

The King Who Heals

Matthew 8:14-17

Introduction

In Matthew 8 we see a series of miracles. Jesus cleanses a leper (vv.1-4); heals the centurion's servant (vv.5-7) and now Peter's mother-in-law (vv.14-15) and a number of people who are demon possessed (v.16). One again the touch of Jesus provides healing and that healing leads to grateful service (v.15). The word of Jesus leads to deliverance from spiritual oppression, and demonic possession.

The Bible contains numerous stories of miraculous healing; in the Old Testament a Syrian General is cleansed of leprosy; in the New Testament we read about a man at Capernaum, lowered from a roof (Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:18-25); the man who was healed by the pool at Bethesda (John 5:1-8); the woman in the synagogue who had suffered for some 18 years (Luke 13:10-13) and the man at Lystra whom Paul healed (by the power of the Holy Spirit—an act for which Paul was later stoned—Acts 14:8-10).

We all could tell stories of loved ones in pain in desperate need of healing. We all want healing; for ourselves, our loved ones. It is hard to be clinical or even theological when your child or grandchild is writhing in pain. Years ago I took Anthony to the Emergency Room. He was writhing in pain. Anthony got a bed and an IV drip. His pain increased. They gave him a morphine drip and still cried in pain. My heart was crushed. My son was in horrible pain and there was nothing I could do to relieve that pain. I prayed. I prayed as hard as I have ever prayed in my life. Something was causing him pain. Something internal in his abdomen. I knew it wasn't his appendix (it was already gone). Scar tissue had wrapped around his large intestine and caused his bowel to shut down. The doctor had to remove the aggravating tissue. In the surgical ward, a woman cried as she heard her father openly weep from the pain of an infected wound. She had never seen her father cry before. It shook her up.

What is the truth about God healing people? The Bible teaches that God Himself is the source of healing. Jeremiah 17:14; "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; Save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise". God has the sovereign right to heal or not heal. Jesus had both power and authority to heal. Power means the ability to do something. Authority speaks of the right to do certain things or refrain from doing certain things. When servants of Jesus act under His authority and power healing occurs. The Bible gives at least four reasons to believe and expect healing;

1. Because of God's identity—He is Jehovah Rapha (or ropheca) Exodus 15:26
2. Because of what Christ has done on the Cross Isaiah 53:3-4
3. Because of what He promised James 5:15
4. Because of what The Holy Spirit can do Romans 8:11

The King Who Heals

Matthew 8:14-17

Healing With A Touch (vv.14-15)

Matthew 8:14–17 (NKJV) 14 Now when Jesus had come into Peter's house, He saw his wife's mother lying sick with a fever.

Where was Peter's house located? In Capernaum. John's gospel tells us that Andrew and Peter were brothers from Bethsaida (John 1:44). Mark tells us Peter's house was in Capernaum. Does this indicate a contradiction? On the surface one might think so—but there is a simple explanation. Peter moved. He loaded up the wife—the kids—and the mother-in-law and moved to Capernaum. One Bible teacher explains that Peter moved from the place of occupational prosperity to be closer to Jesus and His ministry.

Does it shock you that Peter was married? Forbidding marriage and exalting celibacy over marriage was not a part of the early church. According to church tradition Peter's wife was an important partner to him in ministry and died a martyr's death the very same day that Peter died (see Barclay p. 307).

Mark's gospel includes the fact that the healing took place on the Sabbath Day (1:21). "Now as soon as they had come out of the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, **and they told Him, about her at once.** So He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and immediately the fever left her. And she served them".

The word 'fever' means fire. Apparently the fever was high—enough to incapacitate. The disciples began the very good practice of asking Jesus—for help. Jesus is our first source for healing. Remember healing in the Bible is a restoration to wholeness or wellness. Matthew's gospel omits the information about asking Jesus. Once again we are given no information about the mother-in-law—her prayer life or personal life. No conditions are asked. Some people are taught that if they believed harder or generated more prayer or faith—then Jesus might heal them. I find no evidence in the Bible to support such a statement or belief. Can hardness of heart and unbelief restrict God's work? Perhaps—but it cannot restrict His love or force His hand or undermine His sovereignty. **I believe God can heal anyone—even if they don't believe. I would also point out that Jesus withheld certain works on the basis of certain people's unbelief. With the leper, the centurion and here Matthew leaves us with the impression that Jesus wants to help—wants to heal.**

15 So He touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she arose and served them.

Jesus heals with a personal tender touch. In those days, people believed the fever was the illness, not just the symptom of the disease. Again, they feared touching the person, thinking they might be defiled. D.A. Carson writes; "...the touch did not defile the healer but healed the defiled" (p. 204).

The King Who Heals

Matthew 8:14-17

Jon Courson writes; “You can always tell a person who has been touched by Jesus, because that person will begin to minister. When you are touched by the Lord, you can’t help but say, ‘who can I reach out and help’” (p.212). She was saved to serve (Barclay). God did not save you and heal you to remain idle. He saved us to serve. Peter’s mother-in-law was not healed because she served—but rather healed to serve. This is important. Good deeds did not release God’s grace and mercy. Grace and mercy released the one afflicted!

Has Jesus touched you? Has Jesus healed you? Has your response to his touch been grateful service to others? Are you sick? Have you considered linking yourself to the resources that bring healing? Peter’s mother-in-law was healed with a touch, and healed totally. Jesus did not have to tell her to claim her healing or stand on her healing if her symptoms returned. The fact that the woman serves after her healing speaks to the completeness of the healing and the gratitude in her heart.

There seems to be three groups of people who enjoy God’s special attention:

1. **The brokenhearted.**
2. The repentant.
3. The faithful.

In Psalm 147:3 we read; “He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds”. In 2 Chronicles 7:14 we read; “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” In Malachi 4:2 the prophet says; “But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves”.

The leper came directly to Jesus. The centurion’s servant was healed as a result of the centurion’s request. Here Jesus goes directly to the woman and touches her. Do you know what that means? We can go directly to Jesus for healing. We can go on behalf of others. And Jesus can go to anyone, anywhere, anytime he pleases.

Healing With A Word (v.16)

16When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick,

Note—and He cast out the spirits with a word. By now you realize that Matthew is thrilled with the word that Jesus speaks. To put it differently—or in a simple way—Matthew treasures the word that Jesus speaks; Mark the works—that Jesus does—and Luke—the mission that Jesus accomplishes and John appreciates the person of Jesus (Bruner p.310).

The King Who Heals

Matthew 8:14-17

Remember this was a Sabbath Day. When evening came—the Sabbath was over and all the sick from all over town showed up at Peter’s house. Healing on the Sabbath was forbidden—but you could take emergency measures to keep a person from getting worse—but you could take no steps to make a person better! Matthew tells us that many were demon-possessed and Jesus healed them with a word. This is one of the amazing aspects of the ministry of Jesus—demons are subject to Him.

The fact that Jesus will confront demonic powers sets the stage for future acts of power and revival. Can people be controlled by demons? According to the Bible the answer is yes. The Bible teaches that some illnesses are linked to direct demonic activity. Demon possessed people respond to the power, the authority and the word of God.

One word from Jesus can really transform a life. We live in a culture that broadly rejects the supernatural and malevolent demonic activity. But the Bible teaches there is a supernatural world; and that angels and demons are real.

What are the characteristics of a demonized culture? Idolatry, spirit guides, rampant sexual immorality. Look at the world of Noah before the flood. Look at Sodom and Gomorrah. Peter describes Lot’s experience of living in Sodom; that he “was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard” (see 2 Peter 2:7b,8).

Paul writes that foolish hearts are darkened—in all fairness Paul describes the Gentile culture as a group of people who knew God (Rom. 1:18-20); but refused to glorify Him as God (1:21-23); changing the truth of God (1:24-25); rejecting the knowledge of God (1:26-32); and so God gave them up to uncleanness and idolatry; God gave them up to vile passions; God gave them up or gave them over to a reprobate mind. People know that sin will be judged but they take pleasure in it anyway. Were it not for the Gospel of Jesus and the power of Jesus and the grace of Jesus we would be slaves to sin ourselves. In John’s gospel we read; “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (John 12:31).

“and healed all who were sick”

Jesus has the power to help all—the emphasis is on all! There is no need—no desperate circumstance that lies beyond the ability of Jesus to help. Jesus has power over disease as well as demons.

Fatigue must have been a factor at some point. Yet we never read “Jesus was too tired to help”. Jesus never saw people or their need as a nuisance. The Scriptures never distinguish between the private Jesus and the public Jesus. I wonder how many people were there because they loved Jesus or how many people were there because they loved what Jesus could do for them.

The King Who Heals

Matthew 8:14-17

Is it wrong to want to get something from the Lord? **We all ask for things from God.**

For some people—that is their relationship with the Lord. A series of ongoing requests.

There are some people in the so called faith movement who have a genuine love for the Lord Jesus Christ—but fail to see that God is sovereign and will sometimes withhold healing for reasons known only to God. There are still others who rarely if ever ask God for healing—either because they really don't believe God can heal—or worse—believe God can heal—but have resigned themselves to believe that God won't heal them.

Does God really ask people to get in one of two lines; one line for those He will heal; and one line for those who can only look forward to disappointment?

Healing With The Word (v.17)

17that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses.”

The passage Matthew cites is Isaiah 53:4; “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God and afflicted”.

The language Isaiah uses in the original Hebrew are words of sacrificial significance (see W.H. Griffith Thomas p.111; *Outline Studies in Matthew*). Griffith Thomas suggests that Matthew is hinting at Christ's future atonement; but the application in this context points to Christ's ministry of healing; what he calls “His sympathetic entrance into human suffering.”

He writes; “Matthew uses physical words, “infirmities” and “diseases” while Isaiah's reference was to mental “griefs” and “sorrows”; yet all are connected, as causes and effects, with sin on one hand (cf. Isa. 53:5), and with death on the other (cf. vs.8,9), so it is possible to think of both passages as applicable to Christ's healing miracles as well as to His atoning death” (see p. 111).

Isaiah 53 is quoted by other New Testament writers as a picture of the ministry and death of the Messiah (1Peter 2:24). “But strictly speaking Isaiah 53:4 speaks of the Servant's bearing infirmities and carrying sicknesses; and it is only the context, plus the connection between sickness and sin, that shows that the way he bears the sickness of others is through his suffering and death” (D.A. Carson p. 205).

Matthew applies this to the work that Jesus does in his ministry, not the work he does on the cross. Until now, if you have been reading Matthew's gospel carefully, you may not have thought that Jesus was *carrying anything*. When Jesus touches the leper, heals the gentile, touches the woman, Jesus does not seek to avoid infection or avoid confrontation with the powers of man or demons.

Some have interpreted this Scripture (Isaiah 53:5) to mean that God must heal all people at all times. **But is that true?**

The King Who Heals

Matthew 8:14-17

*“But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.”*

The word healed is *rapha* which can mean a physical or spiritual healing. The real question we should ask is—does Isaiah under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit have physical or spiritual healing in mind? Wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities would seem to indicate sins as the primary meaning. 1 Peter 2:24-25 “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”

Peter makes it plain that the healing referred to in Isaiah is spiritual. Hank Hanegraaf in his book “Christianity in Crisis” suggests the following argument: for the sake of argument suppose Isaiah 53:5 does refer to healing. Does it follow that God must heal everyone every time? If healing is in the atonement and is accessed by faith, then those who die due to a lack of faith must remain in their sins. They die without hope. Why? Because if healing and salvation are included in this passage, they must be accessed the same way. And if one does not have enough faith to make oneself well, it follows that he cannot have enough faith to be saved” (p.241).

Some misguided faith teachers insist that healing is a right and not a privilege. Kenneth Hagin wrote; “I believe that is the plan of God our Father that no believer should ever be sick. . .It is not—I boldly state—it is not the will of God my Father that we should suffer with cancer and dread diseases which bring pain and anguish. No! It is God’s will that we be healed.”

The problem with Mr. Hagin’s statement is that it is not true. By his admission and his own testimony he was diagnosed with a heart problem and what he called an incurable blood disease. He died September 19th 2003 at age 86 from cardiovascular disease.

The Bible does not guarantee unlimited health or wealth. But the Bible does promise comprehensive healing at the final resurrection. We have a gracious Father. He loves us. We serve a sovereign God—He loves us—but He will not be manipulated by us through bad teaching or bad theology. The Bible teaches that God is concerned about sickness and is willing to do something about it.

But the Bible also has a lot to say about suffering; reasons for suffering; reactions to suffering and the sources of suffering. We know that suffering can be caused by satanic activity; ungodly people; living in this world’s broken system; and our own fallen nature.

The Bible teaches that God heals. The Bible teaches that we can ask for healing and even expect healing but the Bible does not teach that we can demand physical healing every time.

The King Who Heals

Matthew 8:14-17

An enthusiastic believer in Christ; Dan Richardson lost his battle with cancer. But his life demonstrated that even though the physical body may be destroyed by disease, the spirit cannot remain triumphant. This poem was distributed at his funeral service;

Cancer is so limited. . .

It cannot cripple love,
It cannot shatter hope,
It cannot corrode faith,
It cannot eat away peace,
It cannot destroy confidence,
It cannot kill friendship,
It cannot shut out memories,
It cannot silence courage,
It cannot invade the soul,
It cannot reduce eternal life,
It cannot quench the Spirit,
It cannot lessen the power of the resurrection.

Conclusion

Should the Christian seek healing? Physical illness; spiritual oppression; demonic influences? God has made it clear that we can and should seek answers to our prayers including healing for our loved ones and ourselves. God has declared Himself to be the Healer of His people. Sickness reveals a spiritual condition that requires a spiritual solution. James 5:15; “and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins they shall be forgiven him.”

The Word of God is living and active—sharper than any double edged sword, it penetrates even to the dividing of soul and spirit; joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account (Heb. 4:12-13).

The following is a wonderful prayer by Norwegian theologian Ole Hallesby:

“Lord, if it will be to Your glory, heal suddenly. If it will glorify You more, heal gradually; if it will glorify You even more, may your servant remain sick awhile; and if it will glorify Your name still more, take him to Yourself in heaven.”