people, for their instruction concerning worship. Instruction for these people concerning the leper and his cleansing is recorded in Leviticus 12-14. No atonement was made for the leper. He must stay outside the camp and die in his disease. (1) The atonement was not the same as the burnt offering, which shows the acceptance of the worshipper before the Lord (Lev. 1). (2) It is not the same as the meal offering, which portrays the perfect Object of the heart (Lev. 2). (3) Furthermore, it is not the same as the peace offering, which shows the fellowship of the worshipper with the Lord (Lev. 3). These three are sweet savor offerings. (4) The sin offering refers to what Christ did for the nature of sin (Lev. 4). (5) The trespass offering deals with the fruit of sin (Lev. 5). Therefore, the sacrifices of Leviticus do not set forth the way of redemption of the people, but how their new relationship was maintained in fellowship. There are two major divisions in Leviticus—worship on the basis of fellowship (Lev. 1-17) and obligations of fellowship (Lev. 18-27).

The atonement was a ceremonial affair. Atonement had nothing to do with the leprous man's body. It concerned itself entirely with his relationships and inner life. There were two distinctly marked stages to the atonement. The first was to terminate the man's condition of being ceremonially dead and to allow him to return to the camp for fellowship with fellow Israelites. The second was to restore him to fellowship with God, which is manifested by the priest going outside the camp where the lepers were compelled to live. The second stage of the atonement took place eight days after the first. The atonement was complete; the healed leper was restored to fellowship; and he had access to God's sanctuary. His fellowship with God was fully and properly established.

The leper's healing was the act of the sovereign God. The atonement was made for the man "after" his healing. The man was outside the camp because of his sin, not because of his leprosy, which is a type of sin. People are excluded from the assembly of Christ for sin, typified by leprosy, not because of physical infirmities. The different degrees of leprosy illustrate that some sins are handled differently from others.

Contrary to the teaching that Leviticus 14:18 proves that healing is in the atonement, Scripture speaks of briars, pain in childbirth, diseases, and death. All of these were imposed penalties resulting from sin. Physical death was ordained as a penal consequence of Adam's sin (Gen. 3:19; Heb. 9:27). How could there be briars, pain in childbirth, diseases, and death if redemption of the body and soul were included in the same sense in the atonement? There is no disease offering recorded in the word of God. The body was included in Christ's redemptive work, but that does not mean that believers have the full fruits of Christ's redemptive work in this present life. We groan in dying bodies as we await the redemption of the body.

Scripture vividly illustrates leprosy as sin. It is loathsome, incurable, and fatal. Sins (manifestation of the sin nature) are the fruit of sin (the sin nature). Original sin is portrayed in the birth of a son (Lev. 12). The greatest uncleanness came by the birth of a child after the flesh (Lev. 12:2). The uncleanness of the mother is emphasized to portray original sin. No one can bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing (Job 14:4). All, like David, are conceived in sin (Ps. 51:5). We are sinners by our connection with Adam (Rom. 5:12). We are sinners because of our sinful nature (Gen. 5:3), and we are sinners in practice (I Tim. 1:15).

The widely held view that man needs only a suitable environment, education, and good moral influence to turn out all right is not Biblically correct. In the unregenerate, original sin corrupted the mind and depraved the will; therefore, they are innately unclean. In the regenerate, original sin has mixed and incorporated itself with our duties and graces. Some unbelief is mixed with our believing. Lukewarmness is mixed with our zeal, and pride is mixed with our humility.

The remedy for both the believer and the unbeliever is found in the man-child (Lev. 12:2, 3). The circumcision of the foreskin links with Luke 2. On the eighth day, some of Christ's blood was shed. This was a figure of the death of Christ (Col. 2:11). The sinless humanity of Christ was in view in Leviticus 12:2 and 3. This is the reason the uncleanness of the mother is mentioned here. Israel, like all Christians, had to learn her uncleanness. Christ's coming made manifest the uncleanness that was already there.

Leprosy is discovered by its breaking out in the flesh (Lev. 13). This typifies sin breaking out in the flesh, so as to call for priestly discernment. Discipline is the subject of this chapter. What is the difference between the Lord's speaking to Moses (Lev. 12:1), to Moses and Aaron (Lev. 13:1), and to Moses (Lev. 14:1)? Priestly duties are included when Moses and Aaron were addressed. Certain symptoms must be carefully observed by the priest who was responsible for leadership and diagnosis.

Leprosy rendered a person unfit to occupy his tent or to partake of the privileges of the assembly in Israel. If the sin was not judged in secret by the individual, it would soon evidence itself in the assembly by word and deed. Then, the offender must be excommunicated from the assembly.

The Lord's service in Israel was marked by healing, feeding, and disciplining. Healing must precede feeding and disciplining, because an unhealed person cannot enjoy spiritual food; and he will not endure chastening. The leper was brought to the priest for cleansing, not for healing. After God healed a leper, the priest had something to do with his cleansing. When a sore looked deeper than the skin of the flesh (Lev. 13:4-6), the priest should shut up the person about whom he was in doubt for seven days. Liberty was restricted until the true nature of the problem could be determined. If after seven days the flesh was more evident than grace, the priest should shut him up seven more days (v. 5). If after the second seven days it was revealed not to be leprosy, it had been healed by God's grace. The priest should pronounce him clean (v. 6). The man had been forgiven of his sins.

A spreading sore was a more definite case in which there was no need for delay in pronouncing the person a leper (Lev. 13:9-11). There is often a long, secret history behind an open outbreak of sin. Deep-seated leprosy manifests itself many ways. This case of leprosy manifests itself in the skin of the flesh from the head to the feet (v. 12). Nothing but the grace of God can keep it from breaking out. From small beginnings, the whole living death of the leper is developed.

Leprosy was not inward, but only on the skin in verse 13. Therefore, the man was pronounced clean. This was another case of a pardoned man who had judged himself. His backsliding was healed. However, after open acknowledgement, the flesh may manifest itself again (v. 14). Remnants of former sins may remain, though the leprosy is not there. Believers must not make any allowances for personal infirmity. A boil and a burning inflammation (vv. 18-23) denote anger, personal feelings, etc. The person who spreads these spreads a sore. These things should go like the morning mist before the sun (Eph. 4:26; I Tim. 5:13; II Thess. 3:11). A burning fire is a type of prolonged ill feelings (Lev. 13:24, 25). It is leprosy, and only the priest can pronounce him unclean.

Head leprosy was the worst kind (Lev. 13:29, 30, 45, 46). The person with head leprosy was unclean. The priest should pronounce him utterly unclean. There is nothing worse than an erroneous thinking process. Head leprosy is worse than bad morals. Only in connection with leprosy in the head is man pronounced utterly unclean. A heretic illustrates the worst kind of leprosy. This shows that the will of the flesh takes form in thoughts and teaching. The woman is not mentioned in any case other than leprosy in the head. This condemns women who have been instrumental in bringing about various cults. Verse 46 shows the leper's condition, occupation, and place. He must dwell alone outside the assembly of Israel. Every unsaved person in an assembly has head leprosy and should be excommunicated.

The person with head leprosy was unfit for either communion or companionship (II Thess. 3:6-14). Therefore, he was cast out of the fellowship of the assembly of Israel, the only place in the world where Jehovah's presence was known and enjoyed. The leper is one in whom sin is working. As long as sin is working, there can be no fellowship with God or with the people of God. The energy of evil is the deathblow to communion.

The remainder of Leviticus 13 deals with leprosy in the garment. Leprosy manifests itself in circumstances, as well as in personal conduct. If there was only a spot in the garment, the garment should be washed, and it was clean. However, if the spot remained and spread, the garment should be burned. When the eye is clear, the path will be plain (Luke 11:34). Our circumstances can be applied to all of the manifestations of leprosy. Believers are to watch against the working of evil in their ways just as carefully as against evil in themselves. Washing expresses the action of the word of God on a person's habits.

Leprosy was in the house (Lev. 14:33-53). The priest went into the house that was reported to have a plague in it. He examined the house. As a result of his examination, he knew the house conditions. A minister observes when something of the flesh manifests itself on carnal things, legal things, or mental things. If he seeks to maintain suitable conditions, he must exercise priestly discernment of the character of the living stones that make up the house (1 Pet. 2:5). The normal privilege of the assembly is to enjoy house conditions that are heavenly in character. Here is an exercise the Lord has brought on us to bring to light the true state of things in the assembly and to make manifest the ones He approves (1 Cor. 11:19). The seriousness of having been associated with uncleanness must be felt throughout the house (Lev. 14:41). This deals with suspicion of evil in the assembly.

Until Leviticus 14, all was done in order for the leper to be cleansed. After his cleansing, he must do something for himself. The cleansed person must acknowledge his condition and realize that with unconfessed sins he was unfit to be a companion of God's people. His guilt was the reason he was cast out of the camp. Now that he was healed and self-judged, he could return to the camp. Since his healing was a fact, he must adjust and cleanse everything before he could resume normal life with the children of Israel. He must wash his garments, shave off his hair, bathe in water, and cleanse his house.

The teaching of Leviticus 12-14 is confirmed by Christ's healing the leprosy man in Matthew 8:1-4—"And when He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. And behold a leper came to Him, and bowed down to Him, saying, Lord, if You are willing [present active subjunctive of thelo], You can make me clean. And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, I am willing [present active indicative of thelo]; be cleansed. And immediately [eutheos, immediately, or at once] his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, See that you tell no one, but go, show yourself to the priest, and present the offering that Moses commanded, for [eis, accusative of purpose] a testimony to them" (Matt. 8:1-4 NASB).

Large crowds followed Christ when He came down from the mountain where He gave His sermon on the mount (Matt. 5-7). The leper who approached Him "bowed down" (Matt. 8:2), an imperfect active indicative form of the verb proskuneo, showing that the leper was continually pleading. The verb means to worship, kneel, or bow low. In keeping with the context, he was not worshipping but bowing low in the presence of the

Lord Jesus Christ. The leper called Jesus Christ, "Lord." No man can call Jesus Christ "Lord" except by the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 12:3).

The leper's cleansing was a testimony to Israel. Leprosy appeared first in Israel; therefore, these verses deal with that nation (Ex. 4:6; Lev. 13). This does not indicate that there were no lepers among the Gentiles, but leprosy began with God's judgment on the Jewish people.

The leper's being told to go to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded proves he represents the Jews (Matt. 8:4). What Moses commanded is recorded in Leviticus 12-14. The leper had to prove that he had been cleansed by God before he could enter his own tent or fellowship with the Israelites in the camp. Although the leper knew that Jesus Christ was able to make him clean, he was not sure it was His will. This is proved by the subjunctive mood of the verb *thelo* with *ean*: "...Lord, if [*ean*] You are willing [present active subjunctive of *thelo*], You can make me clean" (Matt. 8:2 NASB). Some are of the opinion that questioning Christ's will to cleanse brings reproach on His character. They assume that God is willing to heal anyone and everyone. However, the leper was correct. Christ demonstrated to the leper that He was willing to cleanse him; and contrary to the teaching that Christ's healings were gradual, He cleansed him at once.

The record of the healing of the centurion's son (Matt. 8:5-13) follows the passage dealing with the Jews. The Jews' rejection of Jesus Christ was foreknown. While the centurion was saying, "Lord," the Jews were saying, "We will not have this man to rule over us." They were apostates and insubordinate. The record of the healing of the centurion's son is a testimony to the Gentiles (Rom. 8:5-13). The centurion was a Gentile Roman officer with 100 men under his authority. He needed only to give a command, and it was obeyed. The centurion's admission that he was unworthy for Christ to come under his roof manifested his humility. True humility results from God's grace. Humility is subordination to the will of God. The centurion's understanding was remarkable. He recognized that disease obeys Jesus Christ, because He is God manifested in the flesh; therefore, His authority is from God.

An aorist imperative verb expressed the centurion's request that the Lord heal his son: "But the centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy for You to come under my roof, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed" (Matt. 8:8 NASB). This imperative was not a command in the sense of his giving orders to the soldiers under him. It was in the sense of humility, recognizing his subordination to the Lord Jesus Christ. The thought expressed was like that of John the Baptist when Christ came to be baptized by him, and he said, "I have need to be baptized by You" (Matt. 3:14 NASB). On another occasion, John said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30 NASB).

Consider how much the centurion knew. He confessed his unworthiness. He knew the attitude the Jews had toward the Gentiles; therefore, he would not place the Lord in an embarrassing situation. Instead of positive self-esteem, he manifested self-examination

and self-denial. The centurion saw and understood what the blind Jews did not see or understand, because they were not true Israelites. His testimony was similar to, but greater than, that of the Gentile Canaanite woman whose daughter was demon-possessed (Matt. 15:21-28). Her faith was great because it was God-given. She, like the centurion, manifested true humility in subordination to Jesus Christ the Lord.

Faith Healing - Part 3

(Matthew 8:1-17; Isaiah 53:4-7)

W.E. Best

Salvation is in three stages: (1) eternally chosen in God's purpose, (2) purchased in Christ's death at Calvary, and (3) applied at the time of regeneration. Christians were not there when chosen, not there when purchased, but were there when salvation was applied. God is omnipotent (has all power), omniscient (knows everything), and omnipresent (is everywhere).

So-called "faith healers" say it is unscriptural to pray, "If it is God's will." Their argument is illustrated by the following statements: They say that no father or mother would pray, "Oh God, save my child, if it be your will." Furthermore, they say that no person would pray in that manner because such praying would be (1) a slander on God's love, (2) an arrogant denial of God's word, and (3) an insult to God's honor. They affirm that healing is in the atonement, according to Matthew 8:17— "In order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, HE HIMSELF TOOK OUR INFIRMITIES, AND CARRIED AWAY OUR DISEASES" (NASB).

The following illustration has also been used by them: In England in World War II, a mother praying for her son in battle, said, "After I read that God neither slumbers nor sleeps, I decided there was no need for both of us to stay awake." The faith healer then said, "After I read where God neither slumbers nor sleeps, I decided that there was no need for both Christ and me to bear my sickness." This was followed by their three views of Matthew 8:17—(1) For the past, we have Christ's public ministry. (2) For the future, we will have the Kingdom. (3) For the present, there is no need to pray, "If it be Thy will." They say that Christ taught us to pray, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." They say there will be no sickness in heaven, and one cannot pray the prayer of faith if he adds, "If it be Thy will." Therefore, they say, God corrected the false theology of the leper: "When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed" (Matt. 8:1-3 KJB). They are saying that the Lord corrected the false theology of the leper because he was wrong when he prayed, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

If physical healing is in the atonement, as Charismatics teach, then God must disapprove of the use of any means, because "It is finished" (John 19:30 NASB). This was said by Christ in connection with His death. Furthermore, the body of the Christian would be deathless, because it would never come into judgment.

Charismatics make fools of themselves by saying that Christ corrected the false theology of the leper. They rely heavily on II Peter 3:9—"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (NASB). The Charismatics, along with other

Arminians, cannot apply II Peter 3:9 to all without exception. What about “vessels of wrath,” “wicked men foreordained to condemnation,” those to whom “God sends upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe a lie,” and those who are already “in hell”? (See Rom. 9, I Pet. 2:8, Jude 4, II Thess. 2:11, and Luke 16.) A good place to learn the importance of the context when it comes to handling the Scriptures correctly is II Peter 3:9. Look closely at the opening statement: “The Lord is not slow about His promise...” (NASB). The word “promise” (verses 4, 9, and 13) refers to Christ’s second coming. The key words in the text are “you,” “any,” and “all.” These are the persons God would not wish to perish. Scripture teaches that Christ’s sheep cannot resist God’s will (Rom. 9:16-19). The “any” and “all” are limited by “toward you.” God is not willing that any of those included in the covenant of grace should perish, but would have them all come to repentance. There is a vital connection between “you” and the elect of God (I Pet. 1:1-9; II Pet. 1:1-10).

There is an old saying: “That can never be too much taught which cannot be too well learned.” Truth is infinite, but our minds are finite. The most elementary doctrine is virtually a summary of the Bible. During the days of the Reformation, the Romans made the charge that the Reformers always “harped on the same string.” In Philippians, Paul continues to repeat his statement about joy.

It has been pointed out that the seventy scholars who gave us the Septuagint were mistaken in translating a Hebrew verb into an incorrect Greek verb and a Hebrew noun into an incorrect Greek noun in Isaiah 53:4. In contrast, Matthew, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, chose the correct verb and noun. The difference was inspiration. There is a vast difference between the choice of a certain word by one who was inspired by God and seventy men who translated the Hebrew into Greek.

The verb involved in the translation is *bastadzo*, which means carry away, remove, or to bear what is burdensome. How can we determine how to translate the verb? (1) Sickness has not been removed for Christians. (2) How is the verb used in Scripture? The verb is used 27 times, but it is never used when referring to sin or sins. (3) Did Christ bear the illnesses, or did He carry them away or remove them?

Matthew 8:16 gives the reason for Christ’s popularity: “And 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 ill” (NASB). Miracles and healing draw crowds; the Person of fulfilled prophecy is not as interesting to the unregenerate. The unregenerate became interested in One who could cast out demons and heal the sick. However, did they have any interest in the fact that Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy? Christ not only manifested His own human sympathy in His ministry, but it was by reason of His hypostatic union of His two natures. Christ could not bear weaknesses in His life (ministry) in the same sense that He bore sins in His death. One took life, and the other took death.

Isaiah 53 is a prophecy of the sorrowful lament and future confession of repentant Israel. The prophecy begins with Isaiah 52:13 and concludes by describing the

exaltation and glory of the righteous Servant (Is. 53:12). However, between the two mountain peaks of glory lies the deep valley of suffering for which Jesus Christ came into the world and died. It was prophesied that Christ would be a man of sorrows (Is. 53:3). Christ's sorrow was the sorrow of unique humiliation, opposition, and anticipation. Many times in sudden calamity we have been constrained to say that it is good for us that we do not know what lies before us. Christ foresaw all that was before Him; nevertheless, He came to give His life as a ransom for many, the elect, not for all. Christ's sorrow was a sorrow of unique separation, described as His treading the winepress alone. His sorrow was that of a unique relationship; He bore our sins.

Isaiah 53:4 teaches that Christ is the sympathetic Savior. This took place in Christ's public ministry. It did not take place at Calvary. A strange and erroneous deduction has been drawn from this verse. Some believe that Christ carried into the Calvary experience our sicknesses and pains; therefore, recipients of grace should never be sick. Christ's redemptive work is absolutely perfect and complete Godward so that He is the propitiation for the sins of the elect (Rom. 3:25). However, the application of His redemptive work to our bodies remains to be accomplished when we step out of time into eternity (Rom. 8:23; II Cor. 4:16-18; Eph. 5:27; Phil. 3:21; Col. 3:1-4; I John 3:2). Our bodies are still under the power of death (Rom.7:17, 23; 8:23; I Cor. 15:26; Rev. 21:4). We are groaning in this body waiting for its redemption.

If Christ stood in the place of the sick as He stood in the place of chosen sinners, our sicknesses would be as far removed as our sins. However, Christ did not destroy sickness at His first coming. Disease is a part of the curse. The believer is not free from sickness. Christ removed, bore, or carried up sickness in a miraculous way during His public ministry so that the prophecy might be fulfilled in a shadow. In the same manner, Christ's baptism in the Jordan River fulfilled all righteousness in a shadow or figure (Matt. 3:15; Acts 3:18). Throughout Christ's earthly ministry, He saw the misery that sin caused. Therefore, He was "touched" with the feeling of our infirmities: "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted [tried] in all things as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:14-16 NASB).

Those who teach that people are healed by their faith are in error. Christ healed some because of the faith of others without regard to the faith of the ones healed. He healed some who were incapable of having faith. He healed some in spite of their protest. On one occasion, He rebuked His disciples for their lack of faith, which was the reason they failed to heal. Jesus Christ manifested that He was the Son of God by confirming His message with healing.

The diseases cured by Christ were types of another disease—the spiritual effects of the fall. The Jews will be granted repentance when they see Jesus Christ whom they pierced; then Isaiah 53:4 will be their penitential confession. They will confess their

former blindness and ignorance regarding Christ. Grace is absolutely necessary for the correct evaluation of the Person of Jesus Christ.

Some misinterpret Isaiah 53:5 to teach that Christ purchased physical healing at Calvary. Those who hold this belief teach that provision was made for not only the full forgiveness of sin, but also the complete healing in this life of sickness and bodily disease. They attribute every sickness, disease, and deformity to Satan's work. They are in error to say that disease never comes from God and that it cannot come out of heaven. These people fail to realize that Satan can do nothing without God's permission. God had to give Satan permission before he could afflict Job, and the governor in John 19:11 could do nothing without God's enabling. They ignore the fact that the Lord struck David's child with sickness (II Sam. 12:15), and that He smote King Azariah, one of Israel's good kings, so that he became a leper until his death (II Kings 15:5). The Lord plagued Pharaoh (Gen. 12:17). The hand of the Lord plagued Egypt (Ex. 9:1-12). The Lord plagued the Israelites because they made a golden calf (Ex. 32:35). God continues making people sick and killing them (I John 5:16).

The message to Israel was that God is the Healer, but He also inflicts calamities, even on his own people (Deut. 32:39; Jer. 7:14, 15). The children of Israel should observe and do all of God's commandments (Deut. 28:1). Blessings would come on them if they hearkened to the voice of the Lord (Deut. 28:2). If they would not hearken to the voice of the Lord to do His commandments, curses would come on them (Deut. 28:15). The Lord would send on His covenant people curses, confusion, rebuke, pestilence, consumption, fever, inflammation, fiery heat, the sword, blight, and mildew; and they would be pursued until they perished (Deut. 28:20-22).

Jesus Christ, the incarnate Savior, sympathetically bore the burdens of poverty (II Cor. 8:9), pain (John 18:22; Luke 22:63-65), hunger (Luke 4:2), thirst (John 4:7), weariness (John 4:6), reproaches (Rom. 15:3), abuses (Luke 4:28, 29), and sorrow (Is. 53:4). These involved no sin on Christ's part. In what sense did Christ take our infirmities on Himself and carry our sicknesses? It was not in the sense that He became afflicted with them, but that He had sympathy and compassion for those afflicted with them.

The Son of God vicariously bore the penalty of sin on the cross on behalf of the elect. Isaiah 53:5 begins with the conjunction "but," showing the contrast between Christ's public ministry in verse four and His sacrifice on the cross in verse five. There is a different aspect of human nature in verse five than that in verse four. Grievances and sorrows are not violations of God's law. The light of God breaks in on the verse and shows that ours was the transgression; Christ's death was the scope for it. Ours was the iniquity; His was the wound for it. Ours was the sin; His was the suffering on behalf of it.

Jesus Christ was the suffering Savior on the cross. He was wounded for our transgressions. The word "pierced" (Is. 53:5) speaks of severe and mortal wounds. Christ was bruised—pressed hard or crushed—for our iniquities. This was one way excruciating pain could be inflicted. The chastisement of our peace was on Him. The suffering by which our reconciliation was secured was in the death of Jesus Christ. He

took the debt of sin on Himself. It was imputed to Him, and He carried it as His own. He bore the punishment occasioned by the sin of the elect (John 1:29). With Christ's stripes we are healed.

The Jewish law forbid more than forty stripes, but Christ was scourged by Romans who recognized no such merciful limits. Isaiah saw the stripes prophetically. From that unseen scourge held in the Father's hand, which fell on the inner nature of Jesus Christ, His soul was made an offering for sin. By His soul being made an offering for sin, our souls are healed. Thus, we are healed of our inattention, unconcern, self-righteousness, and the pleasures of the world.

Isaiah 53:5 is a certainty. However, with every Arminian, it is a possibility. Neither prayer nor faith heal. If they did, that would be our application of the remedy. The remedy comes from God.

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