

Is Healing For Today

Jamie McNab 5/18/02

Well, good afternoon brethren.

One of the benefits of speaking to God's people is that if you are the speaker, you actually get the choice of choosing what you are going to talk about. So today I have chosen a subject which I am particularly interested in, and also one which I think is relevant to just about all of us, at least in my experience. It is a topic I chose to talk about two years ago at the conference in America. I have not spoken about it since that time, and the number of times recently that I have had people phone up and ask for anointing has led me to think it might be worth while doing a study on the subject of healing.

So today I have chosen that subject and I entitled this sermon "Is Healing for Today?", because I think healing is something that most of us who are human beings, and that is of course most of us, are quite interested in.

Sickness and ill health does seem to be a problem in this world and often among God's people too, and the benefit of having a God who heals is really quite precious. So I would like to look closely today at the subject of "Is Healing for Today?"

I would like to start, if we would take our Bibles, and turn to Psalms 103. Starting in verse 1, in this Psalm we read. "**Bless the LORD, O my soul and all that is within me, bless His holy name.**" This is a Psalm of David and you can see here that David is exalting really.... He has something that is really on his mind and his emotions bless and praise the LORD God as he says. Now why is that? Verse 2, "**Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.**" So here are some of the benefits of having the LORD as our God. "**Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases...**" So a benefit of our God is that He will forgive our iniquities, which we are all quite familiar with.

I think most of us do sin from time to time and go to God for forgiveness, and equally, says David, this same God who heals our iniquities has as a benefit "**who heals all your diseases.**" If we look

across at, say verse 13, it says, "**As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him.**"

You know God understands what we are like. We are not a mystery to the Eternal God. Verse 14, "**For He knows our frame...**" The margin says "He understands" our frame. He knows that we are physical flesh and blood, that at times we are quite weak.

He remembers that we are dust, just physical. "**As for man, his days are like grass; As the flower in the field, so he flourishes, For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, And its place remembers it no more. But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children.**" So God's mercy, it tells us there, is from the beginning to the end, from everlasting to everlasting, from this Being who understands that we are physical and fleshly and at times weak. God understands us in that sense. And this mercy it says in verse 18, is: "**to such as keep His covenant, And to those who remember His commandments to do them.**" So there is a limitation in a sense in this particular set of verses we are reading of here.

These benefits we read about are to those who have made covenant with their God, those in a special relationship, and those it says who know His commandments and actually remember them, and keep them. Hopefully that would apply, one would hope, to those in God's true church today. Surely of all people, we have a covenant with the LORD God, and surely, of all people, we remember His commandments, such as the Sabbath day, today, and we do them. Therefore we can perhaps expect that the benefits mentioned in verse 3 would apply to us.

There is a great deal of sickness, certainly in the world today, and in Britain and America, no doubt, and even in the church you hear of a great deal of sickness and illness and so on. How should we look at sickness? What should our attitude be toward sickness and ill health? Should we fear It? Should we be fearful over a critical illness such as cancer? Are we

powerless in this random kind of circumstance when we are struck down by some disease and we are dead before you know it? Or should we have faith that we have Somebody special to go to if we are ill.

Let's remember God's nature. Turn to Psalms 145. Let's just remind ourselves that there is a Being who has called us and a Being whom we worship and a Being that David worshipped and praised for His benefits. Psalms 145, starting in verse 1, "**I will extol you, my God, O king; And I will bless your name for ever and ever. Every day I will bless you, And I will praise your name for ever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; And His greatness is unsearchable.**" This as a great Being that David is praying to and exalting, and of course is our God too .

Verse 5: "**I will meditate on the glorious splendor of your majesty, And on your wondrous works. Men shall speak of the might of your awesome acts, And I will declare your greatness. They shall utter the memory of your great goodness, And shall sing of your righteousness. The LORD is gracious and full of compassion, Slow to anger and great in mercy.**" This is our God we are reading about here, not some strange being . This is the LORD God of us all. It says He is gracious and full, full to overflowing, of compassion and great in mercy.

Verse 9: "**The LORD is good to all and His tender mercies are over all His works.**" Now that should give us some inclination of the nature of this great Being. He is not a hard and ruthless taskmaster, to whom you must sacrifice oxen and goats everyday to keep him at peace. This Being, the one described here by David, is a Being who is full of compassion, kindness and mercy. It says, "**tender mercies over all His works.**"

Dropping down to verse 17, "**The LORD is righteous in all His ways, Gracious in all His works. The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.**" And again, surely, of all people on the earth today, the people of God, in God's own church, named after God after all, the Church of God, surely

we of all people can call upon this Being in truth.

And it says in verse 18, ***“The LORD is near.”*** Not far off but near. Verse 19, ***“He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; HE also will hear their cry and save them.”*** Or we might say ***“hear their cry and heal them,”*** because the word for save and heal is pretty much the same both in Hebrew and in Greek. The LORD ***“will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He will hear their cry and save”*** (or heal) ***“them.”*** David is trying to get across there that the Eternal God is a good God. He is a gracious Being. He is filled with compassion and tender mercies and He is a very near God who wants us to come to Him. He wants to fulfill our desires, if we ask Him in truth and if we remember His commandments, of course, to do them.

So that is the Being we are coming to when we are looking for healing, the great God who has a tremendous attitude towards us. Now, most Christians believe that God is very powerful. In fact, probably most non-Christians believe that, if there is a God, He would be a very powerful Being. And most of us believe that God can do anything. Oh yes, He **can** heal !

The question that most people who doubt ask is, **“Will** God heal? We know He **can**. He can do anything He wants. He is all powerful, but **will** He heal? Will He heal **me**? I know He could heal me. I know that He has the ability, but I just wonder if He has the willingness to heal, and especially to heal me?” The Bible will give us the answer. We could speculate about “is God willing or not”, but why speculate when the Bible makes it pretty plain what God’s attitude is?

If we turn to Matthew, chapter 4, we will start looking at a few scriptures that show Jesus in action, when He was on the earth. You know the saying that says, “Actions speak louder than words”. That’s very true. If we watch Jesus in action, what He does pretty much gives us an idea about the attitude that Jesus Christ had. If we also remember that Jesus only did His Father’s will, when we see Jesus doing something, it is the same as if the Father were here. He would have done the very same thing, because Jesus and the Father

share the same outlook. They have the same mind. They have the same will.

So turn to Matthew Chapter 4. We have about seven scriptures dealing with this particular point, that Jesus was always willing to heal.

So we are trying to see now in the next few scriptures that, as Jesus **can** heal, God **can** heal, the question we have to answer is **“Will** He heal?”

Matthew chapter 4, verse 23, ***“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.”*** So the impression you get there is that it doesn’t matter what you bring to Jesus, what type of sickness or disease, all different kinds, He heals them all. It is not limited, just blindness or leprosy, but anything.

Verse 24, ***“Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, and epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them.”*** The only implication there is that He healed them **all**. Whoever was brought to Jesus, He healed them. He didn’t go out looking for them, of course, that is also implied there, but when they were brought to Jesus, because of His great goodness, His tender compassions, His great kindness, His desire for people to enjoy the good things and the benefits, He healed them all

Turn to Matthew, chapter 8, verse 14, ***“Now when Jesus had come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick with a fever.”*** (so we know that Peter was therefore married), ***“So He touched her hand and the fever left her. And she arose and served them. When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick...”*** I have that word “all” highlighted in pale green in my Bible because it is an important word! It is a very small word but it says that Jesus healed all.

He didn’t pick and choose who to heal and turn some away and say, “No, I’m not healing you. You are a bad person” or,

“I’m not healing you. You’ll learn a few more lessons if you stay sick another eighteen months.” If they came, He healed all who were sick.

Again, let’s turn to Matthew chapter 12. We are looking here at Matthew 12, verse 15, ***“But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all.”*** And, again, I have the word “all” highlighted in pale green. ***“...Great multitudes”*** --so we are talking about not just 5, or 10, or 20, or 30 people. In my mind, at least, great multitudes probably means several thousand, and among those several thousand many, many who were ill in one form or another; and it says here, ***“He healed them all.”*** All of them.

Turn to Matthew, chapter 14, verse 34. And again, we are just looking to see, what did Jesus do. What were His actions? And remember, always, that what Jesus did, he did because the Father in Him did the works, and He always had the same mind and attitude as the Father. So we can even see the Father’s will being expressed here by Jesus’ own actions.

Verse 34: ***“When they had crossed over, they came to the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place recognized Him, they sent out into all that surrounding region, and brought to Him all who were sick, and begged Him that they might only touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched it were made perfectly well.”*** So all in that region who were sick were brought there, and as many as could touch His garment were made perfectly well. All. And you can see there, by the way, the level of faith that they had. They believed that they had to touch His garment. That was in their mind a necessity, “If we can touch His garment we will be healed.”; and that is how they expressed their faith. ***“According to your faith be it done unto you.”*** Their faith was that, “if we touch His garment we will be healed”

Other times people said, “if You just say the word, Jesus, we know it will happen.” Others wanted Jesus to put oil on them, or to make a spit ball, and so on. People’s levels of faith were sometimes quite different, but here they had in their mind the belief “if we can just touch the hem of

His garment.” ***“And as many as touched it were made perfectly well.”***

If we turn to Matthew, chapter 15, verse 29, we read: ***“And Jesus departed from there, skirted the Sea of Galilee, and went up on the mountain and sat down there. Then”*** (once again) ***“great multitudes came to Him, having with them the lame, blind, mute”*** (so they couldn’t speak), ***“maimed”*** (my margin says “crippled”), ***“and many others; and they laid them down at Jesus’ feet, and He healed them. So the multitude marveled when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel.”*** When you look in there, it’s a whole multitude of ill people and sick people, some quite seriously, like crippled people who can’t walk. Perhaps their hands and arms were all crippled and bent, unable to be used; people who were blind and having to be led by the hand by friends or family; others who had never spoken in all their lives, who just couldn’t speak, they were mute. These people are brought in large numbers to where Jesus is, and it says that Jesus healed the mute, the blind, the lame. There are tremendous miracles there, because that was in Jesus’ heart, because of His compassion and His kindness and His tender mercies to do these things.

If we turn to Luke, chapter 4, verse 40, we read, ***“Now when the sun was setting”*** (this was at the end of a Sabbath day, I believe) ***“all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them.”*** So here we can see that Jesus laid His hands on every one, all of them, who were sick, and healed them, all of them, every one. Again here you can see that Jesus laid His hands on, whereas in the previous couple of verses, they wanted to touch His garment. People’s understanding of what had to be done was a bit different, but Jesus responded to the faith of the people. Here perhaps they believed He would put hands on, and they would be healed, and so Jesus did that, and they were all healed.

Luke, chapter 6, verse 17: ***“And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him***

and be healed of their diseases.....” So again we see a great multitude, presumably several thousand people.

Verse 18: ***“as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all.”*** So once again, it is fairly plain so you can’t miss the point, I think, that if you came to Jesus and you were sick, you were healed.

There is no example anywhere that I am aware of where Jesus didn’t heal. Jesus’ attitude was that if you are unwell, you are sick, and you need His healing power, it was available. No matter what the disease was, whether it was something simple, or whether your eye was missing, or crippled limbs, Jesus would heal. If your skin was all rotting with leprosy, Jesus would heal and make you whole. The attitude and the belief of God the Father and Jesus is “heal” because that’s their compassionate nature.

Now some people would say, “Well, Okay, that’s fair enough, but that was Jesus then. Jesus went about in Galilee and Judea in those days and He was trying to prove that He was somebody special. He was trying to prove that He was the Messiah. All those miracles of healing were for then, not for us today in the twenty-first century. That was a long time ago; that is finished. That doesn’t apply now.” Well, okay, let’s turn to Hebrews, chapter 13, a well-known verse. Let’s see if Jesus is perhaps different today than He was back in 28, 29, 30, or 31 AD.

Hebrews 13:8, ***“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday”*** (in 30 .D.), ***“today”*** (in 2002), ***“and forever.”*** So as far as the Bible is concerned, it is the same Jesus; and His attitude and desire to help, His compassion, hasn’t diminished with the passage of 2000 years. It is the same Jesus Christ, and if Jesus healed those who came to Him then, what has changed today? As far as the Bible is concerned, what the Bible teaches, is that it is the same Jesus today as it was then.

Now we have seen Jesus in action there, what He actually did. Was Jesus ever asked about His willingness? Did anyone actually say to Him at any time, “I know You can heal Jesus, but are You willing to

heal?” And if He was asked that question, how did He respond? Thankfully, He did get asked once and He did respond. We can see this in Luke, chapter 5. I guess that is always the question that rumbles around in most people’s mind when they are facing a physical problem: “I know God can heal, I know Jesus is kind and could heal, but I am just not absolutely convinced in my own mind that He will heal.”

So Luke 5:12, ***“And it happened when He was in a certain city, that behold, a man who was full of leprosy saw Jesus ...”*** Leprosy would cause your skin to decay away and it would be a pretty horrible sight, and of course you were very much unclean then. You had to live apart from people. It was a pretty horrible disease to suffer from and this man, it says, was full of it. He saw Jesus ***“and fell on His face and implored”*** (begged) ***“Him, saying Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”*** He knew that Jesus could perform miracles; he was aware of that. He knew enough of Jesus to know: “This man can do amazing things. He has raised the dead. I have heard about that. He walked on water. I have heard about that. I know He can do these things, but I don’t know whether He will for me.”

So he says, verse 12, ***“Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.’ Then He put out His hand and touched him, saying, ‘I am willing. Be cleansed.’ And immediately the leprosy left him.”***

So Jesus was asked, ***“Are You willing to heal?”*** He said, ***“I am willing”*** This is the same Jesus yesterday, today, and forever. Nothing is changed. He is as willing today as He was then. So as far as the Bible tells us, Jesus never said to anybody, “Yes, you can stay sick. Sorry, but with your problems and difficulties, being such a sinner, you stay sick. It is good for you. You will learn some tremendous, crucial lessons if you are sick for another five years.” It doesn’t happen. Or, “Well, no. My Father made you sick for a reason. I’m going to leave you that way.” It is not there.

From our point of view as human beings, we often try to reason around things, like, “I wonder why I have not been healed. Perhaps God is leaving me sick for a reason.” Well that is strange thinking, in

some ways, because what you often get (or what I have seen occasionally, I should say, not perhaps too often), is people who say, “Well, God wants me sick for a reason. That is why He is not healing me. I know He could heal me, but He is leaving me sick for a reason, because perhaps there is something I need to learn. That is why God is not healing me.” So what do you do? You go to a doctor, usually, and get some medicine and treatment to make you no longer sick.

There is some strange reasoning here. If God wants you sick for a reason, why are you going to the doctor to be made well? Isn't that in effect going against what you believe God's will to be? If God wants you sick for your good, why try to get a medical man to make you better? It seems like there is a bit of a conflict there. If God wants you sick for a reason, perhaps you had better just be sick for a reason. Then you might find the reason out, and then get God to heal you. But why say, “God wants me sick, I am going to the doctor to ask for some drugs to make me better.” It is certainly confusing to me to get that sort of message.

Well some say. “Well, okay, Jesus did all that healing then, but now He is back in Heaven,” and really seem to feel that “it was only for those days. It was only for Jesus, just for those days. It doesn't apply any longer.” What people try to do is say, “Well, really, the age of miracles is past. This was a special time in Jesus' life. He was the Messiah. He was trying to prove a point. I know that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, but I really still believe that it was just for then, just for Jesus.”

Well, okay, turn to Acts, chapter 5, and let's see what the Bible tells us, rather than just trying to reason out why we are not healed today. In Acts 5:14, we read, **“And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem,”** (Now a multitude again, to me, is a big number, not just 12 people. A multitude must be surely a few hundred at the very least to deserve the name multitude.) **“Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding**

cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.” Again, I have the word “all” highlighted in pale green, because they were all healed. This is not Jesus, at least not directly here, but this is talking about the apostles. Jesus now had ascended back up to Heaven. This is some time later, and yet the same all are being healed.

Let's turn to Acts, chapter 28. This is as far as we can get in New Testament Church history, the last chapter of the book of Acts. Starting in verse 7 of Acts 28, (Paul is now on the island of Malta, quite a pleasant island. We kept the Feast of Tabernacles there some years ago. It is quite a small island, only about 20 miles long. You can walk along it in just a few hours.) **“Now in that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him”** (Okay, that is pretty impressive.) **“So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed.”**

So the news breaks that “Hey! This chap Paul has just put his hands on so-and-so and he has been healed of a fever and a severe problem!” “Has he? Oh, in that case.....” Before you know it the word was running like wildfire and suddenly there were dozens of sick people turning up outside the door. And it says that they all came and were healed!

So this is not Jesus any longer. This is probably 25 years, 30 years nearly, after the time of Jesus' ascension to heaven and there is still healing, still healing for all of these who came for healing. So it is not something that died out with Jesus Christ or something that was limited to Jesus' physical presence on the earth. It happened all through the lifetime of the apostles.

Perhaps it was only for the apostles? Was it? Well let's turn to James, chapter 5, a fairly well-known passage, starting in verse 14, where we read, **“Is anyone among you sick?”**, which you can think is rather a strange question, because

nowadays you would not have to ask, “Is anyone among you...?” This is like some question of doubt, “Is anybody sick out there?”, like perhaps there isn't, there shouldn't be, but there might be somebody sick somewhere. Today, if you went to almost any congregation, there would be a number of people sick, but James is almost saying, “It's possible, perhaps somebody out there might be sick somewhere”, almost as if it were a rarity.

“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” Well now, if we just read this, it says that if anybody would be sick out there, he should call for the elders of the church, the called-out ones, the ecclesia, and they will pray over that person, anoint with oil in the name of the Lord and **“the prayer of faith will save the sick.”** That word “save” can be translated “heal”, and is, several times.

To the Greeks and the Hebrews, saving and healing were pretty much the same. The prayer of faith, you could say, will “heal” the sick. So how could it be something that died out when Jesus ascended to heaven? Is it something that was just for Jesus physically as He walked about Galilee and Judea? Was it just for the apostles? Clearly not. The elders of the church can anoint with oil and the prayer of faith will heal the sick. It doesn't say it might, or it may be, or once in a blue moon, or every so often, or other special signs—the prayer of faith will heal the sick; end of message, end of story, full stop. That's the truth; that's what God's Word says.

Now Mr. Armstrong got rather irate way back in the 1970's, when people in the church, high-up ministers, tried to water down this teaching. I would like to read just a short part of his response from his booklet “The Plain Truth about Healing,” issued 1979. He is really emphasizing this particular passage in James chapter 5, and the fact that a group of people in the Church had written some allegedly official material saying that this was all nonsense, “God doesn't heal, so don't bother going to Him half the time.” On page 53 Mr. Armstrong says:

“This carnal, scholarly, systematic theology project mentioned above attempts to refute this plain word of God PROMISE of healing in God’s Church with the very cunning inspired by Satan. This comment is made to cause doubt in the definite Word of God...”

Here Mr. Armstrong quotes from this particular article that he doesn’t like. The article says, talking of James chapter 5:14: “Although this one statement appears to be written without qualification, the condition ‘If it be God’s will’ was no doubt tacitly understood.” Mr. Armstrong took objection to that and he says,

“On reading that, I was absolutely flabbergasted! Nowhere in the Bible does God say IF IT BE GOD’S WILL. This very verse, James 5:14, along with many others I have given you, EXPRESSES God’s will. Notice that sly, subtle if it be God’s will. That is SATANIC. When Satan was trying to overthrow Jesus Christ in his greatest temptation attempt, after Jesus had fasted forty days and forty nights, Satan said twice to Jesus, tempting Him, ‘if Thou be the Son of God...’ That little two letter word “if” is just about the biggest little word in the English language. It is intended to cause doubt in God’s Word. It was used by Satan in trying to overthrow Christ. Satan inspired it in this theology project to try to overthrow faith, using God’s ministers, within God’s Church.”

Mr. Armstrong wasn’t happy. This is probably some of the strongest language of any thing I ever saw in print. Mr. Armstrong continues:

“With all my being I CONDEMN that kind of teaching, and the one responsible for handing it out to God’s ministers has been disfellowshipped and is no longer a member of God’s Church, and that Satan inspired teaching is going out of God’s Church as well.”

As far as Mr. Armstrong was concerned, saying “if it be God’s will that you are healed” was directly from the mind of Satan.

In the next paragraph, Mr. Armstrong states God’s promise, and he continues:

“Now that diabolical teaching about the passage in James 5:14 requires a complete refutation to make the true, God-intended meaning clear, without doubt. As a result of this insidious attempt to cause doubt in the Word of God, many have said, ‘This theology project teaches that James 5:14 is not a promise.’ But it is a definite, plain, clear promise from God.”

From Mr. Armstrong’s point of view, James 5:14 is a Promise! He continues,

“I pray for God’s mercy on those who allowed Satan to cast doubt on the Holy, Sacred Word of God. Look at those words again, ‘And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up. And if he have committed sins’ (undoubtedly referring to physical sin), ‘they shall be forgiven him.’ If that is not a promise, then we have no promise of the forgiveness of sins or of salvation and the gift of eternal life!”

Mr. Armstrong made it quite bluntly clear! That was strong language. If there is any promise anywhere in the Bible, that is a promise in James 5:14, the promise of healing. I can almost imagine Mr. Armstrong writing that because sometimes when you saw him in person or on the satellite video when he got really agitated, he would bang and thump his Bible with his fist as hard as he could. He would really get worked up sometimes. I can only imagine when he wrote that he must have been really spitting fire and fumes, because to Mr. Armstrong, they were taking the precious Word of God and turning it from wine into water. He must have been really livid!

If you think about it, it is no great surprise that healing continues with the Book of Acts and the apostles and disciples. It is no great surprise that you find it being mentioned here in James chapter 5:14.

Turn back to Mark, chapter 16. We will see that Jesus already mentioned that healing would continue; it was not something to die out when He went back to heaven. Verse 15: **“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach**

the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe:” (or, will follow the believing ones) **“In my name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”** So Jesus already announced, “When you are preaching, these are the signs that will follow the believing ones. They will, amongst other things, lay hands on the sick and they will recover. They will be healed.” Jesus already prophesied that this was going to happen. Jesus expected it to continue.

Verse 19: **“So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.”** As they went out and preached the Word, these signs went with them. The signs in essence follow the Word. If you preach what is in God’s Word, the signs will follow. If you preach healing, then the signs will follow. If you don’t preach healing; if you preach that God doesn’t heal today; if you preach that it all done away with, don’t expect any healings to follow, because the Lord works through the Word with the accompanying signs. We can see there that healing must continue because it just said there, “When you are out preaching the Word, then you lay hands on the sick and they will recover, and these signs will follow the Word as it is preached.”

The whole thing makes sense. To me it makes no sense at all to think that somewhere it all stopped or slowed down.

I think it is important to understand exactly how it is that God can heal us. What is the mechanism by which God takes our sicknesses away from us and allows us to be healed? That really ties in to the Passover which we kept just seven weeks or so back.

Not many churches understand Passover, the bread and the wine. In the original Passover, we know, there was a lamb. Ancient Israel took the lamb, killed it, and took the blood and splashed it over their

doorposts. We know that when the Eternal went through the land of Egypt that night to slay the firstborn, the blood was a sign. When He saw the blood, He passed over, and they were preserved, protected, by the blood. But they weren't told just to take the blood and splash it around. They were also told to eat the roast lamb. That is actually two things.

The blood protects you from death: but you eat the lamb. Why? Why the two parts? Why the blood and eating the roast lamb? Why, when it comes to us today, do we have the bread and the wine, two parts?

One is the eating of the lamb. It appears that is how we are healed, by the body of the lamb, not by the blood. The blood protected them from death passing over them. That is what the blood achieved.

With many of them, you can understand, bearing in mind that there was probably two million or more of them (ancient Israel in Egypt), that many must have been sick. Here they are about to leave Egypt and walk up to the promised land and they are crippled, or arthritic, or rheumatic, or lame. How are they going to do it? Surely God is going to have some way of healing the people so that they can leave the land and walk vigorously off to the Promised Land! The answer is that the blood protects, but the body of the lamb, eaten, is what brought healing.

If we turn to Psalms 105, we can see, I think, that this must have been the case. It doesn't tell us explicitly, but if you read Psalm 105, you can pretty much work backwards. It is all about the departure of ancient Israel from Egypt, heading for the Promised Land through the Red Sea. Verse 37: ***“He also brought them out with silver and gold, And there was none feeble among His tribes.”*** None? Not one? Everybody could walk out, healthy? Well, it could only have been through eating the body of the lamb. In fact, the Good News Bible, in that verse where it says that there was none feeble among His people, says, “all of them were healthy and strong.”

In our case, we know that Jesus' shed blood, when He died, paid the penalty for our spiritual sins; that is what saved us from eternal death. But before Jesus was

killed on the stake, He allowed His body to be savagely beaten, bruised, whipped, scourged for many hours, suffering immense physical pain. Why? The pain that Jesus suffered for many hours as He was kicked, and clubbed, and beaten, and spat upon, until His bones showed through and He was weakened and suffering great pain and agony, wasn't to save us from our spiritual sins. His death did that.

He took that physical punishment upon Himself to pay for our physical sins, so that we might be healed. We can see that in scripture. It is all there in the Bible if we put the bits and pieces together, here a little, there a little. Isaiah 53: 4 is not a great translation in the King James version or the New King James version of this passage. It almost seems like the translators couldn't quite believe the Hebrew, so they rather weakened it a bit, but we can still find out what it really means.

Verses 4 and 5: ***“Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows...”***

This sounds sentimental: Jesus took away our griefs and sorrows. I could say, “That's very nice, because I've got plenty of them.”, but it doesn't mean that. If you look at Young's Literal Translation, it says: ***“Surely our sickness He has borne and our pains, He has carried them.”*** The word for “griefs” is actually the Hebrew word for sickness and for “sorrows” is the Hebrew for pain. The word for “griefs” is actually translated “disease” seven times and “sickness” twelve times in the Old Testament. It is actually the main meaning of the word here translated “griefs”. It is actually “sickness”.

The J.P. Green Interlinear Bible translates: ***“Surely He has borne our griefs, or sicknesses, and carried our sorrows, or pains, yet we esteemed His stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.”*** (That is what people thought) ***“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him.”*** I have always taken that to be peace of mind, that, apart from being healed from our physical sicknesses and diseases and forgiven for our sins, also the chastisement for our peace was upon Him. Peace of mind, I think, is something we should expect to receive. ***“And by His***

stripes”(bruises) ***“we are healed.”*** At least the King James translators had to admit defeat there, and use the word “healed”. ***“And by His stripes”*** (His “wounds” or “bruising”) ***“we are healed.”***

The J.P. Green Interlinear, one of the more popular interlinears, translates this passage as: ***“Surely He has borne our sicknesses and our pains. He bore them, yet we regarded His as plagued, stricken by God and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was on Him, and with His wounds we ourselves are healed.”*** So by Jesus' wounds, when He was kicked, and bruised, and scourged, and whipped, and beaten, and clubbed, and punished, is when He took away our sicknesses, took away our pains. That is when we are healed, by what Jesus did at that point.

If we don't like the possible translation there of J. P. Green or Young's Literal, if we think perhaps the King James translators have it right, we can find out in Matthew, chapter 8.

The Holy Spirit inspired a translation which I think none of us can argue with. Start in verse 16 and remember that Matthew was writing under the inspiration of God's Spirit, ***“When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: ‘He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses’.”*** So the true translation of Isaiah 53 is given under inspiration of God's Spirit through the pen of Matthew.

In any event, the Hebrew is clear, the sicknesses and diseases Jesus took away by the massive amount of punishment that He took.

Again, I think, that shows how willing God is. I don't think any of us could have gone through all those hours until your bones are poking out, and all your nerves are jangling, and your body is just wracked with pain and agony, for other people! Equally, if Jesus went through all of that for our healing, why shouldn't we take full benefit from it?

So we have seen that God is a good God and that God is willing and Jesus is willing that we are healed; that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We have seen that Jesus healed all that came to Him then. Equally, in the Passover, (which we do keep, those of us who are baptized in God's Church, every year), we take the wine, symbolizing that we accept Jesus' death and His shed blood for us, and we take the broken bread, symbolizing that we believe and accept Jesus' broken body for our healing. So we went through all of that and, really, if we don't fully take advantage of all that Jesus did for us, it is a great shame. We are the ones who would lose out in that case. Jesus has already been through that and now He is resurrected and He is back living in glory, so He has paid the penalty. He has done that for us. For us not to take advantage would be a great shame.

In I Corinthians, chapter 11, Paul ties this all in to the Passover and also brings healing very clearly in to it. Verse 23: ***“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night on which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is’ (or represents) ‘My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’”*** So Jesus is saying quite plainly there, “Look, this bread which is broken up symbolizes, or pictures, My body which is broken for you”

“In the same manner He also took the cup after supper,” (the cup of wine) ***“saying, ‘This cup is the New Covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.’”*** Of course there are two parts, the bread and the wine.

Verse 29: ***“For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning”*** (not understanding) ***“the Lord’s body. For this reason,”*** (because people are not keeping Passover properly, because they

don't understand really what they are picturing, or what they are doing) ***“many are weak and sick among you and many sleep.”***

Sleep is a euphemism for “dead”. Paul is not talking about people dying naturally of old age. That is hardly worthy of great comment. If people die at the age of ninety or one hundred, you don't need to make much comment. He was talking here about people that he believed, plainly, shouldn't be dead. He said, “Look, this is the reason there are so many of you who are weak and sick and why many of you are dead prematurely! It is because you haven't understood what the Passover is all about. You haven't understood, in particular, what the broken body symbolizes. If you understood that and lived by it, so many of you wouldn't be weak, sick, and dying!”

You can see that at times Paul was just struggling to get his message across to these people, particularly in Corinth. But equally we must realize, and those in Corinth perhaps didn't, that although God has the desire and the attitude to heal, there is a responsibility upon us. We have a part to play as well. Mr. Armstrong made it very plain, I think, on many occasions, that when it comes to receiving something from God such as healing, there were two conditions: faith and obedience. They are not especially difficult conditions to understand, although they might be difficult to live up to, but faith and obedience are two, if you like, preconditions to receiving from God.

I won't take a huge amount of time to go through these, but briefly we will complete the topic. I will take obedience first.

I think most of us know what we ought to be doing. I don't think we need a huge amount of lecturing on that. It is not usually a question of requiring ever more new truth; living up to the old truth that we already know is a big enough challenge for most of us.

We know right from wrong. We know what we should be doing. The big problem is not knowing what to do, but the big problem is whether we get around to doing it or not. That usually is for most of us a major hang-up.

Turn to I John, chapter 3, for a scripture that ties together prayer, receiving, and obedience, because they are rather linked.

The first letter of John, a very wise man writing in the last few years of his life, verse 18: ***“My little children, let us love not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”*** (So he is talking about not being hypocrites: we should be actually doing some things.) ***“And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him.”*** In other words, we are going to have a certain confidence if we know we are doing what is right, which I think is the case.

If you know that you are doing something that is wrong, you can't be terribly confident. ***“For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all thing.”*** So you know if you are guilty of something and you know that you would feel a bit “tricky” to go and ask for something and know that you are doing something terribly wrong. If your heart tells you that, you can guarantee God knows a lot more about it than you do, so He says ***“our heart condemns us”***. You know you are in trouble.

On the other hand, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence towards God. ***“Beloved, ... whatever we ask, we receive from Him...”*** “Whatever” is big enough to include almost anything, of course. ***“...because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”*** So prayer, whatever we ask, healing, could be one of those things that is received because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. That is not rocket science.

I think that we are all well aware that it helps to be obedient, it helps to go to God with a clear conscience. None of us is perfect, and you can't go to God and say, “Heal me because I deserve it!” That will get you absolutely nowhere with God.

You don't get healed because you deserve it. You don't get healed because you need it. You get healed because you go on the strength of what God has promised in His Word, and because of what Jesus Christ has done to provide the healing. You have to ask God, “God, you promised. It is in your Word; I am calling on Your mercy and kindness because You

promised it. I am coming in faith and I am a person who tries to live Your way. Where I am going wrong, please forgive me. On the strength of Your promise and your Word, I am going to ask in faith.”

You know yourself that if you have sin in your life and you are not changing, then, really, you are asking an awfully lot of God, because that scripture is truth. God can hardly go against His own scriptures. If He says that you will receive whatever you ask because you **“keep My commandments and do whatever is pleasing in My sight”**, is God going to try to get around His own scriptures? Certainly He has to honor His own scriptures, so the instructions are there: you will receive what you ask if you keep His commandments and do those things pleasing in God’s sight.

So obedience is a fairly clear thing, even though it is not always easy to do. The biggest issue with healing tends to come from the faith aspect; really, faith is one of the major problems, it seems, that we have in our world today. Faith is a key ingredient in receiving from God.

Turn to Matthew, chapter 9 to see how important faith is, specifically in the context of healing. Verse 27: **“When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, ‘Son of David, have mercy on us!’ And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him.”** I assume that they had to be led by the hand, because if they were blind they could hardly follow Jesus up the road and through the door. Presumably people were leading them along by the hand and perhaps asking the way, and so on. **“And Jesus said to them. ‘Do you believe’.. (Do you have faith?) ‘that I am able to do this?’ They said to Him, ‘Yes Lord.’ Then He touched their eyes, saying, ‘According to your faith, let it be to you.’”** So almost, Jesus put matters right back in their hands. “Okay, according to your faith!” I guess that if they had been just pretending that they had faith, nothing would have happened, because Jesus said, **“According to your faith, let it be to you.”** **“And then their eyes were opened and they could see.”** So, clearly, they had the faith! They weren’t just pretending and trying to look pious in front of their friends and neighbors. They did have that faith. You can see there; it is quite plain.

“According to your faith, let it be to you.”

Really, our faith is critical. If we want to come to God for healing, then there must be faith, because “according to your faith, it will be done.”

Turn to Mark, chapter 6, to see an example of what happens if there isn’t much faith around. Remember, when we read this passage, that we are talking here of Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, who walked on water, and multiplied bread and fishes, and healed lepers, and raised the dead. We are talking of an individual who had performed some astonishing miracles.

Verse 1: **“Then He went out from there and came to His own country,..”** (Galilee) **“and His disciples followed Him. And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing Him were astonished, saying, ‘Where did this man get these things? And what wisdom is this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands? Is this not the carpenter, the Son of Mary, the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon?”** (So we see that Jesus had at least four brothers mentioned there.) **“And are not His sisters here with us?”** (So there were several sisters as well.) **“And they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, ‘A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house’. Now He could do no mighty work there...”**

It says that He **could** do no mighty work there; it doesn’t say that He **would** not, but that He **could** not. Jesus, who could walk on water and raise the dead, couldn’t do much here. **“He could do no mighty work there, except He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He marveled because of their unbelief”** They didn’t have the faith, although some other areas seemed to have plenty of faith in Jesus. He could perform mighty works and miracles all over, but around His own home town, it says, there was just such unbelief there. It says that Jesus couldn’t do a mighty work, apart from laying His hands on a few sick people.

The amplified Bible in that verse says, **“He was not able to do even one work of**

power there, except that He laid His hands on a few sickly people and cured them.” I rather assume it means that it wasn’t the lame walking, it wasn’t the blind seeing, it wasn’t the lepers made whole. It wasn’t any mighty work of any sort. He just laid His hands on a few sickly people; perhaps those with a bit of flu or something of that sort; that is all He could do. He couldn’t do any more!

So Jesus couldn’t do any more because of unbelief. Can we expect Him to do any more with us, if there is unbelief on our part? The answer is no. **“According to your faith, let it be done unto you”** So faith is an absolute, key ingredient. We must come to Jesus in faith if we want to receive. It is not an option. Remember, earlier we read, **“the prayer of faith will save the sick..”** The prayer of faith will heal the sick. If there is no faith, there will not be any healing. It is as simple as that.

Hebrews 11:1 is a verse we can hardly miss when talking on the subject of faith. **“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”** So faith is something that is there before the sight.

Faith is the **“substance of things hoped for”**, in other words, it is not yet arrived, something we are looking for sometime in the future, things we are hoping for, such as healing. If you like, faith is the substance of healing which we are hoping for; it is the evidence of the healing that we do not yet see. The margin says, “the ‘confidence’ of things not seen.” One translation says, **“the assurance of things not seen.”**

Faith comes first. The faith continues until the point when the healing is manifested, or arrives. Faith is there while we hope; faith is there while we wait; and faith is that absolute confidence and assurance that what we pray for will absolutely come to pass. The timing we don’t always know; but the faith remains unaffected, unswerving, and continues until the healing is there. Turn to Mark 11 to see another scripture that supports that.

Of course, because we are human beings and we like to go by what we see, and what we feel, and what we hear, it can be difficult for us to have faith in something

that is not there yet. To have complete, absolute confidence and assurance in something that we don't see, as a human being, that is quite a challenge! That is the way the Father and Jesus operate. They live by faith.

Mark 11.24: ***"Therefore I say to you,..."*** (This is Jesus Christ speaking.) ***".....whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them."*** To believe that you receive means that you must have faith. We could re-phrase that, "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, have faith and you will have them." Whatever things you ask for must include healing because that is something you can ask for. Whatever things you ask for when you pray, such as healing, believe that you will receive (the healing) and you will have it. The New International Version translates that verse as: ***"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."*** So the believing must come before the receiving.

You have to have the faith, which ought not be that hard to believe that God will keep His Word and keep His promises. You would believe a man if he promised something. This is the Creator of heaven and earth; if He promises something, are we going to say, "Oh, I'm not sure God will come through with that. You just can't trust God, can you? He might let you down this time." That would be somewhat of an insult! Faith is the complete assurance that what God has promised in His Word, He will do

Because we are physical, sometimes our bodies are aching, and the pain is there, or the lump is there, or whatever problem there might be. We are looking on the one hand on our physical bodies going "jump-jump", "ache-ache", "pain-pain", and then we look in God's Word which says, ***"By His stripes you are healed"***.

We think, "We have two sets of evidence here: the physical evidence on the one hand and God's Word on the other hand." We have to make a choice. We have to make a decision as to what we are going to go by. Are we going to rely on our feelings and our sight, or are we going to rely upon God's unchangeable Word? That is a decision that we have to make.

James, chapter one, highlights what we have to do. Of course, as human beings, we often like to sit on the fence, don't we? We are not too sure whether to go that way or this way, so we think that we will just sit in the middle and wait for a while. Being double-minded in that sense isn't going to take us terribly far, if we are looking to God.

Verse 2: ***"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience."*** Some people think that the greatest test is to strengthen your faith. It doesn't actually say that. It says the testing of your faith produces patience.

Patience means "continuing, enduring, persevering, carrying on, not changing." ***"...the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."*** So here is a situation of going to God for something, going to God in prayer, going to God and asking for something. In this particular case, you are going specifically for wisdom, but the principle is what we will look at here. In other words, you go to God for something; you are asking God, in verse 5, for something.

Verse 6: ***"But let him ask in faith, with no doubting,..."*** (Ask in faith, with no doubting.) ***"...for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man..."*** (Or

woman) ***"...suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."*** In other words, if we go to God in faith for whatever it might be, such as healing, we have to go with no doubts, not being double-minded, not "blowing hot one day and cold the next", thinking, "He will heal me, no He won't, yes He will, no He won't." It says: ***"Let not that man suppose he will receive anything from the Lord."*** No, we must go to God in faith and continue patiently in faith.

As far as healing is concerned, the Bible clearly expresses God's will. God is our healer! We know that He has the power to do it. In all the examples we can find in the Bible, Jesus was always willing to heal. He healed again and again and again. He healed everyone. He healed all, every disease, every sickness.

He has already demonstrated by the way He was scourged, and beaten, and whipped that He was willing to take upon Himself all our pain and suffering, so that by His wounds, His stripes, we are healed. That demonstrates more than any words could, just how much concern the Father and Jesus have.

The problem with healing is not so much in God's willingness and God's power, but with the receiving of that healing. That is where we come in, with the conditions that we must meet: faith and obedience. If we are obedient and have faith and continue in that faith, then we can expect God to deliver on His promise.

Turn back to where we started, in Psalms 103, for our final scripture. Verse 1: ***"Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgives all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases..."*** Healing is one of God's great benefits to us today, so let us not forget this great benefit of our Eternal Creator!