

Q. Since you have been diagnosed with cancer, do you have anything new to add to your views on healing?

A. In 2014, I wrote an article called, "Does God Promise Healing Today?" (<https://www.wordofhisgrace.org/wp/god-still-heal/>). As many of you know, in February 2018, I was diagnosed with bladder cancer and have been receiving treatment for it. Such diagnoses are where the rubber meets the road. Do I still stand by what I said four years ago? Has delving back into this topic while suffering from cancer given me any additional thoughts?

My conclusions in that article can be summed up as: 1) The time of miraculous public healings has past, 2) God sometimes still chooses to heal today, 3) God makes no promises to always heal us in this life, but the time is coming when all believers will be ultimately healed when we are changed from corruptible to incorruptible. I still stand by this today, although I would like to explain something further about the word "healing" and discuss means by which God heals that we sometimes don't think of as healing.

When I used the word "healing" in that article, it was the way most people use it. That is, I was referring to God's direct healing. But using "healing" that way neglects another way that God heals. God also heals through secondary means, although we often don't attach the word "healing" to this.

As I said in the article, God still sometimes chooses to heal people directly, but healing as a public miracle has ended. But what I did not discuss in the article, but perhaps should have, is that God frequently heals another way—indirectly, through secondary means. We shouldn't think of this concept as odd because we know and accept that God uses secondary means in many other areas.

God often (it might even be more accurate to say usually) uses secondary means to accomplish His will. For example, God used Assyria and Babylon to punish Israel and Judah by defeating them and

Copyright © 2018 wordofhisgrace.org

Permission is granted to reproduce this article only if reproduced in full with no alterations and keeping the copyright statement and this permission statement intact. Unless otherwise noted, Bible references are from the World English Bible (WEB).

leading them into captivity. He used the corruption and jealousy of the Jewish leadership and their influence over the Roman government, coupled with the disappointment of a zealot (Judas Iscariot) who wanted the immediate overthrow of the Roman government, to bring about the atoning death of His Son for the sins of His people. God could have spoken the Gospel to the world from on high, but He instead used mere humans to bring the Good News to the world. The Bible is filled with many more examples of God using secondary means. Does His using secondary means make these events any less the outworking of His will? No. All history is the working out of God's will, and when we study history, we are studying the secondary means God has used.

Similarly, God also heals through secondary means. I believe that all healing is from God. As Christians, although we should appreciate the skill of the physicians, we should give God the credit for the healing. Although the healing is not from God's directly manipulating or changing the sick person's flesh as in a direct healing, it is still caused by God. He created and controls the laws of nature, He caused the scientific and medical discoveries, He raised up every person on the medical team, and so forth. When a person is cured through medicine or alternative medicine or by whatever means or even when the God-designed processes in a person's body fight off a disease or mend a wound, it is from God.

I don't know why, but so many people seem to think that healing is different from anything else in life. If they hear someone breaking into their house, they don't just pray and wait for God's direct intervention. They call the police. If their plumbing breaks, they may pray that God will see that the situation is resolved quickly, but they also call a plumber. But if they or a loved one is sick, they pray, and they *don't* go to a doctor. They think that going to a doctor is a show of a lack of faith. Why? Because they say that Jesus has provided healing to us as much as He has provided salvation. By having faith in Him, we can be as assured of the one as the other. But they reach that conclusion only by misunderstanding certain basics, such as the following: the differences between the Old and New Covenants, biblical typology, context, vocabulary, and grammar.

I think that sometimes people tend to think of New Testament times as the age of miracles. We don't often stop to think what a small area of the world that affected. Jesus directly healed many people during His earthly ministry. Yet, they were relatively few when we consider the many sick people He did not heal around the world. His primary

purpose in those healings was to picture the spiritual healing God was bringing through Christ. Those physical healings were a shadow of the greater spiritual healing, and that healing is what really counts. The people living in that region saw the physical healings, and Jesus' followers recorded them in the Bible for all ages. Once the typology was no longer needed because the reality had come, the physical healings dropped off. Some people say that the healings became fewer because faith diminished. But this dropping off of the number of direct, physical healings wasn't a failing on anyone's part, but simply what God willed.

Many more miraculous healings occur around the world today but these are spiritual healings. Jesus sent a message to John the Baptist that, under Jesus' ministry, "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them" (Matthew 11:5). This is still occurring today, but it is happening to the spiritually blind, to the spiritually lame, to the people who are unclean not from leprosy but because of sin, to the spiritually deaf, to the spiritually dead, and to those who are poor in Spirit. This is a far greater miracle than mere physical healing.

The age of miracles hasn't passed. There are more miracles and more healings today than during Jesus' ministry. This is what Jesus meant when He said we would do greater works than His (John 14:12). The primary purpose of the Incarnation was not so Jesus could physically heal people, but so He could atone for their sins. And yet, He still sometimes chooses to directly heal individuals, and He frequently heals through secondary means.

A dear brother in Christ who wrote to me mentioned A.B. Simpson. I'm glad that he did because Simpson is the source of much of what many Christians today believe about healing. A.B. Simpson (1843-1919) was the founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. He also taught what he called the "Fourfold Gospel," which was "Jesus our Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King." Notice that Simpson considered healing to be part of the Gospel.

Because Simpson believed that Jesus provided physical healing in His atonement on the Cross, Simpson called the lower frequency of public healings after the last of the apostles a "post-apostolic gulf of impotence and failure" (A.B. Simpson, *The Gospel of Healing* [Christian Alliance Publishing Co., New York: 1890] 16) (<https://www.cmalliance.org/resources/archives/downloads/simpson/the-gospel-of-healing.pdf>). Who

was impotent? Who failed? God? Certainly not! His servants? Was it due to a lack of faith on the part of those asking for healing? To say that someone not being healed is a failure that is due to the impotency of the people implies that success is due to human potency. But healing isn't due to any human's potency but to God. Exactly as many people are healed—either directly or through secondary means—as God wills.

Simpson's *The Gospel of Healing* is rife with twisted Scriptures and logical fallacies. Every one of the Scriptures he gives as his "Scriptural Foundation" in Chapter 1 he takes out of context and/or twists to fit his preconceived notions. I believe Simpson was very wrong in his beliefs about healing. His teachings have caused people great grief as they doubted their faith or the faith of others or believed that God was punishing them over sin because they or loved ones were not healed.

Paul prayed three times that God would remove his thorn in the flesh, and God basically said no. Was this due to impotency on Paul's part? Was it a failure? Of course not. It was God's will. Timothy suffered from some sort of digestive problem and frequent infirmities. Did God directly heal him? Apparently not. Paul recommended secondary means—wine. The Bible doesn't tell us whether that was successful or not.

Despite the biblical evidence, the ideas promoted by A.B. Simpson remain popular today, even among many people who wouldn't recognize his name. Healing, these people say, is a promise and benefit of the Gospel as much as is salvation. They post the words, "By His stripes you were healed," on social media, wear them on their T-shirts, and claim them in their prayers. Yet, they ignore that the context of those words (discussed in my original article) both in Isaiah 53 and 1 Peter 2 is about Jesus' atonement for our sins and has nothing to do with physical healing. And when a person isn't healed, these people are left with no alternative but to believe that someone failed.

The example of Epaphroditus should put to rest the idea promoted by A.B. Simpson and others that Jesus procured our healing on the Cross as much as He procured our salvation, and that all we have to do is name it and claim it. Paul says in Philippians 2:25-27 that Epaphroditus "was sick, nearly to death." Then, God healed him. Why? Because just before Epaphroditus died somebody remembered to claim his healing? Of course not. If healing was part of the atonement, surely Paul would have known about it and claimed that healing for

Epaphroditus from the beginning of his illness. Paul clearly states why God healed Epaphroditus. "God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow on sorrow."

God didn't have to heal Epaphroditus; He wasn't obligated to heal him because Jesus purchased healing on the Cross. He healed him out of mercy.

I pray for my healing, and I tell God why I believe this would be a good thing for my family and for this ministry. And I am so thankful that others have told me they are praying for my healing. This does not, however, guarantee that God will heal me. God knows what is best. He may heal me. Or, He may choose not to heal me. That will be a hard decision to take and a difficult road to walk. But it doesn't make God any less loving.

When we or others need healing, we can and should pray for it. God hears our prayers. But there is no guarantee in the Bible that He will heal. We cannot just speak it and claim it. This would essentially be forcing God to do our bidding.

Do I stand by what I wrote about healing in 2014? Yes. But I did want to give you some additional thoughts to explain about secondary means and to emphasize that the teaching that Jesus procured physical healing for us on the Cross is not biblical. When we step away from Scripture, we're stepping into quicksand that can pull us down into despair when God doesn't fulfill the promises we invent. The Bible shows us that God heals according to His mercy and will. When He heals, He sometimes directly heals, and He sometimes uses secondary means. Attempts to make Scripture say that Jesus purchased healing on the Cross don't hold up to careful scrutiny.

Peter Ditzel