

Understanding Faith and Healing Joseph Herrin (Updated 10-22-2009)

A teaching on this topic was first posted in 2000 after I had observed a brother in Christ go through a horrendous experience that caused him to question his faith in Christ. This man had a sister whose husband was diagnosed with cancer and was not expected to live much longer. This brother in Christ persuaded his sister, her husband, and their children, that they needed to begin claiming the promises of Scripture that are often cited as universal promises of healing. In particular, the following verse is often taken in this way and repeated often by those who desire to be healed.

Isaiah 53:5

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; *and with his stripes we are healed.*

I do believe in divine healing. I have been the recipient of it, as have members of my family. Our experiences were unusual and profound, and it was very evident that Yahweh had intervened in our lives. However, some saints have erred, often to their extreme hurt, by assuming that certain Scriptures can be understood as promising healing in every situation as long as certain criteria are met. These criteria are often listed as having faith to believe certain Biblical promises, and confessing sin which may have led to the sickness.

The brother that I mentioned, who was interpreting these Scriptures in this manner, was devastated when his brother-in-law died of cancer. As a consequence of this there was a great rift between himself and his sister's family. In addition, this brother was greatly cast down in his spirit, and began to doubt the testimony of Scriptures and his own faith in God.

Since that time I have observed others who have experienced even deeper heartache, including parents watching their precious 11 year old daughter die as they were looking to God for healing for a condition that was easily treatable. The fear that must have assailed these parent's hearts as they watched their child's health decline, the profound confusion and perplexity when she was not healed, and the agony of the following widespread condemnation coupled with their own doubts and thoughts of guilt and loss, have driven me to pray for them on a number of occasions. These experiences also have driven me to set forth this teaching on faith and healing, that others

might be spared unnecessary sorrow and suffering.

I updated this teaching 16 months ago, including some accounts from the news that revealed examples of “faith healing” gone awry. I am updating this teaching once more, as one of the parties involved found the presence of his name being mentioned as a teacher of an erroneous faith doctrine to be offensive. I am satisfied that he has read this teaching, but saddened that its message was rejected. I present it here for those who want to know what the Bible declares concerning the matter of divine healing. I invite all who read these words to test them. Examine the carefully, and look to the Word of God to prove this matter while inviting the Spirit of Christ to guide you into all truth.

Guided by What?

Much of the error in understanding faith today comes from the church having departed from a Spirit-led life. Today the church knows very little of being led of the Spirit in all things. The church is predominantly led by their own souls, though they will at times search the Scriptures to find verses to guide their decisions.

Please hear me very clearly in this: Christians are not to be Scripture led, they are to be Spirit led.

In making this statement, I am in no way denigrating the value of the Scriptures. All of my teachings are founded upon the authority of Scriptures, and this teaching here will include a great many passages from the Bible. The Scriptures are an excellent source of discerning doctrine, and for discovering the general principles of the Kingdom of God.

II Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

The Scriptures are profitable for equipping the man of God. Let me give an analogy to illustrate the role of the Scriptures.

A man is hired to perform a very technical job in a field that he has no experience in. The business owner has deemed the man to be a good candidate

for the job, as he has an excellent spirit about him. The owner is therefore willing to invest in his training. The owner provides the man with a training manual that reveals to him the entire process of manufacturing the product that they sell. The manual covers everything, from the very beginning, through all the stages of production, to the finished product.

The man is encouraged to study the manual carefully, seeking to comprehend the methods of his employer. The man is also told that once he begins his job, he can keep the manual to pull it out to be used as a reference when he needs to understand something.

The day comes when the business owner assigns the man his first task. Although the man has studied the manual, he still needs to receive instruction in his duties, for every employee in the operation has a specific function to fulfill. These functions must be coordinated by management, to insure that everything is working harmoniously, and that nothing is being neglected. At times the employees will also be given changes of assignment, and will be called upon to produce specialty items. The details of these things are not spoken of in the manual. They must be conveyed through management.

Production is also effected by market conditions, and at times there will even be times when production is halted, and other times when production is increased. The owner ultimately controls all of these matters, and the employees must stay in constant contact with him through his managers to discern his will.

In this illustration the manual is a symbol of the Bible, the business owner is God, and the management is the Holy Spirit. In our lives, we have been given the Scriptures to instruct and equip us, but we must daily be guided by the Holy Spirit in that which we do. The Holy Spirit is able to interrupt our normal routine and reveal that He has something different for us to do today. He must also often give us precise instructions to know how to carry out some work of the Father.

There are seasons when God will increase the manifestation of His divine power, and other times when He will diminish it. These things are determined by His own counsel, and we must always remain in communication with Him.

As an example of this last point, let me cite two Scriptures:

Jeremiah 5:24

"Let us now fear Yahweh our God, who gives rain in its season, both the autumn rain and the spring rain, who keeps for us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

There are seasons in God's work with mankind. In the early days of the church they experienced the early rains, and manifestations of divine power were common. Following this came a long period of relative dryness, where occasional showers of the power of God were manifested to revive the church and keep the crop alive. In the last days there will be poured out the latter rains to prepare the people of God for harvest (resurrection).

We must understand that it is Yahweh who chooses the times and seasons, and He has also determined the manifestation of His Spirit among His people. Even Christ had to remain submitted to the decision of the Father to know when He was to manifest healing among the people.

Luke 5:17

And it came about one day that He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; *and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing.*

This statement "and the power of the Lord was present for [Yahshua] to perform healing" reveals that the power to do so was not a constant thing. Even the Son of God had to submit to the Father's counsel and will in healing others. So too must we. We must ever be sensitive to what God is doing, and not assume that the Scriptures provide us with carte blanche control over this matter. We are not to live independently of Yahweh. We are ever to be abiding in Christ as we walk by the Spirit. We will see that the apostles themselves found that there were seasons when the power of God was present to heal all who came to them, while there were other times when they could not heal even their closest associates.

We can understand many things generally through the Scriptures, but we must be led by the Spirit in all things.

Romans 8:14

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Galatians 5:16

But I say, walk by the Spirit...

Some Christians want to be led by Law, rather than by the Spirit. They seek to condense every conceivable occurrence and life decision into a systematic theology of principles and precepts that will tell them what to do in every situation. The Bible was not given for such a purpose. Before the Spirit was given to indwell man, God did shepherd His people with the Law for a period of time. The Law acted as their schoolmaster, but it was not given until man had been on the earth 2,500 years. The Law performed its role of revealing the righteousness of God for 1,500 years, having its role diminished when the promised Messiah came and sent His Spirit to indwell mankind.

Galatians 3:24-25

Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

This temporal tutor told the people of God what they could do, and what they could not do. When the Spirit of Christ was given, God no longer desired for His people to remain under the schoolmaster's dominion. This dominion was transferred to the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 5:18

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

The Law was imperfect in a number of ways. Primarily, it was not able to impart to man the divine life needed to attain to the righteousness of God.

Galatians 3:21

For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

However, one great limitation of the Law is that it is general, rather than specific. The Law may tell a man what type of woman he may marry (not an unbeliever), but it cannot tell the man which woman God would have him to marry, or even if it is Yahweh's will for him to marry. Thousands of such examples could be given, and we can see the truth of this matter as we observe that the Law was spoken of as a shadow, but life in Christ by the Spirit is declared to be the substance.

Colossians 2:16-17

Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day - *things which are a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.*

In the Spirit we have something that is much fuller, much more substantial, much more able to reveal the mind of God in every way, than the shadow of the Law was able to do. When Christ appeared, He fully revealed God. To see Christ was to see the Father. The Law only revealed the shadow of God's nature.

Christ told His disciples that it was better that He go away that He might send His Spirit to indwell them. This was even a greater manifestation of God's presence, mind, and power to man. God need not be understood through the physical senses as the disciples understood Christ and through Him discerned the Father. They could receive His Spirit inside them, and find that Christ's mind was now their mind, and the very thoughts of God were revealed to their newborn spirit with a precision and specificity that the Law could never accomplish.

I Corinthians 2:11-16

For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words... he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Revealing the very specific will of the Father is a role the Spirit is well able to accomplish. The Spirit could tell the apostle Paul not only that he was appointed as a witness of Christ, but the Spirit could direct Paul's steps to those precise people Yahweh desired for Paul to testify to. Doors were shut, others were opened. Visions were given, Prophecies were spoken. The mind of Christ was comprehended. Paul, being filled with the Spirit was able to declare in truth, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

This very substantial union of God and man has ever been the Father's desire.

He does not want man to be independent of Him, operating from a book that speaks of His ways. He has desired from man's creation to indwell man. Man was created to be a temple, but man had to await the time for the Spirit to be given.

Even in the Old Testament, before the Law was given, we find that Yahweh would guide men very precisely by His Spirit. Abraham is called "the father of faith," and as our topic is understanding faith, let us look at the example of his life.

What is Faith?

We can discern something very important about the character of faith from an examination of Abraham's life. Faith always consists of two parts: a word from God, and a response of trusting obedience. Because many Christians have adopted a pattern of being Scripture led, rather than Spirit led, they do not wait to receive a word from God. Consequently, they have no foundation out of which faith might arise.

Genesis 12:1-4

Now *Yahweh said to Abram*, "Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation... *So Abram went forth as Yahweh had spoken to him.*

Abraham heard a word from God, and he responded with trusting obedience. God credited the faith of Abraham to him as righteousness. Faith comes out of hearing. Yahweh had to speak something to Abraham in order for faith to arise.

Consider for a moment that Abraham did not choose to leave Ur of the Chaldees, or Haran, at his own initiative. Faith does not originate in the thoughts of a man. Faith ALWAYS originates in a word from God. Consider how this is revealed in another event from the life of Abraham.

Genesis 22:1-3

Now it came about after these things, that *God tested Abraham, and said to him*, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." And He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

Yahweh once more appeared to Abraham, giving him specific instructions. Abraham responded in faith. If there had been no word from God, there would have been no possibility of faith being present. Abraham did not have to wonder, “Does God want me to do this?” Abraham had heard God give him specific instructions and Abraham responded in trusting obedience.

How many Christians have been tormented because they were not sure they had heard God speak? How many have heard some man tell them that they needed to take a group of scriptures and stand on them, but they had no specific word from God relating to their circumstance? It is difficult to have any confidence in a matter, especially when our senses and circumstances are warring against us, unless we have received a clear word from God.

FAITH MUST ALWAYS ARISE OUT OF A WORD FROM GOD!

Romans 10:17

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word (rhema) of God.

The expression “faith comes by hearing” is not translated literally into English here. The word “by” is a translation of the Greek word “ek” which literally means “out.” It is more accurate to translate this statement as “*faith comes out of hearing.*” In other words, faith must have something substantial from which it might emerge. This substance is God’s word revealed by His Spirit to His people.

According to Strong’s Greek dictionary, the word rhema literally means “to utter, speak or say.” Let us then look at this verse anew with this understanding.

Romans 10:17

So then faith comes out of hearing, and hearing by the utterance, the speech, or saying of God.

[Author’s Amplified Translation]

If God has spoken nothing, we have nothing out of which faith can arise.

If a man, woman or child has not heard anything from God, faith is not present, and belief is not possible. What many are calling faith and belief is merely positive thinking, or misplaced confidence based upon a wrong understanding of God's word.

Hearing from God is a necessary part of a life of faith. Without hearing there can be no true faith. Many are teaching a type of faith today that lacks this vital necessity of hearing God give us direction. Many are teaching a false faith that originates in man's own mind and imagination. They encourage the saints to envision the things they want and then stand in confidence, claiming that they have these things. Elwin Roach wrote regarding this false faith:

Some have called this type of faith the "Prosperity Message," although in less favorable circles it has been called "Name it and Claim it," "Bless it and Confess it," "Blab it and Grab it," or "What the Heck, Write the Check..."

It is one thing to have the Faith of God as a result of an impregnation of His anointed word which will move mountains, but it is entirely another matter when a man carves an image in his positive-thinking mind and calls it faith, and then holds God ransom with the written word which his carnal mind has little or no understanding of. This, dear reader, is not faith, not even in the farthest stretch of the imagination. It is presumption, and God is not obligated to pay up!

Many of the saints today have built upon the shifting sands of a false faith doctrine. Its teachings rest upon a belief in a principle of faith. It is taught that if one can work up enough confidence to believe something when they ask for it in prayer, then they will be assured of having their request. The key to this type of faith is the ability of man to believe something. The saints are told that if they can conceive something, and believe in its fulfillment, then they can have it.

This is not the type of faith that Abraham demonstrated. Abraham did not think to himself one day, "I sure am tired of this city of Ur. I would like to live somewhere far away from here. I think I will take my wife and hit the road, and I will trust God to protect me and bless me in my journey." No! Abraham did not initiate this journey. We read where Yahweh spoke to him and gave him a command. So Abraham's faith began with hearing.

Many who are teaching a principle of faith that is divorced from being led of

the Spirit, focus in on verses such as the following:

Matthew 18:19

Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.

The faith teachers of the day make great use of this verse to suggest that Christians can have anything their hearts desire. But surely a mature Christian does not believe that the “anything” stated here actually means “anything” that man can think up? Does this mean if two Christians agree together that God should give them both a million dollars, that Yahweh is obligated to do so?

James 4:3-4

You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?

James reveals that there are some limitations to those things we can expect to receive from God. Is it possible that there may be other conditions that must be met in order for prayer to be answered? Is it possible that Christians are to discern the will of God in each situation? The Scriptures reveal that the answer is an emphatic “YES!”

George Muller, the minister who established large orphanages in England in the 1800's knew much about prayer and faith. In 1880 he preached a sermon where he shared the following:

Had it been left to us to make promises concerning prayer, I do not know that you or I could have done any more than say, “Ask, and ye shall receive.” Yet, while the promise is so full, so deep, so broad, so precious in every way, we have here, as becomes us with other parts of the word of God, to compare Scripture with Scripture, because in other parts additions are made, or conditions are given, which, if we neglect, will hinder our getting the full benefit of prayer.

George Muller went on to detail a number of conditions that were attached to the simple “Ask, and ye shall receive.” First, our petitions must be according to the will of God as is revealed in I John 5:14.

I John 5:14

And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, *if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.*

Brothers and sisters, we have to get the whole counsel of God on a matter. If you would seriously contemplate this matter of prayer and faith, you would surely have to acknowledge that God will not do anything the mind of man will conceive simply by his asking for it. What a mixed up world this would be. Mankind would end up ruling in the heavens. God would be at the beck and call of man, existing to meet man's every whim, to move at man's command. Such a condition would amount to a total overthrow of the authority of God over His creation.

A true and mature understanding of prayer and faith must acknowledge that man must at all times be subject to the will of the Father. If man asks "anything" according to His will, He hears us and will answer from heaven. If it is not according to His will, then man has no expectation of God granting His petition. Is it always the will of God that healing be granted? By careful examination of the Scriptures, we must conclude that the answer is "No!"

No Formula For Healing - The Example of Christ

Christ knew the Scriptures better than any other man, yet He never operated out of general principles derived from them. Yahshua did not begin His ministry until the Spirit descended upon Him and remained. Immediately *He was led of the Spirit* into the wilderness to fast for forty days. His entire ministry was characterized by a complete submission to the will of the Father as it was revealed to Him by the Spirit. He plainly states how dependent He was upon the Father to know His will in every circumstance and situation.

John 5:19-20

Yahshua therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel.*"

Christ NEVER determined for Himself who He would heal, or how the healing would be accomplished. He looked to the Father. Whatever the Father showed

Yahshua, He did “*in like manner.*” If the Son saw the Father healing a blind man by taking spittle and clay and making mud to place on his eyes, He did exactly as the Father showed Him. If He saw the Father healing ten lepers by telling them to go and present themselves to the priest, knowing they would be healed along the way, then He instructed them exactly according to what the Father showed Him.

Christ never quoted from Isaiah, or another verse mentioning healing, saying, “Based upon this verse, you are healed.” If any man had the ability to apply the Scriptures according to His understanding, surely it was Yahshua. Yet He strictly avoided ever being led in this way. He never made a decision apart from discerning the will of the Father for that situation.

John 5:30

“I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”

The Son of God never acted presumptuously, although He said He was greater in wisdom than Solomon. As He heard from His Father, He judged. It is the tendency of natural man to gather what facts he can through his natural senses, and then make a decision based upon what is observed and his own understanding of righteousness. This the Son of God never did.

Isaiah 11:3-4

He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear; but with righteousness He will judge...

God the Father is the only source of righteous judgment. Only He can decide what will be done in every situation. He chooses to heal, or not heal. He knows the reason behind every sickness. Yahweh alone can determine the manner in which a healing will take place, and we must discern His mind that we might know what He would have done. Consider the following examples from Yahshua’s ministry.

John 9:2-3

And His disciples asked Him, saying, “*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?*” Yahshua answered, “*It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him.*”

John 5:7-14

The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me." Yahshua said to him, "Arise, take up your pallet, and walk." And immediately the man became well, and took up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day... Afterward Yahshua found him in the temple, and said to him, "*Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you.*"

In the first example Yahshua was asked if the man or his parents had sinned, causing his blindness. Yahshua said that neither had sinned. In the second example Yahshua discerned that the man's sin had indeed precipitated his condition and He cautioned him to sin no more. How could Yahshua discern this? Certainly not by outward observation. It would be impossible to construct a set of doctrines, or a theological structure, to determine why a person is sick. It is only by the Spirit of God that the cause can be discerned. Yahshua was in constant communion with the Father by the indwelling Spirit. He was always discerning the mind of the Father in this way. In like manner, the saints of God are to approach every situation where healing is needed.

Yahshua never operated by formula, or principle. He acted as God directed Him. For one blind man He simply touched his eyes and told him to be healed. For another He made mud from spit and dirt and applied it to the blind man's eyes and told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. For some afflicted people Yahshua cast out unclean spirits that He discerned to be in them. For some He told them to stretch out their hand, or rise up off their pallet. For some He said, "Your sins are forgiven." In each situation Yahshua discerned the mind of the Spirit and acted accordingly.

Living by Biblical formula leads to an independence from a daily reliance upon the leading of the Spirit. We are called to "abide" in Christ. Yahweh has so designed the Christian life and experience so that His children will seek Him always. Great error occurs when men seek to construct a theological framework whereby they can determine what to do in every situation. We are called to be a people of the Spirit, not a people of the letter.

II Corinthians 3:6

It is He Who has qualified us making us to be fit and worthy and sufficient as ministers and dispensers of a new covenant of salvation through Christ, *not ministers of the letter of legally written code but of the Spirit; for*

the code of the Law kills, but the Holy Spirit makes alive.
(Amplified Bible)

Those who declare that all we need is God's word have made the Bible into an idol. (It may be more appropriate to say they have made their notions concerning the Bible into an idol, for they believe they are able to understand the Scriptures and apply them independent of hearing from the Spirit of God.) This idol leads men and women away from a daily reliance upon the life of Christ expressed through the indwelling Spirit of Christ. Placing the Bible into a role God intended His Spirit to occupy renders Christians susceptible to many errors of judgment that result in heartache and loss.

Understanding Scriptures on Healing

Many ministers who teach a universal promise of healing based upon Scriptures often cite the following passage from Peter.

I Peter 2:24

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; *for by His wounds you were healed.*

Peter is quoting a passage from the prophet Isaiah, so let us begin by looking at Isaiah's words, which are also quoted widely in support of a doctrine of universal healing from sickness and injury.

Isaiah 53:5

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; *and with his stripes we are healed.*
(KJV)

A question that many have glossed over is, "What kind of healing is the verse referring to?" Many saints have not studied this verse "as a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of God." Looking no further than the surface to gain understanding and to find their interpretation and application, they have failed to arrive at the truth. They see the word "healed" here and make an assumption that the verse is speaking of physical healing. Assumptions are very dangerous, leading to sorrow in many occasions. The word *healed* is not used exclusively in relation to physical sickness.

There are many clues in the context of the above verse that make its meaning clear. Large portions of the prophetic books of the Bible are written in a poetic style that was common to the Hebrews. One of the features of Hebrew poetry is the use of parallelism. Parallelism is the repetition of a thought, either restating a thought using different words, or making a contrast to the thought by stating its opposite. This is seen clearly in the Psalms.

Ps 6:1

O Yahweh, do not rebuke me in Your anger, nor chasten me in Your wrath.

Ps 7:9

O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous...

In these two verses we see examples of parallelism. In the first verse the same thought is stated in two different manners. In the second verse parallelism is again used, but this time the thoughts are in contrast to one another. By understanding this feature of Hebrew poetry translators of scripture have been able to discern the meaning of many obscure words. Knowing a thought is restated, or contrasted, they are able to compare known words with words they are uncertain about in order to arrive at a clear understanding of a word's meaning.

As students of the scriptures, we can use this same device to determine meaning when we perceive parallelism is being used. Look again now at the verse from Isaiah.

Isaiah 53:5

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

(KJV)

It is clearly evident that parallelism is being used in this scripture. Is the parallelism restating the same thought, or is it a contrast? As we look at the verse we see that the same thought is restated. The first clause is:

“He was wounded for our transgressions...”

The parallel clause is:

“He was bruised for our iniquities.”

We see here that the words “wounded” and “bruised” are parallel to one another, speaking of the suffering of Christ before and during His crucifixion. We also see that the words “transgressions” and “iniquities” are parallel. These parallel clauses are clearly speaking of Christ suffering for the sin of man.

This verse is very interesting in that it repeats the original statement not once, but three times. The next sentence contains two more perfect parallels to the original statement.

“The chastisement of our peace was upon Him...”

“With His stripes we are healed.”

It is easy to discern that the words “chastisement” and “stripes” continue the parallels found in the words “wounded” and “bruised.” All four words describe various forms of suffering. It takes a little more Bible knowledge to discern the parallel in the last part of these clauses. What is meant by “the chastisement of our peace was upon Him”?

When someone sinned under the Levitical Law an offering had to be made to atone for the sin. One such offering was called a “peace offering.” This is the meaning of “the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.” This thought is further stated in the following passage.

Colossians 1:19-20

For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, *having made peace through the blood of His cross...*

The cross of Christ is the place where the peace offering was made, restoring the relationship between God and man where sin had caused a division. It is evident then that the first three clauses of this verse from Isaiah are all dealing with sin and Yahshua bearing sin's penalty. Could we expect that the final phrase will bear the same meaning? Let us examine it.

“And with his stripes we are healed.”

I have already noted that “stripes” is a parallel to “wounded,” “bruised,” and

“chastisement.” All of these words are linked to Yahshua paying the penalty of sin. How then are Christians able to break the established parallelism and declare that Isaiah is now writing about physical healing when all the other clauses have been speaking of sin’s healing?

The word that is interpreted “healed” in this verse is elsewhere interpreted as “repaired” (I Kings 18:30), and “be made whole” (Jeremiah 19:11). The scripture from Kings is speaking of “repairing” the altar and the scripture from Jeremiah is speaking of destroying a piece of pottery so that it cannot “be made whole” again. We see that the word can have variations of meaning, and we must look to the context of the passage it is found in to determine its application.

If you still have doubts about the meaning of this verse from Isaiah, you need only look at the verse in its context. The rest of the passage contains these words:

Isaiah 53:6,10

All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but Yahweh has caused the *iniquity* of us all *to fall on Him...* But *Yahweh was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render himself as a guilt offering...*

The stripes Yahshua suffered were an example of Yahweh putting His Son to grief that He might render Himself a guilt offering. What is the purpose of a guilt offering? It is to atone for sin. By His stripes we were healed from our sin guiltiness.

To conclusively settle this matter, we need only look at the New Testament to observe how the apostles understood this Scripture.

I Peter 2:24

He Himself bore our *sins* in His body on the cross, that we might die to *sin* and live to *righteousness*; for by His wounds you were healed.

The subject of this verse is sin and righteousness. The final clause relates to all that has been said before it. “*By His wounds you were healed*” from *sin that you might live to righteousness*.

It is a great manifestation of poor Bible interpretation that would lead a

person to conclude that these verses were making a general promise of physical healing from all sickness to Christians. Tragically, many saints have taken such verses and attempted to stand upon them and claim physical healing. God never intended this verse, or others, to be used in such a manner.

I do not deny that Christ does provide healing for people. I have experienced this in my own life and among my family. Christ healed many people during His ministry. At the same time, He declared that He only did what He saw the Father doing. Let me address one other passage that has recently been shared with me by a reader.

Matthew 8:16-17

And 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 ill in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, "*He Himself took our infirmities, and carried away our diseases.*"

Most Bible scholars I have read take these words of Matthew to be a reference to Isaiah 53:4

Isaiah 53:4

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried...

Yahshua truly did heal many people, both physically and spiritually. He continues to do so today, and divine healing is still available to those who seek Him.

I believe it is helpful to consider the miracles of healing that Christ performed. Many people came to Christ, or were brought to Him, and they would make known what they wanted. We have their testimonies. One man said, "If you are willing you can make me whole." Another said, "If you are able, please help my son." People had various understandings concerning the power that was present in the Son of God. Let me say that I believe what the Scriptures declare:

Matthew 28:18

And Yahshua came and spake unto them, saying, "*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*"

Christ now sits at the right hand of the throne of power. He can do absolutely anything. There is nothing outside of the scope of His power. Certainly, there is no sickness too great for Him to heal, for He demonstrated that He had power to even raise the dead.

As we have observed, and must keep in mind, Yahshua always did things in like manner as the Father revealed it to Him. When we encounter sickness today, how are we to know the cause of the sickness unless the Spirit of Christ reveals it? How do we know if sin is the cause? How do we know if the sickness is generational, caused by a forebear's sin? How do we know if it is caused by demonic oppression? How do we know the specific manner in which God would heal a person? We must be led of the Spirit.

The Bible is our operating manual, and it tells us that God heals sickness and disease and injury. Yet we must be guided by the Spirit to know the mind of God for each situation.

The Example of the Apostles

Let us look at the example of the apostles to see if the doctrine of universal healing for all Christians holds up. The apostle Paul was a man of great faith. He was used of the Lord to perform spectacular healings.

Acts 19:11-12

And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.

Notice here who it says was doing the miracles. "*God was performing extraordinary miracles.*" Paul was simply God's hands in performing the work. Paul was directed by God in these activities, and what the Spirit revealed to him he did in like manner. It is evident that Paul did not subscribe to an universal healing doctrine based upon a perceived Biblical promise. He only healed when Yahweh revealed it was His will to do so, and in the manner revealed to him. There were times when Yahweh gave Paul no revelation for the healing of an individual.

II Timothy 4:20

Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.

How is it that a man with the spiritual maturity of the apostle Paul left an associate behind due to sickness? Didn't Paul know that there was an universal promise of healing for all, and the prayer of faith would raise them up?

It is perplexing to many people that Paul could heal everyone at one point in his ministry, and at other times he could not even heal his closest associates. How are we to understand this mystery? I do not believe Paul's faith or spiritual life was any less at one time than the other. It is simply a manifestation of the will of the Father. He chooses when His power will be present to heal.

It is the Father who determines whether His power will be present to heal at a particular time and place. Knowing that Yahweh is the One who decides when His power will be manifest to heal, we should find ourselves driven into His presence to petition Him for this healing when it is needed. We find Paul doing this very thing. There were times when Paul experienced profound illness.

Galatians 4:13-15

But you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Yahshua Himself. Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness, that if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.

By Paul's own confession he had a loathsome condition that afflicted his eyes. This was a prolonged condition, for trouble with his eyes is mentioned frequently.

Galatians 6:11

See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.

Because Paul was nearly blind, he often dictated his letters and only signed his name at the end of them.

Romans 16:22

I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.

I Corinthians 16:21

The greeting is in my own hand - Paul.

How did Paul respond to this bodily affliction? Did he claim a blanket promise of healing perceived in the Scriptures, such as “by His stripes we are healed”? No! Paul sought the Lord concerning the matter.

II Corinthians 12:8-9

Concerning this *I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me*. And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

I believe this loathsome affliction to his eyes may well have been Paul's thorn in the flesh, for he often makes reference to it. Of this affliction he says he prayed to God three times “entreating” the Lord to remove it. *Paul entreated*. He did not claim some general promise. Paul sought the Lord's mind, and when the Lord revealed it was His will for the affliction to remain, Paul accepted it.

Paul's actions lend no support to the faith healing doctrines that suggest God will heal all who have faith and repentance. Clearly this is not the case. God did not remove Paul's sore affliction of his eyes. Will men suggest this was due to Paul being deficient in faith, or having unconfessed sin in his life?

We find the apostle Paul giving the following instructions to Timothy.

I Timothy 5:23

No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and *your frequent ailments*.

What is interesting to note here is that Paul did not do anything that the erroneous faith healing doctrine would suggest. He did not tell Timothy to stand on promises of healing found in the word of God. He did not tell Timothy to rebuke the devil. Paul did not even suggest that Timothy call for the elders of the church, for Paul was Timothy's elder. Paul discerned that Timothy should drink a little wine for his stomach and his frequent ailments, and this is what Paul recommended to him.

As Christians we must be discerning of the Father's thoughts for us. He does

not choose to heal every person anymore than He chooses to make everyone financially prosperous. Though, just like this doctrine that suggests universal health is promised in the Bible, many faith teachers today say there are a multitude of promises of universal wealth to all who will believe. Yet God chooses to subject His children to lean times financially as well as physically. Through these means He is able to reduce the strength of the outer man in order that the fragrant aroma of the life of Christ might be released through us. Concerning Paul's physical affliction, he understood the following:

II Corinthians 12:7

To keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh...

I was born with a hereditary bone disease called Osteogenesis Imperfecta, or Brittle Bone Disease. From the age of seven to the age of thirteen I broke multiples bones and had numerous surgeries to repair these injuries. Looking back I can see the Lord's purpose in this. Had I been a physically strong person I would have had a tendency toward pride and independence that would have been very destructive. Yahweh wanted to produce a son who was humble and who looked to Him at all times. To accomplish this He gave me a body that was easily broken. The strength of the natural man provides a barrier to walking in humility before God. Yahweh will often choose to subject His children to some affliction, or weakness in order to produce sons in His image.

I Corinthians 1:26-29

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God.

God will choose to afflict His children in various ways for the sake of their own conformity to Christ. As we receive some weakness, or affliction Yahweh has chosen for us, He provides a more abundant grace that the life of Christ might be revealed in us.

II Corinthians 12:9

Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.

God will not choose to heal all sickness, disease and affliction for He has chosen some to bear these things for their perfecting as saints. Though you stand and claim healing Scriptures from dawn to dusk, God will not change His mind concerning His will for your life.

I have been much impressed from the time of my youth with the testimony of Joni Eareckson Tada. As a teenager she experienced a diving accident that left her paralyzed from the neck down. She prayed for healing, and many others prayed for her, yet it was not God's will to remove the paralysis.

As Joni came to accept the brokenness of her body, the fragrant aroma of Christ within her began to manifest more and more. Her compassion, tenderness, patience, and joy are of an unusual degree among the saints of Christ. She has subsequently been enabled to impact the lives of millions through the testimony of Christ's sufficiency in her weakness. She considers her wheelchair not to be a prison that holds her captive, but a throne upon which the Son of God can be manifest.

I read the book *Joni* when I was a teenager. In it she shared how some well meaning believers told her that if she just had enough faith God would heal her. This was like kicking a person when they are down. God revealed to Joni that it was His will that she endure this condition, and His grace has truly been sufficient. His power has been made manifest through her weakness.

My Experiences of Divine Healing

The Father has done some tremendous things in my family. He has performed miraculous things for which only He can get the credit. My son Josiah was also born with the hereditary bone disease called Osteogenesis Imperfecta. By the time he was seven years old he had already broken thirteen bones and had two surgeries to correct fractures. My wife and I had some years earlier applied for government SSI benefits on him and he had been accepted. This provided us with free medical benefits for Josiah and a monthly stipend of between \$300-\$400 a month. These things gave me no satisfaction, for I desired for my son to be healed.

I began to pray in earnest, asking God to heal my son. I was distressed over his condition. He was spending so much time in casts that his muscles and bones were not able to grow stronger. This exacerbated his condition, making him more prone to have fractures. As I was petitioning the Father one day

concerning my son, the Lord spoke to me and told me that He would heal my Josiah. The Spirit made known to me that the Father required that I cancel the SSI benefits on him in order to receive this healing. The Lord demanded that I exercise faith before I would see His provision.

Observe in this how the Spirit of Christ who dwells in us is able to reveal the mind of the Father in a much greater substance and precision than the Law was able to do. There is nothing written in Scriptures that would tell me that God would heal my son if I canceled his SSI benefits and Medicaid. The Spirit is able to make known the will of the Father with great specificity. Christ said:

John 10:27

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me...”

To natural sight and reason, the revealed will of God appeared very foolish. My son was freshly out of a cast and had broken two bones that year. Medical treatment was very expensive and many people fought long and hard battles, even hiring lawyers, to attain the benefits we were receiving. I considered, however, that it would be much better for my son to be healed and to have no more fractures, than to have the government pick up the tab each time he broke a bone. I wanted my son to be able to run and play and do all the things that other boys did.

I shared with my wife what the Lord had spoken to me, and we decided to follow the Lord in obedience, to cancel the benefits we were receiving on our son, and to trust the Lord to heal him. When we called the government agency to ask them to cancel our benefits, they did not understand why we would make such a request. They tried to get us to reconsider, but we told them that we no longer wanted the benefits they offered.

The Lord told me to not baby my son. I was instructed by the Spirit to allow Josiah to ride bikes, skateboard, play on trampolines, roughhouse with other kids, and do all the things other boys were doing. Yahweh promised that He would protect him. Over the course of the next seven years my son never broke another bone, though this was the prime period in which most boys with his condition would have experienced the most fractures. God preserved him. I saw my son take some tremendous spills off of his bicycle that would have left him shattered prior to God's healing, and he came away only with scrapes and bruises. His bones were not broken.

I had heard God speak, and therefore faith had a solid foundation upon which to rest. I did not decide for myself that I would cancel all medical benefits on my son and believe that God would heal him. I pressed into God in prayer, and when I heard from Him faith resulted. This is ever the pattern for faith.

A year after God led me to trust Him for the health of my son, He spoke to me again and told me that He now wanted me to trust Him for the health of our entire family. I was working as a computer professional at a local hospital and they had excellent medical benefits at a reasonable cost. I was serving as a minister at a local church at the same time, and the Father was calling me to steps of faith as an example to the body. I knew I had heard from God again, and I shared what I had heard with my wife. This caused her much fear, and she opposed this decision initially, but later she came to agreement with me in the matter.

When I went to the office at work to cancel my health insurance, I was informed that changes to benefits could only be made during a two week period that occurred in December. This was some months away, so I determined then that in obedience to God I would cancel health insurance on my entire family when that date arrived.

Several weeks before the date that I could drop my insurance I began to manifest symptoms of diabetes. I began experiencing dry cottony mouth and constant thirst. I had extremely frequent urination, even having to get up 5 or 6 times a night to use the bathroom and get another drink of water. I experienced blurred vision and occasional dizziness. One day while at work I became dizzy and, being right there in the emergency room, I asked them to run some tests on me and they checked my blood sugar and it was about 370 when it should be no higher than 120. The attending doctor told me I was diabetic and that I needed to go see my family physician and get started on a diabetic regimen for treatment.

I knew what God had spoken to me about trusting Him for our health. His instructions were for me to cancel my health insurance. The timing of this physical attack, just weeks before I could cancel this insurance seemed more than coincidental. I knew it was a test.

The pressure was poured on even more. Some nurses I knew at the hospital had heard about my case and they dealt with diabetic education and treatment. They began telling me regularly that I needed to see a doctor

quickly. They gave me brochures about diabetes and they told me horror stories of amputated limbs, blindness, organ failure, and other effects of leaving diabetes untreated. They told me that they had patients in the hospital at that moment whose blood sugar was no worse than mine, and these patients were on intravenous insulin drips.

In my thoughts I struggled greatly during the next weeks and my symptoms persisted. I became nervous and distracted by all that was coming against me. I had great pressure from family to not cancel insurance. We will often find that there are obstacles to obeying God, and this is where our faith is exercised. Faith is not exercised when we have received no direction from God. It is exercised after we have heard.

I have great sympathy for those Christians who have not understood this. I have watched many wrestle to trust God in some matter in which they have received no revelation by His Spirit. The torment is great, and there is little ability to stand. At times, the results are very tragic.

As I considered my situation, the greatest contributing factor that weighed in my choice to trust God came when I considered what life would be like if God could not be trusted. I considered what the years ahead would be like if I devoted my life to serving a God who would not do what He said when I followed Him in obedience. The prospect appeared horrendous to me. I decided that I would rather risk dying of diabetes than to spend the rest of my life doubting God's faithfulness.

Life did not appear to be worth living if God could not be trusted. The only fulfillment and satisfaction I could envision in life was in entrusting myself to a heavenly Father who genuinely cared for me and who would not abandon me when I placed my life in His hands. How unbearable it seemed to me to spend the rest of my life serving a God I could not trust.

With some trepidation, I went to the office at work during the allotted time and I asked them to cancel health insurance for myself and my family. I rejected the advice of the emergency room doctor and nurses, to go and see a family physician to begin treatment. I cast myself wholly over onto Yahweh for healing. Over the next weeks I began to lose weight, when all of my previous efforts to do so had failed. I lost about fifty pounds and all of the symptoms of diabetes disappeared. Within 1-2 months I experienced complete healing, and to this date, now more than eleven years later, I have had no reoccurrence of

any of the symptoms.

The pattern was shown in my life, that the word of God precedes faith. I had heard the Lord tell me that He wanted me to cancel health insurance on our family. It would have been an easy enough thing to do if we had all been in great health. Yet He allowed me to be tested by asking me to do this thing when I was suffering from a serious condition and was being advised to seek medical attention quickly. Praise Yahweh! He is faithful!

The Prayer of Faith

James' instructions to the elders of the church of Christ include directions for dealing with sickness.

James 5:14-15

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 restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

To understand this we must keep in mind what we have already seen. Faith must include revelation and a trusting response. Many people call for the elders to pray for them today and they are not healed. This passage is often quoted in many churches, but there is very seldom any healing that takes place. Why is this so?

James states that not just any prayer will restore the one who is sick. What is required is *the prayer of faith*. There must be revelation and a trusting response. Why are so many prayers of the elders ineffective? Because there is no revelation from God before they pray. Many simply pray some formulaic prayer, citing verses of Scripture that speak of healing, or saying "Lord, if it is Your will, let this person be healed." Is this a prayer of faith? Absolutely not.

James states that if the person has sinned his sins will be forgiven him. How is it to be determined if sickness is the result of sin? This knowledge comes through revelation of the Spirit of God. The position of elder is a spiritual duty, providing oversight for the souls of the saints. The elder is to be one who is Spirit filled. They should be capable of discerning such matters as they wait before God for direction.

Even after having heard God instruct me to trust Him for the health of my family, I encountered situations in others' lives where I needed to know what to do. I could not tell them God would heal them, apart from a specific word for their circumstance.

One day my wife and a close friend went out to pick some peaches. When they got back her friend said she was feeling very poorly. Her breathing became affected and she was experiencing numbness and tingling throughout her body. I was quite concerned, and began praying. I told the Father that I did not know what to do, and I asked Him to reveal what should be done. A few moments later a lady from the community dropped by and she took a look at this lady and discerned immediately that she was having an allergic reaction due to pesticides that had been sprayed on the peach trees just before they picked peaches. This woman had some Benadryl in her purse and gave one to my wife's friend and she quickly felt better. In less than 30 minutes she was able to get up, eat a meal, and resume her normal activities.

I know Yahweh sent this woman to our home at that precise moment in answer to my prayer. There are times when Yahweh chooses to use some natural remedy, or treatment to affect healing. There are times when He uses medication and doctors. We must not assume that He will not work through these means. We must remain open to hear from Him at all times, and to obey that which He reveals.

I believe there is good reason that God did not give the church a blank check regarding healing. If God had told the church that all they needed to do was embrace a principle, or stand on certain scriptures, then the church would in effect become independent of Him. God wants His children to be intimate with Him. God wants His children to seek Him diligently and develop ears to discern the still, small voice of the Spirit. God wants communion with His children.

I will close this teaching by sharing one more insight from the Scriptures.

John 20:21-22

Yahshua therefore said to them again, "Peace be with you; *as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.*" And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "*Receive the Holy Spirit.*"

Yahshua is commissioning His disciples. He is sending them forth as the

Father had sent Him. How did the Father send Him? Christ began His ministry when the Spirit descended upon Him at the Jordan. His life is an example of one Who was Spirit led in all things.

Christ would not direct His disciples to function in a way that was contrary to His own experience. They were to walk as He walked. The words Christ spoke to His disciples above would not lead them to independence from God. He did not hand them an instruction book, nor tell them to develop principles of kingdom life to apply to every circumstance. He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

The Holy Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost. From that moment forward we observe the disciples moving by the direction, and in the power, of the Holy Spirit. We too are to live in like manner.

You will rightfully conclude that you must be able to discern God's voice to live in this manner. To hear His voice you must walk uprightly. You must submit yourself wholly to be led of Him, committing yourself to go wherever He says go, and do whatever He says do.

Many Christians are unable to clearly discern God's voice today because they have made no commitment to obey God in all things. Should God make His will known to those who have not committed themselves to obey Him? Why should He waste His breath? I would not continue to give directions to someone who constantly ignores my words. I will go to one who hears and obeys. So too does God.

The people of God have been bought at a great price. They are no longer their own. We are called to be a people of the Spirit. If you would like to read more concerning the principle of being led of the Spirit in all of our activities and ways, I would recommend to you the book *Sabbath*. It can be read in its entirety online.

If you would like to read how the Spirit of Christ has led this son of His to an experience of dependence upon God, manifesting His hand in healing and miracles of provision, I would recommend to you the book *Evidence of Things Unseen*. It too can be read online.

May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days.