

Faith Healing

Can the right amount of faith remove the suffering and sickness that interferes with our daily lives and our ability to faithfully serve our neighbor? Francis MacNutt, a pioneer and a well-respected expert in the revival of the ministry of healing, suggests by exercising faith, we can work to “Christianize” and in turn better society, as “God cannot play on a broken violin”.¹ He claims a cross such as suffering or sickness should not be accepted as something we must bear in the Christian life when because of Jesus Christ, we have the power to overcome it. If belief in Jesus, the son of God, grants us the forgiveness of sin “as long as we do our part and repent” then we must learn how to apply this same faith for healing since Christ not only took upon himself all of our sin, but our sickness, too. In his book, *Healing*, he quotes Rufus Mosely, “*I was put on a cross of bliss - while He had been put on a cross of agony.*”²

In reading healing accounts in the Gospel, this might seem true, but common sense does not get us very far in understanding God’s word (not to mention the false ideas conceived of God and prayer when we think he might say “no” to our request for healing). Martin Luther calls “natural reason” the “devil’s whore” when understanding the purpose of the Law and its relationship to the Gospel.³ When the scriptures exhort us to “Believe!” this doesn’t mean we can so God graciously gives us what He commands.

Summarizing Acts 3:1-16:

A man lame from birth was laid daily at the gate of the temple so he could ask for alms from those entering the Temple. As Peter and John were entering the temple, Peter said, “I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.” He took him by the right hand and raised him up. This crippled man’s feet and ankles were made strong and he entered the temple with Peter and John walking and leaping and praising God. Peter tells the crowd watching with amazement that faith in the name of the one whom God raised from the dead made this man strong that “Faith in the name of Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.”

Reason might want us to take the story of Peter healing a crippled beggar as a literal direction for healing prayer, but this story is the story of us! “*We are beggars, this is true*”. These words of Luther were found written on a scrap of paper in his pocket as he lay dying. Martin Luther knew man’s sinful condition and would agree with the words of

¹ Francis MacNutt, *Healing*, (Notre Dame: Ava Maria Press, 1999), 61,72.

² MacNutt, *Healing*, 135.

³ Gerhard Forde, *Where God Meets Man*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing Press, 1972), 12.

the Apostle Paul: “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the worst.” (1 Timothy 1:15)

“Which is easier to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven’ or to say ‘rise and walk?’” (Matt. 9:5)
The greater miracle that the healing of the sick and the casting out of demons points to is that Jesus has the authority to forgive sin and to deliver us from the devil’s power. This is the Kingdom mission. God’s new creation is coming through the work of Christ. It is not up to us to transform society through healing by faith. The meaning of these Kingdom parables is our response in faith to the message of repentance (to change one’s mind).

God has rescued you in the person of Jesus Christ, conquering sin and death. He has justified you and restored you to perfect health with Christ’s righteousness and His grace restores you to faith. The Holy Spirit works in the Word of God to raise us up as new believers in Christ. Because the Law exposes the spiritually bankrupt condition of the old creature that does not believe, we are driven to Christ for the salvation we cannot attain on our own. The new creature, raised up in faith believes in Christ who mirrors the heart of the gracious God who saves sinners. But as this faith uncovers the truth about us and we recognize we are beggars, the old self fights back in unbelief and we view the cross as if it is transparent and look beyond it for a less painful truth about ourselves. But there is none, and eventually the reality of our sinful self becomes tangible as the cross comes to our lives as the heavy wood that it is.

Carrying my own cross has caused me to see that I am anything but faithful. I am always running after another god than the only One who died for me and my only chance at faithfully serving my neighbor is in the faithful son who died to set me free - through the One that works in me. I can do nothing good on my own.

When the use of faith is put in our hands for salvation and healing we are only pointed away from the truth. There is a danger in believing that we have not been made whole in our baptism, for it sends us out believing that we must do something more. Faith is a gift from God, from the One who is faithful! The Holy Spirit exercises, strengthens, increases, and perfects this faith through the Word of God. Faith believes the Gospel promise and faith trusts in the God who bestows His grace-giving rise to hope in the promise of resurrection and a new creation.

The remedy for our condition is rest. It is in the agony of the cross of Christ that God seeks YOU to make you His own. The claims of contemporary healing ministry misdiagnose the real disease – our addiction to sin. When superficial healing prayer promises fail, the Great Physician has a better cure in mind.