

GOD OUR HEALER.

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Preface to the Second Edition. Since this book was written over twenty years ago, we have seen the Lord do many wonderful miracles. We have also experienced many trials of our faith over healing, which have given us a personal experience of other people's suffering, and the qualifications of a victory of faith over our trials. May this study inspire those who read it, to realise the great mercy and love that God holds out to the sick and suffering. I originally called this book, "Jesus Christ The Healer," however; I have now changed the title to "God The Healer," because every member of the Trinity is involved in the ministry of healing the sick.

W. H. Turner. May 3rd. 1997. Reformatted October 7th. 2000

INTRODUCTION.

a. The challenge of the ministry of healing.

The ministry of healing the sick presents a tremendous challenge to the spiritual condition of the Church; any false claims of real spirituality are exposed by the lack of a ministry to the sick. This is particularly so when viewed in the light of the healing ministry of Jesus and His early Church. We can be quite sure that the Lord Jesus desires to heal the sick just as much as He did when He walked this earth. Why, then, does His Church fail to fulfil His commission to heal the sick? Is not the Church criminally guilty in withholding the truth and experience of Divine healing? It is a great tragedy that such a wonderful Saviour has such poor adverts of His love and power, and that the tremendous desire of God to heal the sick is largely frustrated by a very imperfect Church. However, thank God for those Christians who have taken up the challenge to minister to the sick as Jesus did. The Head of the Church spent at least half of His time healing the sick, and His Church should desire to imitate His example. Divine healing is not faith healing, magnetic healing, hypnotism, or healing through spiritualist mediums. Divine healing takes place when we meet with Jesus Christ the healer, and with God our Father who, in His great love and grace, gives the children's bread of healing, even to those who are not His children. Mt.15v21-28. Lk.7v24-30. Christ's wonderful healing ministry was the manifestation of the Father's generous giving heart to needy mankind. Jn.5v19,30. 14v8-10.

b. Spiritual gifts and ministries of healing are still available today.

The argument that God no longer heals the sick does not have any Scriptural foundation. In 1Cor.13v8-13., we read that the miraculous powers of the Church are to continue until God's perfect kingdom comes upon earth,

and we see Jesus and the Father face to face, and fully know as we are fully known. Spiritual gifts, including Divine healing, are a partial and incomplete manifestation of "the powers of the age to come." Heb.6v5. Our present partial and temporary manifestations of "the powers of the age to come," will be replaced by the permanent and complete manifestation of those powers in the wonderful kingdom of the altogether lovely God of love; until that day dawns we are to "follow after love and earnestly desire spiritual gifts." 1Cor.14v1. Some say that 1Cor.12v28-30., shows that ministering to the sick should be performed by Christians who have a ministry of gifts of healings. However, Paul, in 1Cor.12v31., tells us that ALL Christians are to covet the greater gifts of the Holy Spirit; and James.5v13-18., informs us that healing of the sick should be part of the ministry of the elders of the local Church.

Obviously those who are entrusted with a ministry of gifts of healings will specialise in ministering to the sick. But God expects all the ministries of the Church to minister to the sick besides fulfilling the ministry in which they specialise. The teacher will specialise in teaching, but he will teach about healing by example as well as doctrine. The prophet will reveal the mind and purposes of God, but will minister to the sick as well. The apostle will pioneer Churches, but in doing this he will minister to the sick; indeed, the apostles founded churches through the miracles they did. Rom.15v18-21. The greater ministries God has set in the Church should manifest spiritual gifts and heal the sick, so that God's lovely desires can be fulfilled. Jesus commanded His apostles and evangelists to heal the sick. Mt.10v1-8. 28v20. Lk.10v1-9. Mk.16v15-20. Acts.1v4-8. 2v43. 5v12-16.

c. God still desires to heal even when His Church fails to convey His healing power.

The sick should remember that when the disciples of Christ fail to bring healing because of their weak spiritual condition, as in the case of the boy that the apostles could not heal in Mk.9v14-29.; it is still the desire and will of Christ to heal. Praying for the sick shatters any false pretence of spiritual power. Spiritual pretenders, who pray for the sick without having the spiritual power to deliver the sick, will only cause anxiety, worry, fear and frustration in the sick. A person has to live close to God to minister to the sick with results. When Jesus and His apostles ministered to the sick, there were no disillusioned and disappointed crowds of sufferers leaving the meetings without healing, and bitter in spirit through their disappointed expectations. We also read that most of the healings in the New Testament were instantaneous and complete, and not temporary, such was the spiritual power of Christ and His early Church. e.g. Mt.8v3,13,15-17. Acts.5v12-16. 8v5-8. 6v6. **John Chrysostom**, A.D.346-407., comments; "There are some who ask, 'Why are not miracles performed still? Why are there no persons who raise the dead and cure diseases?'" To which he replies, "That it is owing to the want of faith, and virtue, and piety in those times". For as **Jerome** says, "The Church lost as much of its virtue, as it had gained of wealth and power."

John Wesley in his sermon on "The More Excellent Way," states; "It does not appear that these extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were common in the Church for more than two or three centuries. We seldom hear of them after that fatal period when the Emperor Constantine called himself a Christian; and, from a vain imagination of promoting the Christian cause thereby, heaped riches and power and honour upon the Christians in general, but in particular upon the Christian Clergy. From this time they almost totally ceased; very few instances of the kind were found. The cause of this was not, as has been vulgarly supposed, 'because there was no more occasion for them,' because all the world was become Christians. The real cause was 'the love of many,' almost of all Christians, so called, was 'Waxed cold.' The Christians had no more of the Spirit of Christ than the other Heathens; The Son of man when He came to examine His Church, could hardly 'find faith upon the earth.' This was the real cause why the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost were no longer to be found in the Christian Church; because the Christians were turned Heathens again, and had only a dead form left." **End of quote.**

The gifts of the Holy Spirit almost passed away in the dark ages of Church History, except for spasmodic manifestations of them in times of revival. However, we can thank God, that, just as the Scriptures promised, in these last days of this age, God is manifesting His presence through His spiritual gifts, as Christians seek Him, and are renewed in love, faith and power. It is a tragedy that much of the Church sleeps on, indifferent to, and often wilfully ignorant of, God's intense desire to manifest His love, power and Divine purposes through His spiritual gifts. Israel limited God and frustrated the fulfilment of His purposes through their sin, stubbornness and unbelief, and for most of its existence, human failure has frustrated the beautiful desires of God and His Church. Ps.78v41. In 1Cor.12., Paul makes it quite clear that God desires to manifest the gifts of the Holy Spirit in great power through the individual Christians who have been entrusted with the ministry gifts of Christ, and also through each local church through the various members co-operating together as a body. Eph.4v10-16. We also need to remember that God will not give unlimited spiritual dynamite to spiritual babes, He will give them a measure of power and spiritual gifts, which will be a real blessing to them and the local church. However, mighty workings of the Holy Spirit, particularly in the area of judgement, are given to Christians, who because of their maturity of character, are better able to stand the perils of great spiritual power. Judgement ministry is the last level of spiritual authority to be given. Jn.20v20-23.

The aim of this book is to bring comfort, consolation and healing to the sick by showing them God's love and strong desire to heal them, and also to challenge Christians with the example of our Lord and His great commission to preach Gospel and heal the sick. When the Gospel is preached God's kingdom comes near, and the sick should be healed. Lk.10v9-11. Divine healing is the result of meeting with God, and there are no difficult cases of healing to Him; He heals all our diseases. Ps.103v3.

CHAPTER 1. WHY GOD EARNESTLY DESIRES TO HEAL TODAY.

We need to remember that Divine healing is not just a doctrine, it is bound up in the person and work of Christ, healing flows from the redemptive work of Jesus. Mt.8v16,17. Divine healing is a result of an encounter with the Trinity, and people's lives should be changed as a result of meeting with the healing love and power that flows from them. Christ earnestly desires Christians to manifest spiritual gifts, because He earnestly desires to manifest His saving and healing power through them. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are the means by which Christ carries on His ministry on earth today. Let us consider the Scriptures that show why God earnestly desires to heal us today.

1. BECAUSE OF GOD'S WONDERFUL CHARACTER.

a. God is a God of full compassion. Ps.145v7-9.

God is the Father of mercies, and full of tender mercy. 2Cor.1v3. Ps.145v7-9. Caring for sparrows, and so full of love for His children that He counts the hairs of their head. Mt.6v25-34. 10v29-31. 5v43-48. God's infinite abilities are directed by His infinite compassion, and He desires to, and can, meet all our needs. The great God of Is.40. is so great that He views the inhabitants of the earth as grasshoppers, and the nations as a drop in a bucket; yet He feeds His flock like a shepherd and carries the lambs in His bosom, encouraging the fearful and giving power to the faint. Is.40v7,11,15,22,28-31. God is not only The Almighty, He is The All-gracious; that is, He is willing to use His almighty power to deliver us. We should no more doubt the willingness of God to heal us, than we should doubt His power to heal us.

The altogether beautiful character and love of God and His wonderful promises cause us to confidently expect healing from Him. Though the Scriptures reveal to us the justice and righteousness of God; it is the wonderful mercy, grace and love of God, that is the supreme revelation of the Scriptures. God is "merciful and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." Exod.33v6,7. God loves to help the bowed down and oppressed, and relieves the fatherless and widow. Ps.146v5-10. God's is perfect love, and out of His love spring all His gracious and just acts. 1John.4v8. James.1v17.

b. Divine love is the basis of Divine healing.

Divine healing is not merely a sign to confirm the Gospel; it is a manifestation of Divine love. The signs are signposts to the glorious fact that God is love and that He brings good news of salvation and healing. 1Jn.4v8. Christ stopped the people using His miracles as mere adverts of His meetings. Mt.12v15,16. The reason why our Lord wants to do, "the same works," and "greater works," through His Church, is that His transcendent love just longs to meet the needs of suffering humanity just as He did while He was on earth. Jn.14v12,13. Christ's tremendous compassion is exactly the same today; He still cannot refuse an answer to a cry of need, or a prayer of faith. Jesus came to destroy the works of the Devil and deliver his captives. 1Jn.3v8. Lk.4v17-21. 9v56. Acts.10v38. Sickness is evil, it is not glorifying to a loving and lovely God; it was never part of His original design, it is a result of the fall of angels and men. Christ came to make men whole and to save them from their sins, and from all the effects of sin. Wholeness is the will of Divine love and compassion. Mt.1v21.

Christ was God manifested in the flesh, God with us manifesting His Divine love. God the word was tabernacled in earthly flesh. Jn.1v14. Mt.1v23. How wonderful it is that our great God should manifest Himself in human form, and go to the ultimate in self-sacrifice to save and heal mankind. Christ was moved with compassion, His Divine love poured out in a never-ending stream to meet the needs of the multitudes. Mt.14v13,14. Mk.1v32-45. etc. As soon as the people saw this Divine love and power meeting the needs of the people, they came in their multitudes. So great was the need that Christ could not meet it with the physical strength at His disposal, He gave the twelve, and then the seventy, power to act as He acted, in His name. His Divine love and power was channelled through less perfect channels to meet the need of suffering mankind. Expect the promises of God's Divine love to be fulfilled for you; they are completely reliable. Come to this same Jesus NOW. Repent of your sins, if you have not already done so. Come to Christ in contrition and accept Him as Lord and Saviour, and He will surely meet with you. Look NOW to Jesus. God has given gifts of healings to His Church, so that His love and power can meet your need. We read of the multitudes being healed by the apostles of the early Church through the power of the risen Christ, He will meet with you just the same as He met with them. Acts.5v12-16.

We are to contend for the faith that Christ delivered to His Church, and the healing of the sick had an important place in the doctrine and experience of Jesus and His early Church. Jude v3. God's purpose to heal the sick still stands, and Christians have to contend earnestly for this important Christian doctrine and experience. Christ's Divine love manifested a continuous ministry of healing during His ministry on earth, and instituted a continuous ministry of healing in the Church. Lk.4v18. Mk.16v15-20. Mt.28v18-20. Lk.24v46-48. Jn.14v12. 1Cor.12v9,28. The ministry of healing is to continue right to the end of the age; it has never been withdrawn. Like all Gospel truth, it is to be preached to all the world, to all nations, to every creature and to the end of the age. The character of Divine love and compassion does not change, the Divine gentleness, mercy, love and power of Christ's healing touch is just the same today. Heb.13v8. Our churches should radiate the grace, love, mercy, sweetness and healing virtue of Christ to a world groaning under the weight of its sin and shame, and oppressed by Satan.

c. It has always been God's will to heal the sick.

It has always been the will of Divine love to save man from ALL the effects of sin, and to heal the body as well as the soul. It is not God's will to have Christ's body, that is, Christ's Church, sick and ill, Divine love wishes it to be whole. 3John.v2. God does not desire His children to be sick any more than human parents desire to see their children sick. Human parents desire to see their children well and God desires to see His children well. Christ's love is so wonderful that He died for His enemies and He wishes to save and heal all, particularly His dear friends who love, trust and worship Him. Rom.5v6-11. Sickness is an enemy of the perfect will of the Lovely God of love. His desire for His creation is wholeness and health and He will not be content or happy until this takes place. Heb.10v13. Is.41v13-16.

Lay aside any bitterness or resentment towards God and realise that the open arms of Divine love are waiting for you. God wants to meet with you now, not "sometime," in a far distant time in the future; God wants to prove His love for you now. The unchangeable purpose of God is health for our bodies as well as for our souls, and Jesus healed all the sick who came to Him to prove it. Christ came to do His Father's will, and healed all the sick who came to Him. John.4v34. 8v29. Heb.10v7-9. Mt.8v16,17. God's purpose towards the sick never varies, He still desires to heal them. James.1v17.

It is quite inconsistent to say that Jesus heals the soul, but no longer heals the body. Church history proves that where men and women have had a positive faith in God, and a real love for the sick, the sick have been healed in answer to their prayers. Divine love has never withdrawn any of its ministries towards the sick, sinful and needy. 1Cor.12v28,29. Christ's purpose was to bring salvation and healing to all who would receive it. Christ's desire to heal all is revealed to its full extent in Mt.8v16,17., on this occasion, as throughout His ministry, ALL were healed who came to Him for healing. Divine love still desires to fulfil Mt.8v17. to the full. God does not want us to bear our sicknesses when our dear Lord Jesus has already borne them. The ministry of Jesus fulfilled God's full purpose, and overcame human failure and lack of faith. Even in Nazareth, those who came to Jesus for healing were healed, the unbelief of the others kept them away. Mk.6v1-6.

d. Realise the wonderful character of God and the wonderful promises that He has given to you.

God's promises and character are the grounds of your faith; God is faithful to His promises. Great is His faithfulness, and even if we believe not, He still abides faithful. Lam.3v23. Ps.119v90. Is.49v7. 2Tim.2v13. 1Jn.1v9. James.1v17. God will fulfil His word if we meet the conditions. 2Cor.1v20. Have faith in the lovely God of love. Mt.21v18-22. Mk.11v22-26. Remember, it is faith in Jesus that brings God's power into operation. Mutual trust is the only ground for fellowship and friendship, and so the writer to the Hebrews states that without this trust and faith it is impossible to please God. Heb.11v5,6. Strangers had more respect for Jesus than His own people at Nazareth; those who touched Him in faith were healed. Mk.6v3,53-56. Lk.6v19. Jesus said on several occasions that healing was according to people's faith. When Jesus healed the two blind men in Mt.9v27-31., He said, "According to your faith be it unto you." When Jesus healed the centurion's servant in Mt.8v6-13., "Jesus said to the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour." When Jesus healed the Syrophenician's daughter in Mt.15v28., Jesus said to her, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." In Mk.10v52., Jesus said to the blind man, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way."

We do not build faith by just talking about faith, or by praying for faith. Paul tells us in Rom.10v17., "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Faith is increased by the truth in Jesus, by hearing God's word and by that Word revealing the beauty and glory of the wonderful character of God. Don't talk merely about faith, reveal to people the wonderful character of Jesus and the Father, and how faithful and trustworthy they are, and faith will grow in them. See how beautiful God is. See the glory of His promises. See how positively God desires your salvation and healing. The Bible knows nothing of the faith destroying, negative preaching that is preached by many today. See the great love and compassion of God meeting the needs of the multitudes. As you realise what God is like, then faith will grow in your heart. However, be quite sure that there is nothing in your heart that you need to put right with God, for sin is a great enemy of faith. In his epistle John tells us, "If our heart condemn us not, THEN we have confidence towards God". 1Jn.3v21. "Confidence," "parrhesia," means, fearless confidence, cheerful courage and boldness." See Heb.4v16., "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb.10v19,35. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. v35 "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." 1Jn.5v14. "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us."

The heart and life that has been cleansed in the blood of Jesus, and continues to walk in the light of His truth, will have a bold and positive victorious faith in God. Faith is not developed by psychology or autosuggestion; it grows by loving and walking with God, and by reading and rejoicing in His promises. Plant the seed of the word of God in your heart and obey it, and you will find that you will reap a harvest of faith and healing. Remember that a temporary delay in healing does not mean that God refuses to heal you, look steadfastly to Jesus. Heb.10v35-37. 12v1,2. Jesus, our great High Priest lives to meet our every need, and He has set special ministries in His Church to heal the sick through prayer and faith. James.5v13-20. Mk.16v15-20. 1Cor.12v5-11,28. The Scriptures inform us that in these last days we can expect a great manifestation of the saving and healing power of God through a renewed and empowered Church. Acts.2v16-21.

Jesus and the Father intensely desire to heal the sick. God's redeemed children can expect the children's bread

of healing from their heavenly Father. Mk.7v27. Jesus was so humble and gentle that He even washed the feet of His disciples, He is just as gracious today, His arms are open to receive and comfort you now. Jn.13v12-17. Mt.11v28-30. 20v20-28. He invites you to come to Him, He waits to meet your need. Do you feel like the women who came to the end of herself before she met Jesus? Mk.5v25-34. Lk.8v43-48. She tried all the doctors could do for Her, and they failed. Christ's ministry had inspired a positive faith in Him, she knew that she would be healed if she could but touch the hem of His garment, and the moment she touched it, His healing power and virtue instantly made her whole. Her positive attitude of faith in His Divine love and power brought her instant healing. She had no reservations, doubts or fears about His power and love, she had her point of contact with God settled, and God accepted it. Come to God with the same positive faith in His mercy, love and power and He will meet your need. The character of Jesus and the Father assures you that they earnestly desire to make you whole.

The Scriptures reveal that a person who has great faith in God can bring healing to another person. Mt.8v5-13. 9v1-8. N.B. v2. Acts.3v1-16. 14vv8-10. It is not long prayer, but believing prayer, that bring the request that we desire. We read of the various levels of faith in God, in the Bible. We read of temporary faith, Lk.8v13.; weak, or little faith, Mt.6v30. 8v26. 14v29-31. Lk.22v31,32.; and great faith, Mt.8v10.15v28. Rom.4v16-21. The person that comes to God for healing obviously manifests some faith in Him, but prevailing faith seeks God out until the answer comes. Faith is a living contact with Jesus and the Father. Faith is our capacity for God, and our confidence in God. Jesus said that the person who believes God ALWAYS receives what they ask. Lk.11v5-13. Christ said that if a person does not doubt in their heart, that is, there is no laugh of unbelief, and asks in positive faith, they shall have what they desire. Mk.11v22-24. Jn.14v12,13. 15v6,7.

2. BECAUSE OF CHRIST'S ATONEMENT THROUGH HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS.

a. The cross of Christ shows how earnestly God desires to heal us.

It is a wonderful fact that the lovely God of love died to redeem us from all the effects of sin. The cross of Jesus causes us to confidently expect healing from God. The God who gave His Son for us will also with Him freely give us all things. Rom.8v32. Mt.11v27. 21v22. 19v26. 1Cor.3v21-23. 3John.v2. Rev.21v5,7. The redeeming work of Jesus is the basis of every blessing the Christian receives. Christ's death was the foundation of creation, Rev.13v8. 3v14., of redemption and all the blessing of the New Covenant. Heb.8v7-13. 9v11-28. 10v19-39.

Healing of the body is linked with forgiveness of sins and a covenant relationship with God. Realise that Jesus redeemed us from all effects of the sin and fall of man, and that as a result we can be healed if we acknowledge Christ as our Saviour and Lord. Physical death and sickness entered the world through sin; the cure is salvation in Jesus. Rom.5v12-21. By coming to Christ in sincere repentance, we can know Him as Saviour and healer. The Old Testament. types and prophecies, and the New Testament fulfilment of those types and prophecies, prove that through Christ's atonement we can be saved and healed.

b. We are in the year of Jubilee.

In Lk.4v19. we are told that Jesus said that His delivering love and power in the age of grace was to be likened to "the acceptable year of the Lord," that is, the year of Jubilee. Every fiftieth year, or more precisely, on the tenth day of the seventh month of the 49th. year, on the great day of atonement, the sounding of the trumpets proclaimed the year of release and redemption. Every inheritance throughout Israel was restored to its former ancient family owner. All prisoners, captives and slaves were given their freedom, and all debts were absolved. The land, as on the Sabbath years, enjoyed a year of rest, and was not sowed or reaped, its natural produce was the property of all, to partake, as they needed it. The blessing of God gave an abundant harvest to make up for the deficiency of food due to the suspension of work in the seventh year. The sixth year yielded a miraculous supply sufficient to meet the need of three years. Lev.25v8-23. However, Lev.25v9., tells us that no blessing of the year of Jubilee was to be announced by the sounding of the trumpet, until the blood of the bullock slain as a sin offering was sprinkled upon the mercy seat on the day of atonement. Through the death and shed blood of Christ, the slaves and prisoners of sin, sickness and Satan can know complete release and deliverance, rejoicing in the forgiveness of their sin. What a wonderful Saviour and heavenly Father we have! Hallelujah. Through Christ's atoning death salvation and healing can be ours, so come to Jesus for salvation and healing and He will give it to you on the grounds of His atoning death. Throughout the Scriptures we see that it was the blood of the atonement that was the grounds of healing. In Lev.14v18,19., we read that atonement was made for the lepers cleansing, and we read in Numb.16v45-50., and 2Sam.24v10-25., of plagues being stayed because of the atonement. Christ's death is the basis of every blessing that we receive as Christians.

c. The uplifted type of the brazen serpent brought healing. how much more the uplifted Son of God.

The bronze serpent was a type of Christ's atonement, and the Israelites were healed through looking at it. Num.21v5-9. John.3v14-16. If forgiveness and healing came to all who looked at the brazen serpent, the type of Christ's atonement, then, surely, by looking to the fulfilment of that type, our dear Lord Jesus, we can expect greater blessings than the Israelites experienced through the type. Jn.3v14. 12v32. This proved true in the ministry of Jesus, He healed all that came to Him of every disease and sickness. Jesus is the Saviour who forgives ALL our iniquities and heals ALL our diseases. Ps.103v3.

In Exod.15v26., God promised to be "God the healer," and though it is a conditional promise, like all the promises of God, it reveals God as the healer of His people. Also similar promise is in Exod.23v25,26., where

God promises His obedient children, "I will take sickness from the midst of thee and the number of thy days I will fulfil," and again Ps.91v16., promises those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High long life. Ps.90v10. These promises are conditional upon the keeping of the moral law, and law of health laid down in the law. Some would say that we cannot claim these Old Testament promises, however, Jesus showed by His ministry that these promises are to be extended even to the Gentiles in this new dispensation. Many such lovely promises as Deut.33v25,27. Johua.1v5,9. Is.40v31. Ps.23 etc., given originally to Israel, comfort and encourage Christ's Church today; we find comfort and healing through such Old Testament promises as Ex.15v26. Ex.23v25. Ps.103v3. These promises are "Yea and Amen" in Christ, when we fulfil the conditions that God laid down with them. 2Cor.1v17-20.

d. The full fulfilment of Is.53v4. is healing for ALL, as Mt.8v16,17. proves.

We read in the Gospels that Jesus healed all the sick in the multitudes that came to Him. Mt.4v23-25. 9v35. to 10v1. 12v15. 14v34-36. Lk.6v17-19. The inspired exposition of Is.53v4. in Mt.8v16,17., informs us that Jesus healed all in the light of His atonement. Like the scapegoat, Christ has borne away the sins and sicknesses of all who trust in Him and His redeeming blood. Lev.16v22. It is foolish and unscriptural to say that healing is not in the atonement. Jesus died to deliver us from our sicknesses and pains as well as our sins and iniquities; He comes to give us peace of body as well as peace of soul.

The scholar Delitzsch, says of Is.53v4.: - "Freely but faithfully does the Gospel of Matthew translate this text, 'Himself took our infirmities and carried our sicknesses.' The help, which Jesus rendered to people with all kinds of bodily sickness, is taken in Matthew to be the fulfilment of what in Isaiah is prophesied of the Servant of Jehovah. The Hebrew verbs of the text, when used of sin, signify to assume a heavy burden and bear away the guilt of sin, as one's own; that is, to bear sin mediatorially in order to atone for it. But here, where not our sins, but our sicknesses and pains are the object, the mediatorial sense remains the same. It is not meant that the Servant of Jehovah merely entered into the fellowship of our sufferings, but that He took upon Himself the sufferings that we had to bear, and deserved to bear; and, therefore, He not only bore them away, but also in His own person endured them in order to discharge us from them. Now when one takes sufferings upon himself which another had to bear, and does this, not merely in fellowship with him, but in his stead, we call it Substitution." End of quote.

The truth is indisputable; Christ's substitutionary death extends to healing of the body as well as the soul. Delitzsch, one of the greatest Hebrew scholars of all time, states there is a substitutionary and "mediatorial sense" in the words of Is.53v4. In Is.53v4., the same two verbs, "nasa," borne, and "sabab," carried, which are used to tell us that Jesus "bore our sicknesses and carried our pains," are the identical verbs that are used in Is.53v11,12., to state that Jesus bore our sins and iniquities for us as our substitute. This proves that healing is one of the "all things" that are given to us through our Lord's atonement. Rom.8v32.

In Is.53v4., "surely," is "aken," which means, surely, indeed, certainly, and truly. It is worthy of note that the only "surely" in the redemptive chapter of Is.53, is before the promise of healing for the body, so we can "surely" expect healing for our bodies as well as for our souls. This "surely" is emphasised in Mt8v17., when Matthew says that the prophecy of Is.53v4. was "fulfilled", it means that it was "filled full," that is, the full extent of its promise was revealed. The full extent of the promise of Is.53v4., is healing for ALL who come to God for healing. The Christ of the cross is the perfect remedy for all our needs, both spiritual and physical. Through the shedding of Christ's blood, all who believe are redeemed from the curse of the law. Gal.3v13. We can claim healing on the grounds of Christ's atonement, just as we can claim salvation from our sins, it is part of our salvation; it is a privilege for all who believe in Jesus. Jesus said that most people will not believe that God wants to heal them, so He did miracles to confirm that it is God's will to heal those who come to Him for healing. Jn.4v48. God uses the power and revelation gifts of the Holy Spirit to increase faith and remove hindrances to healing. However, the following exceptions to healing must be noted. We will not be healed if our time has come to die; all the people Jesus healed are now dead, and Elisha died, even though his body was so full of God's power that his bones could raise the dead. 2Kings.13v14-21. Divine healing does not give us immortality. We must also remember that Paul tells us that there can be Divine sickness and death as well as Divine healing, through failure to examine our lives and put things right with God. 1Cor.11v28-30. If we neglect our bodies and health, we may also have to reap the consequences until we learn better. Phil.2v24-30. 4v18,19.

When the angels came to the shepherds, they brought the best tidings possible, "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord". Lk.2v10,11. The angelic choirs told of the intense desire of God to bring peace to mankind because of His goodwill and love. They proclaimed the greatest event of all history, God manifested in flesh to save mankind. When Jesus came to show His goodwill and to give His peace and salvation, what did He do? The gospels reveal that Jesus saved and healed all who came to Him in faith, confessing their need, He showed the wonderful goodwill of God, we never read of one needy person being refused, the only stipulation that Jesus made was that people came to Him in repentance and faith.

e. "Today is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." Lk.4v21.

When Jesus preached the sermon at Nazareth in Lk.4., His message proclaimed the perfect benevolence and goodwill of God. He said, in effect, "Today, you can prove the truth of Is.61v1,2. and 58v6., you can prove the goodness of God in saving and healing power." TODAY He tells YOU that there is deliverance for all the captives

because of His atonement. When Jesus read these Scriptures in the synagogue at Nazareth, He showed the will of God in relation to deliverance from sin and sickness. Christ came to preach salvation, to heal the sick and broken hearted, to deliver Satan's captives, and set mankind at liberty. Christ came to bring salvation, health, and happiness, He could say, "This day, is the Scriptures filled full in your ears, through my ministry". Jesus showed God's will for them and for us. He explained and demonstrated God's strong desire to bless them. The tragedy was that they did not receive the promised blessings offered to them by Jesus, because of their prejudice, contemptuous familiarity, unspiritual carnal outlook, and rank unbelief, and we can miss enjoying the promises of God and the blessings of Christ by the same unbelief, ignorance, and unspiritual carnality. Mk.6v1-6.

f. There is Divine healing in the invocation of God's Covenant Names.

When the Lord made His covenant with Israel, He promised them healing by invocation of His covenant Name of Yahweh. The original pronunciation of the Divine Name has been kept secret by the Jews, however, Yahweh is to be preferred to Jehovah, as the first part of the Divine name is included in the well known exclamation of praise "Hallelu-Yah," Praise ye Yah. The covenant and redemptive name of Yahweh was the basis of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. The covenant names of Yahweh were given to Israel, and they witness to the glories of God, and His presence, and supply to Israel. The redemptive names of Yahweh were all revealed in the Jesus. When Yahweh tabernacled in human flesh as Jesus, He was Yahweh the Saviour and healer. Let us consider the redemptive names of Yahweh and see how they apply to our Lord.

Yahweh-Jireh. "Yahweh will provide." Gen.22v14. John.1v29. Acts.20v28. Rom.8v32.

Yahweh-Elohim. "Yahweh our God." Deut.6v4.

Yahweh-Adonai. "Yahweh our sovereign Lord." Gen.15v2,8. etc.

Yahweh-Nissi. "Yahweh is my banner." Ex.17v15. Jn.15v5. Mt.28v18-20. Mk.16v15-20.

Yahweh-Ropheka. "Yahweh that healeth thee." Ex.15v26. Cf. Acts.3v16 4v10 etc.

Yahweh-Mekaddishkim. "Yahweh who sanctifies you." Ex.31v13. 1Cor.1v2. 1Pet.1v2.

Yahweh-Shalom. "Yahweh is peace." Judg.6v24.cf.Jn.14v1,27. Acts.10v36. Phil.4v7.

Yahweh-Tsabaoth. "Yahweh of hosts." 1Sam.1v3. etc. See Is.6v3,5. with John.12v37-41. N.B. v41 Is.45v21-23. with Rom.14v9-12. Phil.2v10,11. Mt.28v18-20. Phil.2v6.

Yahweh-Elyon. "Yahweh Most High." Ps.7v17. Heb1v3. 7v1 Jude.v24,25. Lk.8v28. Acts.16v17. Rev.5v11-13. Jn.13v13. 20v28. 1v1. Jn.1v2. Heb.1v8. Rev.1v8,11. 22v13.

Yahweh-Rohi or Ra-ah. "Yahweh my shepherd." Ps.23v1. Jn.10v11,14. Heb.13v20. 1Pet.2v25. 5v4.

Yahweh-Shammah. "Yahweh is there." Ez.48v35. Mt.18v19,20. Rev.21v3,4.

David rejoiced that he had claimed and proved Yahweh's covenant Name, and through calling upon it in his own life threatening experiences, had added new concepts of the Divine Name through experiencing Divine deliverances. David called upon Yahweh to be his Rock, Fortress, Saviour, Deliverer, Shield, Refuge, and High Tower. David, like many others, had proved the power and efficacy of the invocation of the Divine Name in his own experience and trials. This gave him an assurance in trial, and the credentials to invoke these names for others. 2Sam.21v1-4,14-22. Ps.18.

Yahweh-Tsidkenu. Jesus is "Yahweh our righteousness," He brings to us all the blessings of salvation. Jer.23v5,6. 33v15,16. Rom.5v18. 10v3,4. 1Cor.1v30,31. 2Pet.1v1. All the redemptive names of Yahweh are available to us through Christ's atonement. **Jesus is Yahweh-Ropheka, Yahweh that healeth thee, because He died for us.** Ex.15v26. In 1Cor.10v1-4., and elsewhere, the deliverance from Egypt is used as a type of salvation from the power of Satan and sin, in Jesus we have the fullness of the type. The Israelites had the name Yahweh given to them as the sign of their covenant relationship and authority, we have the name of Jesus, that is, "Yahweh the Saviour," given to us on a covenant relationship. Through the name of Jesus, Yahweh the Saviour, we can ask anything of God the Father and receive it. Oh, the power of the name of Jesus, and what tremendous blessings and great deliverances He brings us. Jn.14v13. 16v23. 1Jn.5v14.

g. The ministry of Jesus and the early Church was not limited to "healing meetings."

Healings took place almost everywhere and at any time; in street, home, Temple, synagogue, and countryside. Indeed most of Christ's ministry to the sick took place in the open air, His Divine love met a need wherever He found it and He desires to meet our need today. Jesus came to redeem, but He proved His purpose to redeem mankind from all the effects of the fall through the healing of the sick. The tragedy of human physical suffering was met by Divine love, He healed all that came to Him, He met both spiritual and physical needs. Through His redeeming blood we can be made whole in body, soul and spirit. The cross of the Lord Jesus is the basis of the healing of our body as well as the healing of our soul. We can confidently expect healing from the Lord Jesus on the basis of His atonement.

3. BECAUSE SICKNESS IS AN EVIL THING.

Jesus earnestly desires to heal us, because sickness is an evil thing. It is sometimes said to have produced good results in the character of some children of God, however, fighting any kind of evil thing, like resisting Satan, develops spiritual muscles, but it does not alter the fact that sickness is an evil thing, and some diseases are particularly evil.

A. Sickness is an enemy of God's perfect will of wholeness.

Wholeness of body, soul and spirit is the will of Divine love. 1Thes.5v23. 3Jn.v2. This is proved by the following facts.

a. The original perfection of God's creation shows God's will for wholeness. the fall of angels and men made creation subject to "vanity" and unreality. In Rom.8v20., "vanity," is "mataiotes," from "mataios," empty, vain; creation no longer fulfils its original design, and is at present in a temporary unreal and depraved condition. "Mataiotes only occurs in two other places in the New Testament, it is used in Eph.4v17., to describe the vain depraved attitude of mind of the unconverted Gentiles; and in 2Pet.2v18., of the "great swelling words of vanity" of morally depraved false teachers. Sin and sickness have made the whole creation groan, it waits in hope for the manifestation of the sons of God. Rom8v18-23. Wholeness will be restored to creation at Christ's return, sickness will be permanently banished from God's eternal kingdom. Is.11v1-10. 65v17-25. Rev.21v4. 22v3.

b. God laid down laws of health in His law to preserve health. His desire is that man should be whole. He gave laws of rest, food, hygiene, sanitation and quarantine as well as the moral law. Prov.4v20-22. Ex.15v26.

c. The human body reveals God's perfect will of health, it is self healing.

d. There is perfect health in heaven, and Jesus told us to pray that His kingdom would come upon earth.

e. Christ revealed God's will for good health by healing all that came to Him, and the early Church did likewise. Jesus said, Jn.20v21., "as my Father has sent me, even so I send you". cf. Jn.17v18. Today is God's day of salvation and healing.

f. The healing of sickness glorifies God, not sickness. It is the healing of sickness shows His perfectly loving will and character. Mk.2v12. Mt.15v31. Jn.11v4,40,45. The glory of God is His complete dedication and sacrificial love for His creation.

g. Christ's cross shows us that God's will for us is healing. Mt.53v4. with Mt.8v16,17. It is God's will to save us from sin and all the effects of sin, and to give us His good gifts and good things. Mt.7v11. Lk.11v13. We can clearly see that wholeness is the will and strong desire of the God of love for His creation; sickness and death are enemies of His perfect will. 1Cor.15v26.

B. Sickness is a captivity and bondage.

God says sickness is an oppression of Satan, Jesus came to destroy Satan's evil works and set his captives gloriously free. Acts.10v38. Jn.8v36. 1Jn.3v8. Lk.4v17-21. Job suffered a captivity of sickness at the hands of Satan, and after Job's faith was tested, God delivered him and healed him. A delay in healing brought Job spiritual enrichment of character, and increase in faith. Job.2v7-13. 42v10. Christ healed a woman who had suffered the bondage of sickness from Satan for 18 years, and made it quite clear to the hypocritical religious leaders of His day, that it was God's will to release people from the bondage of their sickness. Lk.13v10-17. N.B. v16. Jesus is just the same today; He will set you free from bondage to sin and sickness.

C. Sickness is a curse and chastening-rod of the law.

Sickness is spoken of as a curse and chastisement on those who break the law. Deut.28v15-29. 45-48. 58-68. Those who live in sin can expect its evil fruits; breaking God's health and moral laws has caused much of the sickness in the world today. The way of the transgressor is hard. Prov.13v2,15. What a person sows they must surely reap. Gal.7v7,8. Jesus has redeemed us from the curse of the law, and through repentance and faith in Him, we can be saved and healed. Gal.3v13,14. God may allow sickness to chasten sinful believers if they persist in sin, however, God's perfect will is to redeem us all from the curse of the law, and for this cause Christ died for us, and through His death we can enjoy healing of soul and body. 1Cor.11v29-32.

4. THE CAUSES OF SICKNESS.

A. The basic cause of sickness is the sin of Adam.

Because of the sin of Adam, we no longer have access to the tree of life, which kept the body in perfect health. Gen.2v9,16,17. 3v1-24. Ez.47v7-12. Rev.22v2. All sickness goes back to Adam's sin as the basic cause, it brought sorrow, sickness and death into the world. Rom.5v12-14. Human heredity passes on more and more physical weakness, and is in itself a major cause of sickness, so sickness may not be due to a person's own sin but to heredity.

B. Sickness can be due to a person's own sin.

Sin may be the cause of a person's sickness, but it is not necessarily so, as James.5v15. tells us, "IF he hath committed sins they shall be forgiven him". Children die of sickness before they have sinned, and some of God's saints have suffered sickness and physical infirmity, even though their lives were blameless. Job.2v3. Lk.1v6,7. Leaving these considerations aside we can certainly say that sin certainly effects the mind and body, things like bad temper and bitterness of spirit can cause severe sickness. 1Pet.4v1-5. Breaking God's moral law will bring disease. Deut.28v15,58-61. Mk.2v5-11. Bad living will certainly bring its evil reward. The doctors tell us that there are literally millions of people who become ill because they smoke tobacco, most of them with heart disease, and lead immoral lives. Millions of people have died because they smoke tobacco, most of them with heart disease, but about half of this number die from cancer of the lung, throat and other organs. It pays to live a clean life for God. If a sick person has sin in their life, they should repent of it and come to Christ in humility and contrition for cleansing and healing.

Sins like envy, greed and bitterness, can be just as devastating to the health as the drunkenness, smoking, and immorality. Sins of the spirit are sometimes more devastating and more difficult to deal with than the sins of the flesh. Mt.21v28-32. The most dangerous sin of all is rebellion against God; this can bring sickness, or even death. Miriam. Numb.12v1-13. Asa. 2Chron.16v1-14.; Ananias and Sapphira. Acts.5v1-11.; The Corinthians. 1Cor.11v30.. See Ps.107v17. The strong desire of God is to deliver us from our sins and sickness, by bringing us into sweet communion with Himself.

C. Sickness can be due to Satan. Acts.10v38. John.10v10.

The Scriptures state that evil spirits can be a cause of some sickness, infirmity, deafness, blindness, dumbness, madness and epilepsy. Mt.4v23,24. 8v28-34. 9v32-34. 12v22-24. 15v21-28. 17v14-21. with Mk.9v25. Lk.4v31-36. But here we need to give a definite warning; to attribute every sickness to the Devil and demons is both unscriptural and unbalanced. Jesus Himself only considered some sickness to be caused by demons, for as we see in Mt.4v23,24. and elsewhere, ordinary sickness is clearly distinguished from demon possession. Sickness can have a natural cause, and is seldom due to demon possession or oppression. Demons can oppress and afflict people with sickness without possessing them, and sometimes, like Job, even God's children may sometimes suffer physical trials of faith because of their activities. Job.2v4-7. Lk.13v11-16. 1Cor.5v5. Do not ascribe everything you suffer to demons or Satan, your sickness will usually have a perfectly natural cause. Evil spirits have other activities besides causing sickness, and disease of the soul is their main aim and their most dangerous work. Mt.4v1-12. 2Cor.4v4. Demons manifest themselves as unclean spirits, lying spirits, seducing spirits, familiar spirits and as spirits of infirmity that cause physical illness. Mk.1v23,24. 2Chron.18v22. 1Tim.4v1-3. Lev.19v31. 20v6. Deut.18v12.

N.B. It is an abomination to God, to say that a person has a demon when they do not have one.

Demon possession is rare even among worldly people, for God's decrees and kindness and care extend even to the worldling, "The Highest: is kind to the unthankful and to the evil." Lk.6v35. Mt.5v45. God puts an iron hand of restraint upon the powers of darkness and even protects the worldling from the malice of Satan and his angels. 2Thes.2v7. Acts.14v15-17. 17v27,28.

Some people who are praying for the sick say a person has a demon, just to cover up their ignorance of a true cause. This kind of thing can cause real agony of mind in a person who is suffering from some quite natural cause of sickness and is neither demon possessed or oppressed. Particular care has to be taken with people who may be nervous, run down, unable to cope with life, or suffering from some mental illness due to brain damage or weakness of the body. The Bible clearly distinguishes between "lunatic" and those "possessed with devils". Mt.4v23,24. All epilepsy, mental illness, or breakdown is not due to demon possession or demon oppression. A Christian praying for the sick has to be spiritually equipped to discern whether a person is suffering sickness as a result of demon possession, demon oppression, or natural illness.

We must distinguish between sickness, which is the result of oppression from outside of the body, and demon possession. The best Christian may suffer sickness as a result of an attack of demon oppression. Job.2v4-7. To hurt people by saying that they have a demon when they have no such thing, is very wrong, and for this kind of thing we shall have to answer to God. If a Christian has real power with God, it will cause the demons to manifest themselves if they are in a person. Very often a person praying for a demon possessed person, or a demon-oppressed person, will be able to deal with the demon without anybody else knowing it. The revelation of the demon influence and the removal of that demon influence, can take place through silent prayer in the heart of the person praying for the sick, without anybody knowing it, or anybody being hurt or disturbed. At other times when demons openly manifest themselves in public, they have to be dealt with openly. Christ never demanded faith from people who were mentally ill, or who were out of their senses because of the oppression or possession of demons.

Some people place an invalid emphasis on demons when dealing with sickness, we should be positive and talk about Christ. If we walk with Christ, God will give us the power to discern and deal with demons that are causing sickness and opposing the work of God. However, as Mk.9v14-18., makes clear, dealing with some evil spirits needs real faith and much prayer. whatever you do don't suffer from "demonitis," don't be looking for demons in everything, or blame everything on demons. There can be other causes of sickness, and very often sickness can be due to our own actions, which brings us to our next point.

D. Sickness can be due to neglect, abuse, or overloading of the body.

God's law was very practical; it gave directions on rest, correct diet, hygiene, sanitation, quarantine, as well as moral and ceremonial law. If we ignore God's laws of health we can expect to be ill. God will not allow us to overload our bodies, even in His service, without reaping the consequences, as Epaphroditus found out, overwork will bring ill health. Phil.2v25-30. 1Cor.6v13-20. Ps.107v8-15. ps.127v2. God expects us to be practical, wise, and sensible. Some people do not need healing; they need to exercise common sense in their activities, work, rest, diet and habits. Lack of sleep, food, rest, and too much strain placed upon the body by fasting, work, or any other activity, will cause us to reap a harvest of sickness. We have to realise our physical limitations. Many good Christian men and women have made themselves ill by overloading their bodies in the work of God, and as a result have had to have long periods of recuperation when they could do little for God. For example, the Bible tells us "to fast and pray", not, "to fast and work". Excessive fasting and long fasts are definitely out for working people and busy ministers of the Gospel. Semi-fasting as in Daniel.10v1,2., is the rule for busy people. Many other people eat far more than is good for them, and do not eat the foods that are nutritious, and as a result are ill.

Many people are ill because of the neglect of others; nervous disorders can be due to lack of companionship or creative activity. They can also be due to a person not being able to cope with life and its difficult circumstances and emotional conflicts. In such cases a person may need not only healing but also help and Christian love demonstrated in a practical way. Let such people particularly remember the invitation of our Lord Jesus, "Come unto me and I will give you rest". Mt.11v28.

E. Sickness can be due to the natural ageing of the body.

This follows on very well from the last point, for if a person neglects or abuses their body in their youth, they will find sickness coming upon them as a result of this as they grow older. The natural ageing processes of the body are the cause of much illness, particularly if there has been sinful indulgence in the form of smoking, drinking, surfeiting, and immorality, or the body has been weakened by overwork or neglect. As we get older we have to place less of a load upon our bodies, or we can expect to be sick. Divine healing does not restore the vitality of youth. The aged need more rest, and to be stayed upon Jehovah to have perfect peace and rest of soul to meet life's bereavements, and the weakness and problems of old age. Ps.90v10-12. Ageing causes the death of all people, organs of the body cease to function because they are worn out and the person dies. Until the kingdom of God comes upon earth and the ages of ages begin, it is appointed that men die. Heb.9v27.

We cannot expect Divine healing to make us young, or stop us from dying when our time has come to die, but we can still expect God to heal us and restore our health even in our later years. Not many have the physical vigour and strength in old age that Moses and Caleb enjoyed, but few have had the walk with God that these men enjoyed, and it was, without doubt, their deep communion with God and their obedience to His law that kept them physically strong in old age. Deut.34v7. Joshua.14v7-15. N.B.v10,11. However, as Ps.90v10. makes clear, this is not the lot of all, it states that the infirmity of old age can be a trial even to the child of God. Moses writes, "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." (KJV) He lived until he was 120 so he knew what he was talking about. Very often death can bring a sweet release from pain and sickness. 2Cor.5v1-10. 2Tim.4v6-8. Philemon.v9. The limitations even of a healthy youthful body are indeed very great, and cause us to groan and long for our heavenly glorified body, a body like unto that of our glorious Lord Jesus. Phil.3v20,21.

F. Sickness can be due to bacteria and viral infections, and industrial poisoning.

The body can be invaded by viruses and bacteria and poisons or chemicals, these can cause temporary or permanent ill-health, and even death. Working in certain industries results in many people suffering from the industrial disease associated with that industry. God laid down in His law, directions on quarantine, sterilisation and hygiene, to protect His people from infectious disease due to virus and bacteria. His desire was that His people should not only be healed from their diseases, but that they should avoid becoming ill by keeping the sound medical measures laid down in His law. God directs us to use preventative medicine, in the form of adequate rest, correct diet, sterilisation, hygiene, quarantine, and by having a heart full of the love and joy of the Lord. However, if we do become sick, our dear Lord Jesus can heal our every disease and sickness.

G. Sickness can be due to injury, accident, war, or the evil actions of others.

We are in a world full of imperfect and sinful men and women, and accidents can happen through folly, ignorance, wrong judgement or natural disaster, and people receive injuries that are fatal or produce permanent disability or sickness. War is another frightful enemy of health and well-being; millions suffer today because of this evil thing that comes out of the perversity of the human will. James.4v1,2. How wonderful to read of cases like that of the person in **Kathryn Kulman's marvellous book, "I Believe in Miracles". (Publishers, Oliphants,)** He was suffering and dying from severe and extensive war injuries, but he was instantly healed by the Lord Jesus in one of Kathryn Kulman's meetings. **If you want a real blessing get this book, it tells over twenty other such miracles, these were chosen because they were medically proven and had been proved by the test of time as well.**

There is not only injury of body but there is also injury of soul and spirit, a person can be so tried by the evil actions and words of others, that it makes them sick and ill, and can even result in organic disease. We read in the Hebrew of Ps.69v20., that Jesus Himself was made physically ill by the vicious opposition and reproaches

of evil men. v20 "Insults and reproach have broken my heart; **I am full of heaviness and I am distressingly sick.** I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none." AMP. Other translations follow the NASU translation of Ps.69v20., "Reproach has broken my heart and I am so sick. And I looked for sympathy, but there was none, And for comforters, but I found none."

If the evil attitudes of others have made you ill, our dear Lord Jesus can make you whole and give you His peace, He has personally experienced horrendous persecution, and He really understands and sympathises with you. Sometimes Christians have to suffer this kind of persecution for their Lord's sake. Paul knew what it was to bear in his body the injuries received through serving his Lord. Gal.6v17. He had suffered persecution, beatings, stoning, and vicious opposition for his Lord, and he died a martyr's death for Christ. 2Cor.11v23-33. 2Tim.4v6. Torture and martyrdom has been the lot of multitudes of Christians throughout Church history, and it is the lot of many Christians today. When we suffer physically as a result of persecution for Christ's sake, we can and should rejoice. Mt.5v11,12. Acts.5v40-42. 13v50-52. As Peter, Paul, George Fox and others have proved, Christ can deliver us from the hatred of men, or heal us after that hatred has caused severe injury. Acts.12v1-23. Compare v2 with v11. Our dear Lord Jesus suffered torture and death for us, it is the privilege of Christians to suffer for their Lord's sake, as well as to minister to the needy the healing power and love of Christ. Rom.8v17. 2Tim.2v9-12. 1Pet.2v18-25. 3v14-18. Rev.2v10.

5. THE MEANS BY WHICH GOD HEALS A PERSON.

Having shown that the causes of sickness spring out of the fall of man, and that it is the intense desire of God to save, heal, and to deliver us from all the effects of the fall, we will now briefly consider the means by which Christ heals a person. God communicates His healing power in various ways and so we need to be led by Him when we minister to the sick. Jesus healed the sick in various ways, He usually laid His hands upon the sick, but sometimes He said a word of commanding faith, or directed a person to perform a certain act. We need to be led of the Spirit like our Lord. Above all, remember that Divine healing is not achieved by employing spiritual techniques, formulas, or methods; it is achieved by a person meeting with God and partaking of His life. The following are the means by which the healing power of God can be received.

A. Healing from God can be received through personal prayer.

Through their own prayer of personal faith, directly from the Lord Jesus. Is.38v1-22. Jn.14v11-15. 15v4-14.

B. Healing from God can be received by the prayers of others.

This is usually accompanied by the laying on of hands. Healing can take place through the prayers of Spirit-filled, believers, who are powerfully filled with the Holy Spirit. Mk.16v17,18. However, in the Church it is usually the responsibility of the local elders, who should pray for the sick after anointing them with oil. James.5v14-20. The ministry of apostles, prophets, teachers and evangelists can also convey a gift of healing. Those who pray for the sick need to be powerfully filled with the Holy Spirit when they are praying for the sick. Acts.6v8. The Lord Jesus was so filled with heavenly healing power, that a touch from Him or His garments was all that was necessary for the healing of the sick on many occasions. Mt.9v29,30. 14v35,36. Lk.8v43-48.

C. Healing from God can be received by prayer cloths. Acts.19v11,12.

This was an unusual means, these were 'special miracles', that demanded living faith, real spiritual power and great compassion in the apostle Paul, and heart preparation in the sick person or their friends and relatives. The sending of prayer cloths is nothing more than a spiritual gimmick, if the person who prays over them has no real spiritual power and acts without God's direction. In Acts19v11,12., "special miracles" were performed to meet special needs and they were doubtless directed by special revelation. As Elisha's staff was no good in the hands of an insincere, powerless, and backslidden Gehazi; so imitations of Paul's prayer cloths will do little or no good unless the person sending them is full of the power of God and directed of God, and the person receiving the cloth is seeking God with their whole heart. 2Kings.4v25-37. N.B. v26,31. The great woman of Shunam had no confidence in Gehazi holding Elisha's staff, v29,30., she wanted and demanded the real thing, a man in touch with God, manifesting all the gifts of the Spirit, not a pretender, and the sick have the right to demand the same.

D. Healing from God can be received by the performance of a Holy Spirit directed action.

Naaman was healed by dipping in Jordan seven times at the command of God through His servant Elisha. 2Kings.5v9-27. The Israelites were healed by looking to the brazen serpent. Numb.21v5-9. The blind man was healed by washing the clay from his eyes in the pool of Siloam. Jn.v1-15. The ten lepers were healed as they went to the priests in obedience to the command of Christ. Lk.17v12-19. The deaf man with an impediment in his speech was also healed in an unusual way. Mk.7v32-37. God directed Jesus to heal in various ways, so we need to be prepared to let God guide us in the same way.

E. Healing from God can be received through a spoken word of commanding faith.

A word of commanding faith can bring healing to those who are sick, whether they are present or absent. It is a word of commanding faith based on the revelation of God's word, and perhaps on spiritual revelation by the gifts of the Holy Spirit as well. Cf. Mt.8v8. Jn.11v41-44. Christ spoke with a gentle voice to the widow of Nain's son and the daughter of Jairus, and with a loud voice to Lazarus, but the effect was exactly the same. A great voice is no indication of spiritual power; it is the results of our prayers that reveal our spiritual authority and power with God. Meeting with the very sick or a chronic invalid soon shatters any false pretence of spiritual power. To decree things in the name of Jesus, or to use the name of Jesus as a formula, without having any

communion with God, or any God-given power and authority will produce little or no results. We have to abide in Christ to have results and fruit that remains. Jn. 15v7,8,16.

CHAPTER 2. HOW TO COME TO GOD FOR HEALING.

We will consider the things that open the soul to God and prepare a person for healing. Remember, it is not a spiritual technique, it is meeting with Christ that brings healing, however, there are certain attitudes of heart that will bring us to a place where we can receive healing. While praying groups in a church, or a man in touch with God can bring the healing power of God upon those who are in need, it is coming to Christ that brings health of soul and body to the seeker. I want to consider the things that will cause us to receive and keep our healing from Christ.

1. Come to God in genuine repentance and contrition.

Confess to God any sin that needs cleansing, put anything right that needs to be put right. Let God search and reveal your heart. Accept Christ as your Saviour, if you do not know Him as Saviour. Healing of the soul is the most important thing that can happen to a person. It is true that God may sometimes heal an unbeliever just to appeal to them to accept Christ, however, generally speaking, a person who refuses to be saved by repenting of their sin and accepting Christ, can expect little from God. If you are not saved, get saved, and you can expect the children's bread of healing of the body. Healing for sin first, then healing of the body, is God's order of priorities. Make sure that your heart is clean, "for if our heart condemn us not, THEN, have we confidence, i.e. faith, towards God". 1Jn.3v21. Many Christians are so conformed to this world that they cannot believe God's word and receive healing. Rom.12v1,2. Have you shed any tears for your sins, or are you still in love with them and tied to them, remember Christians are intended to be saints, i.e. "holy ones", not "worldly ones".

Repentance for sin is essential; it is not sufficient to "only believe". John the Baptist, Christ and His apostles preached that repentance is the pre-requisite of a person receiving the blessing of God through faith in Christ. Mk.1v15. Lk.3v7,8. 13v3,5. Acts.3v19. 11v18. 17v30. 20v21. Repentance is a pre-requisite of faith, because sin and pride destroys faith. Heb.6v1. Jn.5v41,42,44. 12v42,43. Repentance is the soil of faith, you do not have to pump faith into a person who has put their life right with God, faith is born through a genuine repentance, and it is nourished through communion with God and His saints, and through meditation on God's word and promises. Faith in God carries with it the demands of obedience to God. Rom.16v26. Heb.11v6,8. Very often it is the poor who have the greatest faith and the most obedient lives, James.2v5., faith is always destroyed by pride, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only"? John the Baptist's and Christ's preaching of repentance, prepared peoples hearts for salvation and healing from Christ. John Baptist did no miracles, but he prepared the way for Christ's ministry and miracles by preaching repentance and so caused many to repent of their sins Mk.1v5.

If you have been to Spiritualist mediums for help, realise that this is wrong and ask God to forgive and cleanse you, and He will meet with you. God is gracious to those who have in ignorance sought healing from Spiritualist mediums, but those who stubbornly refuse to obey God's word on this issue can expect real trouble. God strictly forbade people to have any dealings with those who are Spiritualist mediums, as the following Scriptures show. Lev.19v31. 20v6. Deut.18v10,11. Is.8v19,20. 1Chron.10v13,14. 2Kings.21v6. Acts.16v16-18. 19v19. 2Thes.2v9-12. 1Tim.4v1-3. 1Jn.4v1-3. Don't go to Satan and evil spirits for healing; come to the lovely God of love, who really has your interests at heart. 1Cor.10v20,21.

Let God search your heart, repent of any sin, lack of love, resentment, suspicion, bitterness and hate, these will breed disease and delay your healing. Let the love of God replace the sin and bitterness in your heart, and come in genuine repentance to Christ for healing. Come to Christ in consecration, determined to obey God, and you will receive the answer to your prayer, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, BECAUSE we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight". 1John.3v22. cf. v23,24.

2. Come to God after diligent spiritual preparation.

Come for prayer after much reading of faith-inspiring Scriptures and real love and worship of God. Read God's will for you in His word. Read God's word for faith. It is difficult to have faith if you do not have a knowledge of the promises in God's Word, that God has made to heal you. Realise that no Bible promise of healing has been suspended. Spend much time in loving and worshipping God, He is worthy of your love and praise, He pours His goodness on the just and unjust alike in natural blessings. Mt.5v45. The heart that takes time to love and worship God will grow strong in faith and love, and health in the spirit will result in health in the body. John.4v21-24. We need to remember that love, faith and obedience are strongly related; love and serve Jesus and faith will automatically grow strong and healthy. 2Pet.1v2-11 N.B.v5,10.

3. Come to God with positive faith.

a. Time and time again Christ said to people that their faith had made them whole.

The faith of people brought them to Christ for healing, and then His healing power made them whole. It is not faith that heals, it is faith that brings a person to Christ, it is the power of Christ that heals, in response to a person's faith in Him. A little faith in Christ will bring deliverance, but no matter how much faith a person has in a wrong object of faith, God will not heal them. The multitudes who were healed by Christ said, "I know that if He but touches me, or I touch Him, I shall be healed." They had the certainty of a positive faith in Christ, not

the uncertainty of a faithless hope. cf. Mk.5v25-34. N.B.v28. 6v56.

If you said to your mother, "I can't trust you to keep your word, I have no faith in you," she would be very upset if she was faithful and trustworthy. Christ is absolutely faithful and trustworthy; He is absolutely worthy of positive faith. Positive faith declares that God is not only able to heal, but that He is love and is willing to heal, and that He is faithful and will fulfil His promise. Positive faith in God declares, "that we are convinced that we HAVE, what we do not see". Heb.11v1. Moffat. Be absolutely positive in your faith towards God, He is perfectly kind and loving, and absolutely trustworthy. Let your tensions, fears and worries go and relax in the presence of God and love Him with all your heart. If you are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, rejoice in your relationship with God; rejoice in the wonderful grace, love and truth of God and the reliability of His promises. Rejoice that Christ is the Lord and Master of sickness, sin and Satan.

b. Give glory and praise to God in anticipation of the sure fulfilment of His promise.

Come to God with great love and faith, thanking Him for His past blessings and His sure promises to you. Rejoice in His presence, dwell upon His beauty and love, and let your faith and love reach out with all your being to the lovely God of love. Realise the power of confession of the name of Jesus in positive faith. Jn.14v12-14. 16v23,24. Realise and confess the power of the cleansing blood of Christ. Heb.9v24-26. 10v19,20. Realise that our great High Priest has all power and authority; He ever lives to make to make intercession for you and lives to meet your every need. Heb.4v14-16. 7v24 to 8v1. Realise and confess the power of the promises of God confessed in faith. The power of the promises when claimed in the name of Jesus in positive faith are irresistible, for Christ has all power to meet every need, His ability to help you is limitless. Mt.28v18-20. Heb.13v8. Christ never turned a needy one away, sometimes there was a delay, but we never read of a denial. He has given His Church authority to carry on His great work. No one questions the desire of the medical profession to heal the sick; Jesus Christ our great physician is infinitely more compassionate.

c. Come to God in faith, not unbelieving hope.

Don't come to Christ saying, "I don't expect anything, I am just hoping that there is something in it". This is hope not faith. Don't talk unbelief; confess only what the Scriptures say. Don't contradict the Scriptures with your confession and talk, it is your confession and talk that demonstrates and decides the reality of your faith. Don't talk failure, sickness and fear, talk of and confess your faith in Christ. It is our confession that brings salvation and healing to us. Rom.10v9. If you talk of fear, failure and sickness you will never know deliverance, but talk faith in Christ and your faith will grow and deliverance will be sure. If the Scriptures and your feelings and symptoms disagree, doubt your feelings and symptoms, not the Scriptures. Christ's promises are "Yea and Amen", not, "Yes and No", or "Sometimes". Let your words confess God's confession. Don't think sickness, fear and doubt, think and confess faith in God's promises. All things are possible to you. Mk.9v23. Are you imprisoned by your thinking? "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind", and don't be conformed to this world or you will be unable to believe God's word. Rom.12v1,2. Don't let your life and confession be worldly and unbelieving, God hastens to perform His Word to those who are faithful and believing. Jer.1v12. He is faithful that gives the promises, so we can hold the confession of our faith without wavering. Heb.10v23,35,36. Don't look at your sickness, unworthiness, and fear, look to your fairest Lord Jesus, who waits to meet your every need. Realise that Christ still says "come unto me and I will give you rest", if you are weary and heavy-laden with sin and sickness, come to Christ in positive faith and He will give you rest. Mt.11v28-30.

4. Come to God believing in the victory of faith in God over circumstances and sickness.

Believe in what God says even if you have no visible evidence of answered prayer, for "Faith means that we are convinced that we have what we do not see". Heb.11v1. Moffat. Praise through victory. Heb.13v15. Ps.103v1. Mk.11v22-24. Praise is believing prayer. Ps.50v14,15. Doubt your doubts and the Father of lies, Satan, and believe the word of God. When Abraham was strengthened in faith he gave glory to God, you do the same. Rom.4v20. Give God the glory for what He has done for you and for what He is going to do for you, and don't give the glory to anybody else. Ps.34v1-22. N.B.v1-4. 1Cor.1v29-31. God IS faithful, not God WAS faithful, so believe God if nobody else does, and if nobody else is healed. The person who comes to God must believe that HE IS, and that HE IS a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Heb.11v6. **Though we cannot see God we believe in Him, and believe His Word when circumstances and sight seem to deny it.** John.20v27-29. 2Cor.4v18. 5v7. Believe God for great things then you will see Him act. You will know God's ways before you see His acts, if you live close to Him and trust Him. Ps.103v7. Jn.11v40-44. Moses endured, because by faith he saw the God who was invisible. Heb.11v23-27. We are not healed by feelings anymore than we are saved by feelings, we are healed by positive faith in Christ. Healing is a gift from a gracious Saviour and heavenly Father, through the agency of God the Holy Spirit. No matter what the senses say, God is willing to save and heal us, so, "What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." Mk.11v24. If we receive the witness of men e.g. doctors, the witness of God is greater, believe His Word. 1Jn.5v9.

You may have a trial of faith after a very definite healing, so if symptoms of sickness return, or come and go, continue to rest on God's Word. A trial of faith will always strengthen faith if you approach it in the right way. Don't wait for thrills, feelings or sight, believe God's Word and resist the attacks of Satan. 1Pet.5v6-11. James.4v7. Have faith to say whenever the floods of Satanic doubt come against you, "Whatever my pain, and whatever the sickness in my body is, I will believe the Word of God". Let your confession be as positive as the Word of God. Don't fail to realise that Satan wants to keep you from Christ and healing and to take your healing from you after you have been healed. The battle is sure to come, we can expect an onslaught of evil

power from Satan and his angels, their aim is to separate us from Christ and fill us with doubt and unbelief. Mt.4v1-12. Eph.6v10-20. God will make us more than conquerors through Christ, if we walk with Him. Rom.8v35-39. We can overcome the world, flesh and Devil through the grace of our dear Lord Jesus. 1Jn.2v13,14. 5v4,5. It was the active faith of the friends of the man sick with palsy that brought healing to him. When Christ saw their faith demonstrated, He healed the man sick of the palsy. Mk.2v3-5. Their actions proved their faith and brought victory over circumstances and sickness. Faith without corresponding action is dead faith. James.2v14-26. N.B. v17,20,26. Have an expectant active faith and demonstrate your faith by acting on God's Word, you can be more than a conqueror through the grace of our dear Lord Jesus Christ.

5. The wonderful grace of God to the sincere doubter.

a. There is a tremendous difference between genuine doubt and an evil heart of unbelief.

Unbelief is not ignorance or uncertainty over God's will, but rather a positive rejection of God's revealed Word. Unbelief is the inability to trust God in the light of His reliable power, Word and will; this is spoken of as evil heart of unbelief. John.15v22-25. Heb.3v12. Even Christ could do nothing for people who were bound by unbelief. Mt.13v58. Mk.6v5,6. Unbelief and hardness of heart go together. Unbelief is folly in the light of the wonderful character of God, for our God is the God who cannot lie. 1Jn.5v10. Titus.1v2. Heb.6v18. The reality of His promises can never be annulled by anything our senses or Satan may tell us. Unbelief causes misery and fear and destroys faith and spiritual vision, and causes people to live in bondage and defeat. Mt.17v19,20. Mk.4v40. 2Cor.3v15 Heb.3v19. 2Kings.13v18,19.

The world is so full of unbelief and hatred of God, that it is sometimes very difficult to press out of this unbelief. Faith in some circumstances can be very difficult, as Abraham found out when he "against hope, believed in hope". Rom.4v18. Faith can be severely tried by circumstances, or by the attacks of the powers of darkness. Mt.4v1-12. Eph.6v10-20. Abraham's and Sarah's faith failed for a while under the tremendous pressures upon their faith and then they triumphed because of the wonderful grace of God. Gen.15v4-6. 17v4,5,15,16. 17v15-19. 18v1-14. Rom.4v17-20. Throughout the Scriptures we read of men and women being encouraged to come out of their doubts and fears by the grace and power of God. Divine grace brought positive faith in the place of doubt and fear. cf.Ex.3v3 to 4v31. Lk.24v25-29,44,45. Jn.20v1-31. 1Cor.15v3-8. etc.

b. Jesus is very kind to genuine doubters.

We need to remember that we never find Jesus being hard with people with genuine doubts and problems. Jesus showed kindness and grace to Nathanael, Jn.1v46-51.; Nicodemus, Jn.3v1-21.; Thomas, Jn.20v24-29.; the man with the demon possessed child. Mk.9v17-29. N.B. v24. Christ always met their need. However, He did get angry and disturbed over those who were full of evil scepticism and unbelief, after they had seen a multitude of signs and wonders. There is a tremendous difference between a person with genuine doubts and a person who has a spirit of scepticism and an evil heart of unbelief. Heb.3v12. A person who has a spirit of scepticism and an evil heart of unbelief, does not want to believe because of the responsibilities that faith will demand. The honest doubter may want to believe, but they may have real problems and difficulties that keep them from obtaining a clear and triumphant faith. Genuine doubts can give a person very real and deep distress, anguish and perplexity, for the very reason that real faith is earnestly desired and longed for. This faith distress can lead to positive and triumphant faith, if a person continues to seek God. A person can pray themselves through from doubt and fear, to a certainty of faith, from barrenness and defeat, to blessed experience and victory. Prayer can, and does, stop people dying in agony, who would normally suffer greatly because of the nature of their sickness.

c. We cannot help having battles of faith.

The doubts that we have on these occasions may not be our own fault. they can be the results of our background, circumstances, or even, as in the case of our Lord Jesus, the insinuations and lies of the evil one. What an atmosphere of unbelief there is in the world today! The spirit and unbelief of the world shouts at us from every side, and it takes real prayer and faith to get the victory over the evil atmosphere of the world. Jude.v18-21. 1Jn.5v4,5. The Christian will always find that there is an inevitable "fight of faith". 1Tim.6v12. However, that faith should grow 'from faith to faith', and should win greater and greater victories. Rom.1v17. This victory is only possible through the grace of God, and this grace encourages the faith of His people, and gives the unbeliever signs that testify that Christ is risen and that God is good, to give them the grounds for faith. Mk.16v17,20. 2Cor.12v12. 1Cor.2v4. Jn.5v36. 10v25,38. Christ did many miracles to help people believe in His claims and His mission. God will not give the sceptics the signs and miracles that they demand, but He will give signs to convince honest doubters, as Christ's gentleness to John Baptist doubts proves. Lk.7v19-29.

d. Faith distress can lead to triumphant faith through the grace of God.

Have you an impossible situation, or an incurable sickness? The grace of God can cause you to have a complete victory over them. God intends that praying for the sick should be accompanied by signs and wonders to help the faith of the sick. The combination of preaching the Scriptures and the manifestation of spiritual gifts that confirm those Scriptures, will give faith to the sincere doubter, and prove that Christ is alive. The revelation of God's Word and power will enable the person with faith distress and genuine doubt, to "ask in faith, nothing wavering". James.1v5-7. The one person we can trust is God, and He desires to demonstrate this fact to all. Rom.8v32. Heb.6v13-20. James.1v17. Come to Christ with positive faith in the Word of God, see the signs, wonders and miracles that God is doing today and believe God. If you are suffering from faith distress and genuine doubt, go to where you can find spiritual counsel, and where God is doing great things, so that your faith may grow and triumph over your sickness and circumstances. God, in His wonderful grace, desires to

encourage and increase your faith and to bring you deliverance.

CHAPTER 3. WHY HEALING FROM GOD MAY BE DELAYED.

We need to remember that failure to receive healing is due to human weakness and not to failure on the part of God; we cannot charge God with folly and failure. The question comes, "Why is there a denial, delay, or only a partial healing of the sick"? I pray the answers that we give to these questions may cause many to receive their healing from God. We shall of necessity, consider and expand some of the points that we have made under other headings, and have to repeat points several times under separate headings, but this will serve to imprint their truths more firmly upon our minds.

1. BECAUSE A PERSON'S ALLOTTED SPAN OF LIFE HAS BEEN REACHED.

We read in 2Kings.13v14,20,21., that Elisha was fallen sick of the sickness with which he died. Even though his body was so full of the power of God, that a dead man was raised to life by touching his bones, he himself was not healed, his time had come to die. We read in Ps.90v10,12., that we can normally expect to live 70 years, and Ex.23v24-26., tells us that by walking with God we can expect to fulfil the number of our days. However, we read in Is.52v1,2., that even a young person can be taken away from evil to come. 1Kings.14v11-13.

2. BECAUSE THE PERSON PRAYING FOR THE SICK HAS NEGLECTED PRAYER.

This is a major reason why there is lack of healing or delay in healing. Christ very often cannot find anyone that He can use to deliver the sick; there is very often no one who He can use to convey His tremendous compassion and almighty delivering power. The person ministering to the sick may not have sufficient communion with Christ to receive the power of God to deliver the very sick. And a person who has had great power with God may backslide and lose that power. How are the mighty fallen! 2,Sam.1v19,20. Judges.16v20. Ministering to the sick places great demands on the person praying for the sick, real communion with God and much prayer, sometimes with fasting. Obviously there has to be a growth and effectiveness of ministry with everyone, we read that Paul the teacher, became Paul the apostle in Acts.13v1-4.. A Christian should faithfully develop the ministry that God has given to them and be prepared for God to give them other ministries. One fears that the lack of people ministering to the sick, rises from the fact that many servants of God have no desire to do anything more than preach, in spite of the fact that God has promised so much more than this to them.

When praying for the sick, gifts of revelation may be needed to reveal sin, to encourage faith, or to deal with some great wound or hurt in the past, that our dear Lord Jesus needs to heal. A great sorrow or heartbreak, or bitterness of spirit, can and does produce sickness. The person, who ministers to the sick, needs to be equipped by God to meet the needs of these people. The truth and power of God can enable us to deliver all the captives of sin, sickness and Satan.

N.B. If you expect people not to be healed when they are prayed for, then you will get what you expect.

If the sick in a church continually come for prayer and still keep going away sick, then, in the end, no one will have any faith for healing. Such a situation demands earnest prayer by the church leaders. God's will is perfect wholeness; He does not desire His children to suffer with some horrible disease. 3John.v2. God desires us to prosper and be in health as our soul prospers. It is the elders responsibility to bring the blessing of healing to those in the local church who are sick, or to know the reason why healing may be delayed. Delay in healing or gradual healing, may on occasions be the purpose of God and may not be due to human failure. Trophimus experienced a delay in healing, or a gradual healing, even though Paul had prayed for him, and Paul was certainly not lacking in spiritual power. 2Tim.4v20. Acts.19v11-20 20v4. 21v29. Lack of spiritual power in the person praying for the sick is certainly a major reason for a delay in healing, but it is not the only reason. We will consider further the lack of spiritual power in the church, and the spiritual equipment that Christians need when they are praying for the sick, under the headings, "Why is there sickness in the Church of Christ", and, "Christ's Challenge to His Church".

3. BECAUSE THOSE SEEKING HEALING MAY NOT BE SPIRITUALLY PREPARED.

1. A PERSON MAY NOT BE PREPARED TO GET RIGHT WITH GOD.

a. Jesus prepared people for healing by preaching on repentance, holiness, love, prayer and faith in God.

Christ's preaching often brought about a real heart preparation and genuine repentance in the people that listened to Him. Jesus had an even greater revival than John the Baptist, with an even greater number of genuine repentant converts. Jn.4v1. Mk.1v4-7,14,15. There is a vital need for repentance, forgiveness, and holiness. All some people want is a healing from God, so that they can continue living the old sinful life, but sin must be dealt with, and Christ must be accepted as Lord, as well as Saviour. God has no respect of persons, you have to meet God's conditions before He will save and heal you. Rom.2v11. In Exodus.23v25, God says, "And ye shall serve the Lord your God and He shall bless thy bread and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee". And in the healing of the palsied man in Mk.2v1-12., Christ emphasised the vital connection between forgiveness and healing. He stated that His power to heal, proved that He had the right to assure a person of forgiveness of sin, He linked forgiveness of sin and healing of disease inseparably together. Jesus said to the paralysed man, who He had healed after the man had suffered for 38 years, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee". John.5v1-9,14. Christ was greatly disturbed that some refused to repent in spite of the great signs, miracles and wonders that He had done, and He showed

their awful end. Mt.11v20-24.

b. Divine sickness is a fact as well as Divine healing.

We read that many of the Corinthian Church were sick, and some had died, because they had not repented of sin in their lives. This was, doubtless, after prayer by the elders of the church. God does not treat sin in His Church lightly; He disciplines His children so that they might not be condemned with the world. 1Cor.11v27-32. We also read that people have to repent and confess to God any known sin if they are to be healed. Ps.66v18. Prov.28v13. Sometimes we need to confess our sins to others before we are prayed for by the elders for healing. James.5v13-18. N.B. v16. Whatever you do don't confess your sins to talkative busybodies. Sins of the spirit, as well as sins of the flesh, must be repented of and confessed. Get rid of all the bitterness of spirit, backbiting, or an unforgiving spirit, these can cause many diseases and delay healing. Ps.24v12-22. Mt.6v14,15. 18v21-35. Col.3v12-16. James.3v1-18.

If you have had some great wound in the past that needs healing, take God through the garden of your memories and let Him remove every ugly and hurtful thing. Remember also, that lack of consecration, spiritual lukewarmness, and worldly-mindedness are sinful. Don't excuse your sin, repent of it and live for God. 1Jn.2v1. 3v6. Rom.8v6. Separate your self from the sin of the world, and any other things that don't edify. Surrender your will to God. Rom.12v1,2. Don't bargain with God, don't say, "If God heals me, I will live for Him". Give up bargaining with God, confess ALL your sin and get right with God and live for Him. Jn.5v14. 8v11. God asks for your unconditional surrender. If you have been covetous or immoral in thought or word, repent and confess it to God and He will forgive and cleanse you. Before some people are healed they need to put things right with someone else, if you have hurt someone, repent and ask their forgiveness. Some need to confess that they have had a lying or backbiting tongue. Prov.6v16,17. 12v22. Rev.22v15. Others need to make restitution and put right their dishonesty, stealing or unpaid bills. John Lake tells how when a man came to him for prayer, God revealed to him that this man had stolen 5,000 dollars. Lake challenged the man with this, and he confessed that it was so; when the man had made out a cheque for 5,000 dollars, plus the interest, to the person he had robbed, God met with him. Put things right with the people you have offended or defrauded. Sometimes people are very loath to get right with God because of the consequences.

c. Check your motive for seeking healing.

Are you seeking healing so that you can live a worldly life, or are you seeking healing so that you may serve God and mankind better? Many ask and receive not, because they ask amiss. James.4v1-17. Some people have very deliberately and consistently robbed God of time and service by living worldly lives and they expect God to deliver them, even though they are still determined to go their own way. Pay your vows to God and He will deliver you in the day of trouble. Ps.50v14,15.

d. God's promises of healing can be conditional

The promises of healing often have a conditional "If." God asks for repentance, confession of sin, and obedience. Determine to obey God and He will quicken and heal your mortal body. Rom.8v11. If you go to a doctor you must accept his conditions and advice if you are to expect successful treatment, God will heal you if you accept His conditions and advice. Christ could do no great miracles at Nazareth, because they refused to accept Christ or His conditions of faith, they were full of chronic unbelief. Many people today suffer from the same disease of chronic unbelief, because they live in an unbelieving community, or have fellowship with unbelieving Christians, and they have caught this serious spiritual disease from them. Mt.11v20-24. Mk.6v5,6. God guarantees to heal you, but you must meet the terms of His guarantee. These terms are not self-righteousness, but a genuine repentance and an acceptance of Jesus as Saviour. It is the unrepentant and world-surfeited heart that finds it difficult to believe in the light of signs, wonders and miracles. Jn.5v44. 12v42,43. 15v22-25. Faith is automatically born in the repentant heart. You do not have to pump faith into a person who has genuinely repented of their sin. If you have been to Spiritualist mediums for help, realise that this was wrong and ask God to forgive you, and cleanse you through the blood of Jesus. Lev.19v31. 20v6. Deut.18v10,11. Is.8v19,20. 1Chron.10v13,14. 2Kings.21v6. etc. Don't go to evil spirits for healing; come to the Christ who died to save you. John Lake tells how on one occasion he prayed for 65 people and all but five were instantly healed. These five were interviewed privately after the meeting and God was sought for their need. One confessed to adultery and was instantly healed. A woman confessed to persistent stealing and was healed. Altogether, it took several hours to bring these five people to a place where they could receive healing, but in the end all five were healed. Don't experiment with God, or with His patience, seek God earnestly, lay aside every weight and get right with God Heb.12v1,2. Come to Christ in repentance, consecration, humility, and with diligence, and you will receive healing from Him. The love and compassion of God assures us that delay never means denial.

2. A PERSON MAY NOT BE PREPARED TO MAKE SPIRITUAL PREPARATION.

a. God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him out." Heb. 11v6. Acts.17v27.

"He that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those that DILIGENTLY seek Him". Heb.11v6. Some people are prepared, and quite rightly, to go to doctors and hospital for many hours and have endless preparation for an operation, or treatment for some illness, without any feeling of inconvenience or irritation. However, sometimes people are not prepared to seek God, read the Scriptures, or even listen to instruction before they are prayed for, and yet they expect an instantaneous miracle of healing. Coming into the presence of the King of Kings demands respect and spiritual preparation. "Thou art coming to a king," and so prepare prayerfully, thoughtfully and diligently. Don't be like those who want a display of spiritual power, or

a magic formula, without any desire to meet with God. Some want unconditional healing, so that they can keep on living the same old worldly life. Some people don't want to prepare spiritually, or possess true faith because of the demands that this will place upon them; they want Divine healing without any conditions. James writes that a person should come to God for healing with repentance for sin, and after much prayer and meditation on the Scriptures. James.5v13-20. Some come to a Divine healing meeting after living a very worldly canal life, and quite unrepentant of their sin, and they expect God to heal them instantly, and sometimes God in mercy does so, but what is their end?

b. Some may ask, "Why does God heal the unconverted?"

God is so gracious that He will heal a sick person just to appeal to them to repent. Jesus healed thousands of people who were not repentant, as can be seen from His strong warning to Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Mt.11v20-24. Lk.10v13-15. It is the greatest folly to trifle with God and to trade on His great grace. Jesus taught people for hours, and they were willing to miss their food, sometimes for days, to hear Him and see the miracles that He did. Multitudes were baptised showing their repentance and faith in Christ. This spiritual preparation brought about an expectant rise of faith, which resulted in a free full flow of the ministry of Jesus, and the healing of all who came to Him for healing. Mk.6v35-56. Most of Israel's religious leaders did not seek healing from Jesus, because they did not want to repent and get right with God. Jn.5v38-40. 6v36,37. 8v30-47. This could be one reason why the people at the Pool of Bethesda were not seeking the Saviour, they wanted their sins, and their traditional approach that made no spiritual demands. Jesus healed one man out of the multitude at Bethesda and then hurried away, and later gave a warning to the man about living in sin. The rest may have been warned to keep away from Jesus by their spiritual advisors, and had unfortunately heeded them and rejected His ministry. Jn.5v1-15.

c. The need of faith building instruction can be absolutely vital.

Some people need to come to many meetings to receive healing, for they need this kind of spiritual preparation. Many churches live on such a low level of faith and Christian experience, that the Christians in them need to have instruction and see miracles before they can really believe for themselves. Christ stated that the revelation and open manifestation of God's power in signs and wonders, was necessary before many people could believe. He said, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe". Jn.4v48. This is why most people need to go where God is doing great miracles so that they can have their faith encouraged and receive healing. John Lake, at the direction of the Holy Spirit, told a man to come to his meetings for 30 days and he would be healed, the mans healing was complete on the 29th. day. There is a real need of diligent spiritual effort and calm trust in the wonderful God of love. It is no good persuading an unbelieving or faithless sceptic to come for healing to prove God to them; you cannot prove God to unbelief.

It is absolutely essential to remember that the word of God is the food of faith, it tells us God's will for us and His promises to us, and faith will grow and increase as we read it and believe it. !Pet.2v2. Acts20v32. Rom.10v17. If we neglect the word of God we cannot expect our faith to be strong and virile. The Scriptures are written to enable us to believe that Jesus is the Christ. A realisation of who Christ is and what He promises to us, can only come through the Scriptures and the preaching and the demonstration by the power of God of those Scriptures. Christians cannot be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" if they do not have a good knowledge of the Word of God. Jn.20v30,31. 2Tim.3v14-17. Meditation upon the promises of God will give us faith to receive them. 1Tim.4v13-16. Ignorance of the promises of God has kept many people from receiving the promises of God.

d. People need to be taught to set a time to meet with God.

Do not say that God will meet with you "sometime" or "when He wills". "Sometime" is very often "never". Set NOW as a time to seek Christ out and receive from Christ, for Christ has said, "What things so ever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them". Mk.11v24. This kind of positive faith in Christ will result in a person receiving the requests they ask for. However, don't limit God to an instantaneous miracle, healings can be gradual, or take place later, as in the case of the ten lepers and the blind man at the Pool of Siloam. Jn.4v46-54. 9v1-11. Mt.8v3,13,15. Mk.11v12-14,20,21. Lk.17v12-19. Even Christ prayed for one man twice. Mk.8v22-26. A partial healing, gradual healing, or a delay in healing demand more seeking of God. God does not wish to delay your healing, but he may do so because you need to learn some important spiritual truths. In a Christian, healing may be delayed or gradual healing take place. so that sympathy, humility, and compassion for others may be developed. Gradual healing may make more demands upon a person than an instantaneous healing, but don't be impatient with Jesus, people are not generally impatient with their doctors, so don't be impatient with Christ. Heb.6v12,15. Trophimus doubtless had the experience of delayed, or gradual healing, even though the apostle Paul prayed for him. 2Tim.4v20. Sometimes a healing is gradual or delayed, so that we should search our hearts and become more spiritually minded as a result, which brings us to our next point.

4. BECAUSE GOD MAY DESIRE TO TEST AND IMPROVE A CHRISTIAN'S CHARACTER.

a. A Christian's spiritual well-being is more important than their physical health.

We read in Heb.12v3-15., that God disciplines Christians because of His love for us. God may allow the normal sicknesses of man to come upon us, or allow Satan to afflict us, and He may allow a delay in healing to improve our characters. In the Corinthian church the elders without doubt prayed for the sick and they were still sick. Paul told them that this was due to Divine chastisement, things had to be put right. 1Cor.11v27-34. Delay in healing should cause us to examine our hearts and make sure that our lives are clean and our

attitudes right. We can avoid discipline by sickness by self-examination.

God may delay healing to try the faith and character of the Christian. There may be nothing wrong with the person's life at all, as in the case of Job. Job.2v4-10. God allowed Satan to try Job's faith by sickness and a delay in healing. Job came through this trial with the commendation of God, the trial has proved and perfected patience and endurance, and tried, proved and purified faith, and glorified the great grace of God. This kind of trial of faith obviously only applies to the Christian; God cannot try the faith of an unbeliever in this way, as they have no faith to try. The Devil put the sickness upon Job, Job.2v7., Before this God's power had been an hedge about Job, protecting him from sickness and Satanic attack. Job's obedience and faith had not failed; indeed, they were proved by this trial. Job's trial proved that God was right and that His grace was sufficient for anything, and that Satan was wrong and that his criticisms of Job were incorrect and completely evil. Christian, imitate Job and ask in faith nothing wavering, when God allows your faith to be tested by a delay in healing.

One reads again and again that some great saints, have suffered great trials of physical sickness themselves, while they were seeing great numbers of people healed by God in their meetings. This was certainly true of Smith Wigglesworth. Is it a case of "Have you considered my servant Job?" A great soul proving the Dine principles? Is it that God has said that no flesh should glory in His presence? Is it that it is a trial of faith, or spiritual discipline? Sometimes only God Himself knows. We must make sure that we do not mistake a spiritual discipline by God for a trial of our faith, let us examine our hearts. Blatant lack of repentance, flagrant sin, or wilful disobedience to God can cause sickness and death. Fighting God's voice through a servant of God, or a prophet of God, can bring sickness unto death. e.g. Ahaziah. 2Kings.1v1-17., Asa. 2Chron.14v2. 15v2. 16v12,13. The Corinthians. 1Cor.5v1-5. 10v1-14. 11v23,24., Hymenaeus, Philetus and Alexander. 1Tim.1v19,20. 2Tim.2v17,18. In Ps.105v15., we read, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm". "Mine anointed" and "My prophets", applies to a man of God, not to a spiritual backslider, and can refer to a member of a church as well as a leader of a church. We have to be careful how we live in the Church of Christ, and how we listen to God's voice.

b. Paul's thorn in the flesh was a conflict with an evil angel, not a physical sickness.

Some have stated that Paul's thorn in the flesh was a sickness, and some have confidently asserted that it was a disease of the eyes, in spite of the fact that the Scriptures state that God healed Paul of blindness. Acts.9v17,18. It is difficult to see how Paul could have accomplished his great missionary journeys if he was continually sick and ill. Paul himself makes it clear that his thorn in the flesh was "the messenger of Satan".

The word for "messenger" is "angelos", and means "messenger", but it is especially applied to angels. We can, therefore, state that this "messenger" was a wicked angel sent by Satan to trouble Paul. Paul tells us that God allowed this evil angel to buffet him because he was in danger of becoming spiritually proud as a result of the abundant amount of spiritual revelation he was enjoying. God's preventative medicine against spiritual pride in Paul's case was not sickness but persecution. "The angel of Satan" spoken of by Paul in 2Cor.12v7., stirred up tremendous persecutions against Paul. He suffered weariness and painfulness, perils of various kinds, necessities, persecutions, distresses, imprisonment, beatings, atoning and many other trials as a result of the hatred of men.

Paul certainly did suffer physically, for nobody can have a stoning and five awful beatings from the Jews like our Lord had, and three beatings from the Romans, without some serious physical after-effects. Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus", and a thousand scars testified to the truth of this statement. Gal.6v17. Cf. 2Cor.11v23 to 12v12. Thorns in the flesh in the Scripture are personalities or people that were used by God to discipline His children. Numb.33v55. Josh.23v12,13. The idea that Paul was continually sick from one disease after another, is quite without any Scriptural foundation. Paul had a ministry of healing and preached and experienced healing. Acts.9v17-19. 28v3-6. Rom.8v11. 2Cor.4v11. If Paul's thorn was sickness, the Corinthians had every reason to ask Paul why he was sick, they could have asked him if he had not been examining himself at the Lord's Table. 1Cor.11v30. God may use various means to discipline His children, and temporary sickness was certainly used by God to discipline the Christians at Corinth.

Sometimes a delay in healing can take place, because sometimes it is necessary for us to prevail over the opposing powers of darkness. Realise that you wrestle against wicked angels, so pray through until you get the victory. Eph.6v10-20. A Christian may have to prevail in prayer like Daniel. Dan.10v13. Daniel continued to trust God in spite of the fact that for 21 days the answer to his prayer was delayed, the delay developed character and spiritual muscles in Daniel. If you are being disciplined by God, or experiencing a trial of faith, imitate the persistent faith and prayer of Daniel. Dan.10v1-21. Consistent and persistent prayer will bring health and healing, be filled with God's grace and healing will come. We will further consider sickness in the Church of Christ, at more length, under the heading, "Why is there sickness in the Church of Christ"? We will also consider the spiritual equipment and power that Christ desires His Church to enjoy, under the heading, "Christ's Challenge to His Church".

5. BECAUSE THE SICK PERSON IS LOOKING TO MAN INSTEAD OF LOOKING TO GOD.

Direct your gaze to God, you have come to meet with Him. By all means respect God's servant, but remember that God alone is the healer and the glory belongs to Him alone. Peter and John refused to say that it was their power or holiness that had wrought the miracle on the man at the gate of the Temple; they said that it was through the power of the risen Christ. Acts.3v12. It is not being prayed for by "a great evangelist" that brings

healing, it is meeting with God that brings healing. We have to respect a person who God has entrusted with great spiritual gifts, otherwise the sick will receive nothing from them, but they are only manifesting God's gifts, love and compassion. It is the prayer of faith that heals the sick, but the object of that faith is God. God will not give His glory to another. Is.42v8. 48v11,12. 44v6. with Rev.1v8,17. 22v13. 1Cor.1v26-31. with Jer.9v24.

6. BECAUSE A PERSON BELIEVES IN MEN'S TRADITIONS INSTEAD OF GOD'S WORD.

Many preachers confidently assert that Divine healing and miracles are not for this day, when they have not a shred of Scriptural evidence to support what they say. However, their sceptical unscriptural dogmatic assertions keep many from receiving healing from Christ, and they can expect severe judgement for this. James.3v1. As one Christian man has well said, "Faith comes by hearing God's Word, and leaves by hearing men's traditions". The prayer of faith heals the sick, not an unbelieving, "If it be thy will"? Refuse to listen to unbelieving sermons, for wrong teaching destroys faith, go where you can hear God's truth preached faithfully and where God is doing great things. God is angry when unbelieving preachers tell sick people, that it is God's will for them to suffer terribly for years and that they must bear it patiently.

John tells us in 1Jn.5v14,15., that knowledge of the will of God as revealed in His Word and by His Spirit, is the grounds of faith, "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him". "Confidence," is "parrhesia," freedom in speaking, free and fearless confidence, cheerful courage, boldness, and assurance. Positive faith in the revealed will of God to heal will bring deliverance to the sick, the traditions of men will only add to the suffering of the sick. Do not think that you deserve healing, or can earn your healing by good works, healing is a gift flowing from God's great grace, and it is quite unmerited. Humble yourself before God like Naaman and God will heal you. Don't be proud of your prayers or works of charity, you are only saved and healed because Jesus died on the cross for you. 2Kings.5v1-19. Mt.6v1-18.

7. BECAUSE A PERSON IS SUFFERING FROM SICKNESS AS A RESULT OF OVERWORK.

God will not give us strength to break the laws of rest that He has laid down. Many Christians, like Epaphroditus, have found that they cannot overwork their bodies and escape the consequences. Phil.2v25-30. Christians who have prayed for the sick with great results, have been sick for long periods through placing too great a strain upon their bodies, for such people the need is care, love and sympathy and a rest for their mind, body and emotions. God had mercy upon Epaphroditus and restored and healed him. God does the same today, but He may heal us after we have used some common sense, and learned not to put too great a strain upon our bodies. Some people are so busy that temporary sickness can be a blessing to them, it is an occasion when they have the time to experience spiritual refreshment.

8. SO THAT A GREATER MIRACLE CAN BRING GREATER GLORY TO GOD.

Because Jesus loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus, He gave them the privilege of bringing great glory to God, by delaying the healing of Lazarus and then later raising him from the dead. A temporary delay resulted in a greater deliverance and brought great glory to God and resulted in many people being saved. Jn.11v1-43. The trial of faith in Mary and Martha proved much more precious than gold. 1Pet.1v6,7. They had a new and wonderful revelation of their Saviour's Divinity, power and authority. God may allow the same kind of thing to happen today so that people may realise that He is God, and realising it, may come to know the sweetness and beauty of fellowship with God.

9. WHAT TO DO WHEN HEALING IS DELAYED.

If there is a delay in the answer to your prayer, there must be a reason for it. Your reaction to a delay in healing is very important. Remember it is not just a question of saying a prayer; it is your attitude to God that counts. Also realise that God desires to work a change in you as well as desiring to heal your body. Above all remember that real faith never goes unrewarded, there may be a delay, but there will never be a denial if you truly believe. Mk.11v20-24. So imitate the persistent prayer and faith of the Syrophenician woman of Mt.15v21-28. and Mk.7v24-30. Christ seemed at first to ignore her prayer, and then He stated that His commission was only to the children of God. But with great earnest cries she confessed Him as Lord and Saviour Christ, she worshipped and humbled herself at His feet and in great faith pleaded the love and graciousness of God to those who had no real claim upon His blessings. The woman was obviously not saved at first, she could not claim "the children's bread" of healing, but by coming into a right relationship with Christ she could claim the children's bread of healing. Christ never refuses the kind of faith that this woman had and so He healed the woman's child, if you come to Christ with the same worship, earnest prayer and persistent faith, you will receive what you ask of Him. Remember the persistent faith of the Shunammite woman when she earnestly sought God and Elisha for the restoration to life of her dead son, and the persistent prayer of Elisha for the resurrection from the dead of the Shunammite's beloved child. 2Kings.4v18-37. Remember and imitate the persistent faith of the blind men of Lk.18v35-43., and many others, and you will find that Christ will heal you as He healed them. Remember that the healing of Trophimus was delayed, even though the apostle Paul was present to pray for them. 2Tim.4v20. Phil.2v27. Your healing may be gradual, but if it is delayed, remember that delay never means denial, God desires to heal you, so examine your heart, and fulfil His conditions and be persistent in your faith and prayer, and He will meet with you and heal you.

Why is there sickness in the Church of Christ?

Chronic, severe, prolonged, and life threatening sickness is what we are considering here, for God often allows

temporary minor sickness such as colds, etc, to be healed by the natural healing processes of the body. Simple sickness can be cured by common sense and simple remedy, but severe sickness is another matter altogether, and it is this that I want to consider.

Obviously the Lord expects more of Christians than of the worldling. God may heal the worldling, just because He wants to appeal to them to get saved. However, even with the worldling, repentance and some measure of faith in Christ are the usual pre-requisites for healing. Christ also warned that a person who had received healing from Him, could get a worse disease if they persisted in serving the Devil, the Devil has no mercy. The only real safeguard is to keep serving and following our dear Lord Jesus. We have considered why healing is delayed previously, but we will now consider sickness specifically in it's relationship to Christ's Church, and the responsibility of the local elders and the leaders of the Church to those who are sick.

As we have seen various things can hinder healing. Unrepentant sin in the sick person's life, or a sin like Achan's in the Church, or sin in the elders. Joshua.7v1-26. 8v1. The Christians can be at sixes and sevens and have a bitter spirit towards one another. Wrongs should not be allowed to fester, Christ commanded us to put them right. N.B. Mt.18v15-35. Mk.11v22-26. Jn.13v34,35. 15v12-14. 1Cor.3v1-3. Lack of healings in the church can be due to lack of faith in the elders, or the sick person, and it is very often due to the fact that the church is too spiritually lazy, or too worldly to defeat Satan. However, even if the poor spiritual condition of the elders, stops them from being a channel of salvation and healing and blessing, it is still God's will to heal, as we can clearly see from the healing of the demoniac in Mk.9v14-29.

Very often the premature and untimely death of a Christian is not "God's will" at all, it is more often due to the spiritual failure and weakness of Christ's Church. The phrase, "If it be thy will", is often quoted in direct contradiction to the clearly revealed will of God in the Scriptures. "If it be thy will", is very often quoted as a faith destroying statement and as an escape hatch of unbelief, it is God's will to heal us if we will put our lives right with God. The phrase, "If it be thy will" has its place in prayer, but let us make sure that we use it within the confines of the Word of God. Doubtless, when a Christian dies because of the spiritual failure of the elders, or there own lack of faith, it is always "gain" to them, when they go to be with the Saviour they love. Jn.17v24. 2Cor.5v6-10. Phil.1v20-25. Thank God for His wonderful grace, transcendent power, love and wisdom, and for the immortality brought to us by our dear Lord Jesus. 2Tim.1v10.

Can a Christian expect divinely preserved health?

Can a Christian expect God to keep them from sickness and disease? God does certainly promise in His Word, that He will preserve His children from sickness, destructive force, accident and plague. Ps.91v1-16. However, this promise is, like all the promises of God, strongly conditional, and Divine strength and preservation of health is promised to those who live in the shadow of the Almighty, a life of deep communion with God, and obedience to His commands. Is.40v28-31. In Exod.15v26., God promises to preserve His people from all the diseases, or plagues, that He brought upon the Egyptians, if they obeyed Him and kept His laws. God said, "If thou wilt--, I will--, for I am--". The promise was strongly conditional. cf. Ps.34v12-15. 1Pet.3v10-13. Many of the Israelites did not receive the promise, they broke the commands of God and lost their lives by Divine judgement, however, others did receive the promise, and "there was not one feeble person among their tribes". Ps.105v37. 106v10-48. We also have to remember that the laws that God gave them, were not only moral laws, but laws of health concerning, rest, correct diet, hygiene, sanitation, sterilisation and quarantine. The child of God has to keep God's health laws as well as God's moral laws, if they want to stay in good health. The Lord expects us to use our common sense and to do our part in keeping our bodies strong and well, He will not preserve our health if we act foolishly and are intemperate in our living.

The deadly plagues and diseases spoken of in Exod.15v26. and Ps.91v6-10., are obviously quite different from simple temporary sickness. Paul does not point Timothy to these promises for deliverance, when Timothy was sick with minor ailments Paul tells him to use natural remedies, he says, "drink no longer water only, but use a little wine for thy stomachs sake and thy often infirmities". Some have said this wine was fruit juice, others have said that it was wine of the olive, i.e. olive oil, others have said that it was a weak alcoholic wine, which was certainly a lot better for the health than most of the water of Timothy's day, which was often badly polluted and infected by disease.

God can and does heal simple temporary disease, but He usually allows the natural healing processes of the body to heal simple temporary sickness. Compare the natural and spiritual healings of Ps.103v3 and 5. The promise of Ex.15v26. and Ps.91v1,6-10. are "yea and amen" in Christ, the Christian who walks with God can expect the Divine life and power of God to preserve and deliver them from severe sickness. 2Cor1v20. There was an hedge of protection around Job, God's power had preserved him from accident, oppression and illness, he had good health through Divine protection. God allowed Job to be sick, not because he had done anything wrong, even God said Job was "perfect". God allowed Job to be tested to prove that he was a "perfect" and wonderful man. Job.1v8-22. 2v1-10. Divine love allowed Job's perfection to be tested by poverty, war, oppression, bereavement, slander and sickness of a very severe nature. God may allow some of His saints to be tried in the same way today. It is worth noting, that after Job's healing the Hedge was restored and Job again enjoyed good health and prosperity through the protection and blessing of God. Job.42v10-17.

When Christ said to the man at Bethesda, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee". He implied that the man could enjoy good health through walking with God. The Christian who

walks with God can expect Divine preservation from severe sickness and the quickening of their mortal body by Divine life. God wants His children to be in good health. Rom.8v11. 3John.v2,3. However, the Christian may sometimes groan because of the many limitations and weaknesses of the human body, desiring their heavenly body, which is infinitely better than their earthly one. 2Cor.5v4. Phil.3v21. Thanks be to God that the law of the Spirit and life in Christ Jesus, makes us free from the law of sin and death. Rom.8v1,2.

10. THE SCRIPTURAL QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS WHO PRAY FOR THE SICK.

The qualifications for elders are found in Acts.20v17,28. 1Tim.3v1-7. Titus.1v5-9. 2Pet.5v1-8. These qualifications for elders include, integrity, honesty, self-discipline, wisdom, experience, ability, age, humility, and spirituality; not any busybody or ambitious person should be an elder. We read in James.5v13-20., that another necessary qualification of an elder is the ability to bring healing to the sick through a prayer of faith. In the Early Church the elder, "presbuteros", and the bishop, or better, the overseer, "episkopos," were holders of the same office. They were elder respected leaders of the local church, the word "overseer", describes their work.

1. Paul appointed elders in all the churches that he founded. Acts.14v23. Tit.1v5. Paul tells Titus to ordain elders and then proceeds to give the spiritual qualifications of overseers Titus.1v5-7. And when Paul writes to the leaders of the church at Philippi, he writes to the overseers and deacons. Paul would not have missed the elders out if they were not the same as bishops. Indeed the qualifications of elders and overseers are exactly the same. 1Tim.3v1-7. Tit.1v5-9.

2. The elders of Ephesus are called overseers. When Paul talks to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus, he tells them that God has made them overseers, "episkopoi", and their work is to feed the flock which God has entrusted to them. Acts.20v17,28.

3. Peter writes to the oversight of the churches, as an elder to elders. The word for oversight in 1Pet.5v2., is, "episkopein." There can be no doubt that both Paul and Peter looked upon the elders as bishops, or better, as overseers of the local church. The guidance of the local church should be left in the hands of the older and more experienced godly men, however, godly deacons can also have a place in the ruling of the local church. 1Tim.3v8-16. Acts.6v3. Someone has suggested that the age of 40 should be the lowest limit for an elder. See Acts.11v30 15v6,23. 16v4. 20v17. 21v18. 1Thes.5v12,13. 1Tim.5v17-19. Heb.13v7,8. The elders at Jerusalem held an honoured place in the guidance of the early Church, it was not just left to the young apostles of Christ; they welcomed the advice and guidance of older, wiser, spiritual men.

The work of an elder should not be taken on lightly, for to be an elder with the correct Bible credentials is a very demanding thing. 1Pet.5v1-11. 1Tim.3v1-7. Tit.1v5-9. Heb13v7,8,17. In addition to Christ like qualities of character, there should be a deep spirituality. James 5v13-20. tells us that the elders who pray for the sick should be "prayed through" and full of the Holy Spirit like Elijah, having supernatural revelation gifts and spiritual power gifts in operation. It is not just the saying of a prayer by an elder that brings deliverance to the sick; it is having a powerful living communion with God, which brings deliverance and healing to the sick. Sometimes great faith and great patience are necessary when praying for the sick, on some occasions it may take prolonged prayer to get the victory for some sick one, as when Elijah prayed for rain. 1Kings.18v42-46. A prayerless, worldly-minded elder or preacher, has no hope of praying a prayer for the sick, and this is why many people are not healed. Christ said that you had to bind the strong man, i.e. Satan, before you can spoil his goods. Mk.3v22-30. N.B. v27. You have to be on victory in your life, through living in communion with Christ, if you are to deliver the needy. Any worldly-minded elder or Christian leader will be in no spiritual condition to pray a prayer of faith. A worldly minded ambitious church can never pray a successful prayer of deliverance for the sick and sinful, repentance must come before this can take place. You cannot use the name of Jesus as a certain formula for deliverance, you have to have a loving, clean, obedient, prayerful, powerfully Spirit-filled life, through abiding in Christ Jesus, before you can claim the promise of John.15v7,16.

The challenge comes to every elder and preacher, "Are you prayed through" and full of the Holy spirit, having supernatural revelation and manifesting spiritual gifts? Do you as an elder qualify for praying for the sick? It is no good pretending to be an elder, or being called an elder, unless you are spiritually equipped and qualified to do the work of an elder. Men can call you an elder, but if you are not an elder in the eyes of God, you are an impostor. Every N.T. elder and preacher was commissioned to bring deliverance to the sick and sinful. All the ministries of Eph.4v11. were and are intended to manifest God's saving and healing power Some ministries were obviously more specialised than others, but in the N.T. we read that they all brought deliverance to the sick and sinful. The Scriptures teach us that Christian preachers who give teaching about spiritual gifts should manifest the gifts that they are talking about; a pound of example is worth a ton of theory and talk. God is not "The great I was", He is "The great I am", and any failure can never be laid at His feet; any sin, unbelief, indifference or unfaithfulness in preachers and the elders that shepherd God's flock, will have to be answered for before the great throne of God. Jer.23v1-6. Ezek.34v1-34. Mt.23v13-39. 1Pet.5v1-4.

CHAPTER 4. CHRIST'S CHALLENGE TO HIS CHURCH.

The challenge of Christ's ministry is directed particularly at the more mature Christians and the Christian leaders of Christ's Church, for God does not expect too much of spiritual babes. 1Cor.3v1,2. Heb.5v11-14. Lk.6v40. However, I trust that the challenge of Christ's ministry as revealed in the following pages will be a

spur and goal to all who read them. The example that Christians should follow is the ideal one revealed in the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, and His early Church and not any man-made substitute. I make no apology for the standard laid down in the following pages, it is the standard laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The ministries and teaching of Christ and His early Church show us that the ministries that God has set in the Church are never intended to function without the manifest power of God. Eph.4v11. 1Cor.12v28-31. Intellectualism is inadequate; it is barren without the power of God. Intellectual argument needs to be anointed with God's power and presence. Words have to be anointed words like the words of Christ, He said "the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life". Jn.6v63. Some have mistaken oratory, earnestness and noise for the anointing of God, but those who live close to God can easily discern between the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the "strange fire" of humanistic endeavour. Lev.10v1-10. Christ commissioned every preacher He sent forth to work miracles, and every church to be a centre of revival, salvation and healing.

You may say that this is too demanding, but should anyone be a leader in Christ's Church, who is not prepared to accept the standard that He demands for a leader in His Church. To be a mere professional preacher without being a minister of God's life, means that a person is in for great condemnation when they meet our Lord. James3v1. Christ's apostles preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, every leader manifested spiritual gifts. 1Pet.1v12. Jesus never intended His Church to be a tower of Babylonian humanistic endeavour, He wants it to be a body energised with the power of God. It is imitation, not observation, of Christ and His Church, which makes a person a Christian. There will be no revival today unless Christians, and Christian leaders in particular, imitate Christ and His early Church by having a mighty life of communion with God and an earnest desire after full-salvation, holiness and Christ's spiritual gifts. Let us now consider: -

1. CHRIST'S CHALLENGE TO PRAYER AND VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING.

Christ showed His Church by His perfect example how He wants those to love Him to pray and live. Christ prayed and lived victoriously, in persecution, temptation, crisis, success, popularity and death. Christ prayed at all times, and had special periods of prayer early in the morning and late at night, and sometimes all night. Christ said that His walk with His Father was so real that He was in contact with heaven all the time. Jn.3v13. "The Son of man which is in heaven." Christ's prayer-life was so impressive that His disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples". Lk.11v1-13. Christ's prayer-life is the example for the Christian and we need to accept its challenge and imitate it. No minister, preacher, elder or church member, can fulfil the commission of Christ without they seek God in His Word and in prayer. There can be no N.T. ministry without communion with God. The early Church waited upon God for 10 days before Pentecost, and the apostles gave themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of God's Word after Pentecost. Acts.1v14. 3v23-31. 6v1-4. Cf. Col.4v12.

WHEN CAN WE EXPECT A NEW TESTAMENT REVIVAL AND GREAT HEALING MIRACLES?

A. When Christians have a vital encounter with a risen Christ.

The early Church had a vital encounter with a crucified and risen Saviour. Their salvation from sin and their walk with Christ was intensely real and precious to them. Their hearts had been cleansed and their fears removed, by meeting with their mighty Saviour and by walking with Him in His risen life. Acts.1v3.

B. When Christians have a life of continual prayer and praise.

The early Christians were continually praising God for their salvation, as a result of knowing a living risen Saviour. Lk.24v53. Acts.2v47. They never grew tired of prayer and praise to God; they did not time the prayer meeting with a stopwatch, or watch the clock. They loved praying and praising God, and they were victorious in their prayers as a result. Acts.1v14. 4v23-31. 13v1-4. They did not neglect legitimate necessary interests under a guise of being religious, but whenever they had the opportunity they sought God in prayer and praise. 1Tim.5v8. Because they sought God so earnestly they received such a fullness of the Spirit, that the whole Roman empire shook under the impact of it. Avts.2v1-4. 24v5. 28v22. 17v6.

C. When Christians have a real love for one another.

There was a beautiful and genuine Christian love in the early Church, and anything that was likely to spoil this beautiful spirit, was promptly dealt with by God through the apostles. Practical matters that were causing division and friction were promptly dealt with as well so that this outstanding and beautiful love could be preserved. Acts.5v1-11. 15v35. 6v7. The fruits of the Spirit spoken of in Gal.5v22-26. and 1Cor.13v4-8., are essential in every church. It is only love that makes spiritual power a blessing, Satan's activities demonstrate how dangerous and deadly spiritual power can be if it is not directed by love. God will not bring great numbers of young converts into sinful, strife-ridden churches, for they very often die soon after birth in this kind of church, young converts have to be nourished and cherished and brought up in an atmosphere of love if they are to survive. Those converts who do survive in a sinful, strife-ridden church, very often manifest the same undesirable characteristics as their spiritual parents. We will now close these brief thoughts on love, with the words of John the apostle of love, "He that loveth not God; for God is love." 1John.4v8.

D. When Christians have a real evangelical fervour.

They just had to tell people of a risen Christ, they even made ruthless persecution an opportunity for the spreading of the Gospel. they never counted the cost of proclaiming their faith, they counted earthly prestige as nothing. they did not invite persecution, but they were prepared for it. Acts.5v40-42. 8v1-12. 11v19-22.

20v19,20. Phil.1v7,12-14. 1Thes.1v5,6. The church that is not evangelistic will die spiritually, we must obey Christ's command to go and preach the Gospel, if we are to prove the full sweetness of His, "Lo, I am with you always." Mt.28v18-20.

E. When Christians are subordinate to the Lordship of Christ.

The early Christians at Jerusalem were subordinate to the authority of God's Word and the Lordship of Christ and the leadings of the Holy Spirit. They were successful because they put into effect the commands of the Word of God and the desires of Christ, and not their own desires. They were not guided by a committee of men, but by the Scriptures, Christ and the Holy Spirit. As long as men get in the way of God the Holy Spirit, very little will be accomplished. If we insist on keeping to our programmes, we shall find that we miss the things that God has for us. How many Christians, or Christian leaders would allow the Holy Spirit to forbid some of their activities, as He did Paul in Acts.16v6-10? Owning the Lordship of Christ and the authority of the Word of God, brings real results. Acts.4v29-33. The Church has too many human designs without God's stamp of approval upon them, Christ is the head of His Church, and the Church should follow His plans and designs. The Church has got to get right with God and seek God, if the gifts are to be manifested in power. If churches think that they can import a revival by asking someone with great spiritual gifts of God to conduct meetings, they are mistaken; the churches must get right with God and seek God.

Every church should give priority to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the revealer of Christ. Jn.14v26. 16v12-15. 1Thes.5v19-21. God desires every church to be a centre of revival, salvation and healing, with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit operating in real power and love, a veritable heaven upon earth. Surely this is the meaning of 1Cor.14v1., "Follow after love and desire spiritual gifts". Christians and Christian churches should radiate God's power and love. Christ in us revealing His glory, love and compassion, and manifesting the beautiful desires of God to the world. Col.1v27. Phil.2v13. 1Cor2v16. The local church should act like a body together, the gifts being manifested first by one and then by another, to meet any need and challenge presented to it. This body ministry is the ideal that Paul talks of in 1Cor.12v4-31. Obviously an apostle or prophet will have to manifest all the gifts in doing the work that God has called them to do, but in the local church, God desires the gifts to be shared among His people, it brings a real sense of interdependence, and reduces the possibility of pride, or danger of individualism.

It is our communion with God that enables us to be a channel of His love and power. God wants us to dedicate ourselves to liberating Satan's captives. God wants to reveal to us the power that is ours in Christ. Lk.10v19. Mt.28v18-20. Eph.1v19,20. Be as positive that God is, and God's Word is. God wants to use YOU, and in Christ you can always be the victor, and triumph in Him. 2Tim.1v7. How big is your God? You can have faith to remove mountains by communing with God, for with God all things are possible. Mt.19v20. Do not let the mountains master you; you master them by the grace of God. Mountains are our opportunity to prove that God is a God that specialises in doing the impossible. God loves threshing the mountains with worms. Is.41v14-16. Your communion with God makes the impossible, possible. As a Christian you can have dominion over sin, the world, flesh and Devil, they are not to have dominion over you. Rom.8v1-17. 1Jn.5v4. The soldiers said of Christ, "Never man spake like this man". The authority and power of Christ's preaching was the result of His victorious living and communion with His Father. Jn.7v46. Christian preachers will have the same anointed, soul feeding authoritative ministry, if they will live victoriously for Christ. However, whether we be a preacher or not, we can make every day a wonderful and victorious day if we make the Lord Jesus Christ the centre of our day and live in communion with God. How rich we are in God! He shares with us His life, His truth, His faith, His authority, His power, His inexhaustible riches and His wonderful love. Let us accept Christ's challenge of communion with God and positive victorious Christian living.

2. CHRIST'S CHALLENGE TO HIS CHURCH OF SIGNS, WONDERS AND MIRACLES.

a. Christ's ministry was a continuous manifestation of signs, wonders and miracles.

God desires to astonish people and cause them to think upon spiritual things by the manifestation of His glory and presence, through signs, wonders and miracles, as He did through Christ's ministry. Mk.2v12. 4v41. 6v51. 7v37. Lk.5v26. Acts.3v10,11. However, people are not intended just to be left in amazement and wonder, the wonders and miracles in Scripture, were a sign pointing the way to God, or God's way. They are directing the watcher to Jesus and His Father. Mk.6v14. Jn.2v11. Acts.8v6. 14v3. 19v11. Rom.15v19. Heb.2v4. These signs indicate the desire of God, the presence of God, the power of God and confirm the good news of salvation in Christ. Jn.5v36. 7v21. 10v25,32,38. 14v11,12. 15v24 cf.Mt.11v2,20.

Miracles are the normal work of God, "He is fearful in praises, doing wonders". Ex.15v11. Cf. Ps.77v14. 136v4. Dan.4v2,3. God loves to do "wonderful works", "mighty works", and "miracles". Mt.11v20. Mk.6v14. Lk.10v13. Acts.2v11,22. 19v11. 1Cor.12v10,28. This is abundantly demonstrated throughout the Scriptures; acts of Divine power and gifts of revelation were given by God to fulfil His purposes. God formed His creation by supernatural power. He guided, protected, and gave Abraham children by a miracle. Abraham's and Sarah's faith were strengthened by the manifestations of Divine grace, power and revelation. Gen.17v15-19. 18v1-15. Heb.11v11. God equipped Moses with signs and wonders to convince Pharaoh and the Israelites that God had sent Him and that His message was true. Ex.3v12. 4v1-9. 7v9,10. God gave Gideon signs of His presence and will. Judges.6v11-40. 7v9-14. Samuel gave Saul signs that God had appointed him to be king over Israel. 1Sam.10v1-9. The unknown prophet gave a sign that the worship of the golden calves of Jeroboam was an abomination to God. 1Kings.12v28. 13v1-5. Elijah called fire from heaven to show that the Lord was God. 1Kings.18v36-39. Indeed, the ministry of the prophets consisted of a continual manifestation of signs, wonders

and miracles, through the gifts of revelation and power. It is a remarkable fact that on occasions, even angels gave signs to convince people of the truth of their words. Judges.6v21,22. 13v15-21. Lk.1v18-20,59-65. 2v12.

b. God gave signs through the Old Testament prophets, and the Jews expected this of any prophet.

Paul said, "The Jews require a sign", and the Jews asked Christ, "What sign showest thou"? 1Cor.1v22,23. Mt.12v38. 16v1. Jesus would not pander to their unbelieving demand of a personal sign from God, for He had already given them a multitude of signs through healings and miracles. The apostle Paul also tells us that signs and wonders were the means by which the Gentiles were convinced of the truth of His message. These signs and wonders were the normal spiritual equipment of an apostle, and they were, and are, needed by every local church. Rom.15v18,19. 2Cor.12v12. 1Cor.12v31. 14v1.

We read in James.5v14,15., that elders of local churches are to possess the spiritual power to pray for the sick in their church AND SEE THEM HEALED, so we should expect all the other ministries of Eph.4v11., i.e. apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers, to pray for the sick and see them healed. Obviously, some ministries are more powerful and more specialised in their ministry to the sick, than others, but every New Testament leader and elder was expected to have a ministry towards the sick. Even deacons in the early Church did mighty works of healing. See Stephen and Philip. Acts.6v1-15. 8v5-8.

However, in spite of the example of the ministry of Christ and His early Church, many Christians say, "I don't believe in spiritual gifts. I don't need any supernatural revelation. I don't believe in signs, they are only demanded by an evil generation". It is true that Christ refused to give the sensational sign demanded by the sceptics, but He manifested a multitude of Scriptural signs before the sceptics, which were more than sufficient to convince the sincere seeker. The sceptic is not really looking for a sign; they do not want to repent and are looking for an excuse to reject the truth. Those who repent of their sins and accept Christ and His Word, will accept the signs and wonders manifested through the healing of the sick. Christ appealed to miracles and healings that He did as signs that proved His authority, and He promised the people more of them to help them believe. Jn.5v20,35-37. 10v37,38. Mt.12v38-42. Do away with the signs and wonders in the Bible and all you have left are the accounts of human failure, sin and unbelief. Do away with signs and wonders for today, and you impudently affirm that God is, "The Great I Was", and not the "Great I Am", but our God and our Christ are the same in their compassion, consecration, activities, and abilities. Heb.13v8.

When Jesus stated in Jn.4v48., "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe. He was stating the fact that many people will not believe in the goodness of God, or the willingness of God to meet their need, without some supernatural evidence. Jesus, therefore, did many signs to encourage people to have faith in God for the healing of their souls and bodies, the greatest of these being the resurrection of Lazarus. Jn.11v42,45. And when the Lord Jesus sent the 12 apostles and seventy disciples, He gave them power to do signs and wonders. Lk.9v1,2. 10v1-9. Mk.16v17,20. 2Cor.12v12. Rom.15v18-21. These signs are to encourage the faith of the beholders, and spring out of the compassion and love of God for the sinful, sick and needy. God desires to openly manifest His presence by the things that He does, God does not intend that we should apprehend spiritual things, or the Holy Spirit's presence, by blind faith alone. God desires His presence to be seen, in fact, awesomely seen, by the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. People are brought face to face with the invisible but living God, by the manifestation of His spiritual gifts. The healing of the sick, the secrets of the heart been made manifest, make it very plain that God is in the midst of His people. 1Cor.14v25. Even Simon the sorcerer was amazed at the manifestation of God via the gifts of the Spirit, in the ministry of Philip the deacon, and became a believer and many others with him.

c. The Scriptures proclaim the need of God's miracles right up to Christ's return. Acts.2v17-21.

Some have said that we do not need miracles today, because the Scriptures are all that we need in the work of God. Such teaching denies much of the experience of Christ and His early Church. The Old Testament prophets, Christ, and His early Church needed both the Scriptures and the signs and wonders that those Scriptures reveal and deem necessary. Those who hide behind a false spirituality and say, "All I need is the Scriptures," should remember that they expressly command us to earnestly seek spiritual gifts. 1Cor.14v1. Jesus said He desires to do greater works through His Church than He did while He was on earth. Jn.14v12. God wants to manifest Himself to the Church and to the world, and wants Christians to be channels of His saving and healing power. 1Cor.12v7. There is no such thing as a non-miraculous Christianity in the New Testament, indeed, the Old Testament. only manifests a miracle working God. The present non-miraculous Christianity is yet another fruit of the sin and unbelief of the dark ages of the Church and present unbelief and disobedience to the Word of God.

The fact that God does signs and wonders does not mean that everybody will automatically repent of their sins and turn to God, even the mightiest manifestations of the power and love of God fail to win some people. Jesus upbraided certain cities because they did not repent even though He had done such mighty works there. Mt.11v20-24. Like many of the Scribes and Pharisees, many of the people had clearly seen God, but they did not want Him, they hated both Christ and His Father, because their hearts were bound by a love of evil. The confirmation of the Gospel by signs and wonders and miracles is the final appeal of God to the soul, rejection of God when He is clearly seen in signs, wonders and miracles, is the final act of spiritual suicide. Jn.15v22-25. In pioneer evangelism, and in every church, it is essential that the invisible God is made visible by the things that He is doing. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds". In 1Cor.2v4,5, Paul says, "And my speech and my

preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God". Paul message of a crucified Saviour was confirmed by mighty signs and wonders and it brought great fruit in the wicked city of Corinth. 1Cor.2v1-5. The gifts of the Holy Spirit make God very real; so much so, that in the early Church, when unbelievers came into the meetings out of curiosity, or even with downright hostility, they were forced to cry, "God is in the midst of you of a truth", because of the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit. The same thing happens today where those same gifts of the Holy Spirit are manifested. 1Cor.14v24,25.

d. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are God's answer to the satanic miraculous today.

The challenging counterfeit satanic signs that are being manifested today, demand that the Church of Christ should manifest its blood-bought inheritance of mighty signs, wonders and miracles. Spiritualists, Mormons, and many other false cults have the zeal and power of Satan, and they deceive many. Even as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, and Elymas withstood Paul, they challenge the experience of the Church; God warns us to expect even greater manifestations of evil power towards the end of the age. Mt.24v11,24. 2Thes.2v8-12. The only answer to this evil is the power of God; intellectual argument alone has never been a sufficient answer to the powers of darkness. New Testament Christianity has never been mere intellectual gymnastics, it has always been God's truth confirmed by spiritual dynamics. The vast majority of churches and denominations do not desire to manifest the power of God, some are quite content to manifest the "pop" of hand-clapping, chorus singing, or sheer noise, instead of the power of God through the mighty gifts of power and revelation.

Israel, because of its sin and unbelief, ended up in captivity in Assyria and Babylon, quite unable to fulfil the wonderful purpose of God to be a blessing to the whole world. Much of Christ's church is in captivity, chained and defeated by the world, the flesh and the Devil, and God cannot use it to fulfil His beautiful desires to bring salvation and healing to the world. Many, we fear, like the Scribes and Pharisees, will only oppose the true N.T. Christianity, but some sincere hearts will accept their Christian heritage and fulfil the beautiful and wonderful purposes and desires of God. Nothing glorifies God and exalts His kingdom more than Christ manifesting His power and love through His Church by spiritual gifts, as He did while He was on earth. We thank God that Church history proves that men of faith have ministered the saving and healing power of Christ to the sick and sinful, when the rest of the Church have been plunged in unbelief and spiritual gloom. e.g. Tertullian, Irenaeus, Bernard of Clairvaux, George Fox, John Wesley, Dowie, Price, and many others. Let us follow their example and minister to this needy world the love and power of the altogether lovely God of love.

e. The need of gifts of revelation from Christ.

As we have seen, there are many reasons why God cannot heal the sick even though He earnestly desires to do so. This is where words of wisdom or knowledge, or discernings of spirits, are needed. It is sometimes necessary to have these gifts manifested so that a person's problems, and other hindrances to salvation and healing can be revealed and removed. Gifts of revelation will not only greatly encourage the faith of a person to receive healing, but they will also reveal when a person is ready to receive healing. The Lord Jesus knew that only one man at the Pool of Bethesda was ready for healing, He healed him and then hurried away. Jn.5v1-15. Paul perceived that a certain man had real living faith and was ready to be healed, so he told the man to stand and act his faith. Acts.14v9,10. Elisha knew by revelation that Naaman was not ready for healing, and that it was no good saying a prayer for Naaman's healing until he had humbled himself before God. Naaman wanted to be healed irrespective of his spiritual condition, but God would not meet him on these terms. God had to rid Naaman of his arrogant and unrepentant, "I'll try it, it is my last hope", attitude; Naaman had to humble himself and say "I will seek God and submit myself to His Word and Will". A word of wisdom showed Elisha how this was to be accomplished, and those who pray for the sick, sometimes need a word of wisdom or knowledge to bring a person to a place where they are ready for healing.

This kind of ministry places great spiritual demands upon the person praying for the sick and demands some spiritual maturity and a close walk with God. The greater ministries of Christ's Church will experience a continuous ministry of the gifts of revelation, but Paul said that the same gifts can be manifested by the local church as a body. Paul said that every child of God could prophesy even though only a few might be entrusted with a continuous prophetic ministry and have the office of a prophet spoken of in 1Cor.12v28,29. and Eph.4v11. cf. 1Cor.14v24,25,19-33. Obviously it takes time for the Lord to train and develop a person's ministry to the place where they can be entrusted with the ministry of an apostle or prophet, and it takes time for the gifts to develop in a local church. God desires that the gifts of the Spirit should be continually developing in younger Christians, so that there can be a continual manifestation of the greater gifts of the Holy Spirit. God expects the leaders in the Church to manifest the gifts of revelation in a very powerful and blessed way as the need for them arises. The continuous manifestation of the gifts of power and revelation under the direction of love, is the ultimate in Christian ministry, as the ministry of Christ demonstrates. Christians who love the sick and suffering will pray for the sick on the command of God in the Scriptures and get great results before they experience a revelation ministry. However, God intended His Church to have all the gifts operating and others developing, so that the Church is able to meet all the needs presented to it. God desires not only to heal all the sick, but also to equip His Church with all the spiritual armoury that they need, to meet the needs of the sinful, sick and suffering.

f. The need of revelation gifts to help people's faith.

The prophets were called "seers," because they had visions of God's purposes and people's needs and circumstances. This kind of ministry makes all the difference between victory and defeat, when praying for the

sick. The revelation of a person's need causes the unconverted to turn to Christ, and be converted, and causes hindrances to be removed and faith to rise in the sick, so that they can receive healing from Christ. All the Old Testament prophets had a revelation ministry and gave details of peoples lives and national events, that could only be known by supernatural revelation. God warned Abraham of the destruction of Sodom and so Abraham interceded for his nephew Lot and saved and saved his life. Gen.18v17-33. 19v1,12-17. Joseph knew of the famine of Egypt before it happened by Divine revelation. Gen.41v25-32. Moses knew of the ways and plans of God before God performed them, Israel only saw God's acts. Ps.103v7. Samuel told Saul that his Fathers asses were found, and that his Father was very concerned over his welfare, before Saul knew, and Samuel told Saul several events that were to take place on the day when Saul left him. 1Sam.9v16-27. 10v1-14. Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar about his dream and saved his life and the lives of his friends, and converted the king. Dan.2v1-49. The prophet Ahijah exposed the deception of the wife of Jeroboam. 1Kings.15v1-18. N.B. v5,6.

God told Elijah that there would be a drought for 3½ years, and how He would bring Israel back to Himself. 1Kings.17v1-24. 18v1-46. God directed Elijah to Cherith and Zarephath for provision and safety. Elijah exposed the sin of Ahab over Naboth's vineyard and foretold the death of Ahab, as did Micaiah the son of Imla. 1Kings.21v1-29. 2Chron.18v1-34. Elisha exposed and judged the sin of Gehazi, and also delivered Israel by revealing the King of Syria's secret plans to attack Israel. 2Kings5v20-27. 6v8-23. God revealed to Elisha that he would multiply the widow's oil, and that the Godly women of Shunem would have a child. 2Kings.4v1-37. There are numerous cases of the operation of the manifestation of the gifts of revelation in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Peter had the revelation that the man at the gate of the Temple was to be healed. Peter also exposed the sin of Ananias and Sapphira and brought judgement upon them. God also informed Peter that he had to go and preach Christ to the prayerful and godly Gentile Cornelius, and the angel told Cornelius the name and address of Peter, and the occupation of his host. Acts3v1-26. 5v1-11. 10v40. Ananias of Damascus was shown Paul's repentant condition and the name and address of the person with whom he was staying, and God sent Ananias to help Paul. Acts.9v1-19. Paul knew and beheld the spiritual condition of the Colossian Church and what was happening there even when he was not present. Col.2v5. We could give many more instances of the use of the gifts of revelation in the early Church, but these will suffice.

We will now consider how the gifts of revelation were manifested in the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even Jesus needed the gifts of revelation in His ministry, because He was not omniscient while He was in the human body. The Father revealed to Jesus events in the near and distant past, as well as things in the present, and near and distant future; His Heavenly Father told Jesus to stay behind in the Temple while His earthly parents went home. Lk.2v41-52. The spiritual condition of Nathanael and the women at the well were revealed by words of knowledge, and resulted in the salvation of both. Jn.1v47. 4v16-19. Jesus knew that Zacchaeus was seeking God for salvation, a word of knowledge revealed his hiding place and resulted in his conversion. Lk.19v1-10. Jesus knew of the spiritual condition of Judas and his betrayal, by a word of knowledge. Jn.6v70,71. 13v27. Jesus received a revelation that an evil spirit had caused a child of God to be ill for 18 years. Lk.13v16. He knew that a spirit had caused deafness, and that a spirit had caused dumbness and blindness. Mt.9v32-34. 12v22-24. Jesus knew that the nobleman's son was healed, and that the demon had been cast out of the Syrophenician women's daughter, even though they were a distance away. Jn.4v50. Mk.7v29. A word of knowledge revealed that a colt was tied in a certain place ready for the use of Jesus, and that a fish would supply their need for money. Mk.11v2. Mt.17v22-27. Jesus knew by revelation that a poor widow woman had put all her money in the offering, and of its great value in God's eyes. Mk.12v43. Jesus had a revelation that the household at Bethany was to be the channel of His greatest miracle, and that their trial of faith that was going to greatly glorify God. Healing was going to be withheld, but God was going to raise Lazarus from the dead. Jn.11v1-57.

Jesus also knew by revelation the thoughts and plans of those who opposed His ministry, and Christian ministers need to experience the same thing today. We read that Christ perceived their thoughts, and knew their plans to trap and kill Him by any means they could. He knew their big smiles and compliments would be followed by a devilish plan to bring His downfall, disgrace and death. Mk.2v5-8. Lk.5v22. 9v46-48. Mt.21v23-27. 22v15-41. Jn.4v1-3. 7v1,6-10,19,20. 8v37-40,59. Christ also knew by revelation that the Scribes and Pharisees attributed His ministry to Spiritualism and Satan, and so He exposed their slander and blasphemy, and showed how foolish it was to teach that Satan was bringing people into a living relationship with God. Jesus gave them the solemn warning, that if they wilfully attributed the works of God to Satan, they were in deadly danger of committing the unforgiveable sin. Mk.3v22-30. In the house of Simon the Pharisee, Christ gave a telling and wise parable to answer the critical thoughts of Simon. Lk.7v23-50. Christ always had a complete answer to the crafty theologians, because of His knowledge of the Scriptures, and the guidance of God through His gifts of revelation.

Jesus always acted under the direct guidance of His Father in His ministry, He did not plan His own way, He fulfilled His Father's plans. Jn.2v4,5. 4v4. 5v19,20,21, 30. 7v1-10. However, Christ did not demand a word of knowledge for everyone He prayed for, or for everything He did. Jesus asked how long a boy had been possessed by a demon. Mk.9v21. He walked by common sense and according to the Scriptures in meeting certain circumstances, and when He needed spiritual revelation He received it. Christ did not tell out every revelation that He received, and neither should we, we should only tell out what God tells us to. There must be dramatic results when God directs a person's ministry in the same way as the ministry of Jesus, and there is a powerful manifestation of spiritual gifts, coupled with purity of life and dedication to God.

We read in Prov29v18., "Where there is no revelation and vision the people cast off restraint and perish". Without a continual revelation of the nature, majesty and glory of God to the Church, there will inevitably be spiritual degeneration, and declension, and a reliance upon the human instead of the Divine. Spiritual degeneration is always due to the lack of a revelation and manifestation of the invisible God. In the time of the Judges, there was a most appalling spiritual backsliding and apostasy, and Judges.2v7-11., tells us the reason why. There was no longer any manifestation of the might and power of God, no open demonstration of His majesty, glory, reality and presence. The result was that the people went into gross sin and served idols. Another crisis came in the time of Samuel, the people desired a king to reign over them, they rejected Samuel and the rule of God, and desired and chose the rule of man instead. 1Sam.8v1-22. Lack of, or opposition to, God's power and revelations has always had the same effect, there is a turning to idolatry and a reliance upon the arm of the flesh instead of the arm of God. We are in great danger when we rely upon what we can see and do, and not upon what God can do for us, and human leadership takes over from the Divine. When we do this we shall find that our enemies are always stronger than we are. It is the presence and revelation of God alone that brings the victory. But as we get farther and farther away from God, we begin to rely more upon what we can do, and are less and less able to trust God for the miraculous manifestations of His presence. God does not glorify the flesh, or the abilities of the flesh, but He does delight to show His power to those who trust Him, particularly if the odds are stacked against them. And so He used Jonathan and his armour bearer, Gideon and his 300, to defeat great armies, and David the shepherd boy to defeat giant Goliath, and Christ's despised apostolic band to lay the foundation of the Church. 1Cor.1v26-31. Eph.2v19-22. The presence in the Church of all the manifestations of the Holy Spirit, means that the Church is a mighty force in the world for God.

3. CHRIST'S CHALLENGE TO HIS CHURCH THROUGH HIS GREAT COMMISSION.

a. Christ commissioned His Church to carry on the work that He had started.

Jesus stated that His Church was to evangelise the world with the same methods that He Himself had used. Divine direction through the gifts of the Holy Spirit is essential in evangelism, no one can go where God forbids them to go, or God does not direct them to go, and expect to get great results. Words of wisdom directed Philip to the Ethiopian, Ananias to Paul, Peter to Cornelius, Paul on his missionary journeys, and Christ in the choice of His apostles after a night of prayer. Acts.8v26-40. 9v10-18. 10v9-48. 13v1-4. 16v6-10. Lk.6v12,13. The Holy Spirit is sent as the guide of the Church, we must be subordinate to His Lordship and leadings. Jn.16v7-13. cf. Joshua.5v14. God will not give His power to bring the desires of a movement or a denomination to pass, God expects His Church to bring His desires to pass. Men love to rule in the place that belongs to God alone, but Christ is the Head of the Church, not a committee of men. The end of the rule of men is an unsupernatural denomination or fellowship. Many church leaders work for God in the way that they, or their denomination, or congregation, want them to, and they steadfastly resist the New Testament pattern as laid down by Christ and His apostles, that is, evangelism with the gifts of power and revelation confirming the good news of salvation in Christ.

Many ministers have greatly hindered the work of God by ascribing devilish sickness to the will of God, instead of praying for the deliverance of the sick. Sickness does not glorify God, it usually turns people against God, particularly when a tradition-bound preacher tells the sick that a devilish sickness is God's will and they must bear it patiently. It is the healing of the sick that glorifies God and brings people to God. The positive proof of Divine love seen through the healing of the sick, produces great spiritual victories, and brings people to Christ. Divine healing brings people to Christ. People realise that God is good and wants to bless them, and knowing this, they come to know, love and trust Him. People believed in Jesus when they saw the miracles that He and His followers did. Jn.2v11,23. Acts.8v4-8. Rom.15v18-20. A sign-attested ministry will bring people to Christ, who would not normally be reached by the Gospel. Jesus said that even the wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah would have repented if they had seen His mighty signs and wonders. Mt.11v20-25. The preaching of the Gospel, and the healing of the sick were inseparably joined together in His ministry. Who dare put asunder what God has joined together? No apostle was sent out without the signs of an apostle, that is, a proven ministry of signs and wonders, and yet missionaries today are sent out without the spiritual equipment that God deems essential for pioneer evangelism. 2Cor.12v11,12.

Many Christian leaders have so many jobs to do, that they are unable to give the time to waiting on God and His Word that they should do. Some work should be delegated so that the spiritual side of the church does not suffer. Acts.6v1-7. Committee machinery does not bring a revival, or fulfil Christ's great commission, no matter how necessary it may seem to be. The fulfilment of that commission can only take place when spirit-filled men and women manifest the power of God in signs and wonders and miracles, and move at the direction of Jesus.

b. Christian leaders should heal the sick not just give lectures on healing.

It is not sufficient to give lectures on faith and put the onus for healing on the sick one seeking healing, we should have the spiritual equipment, both in doctrine and spiritual gifts, to meet the needs of the sick. Jesus sent out His preachers with the responsibility of bringing healing to the sick. Mt.10v1. Lk.10v9. Jesus told the apostles to wait on God at Jerusalem, until they received further spiritual power to meet the needs of the sick. However, we do not get a ministry gift from Christ merely by fasting and praying, this may be good, but it is a practical and real love for people and God that is the most important thing, as Is.58v1-14. N.B. v6-11., makes quite clear. There are also other important things to consider, such as, integrity, humility, consecration, no love of ambition or exhibition, a complete disregard for love of money, ("Freely ye have received, freely give." Mt.10v8.), and a determination to serve, love and trust God, and to do God's will whatever the cost.

c. The miraculous ministry of the early Church manifested itself anywhere and everywhere.

The early Church did not restrict preaching and the manifestation of spiritual gifts to the confines of a building, or a healing meeting; they healed people wherever they met them, in street, house, countryside, synagogue or Temple. It is interesting to note that when the glory of God left the Temple, it fell on the "house meeting". Ezek.9v3. 10v4,18. 11v23. Acts.2v1-4. with 1v13. and Mt.23v37-39. The Emperors did not allow Christians to have any church buildings until Constantine made his "Edict of Toleration" in A.D. 313. The early Church gathered in the homes of Christians for fellowship and evangelism. Rom.16v5. 1Cor.16v19. Col.4v15. Philemon.v2. The elders, or other responsible persons supervised the meetings. Every revival has usually started in house meetings, and they still have a very important place in Christian fellowship and evangelism. A church, in God's eyes, was not, and never has been, the building where Christians meet; it is the Christians themselves that are a church. The apostles went from house to house preaching and healing the sick, Acts.5v42. 20v20., and they also made homes the centre of their evangelistic work. Acts.16v40. 17v5. 18v7. 21v8.28v30. The Church today needs to return to the example of Christ and His early Church if they are to fulfil His great commission.

4. THE CHALLENGE OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER.

a. The love, humility, sincerity, honesty and integrity of Christ present a great challenge to His Church.

When we minister to the sick and sinful we must be as loving, sincere, and honest as the Lord Jesus. Those who make praying for the sick an excuse for getting money out of people, are an abomination to God, Jesus said, "Freely ye have received, freely give". Mt. 10v8. Christ ministered out of pure love, He was transparently sincere and honest, there was no fake or make believe with Jesus. Christ never went outside His call or commission. Lk.12v13-15. Jesus had such power and authority that a quiet word or gentle touch from Him would raise the dead. A loud noise when praying for the sick is no indication that a person has any real faith, or any God-given power or authority; a person can make a great noise and have nothing, and be nothing. 1Cor.13v2,3. Nor is an eloquent prayer any indication of spiritual power and authority, for people can pray eloquently when their heart and whole manner of life is very far from God. Mk.7v6-9. It is a commission from God, sustained by communion with Him, that meets the people's needs.

It is not enough to preach the doctrine about spiritual gifts and Divine healing. This can be like a painted fire that portrays heat, but does not give it; we need a living burning fire to convey warmth, and we need a living burning faith to radiate the power of God to the needy. In James.2v14-26., James points out that it is not a dead faith in doctrinal truth, but practical application and possession of that truth that counts with God. The preaching of faith in Divine healing and spiritual gifts, without any possession of those gifts, is a dead faith that cannot deliver the needy. It is the living experience of a correct theology that brings deliverance, not a correct theology. A correct Scriptural theology is not an end in itself; it is the gateway that brings us into a living fellowship with God. Lk.11v52. 1Jn.1v1-4. Christianity is not mere intellectual gymnastics; it is the radiation of the power, beauty and glory of God through spiritual dynamics. It is not enough to say that we have a great High Priest, who lives to meet our every need; the servant of God has to communicate to others the ministries of the risen Christ, in power and deed as well as word. 1Thes.2v1-20. We have the tremendous responsibility to communicate to others the character, glory, beauty and love of God. Jesus and His apostles did this, when they ministered to the sick there was no disillusioned and disappointed crowds of sufferers leaving the meetings still sick and bitter in spirit. It is no good being a pretender, or a mere shouter, you have to love people and keep close to God to meet their need.

b. Christ's total financial integrity.

Another thing that we need to note in this materialistic age, is Christ's total financial integrity. Christ was a financially poor person, but we never read of Him taking up one offering. His great miracles of provision and healing were not looked upon as a means of self-enrichment, they were performed out of pure love, to meet peoples needs. Christ refused every opportunity to make Himself rich, and His work financially secure. When the rich young ruler came to Jesus, He said to him, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come take up the cross and follow me. Mk.10v21. Jesus never said, "Make a pledge, and put a big sum in our offering, and God will bless you." Jesus never used any of the doubtful modern means of furthering His work, He knew, "Where God guides, God provides". Jesus was totally different from some modern evangelists, whose services are monopolised by financial appeals. There is no greater sin than making the preaching of the Gospel, and praying for the sick, into a financial racket.

Jesus was content, even when He and His disciples had no money; like the occasion when Jesus had no tribute money, and His Father had to do a miracle with the coin in the mouth of a fish to meet the need, and after the money was paid, His pocket was still empty. Mt.17v14-27. No one has done so much for people with such little earthly reward as the Lord Jesus; He showed that God's gifts were free and bounteous, whereas men and Satan sell and rob. Christ was content with His Father's riches and power, and His joy was to do His Father's will, He came to serve. Jn.4v31-34. Mt.20v25-28. Humble, consecrated women paid the expenses for feeding Him and His apostles, this was all Jesus wanted. Lk.8v1-3. Jesus had no earthly wealth, yet He was truly rich. Though He was rich, for our sakes He became penniless, that we through His poverty might be made rich. 2Cor.8v9. Jesus was called many things by His evil enemies, but He was never called "a money grubber," and He was mocked by the covetous Pharisees for being so heavenly minded, and lacking in earthly ambition. Lk.16v1-15. Jesus did not build any halls to perpetuate His name and teaching, He loved people and was

content to do His Father's will. Nor did Christ have a vast literature out-reach, or have the best transport possible, He had none, He walked thousands of miles preaching the Gospel. Lk.9v57-62. All these things may have a place in the will of God, but Christ's ministry shows us that we have to do what God tells us to do, and not what we feel should be done. Christ refused to stray out of His commission to the lost sheep out of the house of Israel. He refused to act as a judge or arbitrator. Lk.12v13-15. It is not right to do something because if it seems to be good, we have to make sure that we move in the will of God. The ministry of our dear Lord Jesus proves that God's supreme priority in Christian service, is God's power and love ministering to the world in salvation and healing.

c. The perfect humility of Christ.

Though Christ did so much good, He always had a perfect humility, there was no suggestion of pride, He was meek and lowly in heart. Mt.11v28-30. The truly great are always truly meekest. God said to Moses "Thou shalt be as God to Pharaoh", and yet Moses never got proud, He was "unpuffable", even though he experienced such great manifestations of Divine power. When Jesus came down to earth, He was the meekest of all; we are His witnesses, let us act as humbly as he did, for we are quite unworthy of being the channels of His love and power. Jesus was also willing to recognise others who were doing something for God, "they that are for us are not against us". The person that gives the impression that they are the only one who is doing anything for God, is full of abominable pride. We are part of the body of Christ; individualism is a very dangerous and undesirable thing. We always need to have the humility to realise our great need of other Christians.

Christ defeated all the temptations of Satan to doubt, self-seeking, ambition and pride before He started His ministry, and He ministered with pure love to people. Mt.12v1-12. If we want a ministry that delivers the sinful, sick and needy, we can expect the same temptations as our Lord experienced from Satan, but let us serve God in the same spirit as our Saviour.

Obviously, those who are young in the faith and young in years, will have to mature before they can expect very great manifestations of God's power; the greater ministries of apostle and prophet are not given to many people. Few can stand the great persecution that comes against those who have received great gifts and ministries from God. When God uses you there are also the temptations to covetousness, jealousy, love of popularity, and pride, but spiritual gifts should be used to do only what God wants. The Devil hates God's power and purposes being manifested through spiritual gifts, for He knows that the people of God may be energetic and aggressively evangelistic, but if they do not have the manifestations of the power of God through His spiritual gifts, they will be very limited in their accomplishments.

d. A church that is sceptical about spiritual gifts, and genuine prophetic revelation, is in real danger.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are for seekers, God will not force His gifts upon Christians who don't desire them, and in fact despise them. However, be warned, unwillingness to listen to the voice of God ends in captivity. 2Chron.36v15-21. All Pastors should manifest spiritual gifts, and encourage their flocks to manifest them too. Do Christian leaders really think that they can manage without the equipment that Christ needed to fulfil His task? Jesus eagerly desired and sought His baptism in the Spirit at Jordan, and His purity, preparation, and dedication resulted in Him receiving a baptism of power without measure. Jn.3v34. We should follow His example. Jesus said, "Tarry ye until ye be endued with power from on high." Lk.24v48,49. The apostles and early Church needed to receive the baptism in the Spirit before they could be witnesses for Christ, and we need to be baptised in the Spirit before we can be the witnesses that Jesus desires us to be.

Some will say that I have laid down the Spiritual standard for an apostle or prophet and not those for an ordinary Christian. I recognise that it takes time to reach the standards that Paul lays down in 1Cor.13.; however, we can have a real measure of blessing while pressing forward to the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Phil.3v10-17. 1Jn.2v6,12-17. Paul was not an apostle when he was converted, his ministry developed; in Acts.13v1-4., we read that Paul the teacher became Paul the apostle. Paul had faithfully prepared for the work that God had given him to do and so God entrusted him with a great ministry, be faithful in what God gives you to do and God will entrust you with greater things. Above all things remember that Christ is the example of His Church, so follow the example and challenge that He has set for you regardless of what others may do.

CHAPTER 5. HEALING FROM GOD, NATURAL HEALING, AND MEDICINE.

a. God has guided and directed many godly and compassionate people into the medical profession.

Paul affectionately called Luke "the beloved physician", and he had good reason be thankful for his medical help. Col.4v14. Gal4v13. 2Cor.11v30. 12v10. 1Tim.5v23. We too have friends who are Christian doctors, who are also dearly and well beloved, "agapetos." We thank God for the knowledge of medical science and the many dedicated sympathetic doctors and nurses. One is thrilled to hear of men and women like Florence Nightingale, who have felt a very definite call from God to minister to the sick through medical science. We must not despise medical science as some foolish people have done, for "fools despise knowledge", and medical science is applied knowledge of the human body. Prov.1v7,22. 10v21. It is a good thing that there has been the advance that there has in medical knowledge, for if it had been left to the church to fulfil its commission to heal the sick, the suffering today would be infinitely greater than it is.

If people had to rely on Christian churches to bring them healing, where would they go? How many churches are known for ministry towards the sick? Very few churches advertise healing of the sick as part of their

service, and even fewer get really remarkable cases of healing. In spite of the challenge of healing from sources, which are forbidden by the Scriptures, such as Spiritualism, the major part of the Christian Church is asleep to its responsibility, and deaf to the pleadings of Christ to be a channel of His love and power. The truth is that the vast majority of Christian churches have not got the spiritual dynamic to meet the need of the sick, the church of Christ has very seldom fulfilled its commission to heal the sick. Jesus has had some very poor adverts of His matchless love and power. Many Christians have to thank God for receiving very definite help from medical science, and we thank God for this.

b. We must realise that there is a place for natural remedy in healing.

Paul advised Timothy, perhaps inspired by Doctor Luke, "Drink no longer water only, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent illnesses." 1Tim.5v23. Paul gave Timothy practical medical advice for his frequent illnesses, he did not tell him to trust God for healing, or give him a sermon on faith. Some have said that this wine was fruit juice, others have said that it is wine of olive, that is, olive oil; however, it is far more likely to be a weak wine, which would kill the bacteria in water, and would certainly be far better for people's health than the polluted and infected water that was very common in Paul's day. God told people to drink wine at Israel's feasts. Deut.14v26. However, remember Prov.20v1., "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whoever is deceived, led astray and intoxicated by it, is not wise." Paul warns us in 1Cor.6v9-12., that drunkards will be excluded from God's kingdom. What ever this wine was, it was a natural remedy, and there is certainly a place for natural remedy, for God has made the body self-healing, there are many organs in our bodies whose sole purpose is to keep us in good health. Those organs can, and do counteract successfully much illness and sickness, for we are told that 75% of people recover through natural healing. And in simple sickness we can expect God to allow this natural healing to make us well, unless our sickness is seriously disrupting our lives, or hindering the work of God.

Are you not going to use any natural helps to healing? Are you not going to eat healthy foods and vitamins? Are you going to wash and treat your hair with something that removes dandruff, if you have dandruff? Are you not going to put plaster on a cut? Are you going to have a broken limb put in a splint? Are you going to have qualified help for the delivery of a child? The answer to all of these questions is a definite "Yes." God wants us to use our common sense and aid the natural healing of the body. Ps.32v8,9. God can, and has healed people of colds and broken limbs, but He more often allows the natural healing processes that He has put in the body to heal the body. Much of medical science is designed to aid the natural healing processes of the body. Many medical treatments consist of advice on diet, rest, work, etc., and everyone can see the value of this. Other medical treatment may consist of the taking of drugs, these may greatly benefit the person, or sometimes they can produce serious side effects, for what is good for one person is bad for another. Careful medical supervision reduces the possibility of danger from a person being allergic to drugs. Certainly there are many drugs, which have saved millions of people from an early death and much suffering, and we can thank God for this. The aim of medical science is to aid the natural healing processes of the body and surely God desires that Christians should use the best of both worlds. Don't let us make a belief in Divine healing an excuse for fanaticism. The writer has known some Christians who have been troubled for years through fear of a dread disease, when a simple diagnosis from a doctor has shown that fear to be groundless.

c. God gave advanced medical advice to Israel in the Law.

When God gave the promise of healing in Ex.15v26. to Israel, it was conditional upon them keeping the Law that God had given to them. These laws included sensible natural aids to health, and prevention of disease by good medical practice, God gave medical advice on, rest and work, Lev.23v1-44. 25v1-24. with Mk. 2v23-28.; hygiene and sterilisation, Lev.11v32,39,40. 15v1-33.; sanitation, Duet.23v12,13.; quarantine, Lev.13v1-59. Numb.5v1-4.; and diet, Lev.11v1-47. These health laws were put rigorously into practice in peace and war. Num.31v19-24. Joshua.7v18-26. Much of the law was given to preserve health by the observance of good medical practice. God laid down laws of medicine, which are recognised and practised by the medical profession today. The Jews experienced good health by practising God's medical Law, as well as by definite spiritual healing.

In spite of this kind of evidence from the Scripture, some Christians feel that they must trust God completely as their physician, this is obviously a matter of personal faith and conscience, however, on many occasions a Christians determination not to seek or follow medical advice for their condition has resulted in them dying prematurely, when medical help would have saved them. This is certainly not glorifying to God. Such people should not dictate their own conscience and faith to others, but respect the faith and conscience of other Christians, who do not feel that the taking of drugs, medicine, or surgery, is not inconsistent with faith in Christ. It is obviously wrong for a Christian to go to the other extreme and pin all their faith on doctors, and none, or very little, in God. However, fanaticism should be avoided like the plague; and we should remember that it is both unchristian and foolish to treat the knowledge and abilities of the medical profession with disrespect. Fools despise wisdom and knowledge. Prov.1v7,22. 2v29. 8v10. 23v9. Sound medical knowledge is as precious as gold. Prov.8v10-12. Medicine, like a merry heart, doeth good. Prov.17v22.

N.B. Procrastination in calling medical help in severe sickness is foolish and dangerous.

When severe sickness comes, we must call a doctor immediately, and after this we should contact praying Christians, and ask them to pray into the situation. We must ask for medical help for the following reasons.

1. We must have love as well as faith. and we should try to help our loved ones, and stop their illness and suffering by all the means at our disposal. We should use the best of both worlds.

2. We need common sense as well as faith. Ps.32v9. We must recognise that the Scriptures say that medicine, like a happy disposition, does good. Prov.17v22. "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones." God's Word informs us that there will even be medicine in God's eternal kingdom we read in Ezek.47v12., "Along the bank of the river, on this side and that, will grow all kinds of trees used for food; their leaves will not wither, and their fruit will not fail. They will bear fruit every month, because their water flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and **their leaves for medicine.**" This thought is repeated in Rev.22v2., "In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. **The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.**" "Healing," is the noun "therapeia," which primarily means service, care or attention, it is used in the sense of care of a household in Lk.12v42.; however, "therapeia" is especially used of medical service and healing, indeed we get our English word "therapy," from it. Luke uses "therapeia" for healing in Lk.9v11., where he states, "But when the multitudes knew it, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing, "therapeia." Seeking God for healing should be a priority for us as Christians, but we must also recognise the place that God gives to natural healing and medicine, and remember the wise words of Solomon in Prov.17v22., "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." Medicines can do good, and save lives, so do not be fanatical over Divine healing, and refuse medical help.

3. We have to make sure that we don't give cause for reproach, and fanaticism gives a very good reason for reproach. As Christians we are "to submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake,-- for so is the will of God; that with well doing we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Titus.3v1. 1Pet.2v13-15. Let no Christian make faith an excuse for fanatical folly. However, Christians should come to Christ first for healing, and then on many occasions they would not have to worry the doctor for treatment. In some cases the continuance of medical treatment becomes no longer necessary because Christ has healed a person while they were under medical supervision. Our Lord is glad to do this. Christ healed the woman who had spent all her money on doctor's bills, He was quite willing to do this after the doctors had done their best and failed, He is the same today.Mk.5v25-34. Christ never upbraided people for resorting to medicine or doctors. cf. Mt.9v12. The sin of Asa and Ahaziah was that they entirely omitted seeking God's help when they were sick, and their sin was the greater because they were the leaders of God's people. 2Chron.16v12,13. 2Kings.1v1-18.

Obviously, the very best attempts by man can never compare with healing from the Creator and great physician, Jesus Christ. Human doctors, with all their abilities and good intentions, have their limits, but God has no limits, He can do anything, He can heal a diseased organ that the doctors can only remove by surgery. There are definite limitations upon the effectiveness of medicine, drugs and surgery, but God has no limits, unless it be that He is limited by the state of our lives and the condition of our faith. I have been told that when revival came to Ruanda, the doctors had next to nothing to do, the people got right with God and the result was health and healing.

We can be quite sure that God is more desirous of seeing us well, and more able to make us well than anyone else, no matter how able or gracious they may be.

NOTE:

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