

Spiritual Gifts #4:

GIFTS OF HEALING

Read: Acts 3:1-16

Divine healing

Divine healing is a crucial part of the church's ministry

- Jesus promised it (Mark 16:17-18)
- The New Testament teaches it. See James 5:14-15

The healing covenant (James 5:14-15)

This passage contains general covenant of healing

- *Save* = make whole. It is sometimes used of physical healing in the gospels (Matthew 9:21; Mark 6:56; Luke 8:48; Luke 17:19)
- *Raise up* = restore
- Confession of sin is part of the process
- Therefore spiritual factors also appear to be involved
- From both Scripture and experience we know that stress causes sickness
- So also do sins like bitterness, resentment, fear, anger, malice, hatred
- When we deal with sin our physical health may also benefit
- This passage is about restoration to wholeness

Obeying God's Word

- God expects us to do what He tells us to do
- If verse 13 applies so does verse 14.
- Too many people fail to obey the Word
- The sick person is to call for the elders. This is our responsibility. We cannot blame the elders or the pastor if we don't call them.
- The elders are to come, to anoint with oil and to pray the prayer of faith in the name of the Lord. This is part of the work of elders.
- We do everything we are told to do, but it is the Lord who heals.

NT healing ministry

- Jesus healed all who came to him (Matthew 4:23, 24; 8:16; 9:35; Act 10:38)
- But even He did not heal everyone (Mark 6:5,6; John 5:1-9)
- The apostles healed many (Acts 3:1-16; 8:7; 14:8-10)
- Sometimes there were other factors such as exhaustion (eg Epaphroditus who burned himself out in the work of Christ – Phil 2:25-30)

Gifts of Healing

- All believers are expected to obey James 5:14-15.
- However, sometimes we still flounder in the healing ministry. People are not always healed
- Gifts of healing are above and beyond normal healing ministry

- They are given to some believers by the Holy Spirit ‘for the common good’ (1 Cor 12:7-9)

1/They are not permanent

- Original text = ‘gifts of healings’
- The use of the plural suggests there is no such thing as a permanent ‘gift of healing’
- Gifts of healing are given by the Spirit to meet specific needs at specific times
- Once the person is healed, the gift is completed
- Eg Peter and John at the temple (Acts 3:-16); Philip at Samaria (Act 8:7)

2/They are not regimented

The plural suggests different methods—

- A word (Matt 8:8; Act 3:6)
- A touch (Matt 8:15)
- Laying on of hands (Mark 16:18; Act 28:8)
- Saliva and dust (John 9:6)
- A shadow (Act 5:15)
- Cloths (Act 19:11-12)
- An embrace (Act 20:10)
- Prayer (James 5:14-15)
- Anointing with oil (James 5:14-15)

We need to be careful not to systematise the supernatural ie not to make any of these methods an inflexible pattern. (eg the ‘Shadow Healing Church’ or, ‘The Mud-in-the-eye Healing Congregation.’)

During a trip to Israel, one man suffered a sprained ankle and could not walk. My wife felt led to wash his feet, anoint them with oil and pray for him. The next morning there was no swelling or pain and he was able to participate in the rest of the tour. She has never done such a thing since, but it was right for that time.

3/They are not just physical

The use of the plural suggest healing may occur in many areas—

- Spiritual
- Emotional
- Psychological
- Physical
- Demonic

Eg Paul at Philippi (Acts 16:16-24)

4/Not deserved

- Gifts of healing are given sovereignly by the Spirit, often to people who have little or no grounds for them. There may be no obvious faith or holiness (Act 3:12-16).
- This is especially so in evangelism where gifts of healing demonstrate God’s love to those who do not know him.

Examples: Cripples (Acts 3:1-16; 14:8-10); demonised (Acts 8:6-8); dead (Act 20:9-12)

In 1974, Chris Brock and his wife came to an Easter camp in northern Tasmania. They were not Christians and knew little about the faith. Chris had been discharged from the RAF because of polyarthritis and had a relatively short time to live. He had come to Australia to see out his days. We prayed for him at the camp. Within a year he was playing football. Today he is senior pastor of a large church in Cairns in Queensland.

What to do

The question is not, 'What gifts do I have?' but, 'What needs can I meet?' Our motivation is always to help those in need.

- As we seek to meet people's needs we can expect gifts of the Spirit (including healing) to occur
- It is not enough to sit back waiting
- We must earnestly desire spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:31; 14:1). This is not an option.
- Not for our pleasure or praise, but for the sake of sick and suffering people
- We need to step out in faith

SOMETHING TO THINK OR TALK ABOUT

Read: James 5:13-16

Biblical

1. Who are the three people James addresses? (13, 14)? Is there any obvious connection between them?
2. What are the responsibilities of a sick person? (14-16) To what extent are physical and spiritual healing interrelated? (Compare Matthew 9:1-8; 1 Corinthians 11:27-32; 1 Peter 2:24)
3. What are the duties of the elders? (14-15)
4. What can you find out about anointing with oil? (Use a concordance to find other biblical references.)
5. How is the sick person made well? (15)
6. What are the responsibilities of all believers? (16)
7. What do you think verse 16b means? How would you explain it to someone else?
8. Read Acts 3:1-16 which is an example of a gift of healing. What differences are there between this story and the procedure laid down in James 5:14-15?

Personal and practical

9. How do you think verse 16a should work out in practice? (There is an old saying that private sins need private confession and public sins need public confession. What do you think of this? Give reasons.)
10. Share any testimonies you have seen/heard of people being healed through a gift of healing ie as a sovereign gift of God without any obvious spiritual factors being involved such as great faith or confession of sins etc
11. Share any testimonies you have seen/heard of unusual methods of healing.

12. If you have a need for healing right now ask those in the group to pray for you and anoint you with oil according to James 5:43-15.

Want to read more by Barry Chant? Easy. Just go to www.barrychant.com and browse around. There is something for everyone – Bible studies, children’s stories, articles, devotional materials, poems, short stories, Christian resources, pioneer Pentecostal research and more. And lots of it is free. Dr Barry Chant is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is an ordained minister in the CRC Churches International and was the founding president of Tabor College, Australia. He is married (to Vanessa) and they have three adult children and twelve grand-children.