

Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

Publication No. 211780

Second Class Postage Paid At Mammoth Spring, AR

Volume 19

Mammoth Spring, Arkansas 72554

February, 1985

No. 2

Miraculous Faith Healing FACT OR FICTION

By Clifford Payne

Alleged faith healing is enjoying sizeable renewed popularity. In fact, it is possibly experiencing its greatest propagation and acceptance. Perhaps the two most fundamental factors accounting for this are dynamic leadership and modern means of communication. Unquestionably, its rising popularity warrants a dispassionate and logical examination of its beliefs in the light of Biblical teachings. This enables us to properly decide upon its validity.

In our study we have no desire to impugn the sincerity or character of anyone of the faith healing persuasion, whether he be a leader or a follower. But, rather, we simply wish to obtain the truth concerning the whole matter, for it is the truth which shall make us free (John 8:32).

Faith Healing Defined

Supposed faith healing of today should not be confused with God working through natural laws, for this would plainly be misleading. All Christians believe that the natural processes of healing are given by God and that God heals through these avenues. He may increase or decrease the processes, but, in the present age, He never discards them or works contrary to them. This kind of healing could not be considered any more miraculous than the God-given law of gravity in its operation. It is common knowledge that faith healers claim that their work begins when the natural laws of healing cease, or simply prove ineffectual. Thus, they consider their healing a miraculous act, not unlike many of the miracles recorded in the Bible.

Has God Promised Them Today?

If the Bible has promised us miracu-

lous healing as is claimed by some, we must concede and fully accept it. But if the Bible makes no such promises, the faith healing of today must be completely rejected. Let us remember that we are not disputing God's power to heal miraculously if He chooses to do so. The crux of the matter is found in the answer to the question: Are we today promised miraculous healing? First, let us observe some of the principal verses used in an attempt to substantiate this doctrine.

(1) **Mark 9:23.** It is noteworthy that the incident from which this verse is taken is about the healing of a boy who manifested no faith. Jesus had the faith, the father of the boy had faith, but the one being healed had no such faith. Candidates for faith healing today are told that faith on their part is mandatory for the cure, but this was not always true of Christ's healing. As to the meaning of the verse, it undeniably has meaning only to the era in which it was given as did other similar statements by Christ (Mark 11:22-24). We are told in Mark that with sufficient faith we can remove mountains. Can we do that today? If we conclude that the passages have direct meaning for us today, we can.

(2) **Mark 16:18.** It is contended that this certainly teaches the possibility of miraculous healing today, for it says: ". . . they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." But let us note that it also says, if we include the preceding verse as we must, that the same people who lay hands on the sick shall cast out devils, speak with new tongues, take up serpents, and drink that which is deadly, all without harm. Now, do the modern faith healers do all of that? If they can do the one, they can do them

all, for the same Lord who promised one, promised them all. The true meaning of the verses is that such power was promised to the apostles and the apostolic church, as is borne out by the Bible (Mark 16:14). All of these things, with the exception of drinking poison, and that likely happened also, were fulfilled in the lives of the apostles and early Christians as recorded in the book of Acts.

(3) **James 5:14-15.** These passages are quoted as definitely bearing out the validity of miraculous healing. Even if these verses teach divine healing, it still remains to be proved that they apply directly to us today. Furthermore, these verses certainly do not endorse the type of healing practiced today. James states that if there are those who are sick, let them call the elders of the church, and let them pray over the sick. Is this practiced by faith healers? The evangelists are usually the ones who claim the power of healing, not elders. Yet James does not state that one should call an evangelist, but rather the elders. It is further stipulated that the sick person should be anointed with oil in the name of the Lord. Do faith healers do that? Of course not! And it does little good to say that such is not required today. The same writer who says that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick" also declares in the preceding verse that the sick should be anointed with oil. We can easily see, then, that these two verses from James do not prove faith healing as we see it now, for the faith healers do not even practice the things commanded in the verses.

The day of miracles has long passed. It ceased when the last person, on whom the apostles laid hands for the impartation of a miraculous gift, died. This is

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS
 . . . is a monthly publication distributed free of charge to any who care to receive it. We will be happy to add any names to the regular mailing list. If you send in a name be SURE to include the Zip Code Number. It must be with each address according to the Postal regulations. This paper is supported by unsolicited contributions for which we are grateful. If you care to know the financial status and expenses, that information will be furnished upon request. Mail all address corrections to:
FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS
 P. O. Box 251
 Mammoth Spring, Arkansas 72554
 EDITOR Mike Pace
 Publication No. 211780

deducted from simple, logical reasoning. The apostles had the ability to impart miraculous gifts and power by the laying on of hands (Acts 8:14-18; 19:6; II Tim. 1:6; Rom. 1:11). But those on whom they laid hands did not, in turn, have the ability to impart the miraculous power to others. This is made clear in Acts 8, where Philip, after performing many miraculous works in Samaria and making many converts, was unable to impart unto any of them the miraculous gifts; hence, Peter and John were sent that the Samaritans might receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:5-15). It is to be further observed that not every Christian during the days of the apostles had miraculous power and gifts (I Cor. 12:29). Not every one had the gift of healing (I Cor. 12:30).

These miraculous works were for the primary purpose of confirming the spoken word. As the New Testament which we have today had not been completed, there was need of some definite way of confirming that which was orally spoken (Mark 16:17). For many years now, we have possessed the New Testament in its entirety, and it makes us perfect unto all good works (II Tim. 3:16, 17). We need nothing more. To ask for more would be the sin of tempting God. The apostle Paul wrote that there would be a time when miraculous gifts would cease (I Cor. 13:8-10). As Paul stated, so it has happened.

Abundant Life

One well known faith healer declares that possibly the greatest verse in the Bible, at least to him, is John 10:10, where Jesus says, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." He gives the verse quite a materialistic interpretation by say-

ing that "Christ comes to make you more than you are, to give you more than what you have. You see, Christ came to make people whole."

It is exceedingly true that Christ came to make people whole, spiritually speaking, and that He came to give us more than what we have, spiritually. But to give this such a materialistic connotation is to misinterpret the Scripture. The faith healer further states that "It is God's will for all men to prosper and be in health, even as their souls prosper" (III John 2). Now if it is true that one must be in good health to enjoy abundant living and that it is God's express will that men prosper materially and experience good health, then the apostle Paul did not enjoy abundant living, and God's will was not realized in him, for he says, ". . . *there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me . . .*" (II Cor. 12:7). Moreover, he declares that it was of such misery to him that he asked the Lord three times to remove it (II Cor. 12:8). But He did not do so. Did the apostle Paul enjoy abundant living? Certainly! He repeatedly stated that he did. Yet, it is rather likely that he had some physical ailment. Why did God not remove it? Was Paul lacking in sufficient faith? Was he not pleasing in the eyes of God? With respect to III John 2, the writer simply expresses his desire that Gaius, and, of course all Christians, might prosper both financially and health-wise, even as his soul was prospering. We cannot imagine his wishing to the contrary of this. But John does not say that it is God's express will that Gaius prosper materially and enjoy the best of health.

In Philippians the apostle Paul writes that his fellow-laborer, Epaphroditus, had been grievously ill. In fact, it is stated that he had been nigh unto death (Phil. 2:25-27). Because of its severity, it is possible that this was an extended sickness. If it is God's will that all Christians experience good health, why did not Paul immediately heal Epaphroditus of his illness? If one must enjoy splendid health to know abundant living, Epaphroditus, an excellent man and follower of the Lord, failed to achieve it, at least for a period of time.

In II Timothy 4:20, Paul states that he left Trophimus in Miletum sick. Again it is asked: Why did not Paul heal him that he might accompany him and that he might enjoy abundant living? If it is the

Lord's will that we all have good health, as faith healers affirm, why did Paul not heal Trophimus that God's will might be realized? The Scriptural conclusion to this matter of abundant living is that one enjoys abundant living when he establishes the proper relationship with his God. Material prosperity and good health, though desirable, are extremely secondary.

Do Faith Healers Heal?

Even though it may seem strange, it would appear that some do in certain cases. But this admission does our cause no damage, and it in no way substantiates miraculous faith healing. The same kind of healing as wrought by alleged faith healers takes place every day in the offices of psychiatrists and psychologists. It is psychological healing, and is concerned with the power of suggestion. Maybe it can be simply illustrated in this manner: Perhaps we have all known individuals who had grave illnesses, but who refused to acknowledge the fact. Through the power of inward suggestion, which we can identify as will power, they continued to be active for an incredibly long period of time before utterly collapsing. This, in an over-simplified manner, explains the nature of many of the alleged organic cures of divine healers. Although such candidates for healing are not actually cured, their belief that they are is so strong that they are capable of normal living for a period of time. Of course, if the disturbance is purely a psychological one, then the explanation is simpler. When an individual suffering from a stomach condition which is psychosomatic is told that he is cured, and he firmly believes that he is, then certainly he has been cured of that ailment, at least temporarily, for it was only a mental condition originally. But this we must remember: Such cures are not miraculous, for they follow natural processes, and they can and are being wrought by individuals who make no claim of being divine healers, or even of being religious.

It is an indisputable fact that many have thought themselves miraculously cured of some physical condition, when in reality they were not. They were simply caught up in the emotional impact of the occasion and thoroughly deluded by believing that which was not a reality. Later, when their emotions returned to normality, they found the same previous condition existent.

Differs With Biblical Healing

As divine healers today claim to perform their healing miracles by the same divine power as did Christ and the apostles, it would be reasonable to assume that divine healing of today would be similar to that of Christ and the apostles. Let us note two characteristics of Christ's healing:

First, when Christ healed He did not always demand faith on the part of the one being healed (Matt. 9:1-8; Luke 8:43-44; 1:11-17; Matt. 12:15-21). In fact, He healed the nobleman's son who was not even in His presence. The son did not feel the touch of the Master's hand, nor did he hear the sound of His voice. Yet, he was cured. The stock reply of faith healers today, when they have failed to effect the desired result, is that the candidate did not have sufficient faith. In this they are most inconsistent with the miraculous healing of Christ.

Second, Christ and the apostles possessed the power of miraculous healing to the point of raising the dead (John 11:43-44; Acts 20:7-12). If faith healers of this age have divine ability to heal, why can they not also restore life? Would one be any more a miracle than the other?

A leading faith healer contends, "You can't kill the truth; it cannot be done!" It is assuredly true that the truth cannot be killed and that it will ultimately prevail. But, as we have pointed out, faith healers of this age operate outside the truth as found in God's revealed word. God has the power to heal; God does heal, but not miraculously as the adherents of faith healing would have us believe. It is natural that we long to be free from every bodily ailment, but such is impossible since the world has been polluted with sin. Furthermore, such freedom from bodily distress is not necessary for happy, abundant living.

We need to give earnest heed to the health of the soul, knowing that if it is redeemed and we walk worthily before Him every day, joy unspeakable will be ours today and forever. The Bible is God's revealed will to man, and it contains the way of life. To twist and abuse its precious contents is to commit one of the most heinous crimes of which man is capable. Miraculous healing is not authorized by the Bible!

The Silence of Women

By Art Smith

There are two passages of scripture that deal with the silence of women. These passages are I Corinthians 14:34-35 and I Timothy 2:11-12. The purpose of this article is to examine the above scriptures and to determine areas where the silence of women does and does not apply.

The situation that existed in the Corinthian church likely involved both men and women who had spiritual gifts. The gifts probably were used as a check and balance system in which one spiritually-gifted person could question what another spiritually-gifted individual taught in the assembly. Apparently some gifted wives publicly questioned what their gifted husbands were teaching. Such action could precipitate some serious family problems and could set a dangerous precedence, i.e., women usurping the authority of men. Paul's instruction was to confine such questioning to the home. This answers the oft-asked question, "What about the women who don't have a Christian husband?" Paul is speaking to spiritually-gifted women who publicly questioned what their spiritually-gifted husbands were teaching in the assembly.

Does the above scripture have any application to the 20th century church? It does not as far as the spiritual gifts are concerned because they no longer exist, but it does apply in principle. A woman who would publicly question what her husband was teaching would be out of place. In fact it would seem that any woman who would publicly question any man in the assembly would be out of place.

The passage in I Timothy 2 urges women to keep silent in the public assembly and to assume no authority over men. Paul's instructions were for men, not women to be the leaders in the church.

The silence of women **does not** apply to the following: singing, women teaching women, women teaching children, women teaching men in private, asking a question in class, making a comment in class and participating in a worship ser-

vice where men are not present.

The silence of women **does** apply to the following: preaching, teaching a class where men are present, leading singing, taking a lead in the worship service such as serving the Lord's Supper, and in the decision-making process of the church.

The Greatest Miracle

Our God, He is so great,
How we wish that we could know;
Just how He made all things,
Our finite minds, won't have it so.

As we look at the sun, moon and stars,
Oh! how great is the power of His hands;
What wonder we gaze at mountains and seas,
And view His creations upon the lands.

He created the animals, and fish of the seas,
The birds, flowers and beautiful trees;
There was something amiss,
Thought the great I AM,
Then he performed the miracle of man.

As I think of these wonders so great
And how this great big world was flung;
Out into the North's empty space,
And on nothing it was hung.

Job 26:7

Contributed by Naomi I Price
Duncan, Oklahoma

CONTRIBUTIONS

INDIVIDUALS

Betty Kerley	\$ 2.00
Dortha D. Brawley	10.00
Hayden Estes	5.00
Ella Rogers	3.00
Betty Kerley	2.00
Clyde & Delphia Smith	32.00
Elsie L. Harris	5.00
Woodrow & Mona Timmons	2.00
Geneva Jones	10.00

CONGREGATIONS

Jeff Church of Christ	10.00
Garfield Church of Christ	15.00
Viola Church of Christ	5.00
Agnos Church of Christ	5.00
Gamaliel Church of Christ	10.00
Church of Christ, Marionville, Missouri	10.00
Church of Christ, Maple Grove	\$200.00

How To Become A Christian

The most important question ever asked is: *"What must I do to be saved?"* (Acts 16:30). Then, the **HOW** becomes equally as important. Notice the step by step process. First, we must have faith in the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ. (Heb. 12:2). This faith comes by the hearing of the Word of God. (Rom. 10:17). *"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."* (Heb. 11:6). With the belief and trust that Jesus is the Redeemer, we must repent of sins. *"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."* (Acts 17:30). In repentance, we turn from sin, **STOP** serving Satan and **START** serving the Lord. (Matt. 3:8,

Luke 13:3). With this new attitude we are ready to confess our faith, *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* (Rom. 10:9-10). Read Matthew 10:32-33. Acknowledging our faith, repentance and confession, the last step into Christ is baptism. *"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* (Gal. 3:27). Read Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38. Now that our past sins have been forgiven, the Lord has added us to His church and we are Christians. (Acts 2:47; Acts 11:26).

BECOME A CHRISTIAN

Mail all address changes to:
CHURCH OF CHRIST
 P. O. BOX 251
 MAMMOTH SPRING, ARKANSAS 72554