

What is it about “healing” and the Christian church?

In Australia, by far, the biggest **non**-government provider of hospitals, is the Christian church. People can hate-on Christians all they want, but if the Christian church tomorrow, closed the doors of:

- all of its hospitals;
- all of its aged care;
- all of its home-care services;
- all of its schools;
- all of its universities,, t

his country would be in a real mess.

And the reason for this is because years ago, **committed** Christians saw it as their mission/ministry/calling – to demonstrate the love of Jesus for the sick; the disabled; the elderly; and the injured.

Today, things have changed somewhat. **Rarely** is it through the generosity of actual living, breathing Christians to **fund** and **work** free-of-charge to provide health care. And most of the churches who now provide hospitals and such are fully dependant on government grants; government funding and fee-for-service for their activities.

Church hospitals (and any expansion of them now) are mainly the domain of older denominations who are living off of a legacy that was built up, of a **past** passion for mission.

Now having said this, Christians are still drawn to healing. Many Disciples of Jesus find that “health care” is the ideal profession to live out their calling to love the world for whom

Jesus died. And we find a high number of Christians have become:

- Doctors;
- Nurses;
- Aged carers;
- Wardies;
- Counsellors;
- I'm not going to list all the professions because we'll be here a long time, and I'll miss some...

But many Disciples of Jesus follow the example of Jesus, by dedicating their lives, to care for the sick...

But the type of healing Jesus did, was miraculous healing. And when it comes to **miraculous** healing, what is it with the Christian church, that we can be so divided in belief and practice???

On **one** end of the spectrum, some churches believe that miraculous healing (and the gift of healing) is a thing of the past – it fizzled out with the last of the apostles. So, as soon as the first drafts of all of the gospels and Biblical letters were written, the Spiritual gifts and instances of miraculous healing 'faded-out'. And so **some** Christians believe that the period of miraculous healing, was for the first generation of Christians only...

But then on the **other** end of the spectrum, some Christians go on and on and on about healing, as if that's the main thing, and how **everyone** has to be healed of **every** ailment, and if you're not healed, then that's a sign of your lack of faith.

And they front up to church every Sunday, and it is **expected** that every Sunday there's going to be another healing, and another testimony of a healing that happened during the week....

It's as if some feel a need to witness a miracle every week as evidence that the Holy Spirit has turned up, and that we have the 'anointing'.... And so, if a person's cold is less severe in 3 days, "Alleluia, it's a miracle of God!!".

What is it with "healing" in the Christian church? – that we can have such opposed views...

I want to begin today by saying, "I absolutely believe that the Gift of Healing, did **not** pass away with that first generation of Christians." And clearly, the Scriptures do not say that it did. There **will** be a time when spiritual gifts do pass away – it is described as: when that which is perfect has comeⁱ. And no, that's not talking about when the Bible was written. It's talking about the return of Jesus.

And so when Jesus returns:

- we won't need the gift of prophecy any more – we will all know;
- we won't need the gift of speaking in other languages any more – we will speak one language;
- we won't need the gift of preaching any more – we will all be saved;
- we won't need the gift of healing any more, because we will all be changed in a moment – in a twinkling of an

eye, to be like Him. There will be no more sickness – there will be no more disease...

And we **also** know that God is going to continue to do His miracles, because we're told to watch out for **false** miracle workers. And we're told that it's not easy to tell them apart. You see, if it was true that at some point God stopped doing miracles (including healing), it would be easy to tell a false miracle worker from a servant of God – If God stopped supernatural healing, any supernatural healing would be of the devil...

Are you with me? God continues to heal through His supernatural power, but not all healing that appears supernatural, is either real, or from God...

BTW, I am a living, breathing example of the healing power of God.

When I was in Primary School (Grade 3), we were getting ready to go out somewhere. And I was walking down the hallway, and I ran into the wall. And so I started walking again, and I ran into the wall again. And Dad said, "Stop doing that. You'll hurt yourself". (I think he was really more worried about the wall). And that's the last thing I can remember until I woke up in the hospital the next morning.

Apparently from that point, it all happened quite quickly. I didn't know the names of common objects. I was looking for my shoes and I said, "Where are my camels?" And then I didn't know who my Mum & Dad were.

And before long, I'd lost consciousness, and I was lying on the floor, with my body all twisted up like a spastic.

So they rushed me to hospital. I'm pretty sure Dad had the 253 pretty wound up in the HQ wagon as they drove the 25 miles of country roads to get to town.

And there at the hospital, the doctor examined me, and he prepared my parents, "Don't expect him to be alive in the morning." He himself slept in the bed next to me because he knew if he was needed, his own bed would be too far away.

You've gotta remember, this is a country hospital in the mid 1970's – there was not much they could do for me.

So, my parents rang some contacts and got the church praying.

Well, it was in the early hours of the morning when my Mum was on the phone to my Grandmother, and it was in the days of the manual exchange, and the doctor got the exchange to cut into the call, and he said, "He's awake. And he's crying. It's a miracle. It's a bloody miracle."

What did I have?

It was strange. They were pretty sure it was Encephalitis, but my instant and complete recovery from where I was at told them it must be something else. They called it epilepsy. But no, no sign of epilepsy, and they sent me away for tests for years – no hint of epilepsy.

And I shared this story with a doctor friend of mine, and what he said is "What you've just described is classic Encephalitis.

And at the point where you were unconscious and all twisted up, the next stage is death.”

I know God healed me that night.

But I don't only believe that God heals because of my experience (& I've seen it numerous times since). I believe God heals because God's word tells us that He heals. It tells us that He is an all-powerful God, and that what He **Wills**, is done.

But the thing is, while God heals, (and praise God for the healing He does), faithful disciples of Jesus do not chase after miracles, and it is never right to **demand** miracles, or to claim miracles.

Sometimes I hear people praying, and they put themselves in the place of God “I declare”; “I claim”; “I speak it into being”....

Here's a little heads-up. You're not God, and neither am I. We don't speak anything into being. Even Jesus when He prayed, cried out “Father, if it is Your will”...

And the faithful do not chase after these things. Jesus said (several times), “An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign”ⁱⁱ... Why would I be looking for signs and wonders? That's not the source of our faith. The source of our faith is the risen Lord Jesus Christ.

So, why did Jesus heal? And why does He continue to heal? Well, because God is merciful, but more than that. Let's look to the reading:

While Jesus was at one of the cities (We're not told which one, but He's still in the region of Galilee), Jesus healed a man who was full of Leprosy.

What is Leprosy? Well back in the day, Leprosy was the name given to any one, of a number of skin conditions. They were **often** contagious, and some of them were downright nasty. The most feared form of Leprosy is what we now call "Hansen's Disease". It forms lesions and attacks the nerves.

And there was no cure for these conditions, and so for the safety of the community, **isolation** was their only preventative measure. And so the lepers were excluded to outside of the town. And they only way they could eat, was to beg for food on the side of the road.

Now, in recent times with covid and all the lockdowns, we've had a minute taste of forced isolation. It was feared by many, that this new disease was going to get out of control and the hospital system would be overwhelmed, they locked us down and forced us into isolation.

*Did anyone here enjoy the lockdown? It was awful, wasn't it? But what we experienced, is **minor** compared to the life of a Leper.*

Anyway, Jesus must've been just outside of the city because Lepers weren't allowed in the city. And this Leper falls on his

face before Jesus, and begs Him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." ¹³ And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him.

Let's be clear here: "if you will". is not just about "Will You do it or won't You do it" – It's about the will of God – the intent of God – the determination of God – a decision of God that was probably made before this Leper was born, or maybe before creation began. Alright, this is something for God to decide. **We** don't actually get a say in the matter – it's **God's** decision.

In a secure place, I keep a very important document: The Last Will and Testament of Michael John Brumpton. My Will, outlines my wishes / my decided dividing up of my assets upon my death. It's not only my wish – it's what I have determined and it will happen. It's my Will.

Does that help you to understand how we use the word "will" when we're talking about God's will. We're not just talking about an inclination or a preference. The **Will** of God, is His determination of what He intends to be, and what He will therefore do.

You see, not everything that **I** ask for in prayer, is God's will. And not everything **you** ask for in prayer, is God's will. And that's why God doesn't always answer our prayers the way we want Him to. Do you know how to pray so that your prayers **are** always answered? Pray "Your will be done."

But some folk aren't happy with that, and some will elevate themselves to the place of God. And essentially they claim an authority for themselves, that only rightly belongs to God. And they may not use these words, but their prayer is essentially saying, "**My** will be done"... I declare that this is going to happen... I speak it into being...

That's not the way a Disciple of Jesus prays.

You see, God is sovereign/king/Lord. And so it's not about our will – it's about God's will.

Now, I've had it said to me, "Michael, it's **always** God's will to heal". Rubbish. Where did you ever get that idea? When this Leper begged Jesus, did you notice, he didn't even ask Jesus to heal him. He just said, "If it's Your will, I know you can do it."...

How did Jesus answer? I'll tell you what Jesus didn't say, "Don't be silly – it's **always** my will to heal". He didn't say that, did He... He didn't say, "That's the words of unbelief – I negate those words of faithlessness..." He didn't say that, did He...

And in the sovereignty of God, Jesus did His will, "**I will; be clean.**" And immediately the leprosy left him.

BTW, did you notice Jesus touched him? What a beautiful touch of compassion. Jesus touched the untouchable. Now, by the religious Law, that would've made Jesus unclean. But instead, by the power of God, rather than filth rubbing off onto Jesus, the Leper was made clean by the hand of Jesus.

Righto:

So Jesus tells this bloke, “Don’t tell anybody about this, **but “go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them.”**”

We don’t know why he said “Don’t tell anyone”. Maybe He was trying to not draw too much attention to Himself at this point? We don’t know...

But by the Old Testament Law, for the man to be able to re-enter society (after being healed), he had to be declared clean by the priest, and this was an 8-day process and it involved several sacrifices. So Jesus told him to do that **for a proof to them.**

For a proof to who? Proof to the disciples? Proof to the people? Proof to the priests? Probably all of the above. It’s about testimony/evidence. The priest was the one who’s job it was:

- to make sure that this man was truly healed
- to test that he was indeed clean and safe to come back into the community
- to test that it was genuine and that it wasn’t just some placebo effect or charlatan’s trick...

BTW, there are some well-known miracle workers, who are nothing more than charlatans, putting on a show, and their faithful lap it up.

Anyway, the proof of the Leper's healing, is testimony about who Jesus is – it's proof that Jesus is the Messiah. When we get to Chapter 7, John the Baptist sends his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come? Or should I keep looking?"

And Jesus said:

7:22 ... "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.

The fact that Jesus healed the Leper, is evidence that He is indeed the Messiah.

Anyway, word obviously got out , and great crowds gathered to hear Him and to be healed....

But what did Jesus do? He would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

Do you get this? The crowds are coming, and He goes out into the bush where there's nobody, and prays.

This isn't the picture of the modern method growing churches. This isn't about:

- having a slick public image marketing team; or
- managing social media to promote the cause.
- He didn't stoke the flames of the fire; and

- use the miracles as a draw-card to grow His numbers.

The Lord determined that He would heal the Leper. Why???
As evidence that He is the Messiah.

Righto,
so let's get on to the next healing – the healing of a paraplegic.
When I was a little boy going to Sunday School, this was one
of my favourite stories.

Some men bring their paralysed friend to see Jesus. They're
carrying him on a stretcher. And when they get to the
building where Jesus is, it's so crowded, they can't get their
mate into him. So they climb up onto the roof, and make a
hole in the roof. Here in Luke it says they moved some tiles
away. And they attach the stretcher to some ropes, and they
lower him down in front of Jesus.

And when Jesus saw their faith, He said, "**Man, your sins
are forgiven you.**"

Now, we're told that there were a whole bunch of religious
leaders there, who had come to check Jesus out (& not in a
positive way). Pharisees; Scribes; Teachers of the Law, from
Galilee (N); and Judea (S); and Jerusalem. (From the North;
and the South; and the Capital) – They were there in force.

And when Jesus said to that man, "**your sins are
forgiven**"... They were pretty upset about that. And I don't
know if they were talking amongst themselves, or if that's

what they were thinking: Blasphemy. **Who can forgive sins but God alone?**

But Jesus knew what they were thinking and He said
²³ **Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk?'** ²⁴ **But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"**—he said to the man who was paralysed—
"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home."

And immediately, he got up, he picked up what he'd been lying on, and he went home, glorifying God...

You see, how could Jesus prove to them that He **did** have the authority to forgive sins? They made the statement, "Only God has the authority to forgive sins". Therefore Jesus did something that only God can do.

When Jesus looked at that man, He knew that his greatest need wasn't to be able to walk again. That man's greatest need, was the same as **my** greatest need – to be forgiven of my sins. The reason that Jesus healed Him, was to prove that Jesus had that authority.

How do **we** know that Jesus has the authority to forgive us from our sins? Well, because of an even greater miracle – that He rose from the dead.

And so by doing something that only God can do, Jesus proves that He has the authority to forgive sins, because only God can do that.

BTW, this is the first of 26 times in the Gospel of Luke, that Jesus refers to Himself as “the Son of Man”. **the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.** Jesus wants you to know that. **the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins**

Are you feeling burdened, with all of the evil things you have done? **the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.** In the Lord Jesus Christ, you can be free and be released from all of your guilt.

The Son of Man was spoken of by the Old Testament Prophet Daniel, and there He is presented as a human figure, who is given dominion by God. And this is who Jesus is. He is the Son of God, born as a human, and given dominion by God.

Anyway, when Jesus healed that paraplegic, how did the crowd react?

They:

- were seized by amazement;
- glorified God;
- were filled with awe
- said, “**We have seen extraordinary things today.**”

Only God has the authority to forgive sins. But in Jesus Christ, they had met someone who demonstrated that He had that authority.

What does that tell us about Jesus??? He is God. And He is God who does forgive sins.

You see, I introduced this message as being about “Healing”, because that’s where the human mind wants to focus.

But for Jesus, “healing” wasn’t the main thing. What’s the **purpose** of healing??? The fleshly man/woman see it like this: “Well, the purpose of healing, is to be healed.” Because to the fleshly man, there is no greater blessing to have good health and a long life...

And there is a real twist here, because **often** those who claim to be most spiritual, are doing nothing more than craving things of the flesh – They are desiring something to enhance my physical life, whether it be about:

- being healed; or
- the excitement of the miracle itself;

The purpose of these two healings, is to glorify Jesus.

1. The first one, is testimony that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We don’t order Him about. We seek His will, and we pray for His will to be done.

(Not my will,, but Your will); and

2. The second healing, is proof that Jesus has the authority to forgive sins. It reveals that Jesus is the Son of God.

Do I believe that Jesus continues to heal? Of course I do. And that's why we pray for the sick. We also know that Jesus is Lord. And so we also pray, "Lord, if it is your will, You can. But not my will – Your will be done.". And a prayer of faith, is accepting that God's will is perfect, and praising Him for it, even when it's not my will...

But let's never forget: The greatest miracle, is the resurrection of our Lord. And the greatest healing (and the healing that we most need), is the forgiveness of sins, and to be raised to a new life with Him.

Let's be a generation of Faith – a generation who (in faith) **loves** it when God's will is done. Let's not be a wicked and adulterous generation – always seeking a sign. Disciples of Jesus (in faith) do not need a sign. We delight in The Lord's will, being done.

Let's pray:

Heavenly Father,
We praise You for what Your word reveals about Your Son.

We praise You that Jesus is King of Kings;
that He is Lord of Lords.

We praise You, that He has the authority
on Earth to forgive sins.

We praise You,
that His will, is always best.

Lord, give us hearts of compassion for the sick.
Help us to pray at all times, according to Your will.
Help us, in our prayers,
to never elevate ourselves to the place of God.
But to humbly petition for Your mercy, and for Your will.

And give us joy in every circumstance,
knowing that Your will is done.

in Jesus' Name,
Amen.

ⁱ 1 Corinthians 13:10

ⁱⁱ Matt 12:39 and others