

Sermon Series on Healing Prayer

THE HEALING GOD

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The Worst That Can Happen (On Healing By Compassion)

According to one catholic priest the historic mainline churches almost committed the near perfect crime and that is: do away with Christian prayer for healing (Francis MacNutt). Even in our more recent past books were published which had titles like “The Healing Epidemic” warning of the sickening influence of much Christian healing and calling it an “epidemic” because – I quote: “ ... healing ... is being promoted in Christian circles as never before ... ‘best-selling’ titles flood Christian bookstores ... healing seminars pack the largest conference halls in major cities across the world ... We have bared our throats to the devil’s knife ... “ (Peter Masters: The Healing Epidemic, London: Wakeman Trust 1988, p12-13).

This is rather complex. Where are we at? Nowadays Christian healing seems safe from the near perfect crime because what some call an “epidemic” others celebrate as “sweeping revival” but – making this personal – where do you stand on this matter and how much healing have you and I actually witnessed? On the one hand we may shy away from calling divine healing a disease – an epidemic (restored health is too good for that) – but on the other hand we observe that despite the positive books, despite the seminars, despite charismatic renewal, despite new streams within the Christian church, many denominations – including mine – have not begun to embrace healings from God as anything central. We do not teach healing prayer at our church seminaries and we make almost no provision for healings to happen in normal Sunday worship services.¹ (We have the liturgy/a set procedure and go by the book. And then we have to be finished by a certain time – and maybe that is you as well.)

I assume that none of us here likes conflict and therefore none of us here wants to be accused of espousing an extreme unwarranted position on supernatural miracles but even if we are more balanced confusion still comes – often – with more safe-sounding – subtle – human calculations. One of the current best-selling Christian authors wrote a book on prayer and in that book he included a chapter on prayer and physical healing. He writes positively: “I have personally interviewed individuals, such as a Costa Rican prostitute, whose stories could confound the hardest skeptic ... I believe them and take them at face value” (Philip Yancey: Prayer, London: Hodder & Stoughton 2006, p212). He goes on and further shares that in Nepal the first person became a Christian in 1950. Now – only a few decades later – the church in that country numbers more than half a million people and – so the exciting news – Nepalese church leaders estimate that 80 per cent of the converts have resulted from physical healings: a Christian prays for a sick neighbour who then gets well (p231). 80 per cent of converts from healing prayer! 80 per cent! And the writer reports on similar figures for China.

What do you say about that? The information that is given in this best-selling book has the potential to electrify our faith. Surely – what God can do in Nepal and in China, he can do here in our country: bring people into his kingdom by healing prayer. And the Bible seems to strengthen this assumption. In the Bible preaching the kingdom of God and healing so often – if not always – belong together. The Bible says – and we hear a few references – **Matthew 4:23-25: “Jesus went throughout Galilee teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness among people ... people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them ... “ / **Matthew 12:15**: “ ... Jesus ... healed all their sick.” / **Luke 4:16-44**: “ ... [Jesus said:] The Spirit of the Lord is on me ... to preach good news to the poor ... and recovery of sight for the blind ... On the Sabbath he began to teach the people. They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority ... people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them ... “ (cf. Luke 6:17-19; Acts 10:38) / **Luke 9:11**: “ ... He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.” / **Luke 9:1-2**: “ . Jesus ... sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” / **Mark 6:12-13**: “The disciples of Jesus went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.” / **Acts 5:12-16**: “ ... bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed.” / **Acts 8:4-8**: “ ... Philip proclaimed . Christ ... With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed ... “ / **Acts 28:7-10**: “ ... When this had happened, the rest of the sick on the island came and were cured ... “**

I am not getting tired of this. Could we not keep reading one Bible passage after another and then have our faith stirred into expecting more than we currently have? What God is doing in Nepal and in China and in other places – healing people – saving people through healing prayer – 80 per cent figures – that is normal church procedure according to the Bible and therefore can be – must be – normal among us as well. For us it may be the new normal but it is the Bible normal.

Yet, coming back to the best-selling book which related these astounding figures, you may be surprised to learn that the writer – though believing these same figures – **does not share our enthusiasm.**² **Listen to how he changes tack:** “I would never want to dampen someone’s faith ... Yet ... we can do equal harm by holding out false hope of physical healing ... Down’s syndrome ... Huntington’s chorea ... I know of no miraculous healings of those conditions, and to offer false hope would be even more cruel!” (Philip Yancey: Prayer, London: Hodder & Stoughton 2006, p241). **What is he now talking about? Is God into healing or not? And then, is there a medical condition that is beyond God’s power to cure? Can I hope for God to heal the common flu or a minor cut but when it comes to Huntington’s chorea or cancer, this is beyond him – false hope? How does that compute with the stories from Nepal and China – and the Bible?**

I know that from a human perspective the writer’s caution seems wise and he speaks from human experience: “Don’t propagate a faith that promises too much” (cf. p253). **In other words:** “Do not be too bold.” **Because** – and I quote him again: “Many Christians who roll about in wheelchairs ... have prayed for healing. Some have attended healing services, felt a sudden rush of hope, and kneeled for an anointing of oil – yet still they live unhealed. For them, divine healing feels like the cruelest joke of all, a taunting accusation that in spiritual as well as physical health they do not measure up” (p256).

Do we feel like sharing the same sentiment? We don’t want to dampen faith but at the same time we counsel against false hopes of physical healing because your hopes may be dashed. God may play a cruel joke on you. Maybe here we are getting to the heart of the problem. Maybe this is the question which troubles us most (never mind the other debates on divine healing): How much can God be trusted with healing prayer? Some get healed, others don’t – or not yet. Where does that leave us?

My suspicion is that many of us – myself included – we struggle with comprehending that God is overflowing with love for us. The writer from before also shares with his readers – I quote: “I do not doubt that God answers prayers. Rather, I struggle with the inconsistency of those apparent answers” (p212). **Some he saves. On others he is playing a cruel joke. God is inconsistent which comes close to saying that God is arbitrary and random – ultimately unjust.**³

However, this is where we may need a fresh revelation. There is nothing cruel or arbitrary about God. On the contrary he is overflowing with consistent, dependable, steadfast, unwavering, unquenchable love for us. We are never ever the butt of a divine joke and the pastor is right who keeps encouraging his church members to come forward and receive healing prayer with these words: “The worst thing that can happen to you is that you will have an experience of being profoundly loved. That’s not so bad, is it? And you just might hear the Master’s voice: Your faith has made you whole. Go in peace, freed from your suffering” (Philip Yancey: Prayer, London: Hodder & Stoughton 2006, p256).

“The worst thing that can happen to you is that you will have an experience of being profoundly loved.” **If you get confused about that** – if you are unsure about that – if you do not seek healing because you do not trust this invitation – **then you need to proceed by going back to the fundamentals: what all Christians confess as the core revelation of God** – what we see in Jesus Christ.⁴

Fact is that at its deepest root the Christian faith is about healing. In the Bible the very word “to save” includes the meaning “to cure” – “to heal” – so that, for instance, Matthew 1:21 could be translated thus: “ ... Jesus will heal people from their sins.” **Fact is that according to the Bible the whole human race suffers from a sickness unto death, that is: sin – which in due course leads to the following human outcry – Romans 7:24:** “ ... Who will rescue me from this body of death?”

The Bible explains that – Romans 5:12: “ ... sin entered the world through one man [the first man committing the first act of disobedience against God], and [with that] death [entered the world] through [this man’s] sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned ... “ **Therefore, the terminology fits. We all became sick. Our whole human nature became dead and diseased** – Ephesians 2:1-10 – I read: “ ... you were dead in your transgressions and sins ... gratifying the cravings of our sinful [diseased] nature ... by [that] nature objects of God’s wrath ... “

But then came the cure and from the outset note what motivated the cure. I read again from Ephesians 2:1-10. And there it says in the Bible: “But [– and what a glorious ‘but’ this is –] because of his

great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions ... **But because of love** – great love – from God to us – **new life came** – healing came with Christ – **to our bodies of death**.

This is how it happened – 1 Peter 2:21-25 – I read: “ ... Christ suffered for you ... ‘He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.’ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree [on the cross of his death], so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed ... “

Did you notice again the last word: “ ... by his wounds you have been healed ... “ – **healed** – and – the Bible leaves us in no doubt that – **this healing was more dramatic and demanded more divine medication than any earth-bound cancer or spinal bifida ever would** (cf. Luke 5:23-26). **Untold love made Jesus suffer untold wounds** – on our behalf – **so that his blood** – flowing from his wounds – **would cure us from sin**.

What precious healing substance: the blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Revelations 1:5 – I read from the Bible: “ ... To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ... be glory ... “ **All the company of heaven sang a new song to Jesus** – Revelations 5:9-14: “You are worthy ... because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased people for God ... Worthy is the lamb who was slain ... “

You may be hurting and you may be wondering whether healing prayer is for you. You may fear disappointment but I repeat the invitation of the one pastor from before. His words are true because the God who cured you from the sickness of eternal death and poured out on you the healing ointment of Jesus’ own blood, he will not let you down – ever: “Come forward. The worst thing that can happen to you is that you will have an experience of being profoundly loved. That’s not so bad, is it? And you just might hear the Master’s voice: Your faith has made you whole. Go in peace, freed from your suffering.”

The other week I bought a new book with keen anticipation from the Koorong catalogue. It is by the missionaries Heidi and Rolland Baker who have amazing stories to tell from Mozambique, Africa. I bought the book because they planted about six-thousand churches in only five years and I wanted to learn how they were able to do that. I was intrigued by how powerful the Holy Spirit was through them – opening the eyes of the blind, making the deaf hear, multiplying their food, raising the dead even (53 reports of raising the dead) ... **Wow!**

However, then I made two unexpected discoveries. Firstly, despite the miracles, life in Mozambique is hard. At one conference Heidi and Rolland Baker asked all the pastors to stand who had lost a close family member to starvation – a wife, an aunt, a child. **Too many rose to their feet and then Rolland wrote a sentence which sounded all too familiar:** “We are exhausted, overextended and overrun by needs, crises, corruption, disappointment and the desperate cry for relief ... “ (Heidi & Rolland Baker: *The Hungry Always Get Fed*, Chichester: New Wine Press 2007, p128).

Miracles did not mean the absence of challenges and then, the second observation – standing in curious tension with the first one – **has to do with phrases like these** – repeated throughout the book: “ ... We are falling in love with him who is love ... “ (p26) / “ ... Ever since this day I have been wrecked and ruined by his love ... “ (p31) / “ ... We have lost our love for this world ... The Lord is calling us deeper into the river of his love ... “ (p38) / “ ... I am undone by his love ... “ (p41) / “ ... We have not understood that the Gospel is as simple as this: love, love, love, love, love ... “ (p68) / “ ... The immense love of Jesus is far bigger than anything you will face in life ... “ (p85) / “ ... heart-broken at the great love of our Father ... “ (p116) / “ ... at the core of this movement is a white-hot, total abandonment to Jesus and his kingdom ... a love that cannot be resisted ... “ (p128-129) / ...

What kind of relationship do these people have with God? I am convicted. I wish that I could say the same with the same passion: “I am undone by his love. I have been wrecked and ruined by his love – heart-broken at the great love of our Father.” **And I wish that I could say the same in the same adverse circumstances of Mozambique.** I seem hardly able to handle Toowoomba and that is no comparison.

Heidi teaches that even the tragedies of life inevitably force you deeper into the love of God. The turning point of their ministry happened early on. Everything fell apart around them. Rolland contracted cerebral malaria and Heidi discovered that she had multiple sclerosis. In addition, their daughter also contracted malaria. At the same time the Marxists repossessed all their ministry buildings which meant that they were all thrown out onto the street – a family of four, plus 320 homeless children in

their care. **They retreated to the last building which they had** – one tiny office twenty miles away with one toilet between them, nowhere to sleep and no food.

Heidi writes: “I was tired and I was angry! I heard the voice of the angel of the Lord beckoning me to come deeper into God’s presence, but at the same time ... life was practically unbearable ... I prayed and said: God, you’re mean! How could you let this happen? ... “

I continue to read Heidi’s story: “ . when all hell breaks loose you have a choice. You can either go deeper into the river of God’s presence or you can retreat ... For a long time I was in the twilight zone between these two places, yet the Spirit of God was continually calling me deeper [into love].

I can’t say that I was full of faith at that time – I wasn’t. I desperately needed a miracle. Later that day, God provided one by supernaturally multiplying the food brought to us by a friend. That day I went a little deeper in him. In fact, I took a plunge, because I had seen God do a great miracle right in front of our eyes.

The deeper you get into the river of God’s glory, the more you discover how good he really is. He turns out to be so much more beautiful than you can imagine ... soak in the river of God ... “ (p140).

If that’s the experience when life becomes unbearable in Mozambique, then trust God with your own life and whatever is unbearable in your life. If you are sick, take the plunge. “Come forward. The worst thing that can happen to you is that you will have an experience of being profoundly loved ... ”⁵

By his wounds you are healed – on account of his love – and – know this – **the love of Jesus overflows with compassion for you even when you suffer from less than the terminal illness of sin. I read from the Bible – Matthew 9:35-36:** “Jesus went ... preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them ... “ / Matthew 14:14: “When Jesus ... saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick.” / Matthew 20:34: “Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him.”

Again and again the Bible makes us look into the heart of Jesus: “He had compassion on them and healed their sick.” Therefore, dare to hope. When Jesus sees you and your sickness, he will also have compassion on you. Can I come to the last segment of today’s message and tell one more story from Heidi Baker?

Heidi went through a period of time where she longed to see God heal the blind. In fact, she was excited about what God might do that wherever she went she would look for blind people, just so she could pray for them. If she was driving her truck down the street and spotted a blind person, she would slam on the brakes, leap out, grab the blind person and pray for them, there and then. She says: “It was OK because they never saw me coming.”

She prayed for many of them but none of them received sight. Then, one day, she was in a mud hut church. It was a sweltering hot day. They were worshipping God together when she noticed another blind person being led into the meeting. She was quite excited, thinking: “Here is another opportunity. Maybe God will heal this lady?” When she took hold of her and began to pray, a sudden wave of supernatural compassion (and these are her own words) engulfed her and she began sobbing over her. She sobbed her heart out until God touched this lady and “bang” – she fell backwards onto the mud floor.

Looking down at her, lying in the dirt, Heidi could see her totally white, unseeing eyes. But, as she continued to stare, she saw her eyes turn from white to grey to beautiful brown and that woman blinked as God restored her sight. Heidi was so excited. As the woman realized that she could see, she began screaming in excitement too. She didn’t get up off the floor, she just lay there shouting in amazement. Heidi managed to ask her: “What’s your name?” And to her surprise she answered: “Mama Ida” which is what Heidi is called in Mozambique. So Heidi said: “Oh. That’s my name too.”

A couple of days later Heidi was in the next village in another hot mud hut. While her friend was sitting, writing copiously, another blind lady came to her for prayer. Heidi began hugging this lady and again compassion overcame her. She wept over this lady for a long time until suddenly that woman began exclaiming loudly: “Oh, you are wearing a black shirt.” Heidi said: “Yes, that’s right.” The woman said: “I can see, I can see!” She shouted. Heidi took this lady outside to test her eyesight. Then Heidi asked her: “What’s your name?” She replied: “Mama Ida!” Heidi thought to herself: “Oh wow! Two blind Mama Ida’s in a couple of days. That’s amazing!”

A day later Heidi had moved on to the next village. She was so excited and full of faith that by this time she was saying: “Where are the blind? Bring me the blind.” In response a very old lady was led towards her by a guy in rags. They were beggars. Heidi prayed for her and she fell backwards into the

dirt. Right away she began screaming: “I can see! I can see!” The church congregation was ecstatic because they all knew her and so they began shouting: “Mama Ida can see!”

Heidi couldn't believe her ears at first. She got down in the dirt next to this lady and whispered: “What is your name?” She said: “They just told you my name. It's Mama Ida! What's yours?” Heidi replied with glazed eyes: “It's Mama Ida.”

This was just too much of a coincidence. She prayed: “Oh God. What does this mean?” And now I let Heidi finish the story in her own words. I quote her from the book: “Do you know what God said to me? ‘You're blind!’ I was shocked. I began to argue with God: ‘God, that's not nice! I feed the poor, thousands of them ... (I can't believe I told God this.) ‘I work in the slums ... I feed widows and orphans!’ I was trying to explain to God that I was not blind ... Finally, I stopped arguing with God and surrendered. ‘If I am blind God, then I want to see.’ ... “

And God made her see. He opened her blind eyes to the needs of the Western church. Previously Heidi was not fond of the Western church because she judged us as not being really hungry for God. Therefore she was reluctant to travel outside of Mozambique but now all these strange healings of Mama Ida's healed another Mama Ida – gave Heidi sight for the plight of the Western church (p158-161).

Two quick comments and then the main observation: Did you notice how persistent Heidi needed to be until the first blind woman was healed? She was on a mission – slamming the brakes, leaping out and grabbing people – and the blind didn't see her coming, so she kept praying for them until the first person received her vision. Persistence paid off and then did you notice how lovingly God restored her own sight? This is what God is like – teaching lessons – granting repentance – by miracle breakthroughs and screaming joy. As she was still ecstatic over the healings, God did something to her own blindness which was caused by sinful judgements on the Western church. God can call me to repentance like that at any time!

However, this is the main observation. How were the first two blind women healed? What happened? Heidi took hold of the first one – began to pray – when a sudden wave of supernatural compassion engulfed her and she began sobbing over her. She sobbed her heart out until God touched this lady and restored her sight. It was not much different with the second woman. Heidi began hugging this lady and again compassion overcame her. She wept over this lady for a long time until suddenly the woman shouted: “I can see! I can see!”⁶

There is still compassion flowing from our God. Hugging a stranger in church may no longer be politically correct in our times but imagine what it does to you. As someone sobs over you and over your sickness and as someone holds you in their arms, you experience compassion and you learn that someone cares – and that someone is most of all God.⁷ As happened with Heidi and the blind in Mozambique, wait for the sudden wave of his supernatural compassion and love that comes with healing from your sickness. The most difficult has already been accomplished. “By his wounds you have been healed” – to eternal life – now and forever.

I come back to the beginning. In the Western church there are warnings about a “Healing Epidemic” and more subtle human calculations but this day – if you are sick – please come forward for healing prayer. “The worst thing that can happen to you is that you will have an experience of being profoundly loved ... “ Amen.

Until You Have It
(On Healing By Perseverance)

A man with leprosy came and knelt in front of Jesus, begging to be healed: “If you are willing [- Jesus -], you can heal me and make me clean.” Then the Bible records – Mark 1:41-42: “Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out and touched him and said: ‘I am willing. Be healed!’ Instantly the leprosy disappeared, and the man was healed.”

Now the question is: If you are sick, how often do you expect to hear the same answer from Jesus: “I am willing. Be healed.” If you are praying for a sick person and you – like the man with leprosy – you also kneel in front of Jesus – maybe in a hospital room or your prayer closet – **begging for healing, how often do you think that Jesus will be moved with compassion for you and then answer you with a cure?**

Going by current experience we have to say that most of our prayers for healing remain unanswered. Even in minor matters like head-aches or the flu we seem to have a success rate of less than 1% which is not very impressive. Then in cases like leprosy or cancer we have close to 0% outcome. Thus, we – the western church – have come to a place where we no longer expect all that much, no longer kneel or beg but often pray only once with the feeble disclaimer “if it is your will, God”⁸ with the implication – so a Catholic teacher – “that sickness is probably God’s will, and so we should accept it”⁹.

How can that be when we are Christians? How can so many of us resign ourselves to suffer sickness and disease when in the Bible Jesus never ever said “no” to a single healing request.¹⁰ Not a single rejection. Always compassion moved him and always he said: “I am willing. Be healed.”

Our current experience – please agree with me – is not in accordance with what the Bible says and therefore we are less and less inclined to act on Bible promises and persevere with healing prayer but – maybe – just maybe – we should not lower the truth of God to the standard of our experience. As surely as Jesus Christ is risen from the dead – as surely as he conquered even death when he emerged from his grave –, so do his compassion and power still heal today.

There are some more reasons why we do not persevere with healing prayer and seeking Jesus. Overall our faith walk with God may be quite shallow and therefore we don’t feel ready to plunge into the arms of God with our deepest needs. Then we fear failure. One quick prayer is okay but perseverance in prayer demands an investment in time and runs the risk of rising hopes which – and that is again our current experience – all too frequently get dashed with disappointment. Somehow healing has eluded us.

A missionary in Mozambique, Africa – Heidi Baker – contracted multiple sclerosis and was slowly dying. The most renowned and most famous pastors prayed for her – prayed for healing – one by one – but it made no difference. She was getting worse and worse. By then her own prayers turned to more practical matters like negotiating the wheel-chair over the rubbish dump to get to the mud-hut church in the dump but not so the children. They kept praying for healing – with their simple faith, unpretentious, humble, full of hope. Six, seven, eight year olds prayed: “Father God, don’t let Mama Heidi fall anymore.” “Father God, don’t let Mama Heidi fall anymore.” And – behold – after ten years of suffering from multiple sclerosis Heidi was completely healed. Jesus had compassion on her and in time did say: “I will. Be healed.” What a lesson in perseverance – from the children. If only we could learn from the children.

The same missionary – Heidi Baker – reports another case where an entire hospital was healed – every patient, every disease – and this in the midst of a cholera epidemic. The events were so miraculous that all of the doctors and nurses resigned and began to work for the mission. But then Heidi continued to say: “The next week – despite our prayers – three orphans in our centre died of Aids.” In similar circumstances when another two kids died with measles and malaria she wrote: “Bear in mind that the children who had died were our babies, our precious children ... It was then that God said to me: ‘Heidi, it’s about love. It’s not always about victory.’ Our whole life cannot be about victory and glory – but, it must be about love ...” (Heidi & Rolland Baker: The Hungry Always Get Fed, West Sussex: New Wine Press 2007, p58).

This recalls words from the Bible – Romans 8:35-39 – I read and paraphrase: “ ... We are suffering but no trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword – nothing – will

ever separate us from the love of God ... ” Heidi was right. It is always about love and loving people into heaven.

However, how do you and I hear these stories? For Heidi it has become normal that Jesus opens the eyes of the blind, that Jesus makes the deaf hear and the mute speak, that Jesus heals all sorts of diseases. Heidi was not taken by surprise when Jesus healed an entire hospital but – you and I – do we come on board with this or do we straight away focus on what happened the week after when three orphans died – a terminal outcome which is somewhat closer to our experience – possibly confirming our lack of persevering prayer.

Can we let it sink in that Jesus said to an entire hospital: “I will. Be healed”? Another evangelist writes: “There are thousands and thousands who can prove conclusively that Jesus has healed them and that his power remains the same. The faith that has in times past – and here she quotes from the Bible – Hebrews 11:33-34: ‘... subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword ... turned to flight the armies of the aliens’ – that faith has done it again!”¹¹

Yes, that faith has done it again and can and will do it again even among us. The evangelist prayed for thousands and then witnessed the healing of thousands. From such a person – and maybe only from such a person – we can also hear the following from the right perspective. I quote her again: “... ‘Why are not *all* healed?’ The only honest answer I can give is: I do not know. And I am afraid of those who claim they do know. For only God knows, and who can fathom the mind of God? ...”¹²

Once more – how do you and I hear this last quote? Are we tempted – yet again – to remain stuck in a church which fails to push and press more into the things of God? Do we hear this last quote – remember the dying orphans from before – and thus say: “Why are not all healed? I do not know and therefore I better not pray – better not persevere. The sick may not be healed.” That’s not what the evangelist wanted to say. What about the thousands restored to health? What about the hospital in Mozambique? What about the Bible?

So many seem to have a favourite Bible story which seems to prove that healing is something that is not promised to us from God. Yet, anyone surveying all of the relevant data in the Bible can only come to one conclusion: God is a healing God and he desires the health of his people. When God led the people of Israel out of Egypt, he said to them – Exodus 15:26: “... I am the Lord, who heals you.” The same is said in Exodus 23:25: “Worship the Lord your God and ... I will take away sickness from among you.” Also Psalm 103:1-3: “Praise the Lord, o my soul ... praise the Lord ... who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases.”¹³

God is a healing God and in a moment we will pursue this further. Only now – let’s deal with some of the objections – those passages that are used to dampen our zeal for healing prayer. I read from the Bible – Romans 8:23: “... we ourselves [the Christians], who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for ... the redemption of our bodies.” Also 2 Corinthians 5:2: “We groan in our present bodies, longing to put on our heavenly bodies like new clothing.” Both passages are a useful reminder that no healing miracle now can compare to our future in heaven when all groaning will stop. Here on earth we all face aging and we all face dying – we all long for the final redemption of our bodies – but – nevertheless – please take note – neither passage speaks against God’s desire for healing.

On the contrary this Romans 8 passage continues with positive affirmations, saying in verse 26: “... the Spirit helps us in our weakness ... the Spirit himself intercedes for us with [his own] groans that words cannot express.” And then another promise is added in the same chapter, verse 28: “... in all things God works for the good of those who love him ...” “... in all things God works for the good of those who love him ...” This means that we are not meant to be crushed – struck down with sickness before our time. We are meant to have good outcomes which include healings (good is what is good in heaven).

Another favourite faith dampener is the story of Job whose devotion God tested by letting Satan strike his flesh and bones. But here is how one writer deals with this story – I read: “... Job is sometimes thought of as the type of a suffering holy man. Well, he may be because he refused to submit to his boils and sought God day and night, in spite of the scolding of his wife who advised him to curse God and die, and the smug advice of his friends who suggested that he was not worthy of health. And he found God. He received an overwhelming vision of the holiness of God, a vision that transformed him from a comfortable righteous man to ... a prophet with health and prosperity.”¹⁴

Job's suffering made no sense to him and often we are none the wiser. But in the end he was healed and in the end – if we are open to that – Job became a model for persevering prayer because he never gave up. He demanded an answer from God – with boldness – Job 31:31: “ ... let the Almighty answer me ... “ He persisted until God showed himself and only then was he satisfied.

Job was completely innocent and he may even have suffered because of that. Early on we read in the book of Job that God was so proud of Job that he told Satan – chapter 2:3: “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright ... “ **But then Satan argued back: “ ... stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face.” Yet, no matter how much he suffered in his flesh and bones, Job did not curse God. He may have cried out in agony – chapter 16:13-14: “ ... Without pity, he [God] pierces me [original: my kidney] ... rushes at me like a warrior ... ” but all the same Job remained loyal to God and thus brought more and more glory to God.**

Job was innocent – as you may be innocent – but God was glorified in his suffering. Then healing came and – importantly – God was also glorified in his healing as another Bible story illustrates – John 9:1-3 – I read from the Bible: “As Jesus went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him: ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus said: ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.’” Thus, here we have another innocent man – like Job – who suffered for a very long time – blindness from birth – but then healing came (I quote again the Bible) – “so that the work of God might be displayed in his life” which means that God was glorified in his healing.

Thus, when you suffer for a very long time, do not give up, do not come under condemnation, do not accept blame, but persevere and persist. Wait for the day when the work of God might be displayed in your life and healing comes. [Job was tested by God which may be similar to God's testing of Abraham (Genesis 22). And as God does not condone and approve of child sacrifices so he does not condone and approve of sickness in his righteous people under normal circumstances. Cf. James 5:11: “ ... we consider blessed those who have persevered. You have heard of Job's perseverance and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.]

Still another Bible passage is used to dampen our enthusiasm for healing prayer. The apostle Paul writes in the Bible – 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 – I read: “To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassing great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient to you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ ... “

How are we to understand this? The apostle Paul prayed three times for the removal of a thorn in his flesh – which could have been a sickness – but he was not healed and therefore – so argue some – neither may you be healed of your sickness. Your healing is not likely to happen. However, is that what we are to conclude from this Bible passage? No!

First of all, – to quote a Catholic writer – “there has been a long tradition of redemptive suffering [sufferings that bring forth blessings] ... This tradition is too long to be lightly dismissed ...”¹⁵ **but on the other hand let's be real about pain. When the agony is too great or continues for too long then the probable outcome is not increasing faith but diminishing faith. Pain – intense pain – makes the mind focus on the wound (on ourselves): the soreness, the nausea, the burning sensation, ... to the detriment of looking beyond ourselves in prayer and charity. Even the Bible says – Matthew 24:9-12: “ ... Because of that [original: the increase of wickedness], the love of most will grow cold ...”¹⁶**

Sickness is not always a blessing – that should be obvious – and what's more, Paul himself said that his thorn in the flesh was a messenger from Satan. Please hear this: A messenger from Satan! His suffering, therefore, was something of the devil – evil – and there the Bible assures us – 1 John 3:8: “ ... The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work” – which in normal circumstances includes sickness and satanic thorns tormenting the flesh.¹⁷

In Paul's case the thorn in the flesh did serve a purpose. I repeat what he said: “To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassing great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, ... “ **In his case God used a painful thorn to discourage him from becoming conceited which – I hate to say – but conceding the point – is a rather common strategy of God – also applying to us. The Bible says – Hebrews 12:4-11: “ ... do not lose heart ... God disciplines us for our good [through suffering] so that we may share in his holiness ...”¹⁸ **But then, the Bible is also clear that this is not forever. 1 Peter 1:6-7 – I read: “ ... for a little while you may have had to suffer ... so that your faith ... may be proved genuine ... “ **Here******

suffering was for “a little while” which – coming back to Paul – would make healing conceivable even for him. The day might come when his thorn in the flesh had served its purpose and therefore would be pulled out by our loving Father in heaven. The day might have come when he no longer needed a thorn to keep him humble.

This concludes our brief survey into Bible passages which some people use to dampen our enthusiasm in healing prayer.¹⁹ As we have seen, none of them support the case that sickness in itself is a good thing. We cannot call “messengers of Satan” good (despite possible good outcomes). It is our healing that is good and that’s what Jesus came to accomplish.

We now get to the good news. Jesus introduced his saving work with these words – Luke 4:18-20: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor ... to proclaim ... recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed ...” Then Jesus put these words into action by preaching and healing the sick. When John the Baptist sent messengers to inquire whether he was the promised Saviour, Jesus replied – Luke 7:22: “Go back and report to John ... The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor ...” In other words, Jesus said: “Look at the healings and know that the Saviour has come.” In one sweeping statement the saving work of Jesus was summarized in this way – Acts 10:38: “... Jesus of Nazareth ... went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil ...”

Then Jesus instructed his disciples to follow in his footsteps – Luke 10:8-9: “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’” Thus, even for the disciples – and by the way: even for us – **kingdom preaching and healing belong together and therefore the disciples later prayed – Acts 4:29-30: “... help your servants to proclaim your message with boldness, by stretching out your hand to heal and to work miracles and marvels through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”** One writer observes: “Notice that they did not pray to preach and to heal, but to preach by healing.”²⁰

Then the Bible clearly connects our healing with the saving work of Jesus on the cross. For instance, we read in Matthew 8:16-17: “When evening came, many demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.’” It was on the cross that Jesus “took up our infirmities and carried our diseases” – that’s where he sacrificed himself for us – and here we learn that what happened on the cross worked itself out in present-day deliverances and healings which means that your sickness – my sickness – died with Jesus on the cross and therefore healing can come to us also already now – with the final healing to come in heaven.²¹

Still more encouragement to persevere with healing prayer comes from James 5:14-16: “Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders ... to pray over him ... And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well ...”

This is enough for now.²² According to the Bible there is every reason to expect that when we come to Jesus with a healing request, he will say: “I will. Be healed.” There is every reason to persevere with healing prayer.

Only – to get more into the practical side of this – the thought of persevering prayer can be rather daunting because it sounds like hard work – always trying to break through when you are sick. A woman contracted a brain virus, which left her disabled and in constant pain. Bringing up six children from a wheelchair was extremely tough but the worst part was knowing that God still heals people today, yet, in spite of earnest prayers, he chose not to heal her! She had herself taken to visit everyone with a healing ministry and she had “laying on of hands” so often it was a wonder that – in her own words – she didn’t get bald! When nothing changed, she became deeply depressed but, after months of darkness, God helped her to realize that he wanted her to stop striving for healing and just live each day for him. She found such peace and contentment when she stopped nagging God for healing and started enjoying him as a friend that she wrote a book called *Beyond Healing* and God used that book to bless many people.

Then she writes: “I always love to tell people about the day my eight years in a wheelchair ended so abruptly. I had been speaking at a ladies’ meeting, when a new Christian prayed for me and God healed me completely. I had stopped praying for healing but God saved up all those prayers until the time was right. His timing is always perfect but it is very different from ours! One rather flippant friend of mine often says that when she dies she’s going to take God the present of a clock, because his must be slow!”²³

This story helps us to learn that persevering prayer is not about stressing all of the time but remaining in the love and friendship of Jesus and remaining open to healing prayer – even after eight years – even from a brand-new Christian. This is also the advice which another person received. A friend said: “You’ve been trying too hard [with healing prayer], and it’s upset you. Just be still and *know*; He is God and His power [is for you] ...”²⁴

Relax and rest in God. We may even discover that persevering prayer can be playful. The Bible records many different methods of healing and with playful trust – child-like – we may simply experiment and have a go at healing.²⁵

One of the easiest ways to heal the sick seems to be by touch. Jesus said – Mark 16:15-18: “... in my name they ... will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.” It is said about Jesus – Luke 4:40: “... laying his hands on each one, he healed them.” Acts 28:7-9: “... Paul ... after prayer, placed his hands on him and healed him ...”

Sometimes healing comes when the sick themselves take the initiative, reach out and touch the person that is filled with the Holy Spirit. For instance, Luke 6:19: “Everyone was trying to touch Jesus, for when they did healing power went out from him and they were cured.” Mark 6:56: “... as many as touched him were made whole.” Cf. Mark 5:25-34.

Then there is the anointing with oil – Mark 6:13: “The disciples ... anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.” James 5:14: “Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil ...”

Still another method for healing is by command. A centurion said to Jesus – Matthew 8:8: “... just say the word and my servant will be healed ...” and so Jesus just said the word. Mark 7:33-35 records this: “... Jesus put his fingers into the deaf man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, *Ephphatha!* (which means, ‘Be opened!’). At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.” Cf. Acts 3:6-7; 16:18.

Many people receive healing by faith. Again and again Jesus said to the person in front of him – Matthew 9:22: “... your faith has healed you ...” Luke 18:42: “... Receive your sight; your faith has healed you.” Then frequently a faith action was required to complete the healing. To a man with a shriveled hand Jesus said – Mark 3:5: “Stretch out your hand.” When the man stretched it out, his hand was completely restored. John 9:6-7: “Having said this, Jesus spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. ‘Go,’ he told him, ‘wash in the Pool of Siloam’ ... So the man went and washed, and [healing came through that faith action and he] came home seeing.”²⁶ Luke 17:14: “... ‘Go, show yourselves to the priests.’ And as they went, they were cleansed.”²⁷

This may all sound a little confusing – so many methods – but on the other hand why not keep this simple and persevere with some kind of playfulness. One experienced couple writes: “You need to be persistent, too! If you lay hands on someone, and nothing happens, try the next person! Lay hands on him or her. If nothing happens, don’t give up! Sometimes we [original: Charles and I] have ministered to the same person as many as five different ways. We have tried commanding, laying on of hands, casting out devils, but finally the persistence pays off and we see the individual healed!”²⁸

Even in the Bible there are instances where the healing procedure required persistence. Jesus himself had an encounter where the first attempt did not work. He needed to place his hands on a man twice to heal the man – Mark 8:22-26: “... Once more Jesus put his hand on the man’s eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly ...” [*Testimony of Lutheran pastor Peter Steicke whom God used to heal a blind man in Uganda by praying for him three times.*] Cf. 1 Kings 17:17-22; 2 Kings 4:32-35.²⁹

After hearing all of this can we change? Can we become a church that is more like what Jesus wanted? Can we have church services and do mission work by being obedient to the simple command of Jesus when he said – Matthew 10:7-10: “As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons ...”

At present I know that we are not there yet and I myself am not there yet but I am committed – and I hope that you are committed – to trust Jesus and obey the Scriptures rather than be limited by current human experience. [*The goal is to close the gap between Jesus’ ministry and our ministry because we are meant to do “even greater works” than Jesus in his name.*]

John Wesley was already ordained as a priest and had even been on the mission field but listen to what he struggled with. He wrote in his journal – and this entry is from April 1738: “I met Peter Bohler

once more. I had now no objection to what he said of the nature of faith; namely, that it is (to use the words of our Church) ‘a sure trust and confidence which a person has in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven ... ‘ Neither could I deny either the happiness or holiness which he described, as fruits of this living faith ... But I could not comprehend what he spoke of as an instantaneous [an immediate] work. I could not understand how this faith should be given in a moment: How a man could at once be thus turned from darkness to light, from sin and misery to righteousness and joy in the Holy Spirit. I searched the Scriptures again, touching this very thing, particularly the Acts of the Apostles: But, to my utter astonishment, found scarce any instances there of other than instantaneous [immediate] conversions ... I had but one retreat left; namely, ‘This is how God worked in the first ages of Christianity; but the times have changed now. What reason have I to believe he works in the same manner now?’ ... “

From our vantage point this may be hard to comprehend. John Wesley struggled with the gift of saving faith which could come immediately at conversion. We take that for granted now but with his church upbringing he could not believe that salvation was so easy (anyone at any stage can be transformed by simply trusting the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross) and therefore – as he could not believe and trust these promises in the Bible – he had not yet received that faith – had not yet received for himself certain assurance of salvation.

What was he to do? And what are we to do with our predicament – a church upbringing that in our case neglected healing prayer? This is the advice that John Wesley received from his mentor Peter Bohler. He said to him: “Preach faith until you have it, then, because you have it, you will preach faith.” “Preach faith until you have it.” John Wesley was meant to preach and proclaim the Bible truth – not his own inadequate experience – until saving faith would come even for him – until God would confirm his word and promise.

Jesus himself encouraged a similar approach in the Bible – John 15:5-8 – he said: “ ... If you remain in me and my words remain in you [my words – not your experience] ... it will be given to you ... you will bear much fruit ... “ Remain in Jesus’ words – preach his words (not your experience) – until you have what they promise.

This is the advice that we need to hear. In our case: “Preach healing until you have it.” Preach and proclaim the Word of God on healing and persevere with that truth until you have it – until God confirms his healing promises even among you.³⁰

I close with what an Anglican priest passed on: “Several years ago a Sunday morning meeting was in progress at a local church in Uganda. As the pastor was speaking, a three-year-old girl walked up to him, pulled on his trouser leg, and asked for the microphone. The pastor gave it to her and the girl started to say, ‘Jesus saves! Jesus heals! Jesus delivers!’ She paused. Then she spoke again, ‘Jesus saves! Jesus heals! Jesus delivers!’ Again she paused. Then again, ‘Jesus saves! Jesus heals! Jesus delivers!’ As she spoke this third time, people in the church started to weep over their sins and cry out for forgiveness. Others started shouting, ‘I can see!’, ‘I can hear!’, ‘I can walk!’ Others poured forward to be set free from all manner of spiritual oppression.

The most extraordinary thing about this story is the fact that the little girl had died several weeks prior to this incident. She was about to be buried in the ground when the pastor prayed that she would be raised. Immediately she sat up, alive and well. When her pastor asked if she had seen or heard anything during the time between dying and being raised, she replied, ‘Jesus, came to me and told me to give this message: Jesus saves! Jesus heals! Jesus delivers!’”³¹

Therefore persevere. Amen.

Eyes On Jesus
(On Healing By Faith)

I read from the Bible – Mark 9:21-24: “Jesus asked the [sick] boy’s father: ‘How long has he been like this [convulsing and foaming at the mouth]?’ ‘From childhood,’ he answered. ‘It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.’ ‘If you can?’ said Jesus. [‘If I can?’] ‘Everything is possible for him who believes.’ ... “

Jesus gave the father the key to the healing of his boy. “Everything is possible for him who believes.” This was good news – breathtaking news: “Everything is possible!” – but at the same time Jesus was confronting him: “Do not come and say to me: ‘If I can ... ‘ Come to me with faith saying: ‘You can and you will heal my boy.’”

This brief interchange is in the Bible and therefore we do not want to argue with the words too much but – nevertheless – many of us struggle with Jesus’ teaching on two accounts: 1. This is aiming too high. (How can *everything* be possible?) 2. This generates too much pressure. (Don’t put the healing outcome on me and my faith.)

We have our objections but Jesus put emphasis on this particular truth. For instance, he said – Mark 12:22-24: “ ... I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” And then, another Bible passage – James 5:15 – confirms the promise: “ . the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up ... “

Time and again Jesus would heal people and then tell them – Matthew 9:22: “ ... Your faith has healed you ... “ Matthew 9:29: “ ... According to your faith will it be done to you ... “ Matthew 15:28: “Woman, you have great faith! Your [healing] request [for your daughter] is granted ... “ Mark 10:52: “ ... Your faith has healed you ... “ Luke 7:50: “ ... Your faith has saved you. Go in peace ... “ Luke 18:42: “ ... Receive your sight. Your faith has healed you ... “

The same dynamic reappears in the work of the first Christians – Acts 14:8-10 – I read from the Bible: “In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, ‘Stand up on your feet!’ At that, the man jumped up and began to walk.”

Thus, the key to healing – your healing – is faith in Jesus Christ. Again, we may not like these words, want to object and even bristle with indignation, saying: “What about the person that is not healed? Would you want to tell that person: ‘Jesus wanted to heal you but he couldn’t because your faith was not strong enough.’”

This kind of suggestion seems cruel toward a sick person and hence Jesus was never that insensitive with the sick themselves. Those in pain need healing. They need love. They need compassion. In the opening interchange Jesus did not confront the sick boy but the father and, before the father was confronted, he said to the entire crowd – Matthew 17:17: “O unbelieving and perverse generation ... “ and then explained further to his disciples – Matthew 17:20: “[You could not heal the boy] because you have so little faith ... “ Healing is by faith but not necessarily the faith of the sick person. It may be the faith of a father, a mother, a relative, those praying for healing, the faith of the church, etc. Thus, at all times – you and I – be sensitive with the sick and maybe deal with the log of unbelief in our own eye first.

A healing evangelist writes: “One impossible night, as I preached about radical faith, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Todd, you’ve got to pray for that girl over there.’ Later in the evening, the fourteen year old girl, Julie, approached me and asked me to pray for her. Her grandfather in the United States had suffered a stroke that left him mute as well as paralyzed on his left side. ‘He doesn’t know Jesus ... please pray that he would be healed and know that Jesus was the one who did the miracle,’ she asked.

We agreed together and prayed, ‘Jesus, I ask you to heal Julie’s grandfather ... ‘ and just then, Jesus interrupted our prayer ... ‘What are you doing, Todd?’ the Lord asked. ‘I’m praying.’ ‘You just preached on radical faith for the impossible ... what are you going to do about this?’

I knew in my heart that my prayer for the girl’s grandfather was simply a courtesy prayer, but my faith changed right then as I prayed, and suddenly I was translated in the spirit to the man’s hospital bed where he lay asleep and hooked up to IV’s and a heart monitor. I laid hands on him and rebuked the effects of stroke. The man rose out of his bed and ran down the hospital hallway, the IV still in his arm! Hours later, I learned that

Julie received a telephone call a few hours later after she'd returned home ... 'Praise Jesus, praise Jesus ... I've been healed!' shouted her grandfather ... " (Todd Bentley: Journey Into The Miraculous, Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers 2008, 142-143).³²

How can we pray and not just pray a courtesy prayer for people but pray with faith? What precisely is faith? We need to know because faith is not only for healing but even more importantly for salvation. The Bible says – Romans 5:1-2: “ . since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand and rejoice in our hope of experiencing the glory of God.” There is nothing more central than this: By faith we are justified. By faith we have peace with God. By faith we have access into this grace in which we now stand. Everything is by faith – friendship with God and then healing. What then is faith?

This is where it gets difficult. The Bible does not give us anywhere a definition of faith. The closest the Bible comes to a definition is in Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” Thus, faith is about knowing something – being sure of something – being certain of something – which is not seen. Furthermore – as we learn in the same Bible book – this kind of knowing – faith – is not about some thing but someone. The Bible says – Hebrews 12:2: “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith ... “

And that's the key! Faith is all about fixing our eyes on Jesus. Faith is not something that we make happen – that we discover in ourselves. Faith is looking at Jesus who then imparts something from him to us. It is a supernatural gift – imparted – living and active as we fix our eyes on Jesus. Hebrews 12:2: “ ... fix your [original: our] eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith ... “

There is a good illustration of faith in the Bible. There was a storm and it was dark and the disciples were in a boat struggling to cross a lake. Then the Bible reports – Matthew 14:25-33: “During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. ‘It's a ghost,’ they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: ‘Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.’ ‘Lord, if it's you,’ Peter replied, ‘tell me to come to you on the water.’ ‘Come,’ he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, ‘Lord, save me!’ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. ‘You of little faith,’ he said, ‘why did you doubt?’ ... “

Faith – according to this Bible story – is again not about knowing some thing or some principle but it is about knowing someone and Peter knew Jesus and he knew that Jesus was faithful and he knew that Jesus was amazing. Therefore, fixing his eyes on Jesus with faith he first asked him whether Jesus – in this situation – would want him to come out and walk with him on water. Because without Jesus' word and promise any stepping out of the boat and attempting to walk on water would not have been faith but presumption.

Then – having fixed his eyes on Jesus thus – Peter discovered that there was power in faith. Trusting Jesus – the invitation to come – he was outside the boat walking on water – in the middle of a storm. Wow! What an experience – and who knows what we will experience? But then Peter also discovered the flipside of faith power. There is weakness and failure in unbelief – doubt – because as soon as he lost sight of Jesus – as soon as he became afraid of the wind – he went under – drowning fast in the storm.³³

However, thank God for sinking feelings – the dark times – because desperation brought Peter back to faith – not his own resources – not his feelings – not the outward circumstances – but to faith which is fixing our eyes on Jesus – crying out to him: “Lord, save me!” And Jesus – because he is faithful – did not fail to hear his cry of faith – as he never fails to hear our cry of faith.

Now let me ask more pointedly: Where does faith come from? Where did Peter's faith come from? On the one hand – as we have heard before – Jesus is said to be the author and perfecter of our faith – which means that our faith originates with him and is sustained by him – he introduced himself to Peter (and to us) and he kept taking Peter under his wings – but on the other hand in this Bible story – when Jesus saved Peter – he added a gentle rebuke by quizzing the disciples: “You of little faith, why did you doubt?” “Why did you doubt?” At this point of time Jesus clearly expected more of his disciples – more faith – because faith and walking on water by faith – by now – was up to them. At some stage – you and I – we are all responsible for our faith. Think back to our opening Bible story. There Jesus rebuked a sick boy's father by placing a demand of faith even on him – charging him: “Do not come to me saying: ‘If I can. If I can heal the boy.’ Come to me with faith because everything is possible for him who believes.” The time

comes when Jesus expects those around him to take ownership of their faith and he wants their faith to be believing for healings and walking on water.

As we are sitting in our pews right now many of us – probably most of us – are not any further advanced than the disciples or the sick boy’s father. We are still hearing the same gentle rebuke from Jesus: “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” But why do we have to keep hearing the rebuke? How can we have more faith for the future?

The Bible explains – Romans 10:17: “... faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”³⁴ The eyes of faith remain fixed on Jesus – faith comes from hearing the message and Jesus came for that very reason. When he began preaching the kingdom of God, the people (I quote the Bible – Mark 1:22) “were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the [other] teachers [original: of the law] ...” “**Jesus’ preaching** – the word of God from which faith comes – **happened with authority and when in the midst of his preaching Jesus commanded an evil spirit to come out from a man, the same people were again amazed, saying – Mark 1:27: “... What is this? A new teaching – and with authority [with power]! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.”**

Thus, there is an authority – there is a power – **that operates as the word of God is preached.**³⁵ Therefore, how can we have more faith – growing faith – faith for believing more? We immerse ourselves in the word of Christ – the Bible, preaching, testimonies, books, ... – and this can be exciting but in the experience of most Christians this is actually not so easy.

A pastor writes: “One Sunday night a young man in our church fell in the back of the sanctuary and broke his arm. The mother came to me quickly and said, ‘Come pray for my son.’ The healing of broken bones, even the ones from decades ago that healed incorrectly, had become commonplace. I ran back and found him laid out on the ground, his arm clearly broken. I got down on the ground with him, put my hand on his arm, looked at the break – and suddenly fear stole into my mind. I forgot every miracle I had ever seen, and I said, ‘Let’s call the doctor.’ Now, I wouldn’t fault anyone for calling a doctor in that circumstance. For most it would be the proper thing to do. But for me the moment was personally revealing. I had seen deformed bones disappear, bones re-set, hips reshaped, blind eyes opened, deaf ears unstopped – but now, looking at a young man with a broken arm, I forgot everything I had seen ... My experience with miracles hadn’t fully shaped me. I repented and apologized to the mother a week or so later, not because I felt guilty or ashamed, but because I realized I had a long way to go in having my mind renewed” (Bill Johnson: The Supernatural Power Of A Transformed Mind, Shippensburg: Destiny Image 2005, p91-92).

This pastor knew that faith was fixing your eyes on Jesus and that there was power in faith – he knew the Bible teachings and he had already experienced the truth of them: deformed bones disappeared, blind eyes opened ... the word had worked faith in him, yet one evening he forgot and instead of fixing his eyes on Jesus, he fixed them on a broken bone which allowed doubt and fear to rob him of a healing. At least that is what he thought.

But – to ask the questions again – we identified these objections in the beginning – since this is a little radical – was he not aiming too high and was he not putting himself under too much pressure? He says: “No.” And writes: “... don’t feel too bad. It happened to Jesus’ disciples too.” The pastor took encouragement from the disciples and so may we.

One time Jesus was preaching in front of more than 15,000 people and late in the day everyone became hungry but there were no shops close by. Then Jesus said to his disciples – Mark 6:37: “You give them something to eat,” which to them was not any less radical than saying: “You heal the broken bone.” The disciples objected – Mark 6:37: “That would take at least \$30,000 [original: eight months of a man’s wages]. [We don’t have the money.]” But then Jesus made them perform a food miracle whereby five small loaves of bread and two fish multiplied in their hands as they were distributing food to everyone – with twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish left over.

Wow! Jesus meant them to learn from this experience – his word and the miracle. Immediately after the feeding of the crowd of thousands the disciples were caught in another crisis. They were in a boat in the middle of a lake in a storm and they struggled. Then Jesus came – I read from the Bible – Mark 6:51-52: “. he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves [the previous miracle]; their hearts were hardened.” According to this Bible reading – in light of the previous miracle and the previous experience of faith power – the disciples should have been able to deal with the storm themselves – making the wind die down with their spiritual

authority – **but** – and this is what it says – “they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.”

“They had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.” **May our hearts be softened and may we understand what Jesus says: “Everything is possible for him who believes.”**

A young Southern-Baptist missionary – not yet out of language school – **attended a worship service in the jungle of Mexico. There were about 400 Indians standing around and – in his own words – the Holy Ghost was everywhere in the meeting. They brought a little girl to him who was four years old. They set her down. He didn’t know what was wrong with her. She couldn’t hear. The problem was that she was born deaf. So he knelt down there. He had watched the power of God fall in the place and knock everyone down. He had watched people wailing and moaning. Jesus came and he was amazed at what was going on. Benches and benches full of people were falling and wailing and moaning. He had never seen it before. He – in his own words again – he was just a little Baptist guy. But it didn’t matter to him. He didn’t value manifestations. He valued Jesus. He wanted Jesus.**

So, he was holding onto this little girl. He was down on the floor. He had seen other things already get healed in the meeting and he was impressed with Jesus and his heart was almost ready to burst with joy and faith. He just knew it was going to happen. And he knew that he was going to run off that mountain like a madman, screaming and yelling and glorifying the King. And he prayed and prayed and prayed and prayed and the healing did not happen. That impressed him. There was that much of Jesus, and what he could see and what he could feel, and the little bits of knowledge that he did have in him, and it bothered him and irritated him that she was not healed.

He was weeping. He was complaining. He was screaming. He was commanding. He was jumping. He was very frustrated and she stayed deaf. All right. He was humiliated now. All of the great wonders of God were going on all around him and this baby that he wanted to be healed so much, she was still deaf. He didn’t like that. Something had to change.

And now I quote from his account. He said: “ ... So as I was on my knees weeping and holding this child, I called out to Heaven, ‘Please, would you help me? Just a little bit?’ And He did, there was a vision. I haven’t had a lot of them, just a few, probably 4, maybe 5 open visions where it is like a movie and I was there. What happened was, there was this awesome pasture, and it was beautiful, lush, and green and full of nutrients. The right things were there. And there was a huge beast, a big bull that was very strong, that represented me. He was snorting, and ripping the ground, and eating the right nutrients, and the power was definitely there. And the bull was tearing up the field with its horns. And then, suddenly in the middle of this huge beautiful pasture, there was a little present placed there by the Holy Ghost. And this huge, power bull walks up to that present, and with all of his power and might and all of his great ability, he could not open that present. In the next moment, there was a baby, 10 or 11 months old, maybe 15 months old at the most, sitting in front of that present and was very happily and easily opening the present. The big bull was tearing the ground up, was very powerful, was eating the great nutrients, but it was the baby that opened the box, not the big bull.

And I said to Jesus, ‘Either make me that baby or I’m not going to preach.’ And He said, “You must become like a little child to enter the Kingdom of God.’ It’s not the manifestations; it’s not the great power you possess; it’s not your great abilities, it’s becoming like a little child and using the gifts of heaven in your life. That’s the answer. That’s it! And so I’ve been working on that ever since” (David Hogan: Faith To Raise The Dead).

This example story is a little different because faith was present – the missionary prayed with faith and joy – and then jumped and screamed expecting a result – but to no avail. Why? What else is there about the nature of faith which is important for healing the sick?

I repeat: Faith is fixing our eyes on Jesus and not on us – even though we may be big impressive bulls snorting with spiritual power, tearing up the ground. Faith that opens the present of healing is not born out of striving and exhausting ourselves with disciplines but trust and intimacy with Jesus.³⁶

The Bible says – Galatians 5:6 (I quote from the Amplified Bible): “For ... in Christ Jesus nothing [original: neither circumcision nor uncircumcision] counts for anything, but only faith activated *and* energized *and* expressed *and* working through love.”³⁷ It is love that releases the power of faith. Ephesians 3:16-19 provides more insight into this. I read from the Bible: “ ... I pray that you ... may have power, together will all other Christians [original: the saints], to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

According to these verses the measure of all the fullness of God – which includes faith and power for healing – the measure of all the fullness of God is filling into us as we grow in intimacy with Jesus Christ – as we grasp – by the power of the Spirit – how wide and long and high and deep is his love for us.³⁸ **The bull of the missionary’s open vision may be tearing up the ground striving to open the present but the child – 15 months old – the child knows who he is – a beloved son, a beloved daughter of a most affectionate and adoring Father in heaven – and he or she – fixing their eyes on Jesus – knowing in their heart the love of the Father – they open the present without effort.**³⁹ [*My own testimony where my wife prayed for healing from the flu and eventually I came to a place where I thought that God might actually also heal me because he loves me. Then healing came – to my great surprise.*]

Love – knowing the loving favour of God – the intimacy with God – makes faith strong and this is further expressed in other outcomes such as peace and joy.⁴⁰ **Hear the Bible – Philippians 4:7: “ . the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”** Nehemiah 8:10: “ ... The joy of the Lord is your strength.” **Love, peace, joy – not striving.**⁴¹

Not striving but – and I now identify a common problem – **when the healing does not happen** – as in the case of the stomping missionary – **or the healing does not happen straight away, we do** – all too easily – **tend to strive with ourselves, turn on ourselves – come under condemnation, saying: “This is all my fault. My faith is not big enough. I need to do more praising, more positive thinking, more claiming, more declaring, more shouting, ...”** However, - as much as there may be some truth in the above – **this is once again not fixing our eyes on Jesus but on ourselves** – this is once again not knowing that we are the beloved children of the Most High – **and therefore the outcome cannot be anything but despair because we cannot produce faith by our own strength. Faith is a gift from God. Faith is looking toward Jesus, falling in love with him, becoming overwhelmed by the truth of his sacrifice for us, becoming assured that his will is always good towards us, trusting him, etc. Faith** – and you may want to examine yourself – our current level of faith – **may not provide us with all of the answers** – there are still mysteries with healing – **but faith never despairs because faith is looking toward Jesus and he loves us.**

In closing I want to make two further points. Firstly – and this is hammering the point – **but faith is indeed fixing our eyes on Jesus. Faith is about a relationship** – intimacy with a person – **and not about some scientific formula or method – which means that our faith and faith healings are dynamic. For instance, a healing evangelist writes: “Many years ago, while I was in a Vancouver, B. C. Campaign, an incident occurred which kept me awake most of the night, with my heart open before the Lord. I had been praying for hundreds that night. There was in that meeting the very real consciousness of the sweet and wonderful presence of the Saviour. Many weary, tired bodies had been renewed by the touch of the Master’s hand. They had found deliverance from their pains and sicknesses, as they knelt at the foot of the cross. I turned to Dr. Gabriel Maguire, pastor of the First Baptist Church, and said, ‘The Lord is imparting faith tonight; the power of the Lord is present to heal.’ He replied that he was never more conscious of the moving power of God in all his life.**

A minute later, together we placed our hands on the head of a man. A feeling akin to a vacuum came over me. I felt so empty. The presence of the Lord was with me, but I had no confidence or faith to pray for the man, and nothing happened to him! I prayed again. Then I felt so empty that I was about to cry out to the Lord and ask why He seemed to have departed when He had been so sweetly manifest just before. Instead, I turned to the man and said, ‘Brother, why are you here? Who are you? What is the purpose of your coming to the platform?’ He turned pale. Then he made a confession! He told me that he was a professional hypnotist. He had argued with other people about it, and then had decided to use himself as a test case; as he wanted to investigate first-hand. Then, he planned to hold a public meeting and expose the whole divine healing movement. Now this man had a sickness, indeed! He needed healing; but suppose I had possessed faith for him. Would it not have been disastrous to have brought healing to that man? ... ” (Rick Price: The Real Faith, p31).⁴² **We keep our faith informed by our relationship with Jesus.**

The second point is that we may not give up so quickly when the healing does not happen immediately. When Jesus healed ten leper, they were not immediately healed at the meeting but only later as they were on their way again (Luke 17:11-19). Thus, even before we can actually witness the healing, we may act on our faith by praising God and confessing his truth with our mouth (cf. Romans 10:9-10).

We have come to an end. Please be encouraged. Jesus said to the disciples – John 14:12: “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than

these ... “ **And** – in like manner – **Jesus told the worried father of the sick boy in our opening story – Mark 9:23: “Everything is possible for him who believes.”**

The key to healing power is faith. The key to your healing is faith in Jesus Christ. Maybe even now – after this teaching – **we still feel that our faith is not strong enough but please make a stand** – remain encouraged. **The worried father**, who was also not quite sure whether Jesus could heal his boy, **he was in the same position and said to him – Mark 9:24: “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief.” “Help me overcome my unbelief.”** **And Jesus did and the boy was healed. And so will you. Amen.**

Why Not
(On Healing By Power)

The disciples had a question. What did just happen? A sick boy remained sick even though previously the disciples had such a good track-record of getting results – Mark 6:13 – I read from the Bible: “They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them” (cf. Mark 3:14-15). Why was it not working now? The boy’s dad told Jesus – Mark 9:18: “I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.” To them – this was confusing and therefore the Bible records – Mark 9:28: “After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, ‘Why couldn’t we drive it out?’”

Good question! “Why couldn’t we, Jesus? Why couldn’t we heal the boy? Why were we lacking in power?” The disciples were humbled and in need of answers – but – (and I want to submit this) we do not immediately relate to them. When a sick boy fails to be healed among us, we don’t seem to worry about our own spiritual aptitude. We don’t seem to be troubled by any apparent lack of power. Why is that?

The problem is not new. Charles Finney already wrote in the 1800s. I quote: “It is amazing to witness the extent to which the Church has practically lost sight of the necessity of this endowment of power. Much is said of our dependence upon the Holy Spirit by almost everybody; but how little is this dependence realized. Christians and even ministers go to work without it. I mourn to be obliged to say that the ranks of the ministry seem to be filling up with those who do not possess it. May the Lord have mercy upon us! Will this last remark be thought uncharitable? If so, let the report of the Home Missionary Society, for example, be heard upon this subject. Surely, something is wrong. An average of five souls won to Christ by each missionary of that Society in a year’s toil certainly indicates a most alarming weakness in the ministry. Have all or even a majority of these ministers been endued with the power which Christ promised? If not, why not? But, if they have, is this all that Christ intended by His promise? In a former article I have said that the reception of this endowment of power is instantaneous. I do not mean to assert that in every instance the recipient was aware of the precise time at which the power commenced to work mightily within him. It may have commenced like the dew and increased to a shower. I have alluded to the report of the Home Missionary Society. Not that I suppose that the brethren employed by that Society are exceptionally weak in faith and power as laborers for God. On the contrary, from my acquaintance with some of them, I regard them as among our most devoted and self-denying laborers in the cause of God. This fact illustrates the alarming weakness that pervades every branch of the Church, both clergy and laity. Are we not weak? Are we not criminally weak? It has been suggested that by writing thus I should offend the ministry and the Church. I cannot believe that the statement of so palpable a fact will be regarded as an offense. The fact is, there is something sadly defective in the education of the ministry and of the Church.

The ministry is weak, because the Church is weak. And then, again, the Church is kept weak by the weakness of the ministry. Oh for a conviction of the necessity of this endowment of power and faith in the promise of Christ” (Charles Finney: Power From God, New Kensington: Whitaker House 1996, 40-42).⁴³

In his time Charles Finney hoped in vain. The church was offended. You and I – we – may choose to be offended at his words. The suggestion that five converts per year are not enough – not in line with God’s good intentions – but a sure sign of weakness – criminal weakness – does not go down well in our current church climate – in many sections of the Western church – where converts and also healings seem to be so rare. How many of us here in this room can celebrate the conversion of five people in the last year? Have we failed in the face of Jesus’ promise – John 15:5-8: “If a person remains in me ... he will bear much fruit ... if you remain in me ... ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit ... “?

Charles Finney continued to say that “ ... the want of an endowment of power from on high should be deemed a disqualification for a pastor, a deacon or elder, a Sabbath school superintendent, a professor in a Christian college, and especially for a professor in a theological seminary. Is this a hard saying? Is this an uncharitable saying? Is it unjust? Is it unreasonable? Is it unscriptural” (Charles Finney: Power From God, New Kensington: Whitaker House 1996, 45).

Charles Finney was blunt – and his words even seem brutal – offensive – but his frustration was understandable. Why wasn’t the church worried about her weakness? When the disciples couldn’t heal

the sick boy from before, at least they were asking the question: “Jesus, why were we lacking in power?” The church – many a time in history – became blind and accommodating to her ineffectiveness.

Moreover, the challenge of Finney and others – including Jesus’ own exasperate words in the face of the disciples’ weakness – when he said (Matthew 17:17): “O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy here to me” – these challenges to our effectiveness are not only ignored but aggressively contradicted. We say: “Who dares to question us and our traditions? Don’t make us feel bad!”

In 1992 a book was published with the title: “Power Religion. The Selling Out Of The Evangelical Church?”⁴⁴ This book was not aggressive but numerous contributors to the book betrayed an uneasiness about focusing too much on power because this may divert from truth. In our denomination – the denomination that I belong to – the same uneasiness persists and also a certain helplessness because: how come that despite the truth of our correct liturgies and correct sermons – despite safe-guarding sound sermons – we do decline in numbers which is not necessarily a sign of strength? God promised in the Bible – Isaiah 55:10-11 – and to this we cling – I quote: “... my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return empty ... “ Yet, why then does so much of institutional church life feel empty? Have we missed something about the power of God’s word?

Many church seminaries – and church programs – sought to mature Christians by educating them with lots of class-room teaching on the Bible but something was not working – and may still not be working – also for you. In 2003 Peter Wagner wrote the book “7 Power Principles I Learned After Seminary” asserting that his training failed to teach much on the operational role of the Holy Spirit, warfare worship, prophecy, miraculous healing, demonic deliverance, powerful prayer, etc. In the same vein the former missionary and current lecturer Charles Kraft published a book in 2002 which bore the title “Confronting Powerless Christianity. Evangelicals And The Missing Dimension” and in it he wrote: “... I have changed. Not my evangelicalism. Not my commitment to Jesus Christ. Not my commitment to biblical Christianity. What has changed is my understanding and experience of what biblical Christianity is intended to be. The only kind of Christianity in the New Testament is a Christianity with power – a Christianity quite different from what I experienced during those first 38 years. What I am experiencing now is a Christianity with power. And that is what I am writing about ...”⁴⁵

Do we need books such as these?⁴⁶ Yes – maybe – because – as I suggested in the beginning – when the disciples could not heal the sick boy, they were at least asking the right question: “Jesus, why were we lacking in power?” We often don’t ask the question and thus may be the people of whom Charles Kraft writes: “... For several generations we in the West have not known what to do about spiritual power. And even now, when the issue has become one of wide-ranging discussion, most evangelicals continue to be uncomfortable with the subject.”⁴⁷

Perhaps one of the reasons why we struggle with the power question is that we struggle with an even deeper root problem: that is Christian experience. How can power be measured if not by experience? Only the whole concept of experiencing God does not seem to be prominent in our church – in your church? – even resisted. [Two years ago our congregation studied the “Experiencing God” course by Henry Blackaby and Claude King. We were immensely blessed but one of our older members – faithful and raised in the church – said to me: “Pastor, even the title of this course is offensive to us.” Not long before this I was on the pastors’ conference planning committee for the Qld Lutheran pastors and suggested that we do a few in-service training days under the theme of “Experiencing God”. We did but the vice-president of the time told me: “Twenty years ago this theme would not have been possible in our church.” During the in-service training days – in the question & answer segment of one of the talks – one older pastor got up and even publicly thanked the president for allowing the discussion of this topic.] Again, it is Charles Finney who is unpacking the problem. He said: “I find many people trying to grasp with their intellect, and settle as theory, questions of pure experience. They are puzzling themselves by trying to comprehend with the mind what is to be received as a conscious experience through faith” (Charles Finney: Power From God, New Kensington: Whitaker House 1996, 48-49). “Students are pressed almost beyond endurance with study and developing the intellect, while scarcely an hour in a day is given to instruction in Christian experience ... But religion is an experience. It is a consciousness. Personal fellowship with God is the secret of the whole of it ... real heart-union with God ... “ (Charles Finney: Power From God, New Kensington: Whitaker House 1996, 51).

Charles Finney becomes even more challenging in the following words – I quote: “I have met with this erroneous notion of the nature of Christian faith almost everywhere since I was first licensed to preach.

Especially in my early ministry I found that great stress was laid on believing ‘the articles of faith,’ and it was held that faith consisted in believing with an unwavering conviction the doctrines about Christ. Hence, an acceptance of the doctrines, the doctrines, the DOCTRINES of the Gospel was very much insisted upon as constituting faith. [But] these doctrines I had been brought to accept intellectually and firmly before I was converted. And, when told to believe, I replied that I did believe, and no argument or assertion could convince me that I did not believe the Gospel. And up to the very moment of my conversion I was not and could not be convinced of my error.

At the moment of my conversion, or when I first exercised faith, I saw my ruinous error. I found that faith consisted not in an intellectual conviction that the things affirmed in the Bible about Christ are true, but in the heart’s trust in the person of Christ. I learned that God’s testimony concerning Christ was designed to lead me to trust Christ, to confide in His person as my Savior; that to stop short in merely believing about Christ was a fatal mistake and inevitably left me in my sins ... ” (Charles Finney: Power From God, New Kensington: Whitaker House 1996, 140).⁴⁸

This is not a popular word. At first, Finney – when he accepted Bible doctrines with his mind only – **at that time he was certain that he was a Christian** – he could not be convinced otherwise – **but then he saw his error** – which could also in some degree be our error.

In another place he spells it out even more clearly – I quote him again: “ ... From personal conversation with hundreds and I may say thousands of Christian people, I have been struck [that] ... they stopped short in the Scriptures ... They read and perhaps search the Scriptures to learn their duty and to learn about Christ. They intellectually believe all that they understand the Scriptures to say about Him; but when Christ is thus commended to their confidence, they do not by an act of personal loving trust in and committal to Him so join their souls to Him as to receive from Him the influx of His life, and light and love. They do not by a simple act of personal loving trust in His person receive the current of His divine life and power into their own souls. They do not thus take hold of His strength and interlock their being with His. In other words, they do not truly believe. Hence, they are not saved ... ” (Charles Finney: Power From God, New Kensington: Whitaker House 1996, 143-145).⁴⁹

Believing with our brains only is not enough and does not save us. Faith in God is trusting God and is – according to Charles Finney – **an experience of receiving from him: life, light, love and power. If we have no awareness of that** – if as a church we can no longer even talk about that – **then we are in trouble because the Bible agrees with Finney and others** – including Luther.⁵⁰ **There is no faith without experiencing God.**

You may quote the Bible and say that according to 2 Corinthians 5:7: “We live by faith, not by sight” – **but two verses earlier the same Bible passage confirms that we do indeed experience God** – I quote – **2 Corinthians 5:5:** “ ... God ... has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.” **Yes – there is much that we do not yet understand** – there is much that we do not yet see (not by sight) – **and there is plenty of frustration in our mortal bodies** – there is the cross of discipleship – **but** – as Christians – **we are not without an experience of God. We experience the deposit of the Holy Spirit who is guaranteeing what is to come.**

The Bible makes the same point over and over again – **Romans 8:14:** “ . those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.” **Romans 8:16:** “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” **Galatians 4:6:** “ ... God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ ... ” **1 John 4:24:** “ ... this is how we know that Jesus Christ lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.”⁵¹

These quotes may now bring us to a further field of neglect: the Holy Spirit – the baptism with the Holy Spirit – fillings and refillings with the Holy Spirit – **and this is not surprising because any failure to understand spiritual power and experience can be traced back to a failure of understanding the Holy Spirit.**

Hear a testimony from the evangelist Dwight Moody: “There was no disputing that Moody was empty in his soul ... Two women in his congregation noticed this ... while Moody preached they prayed in an obvious manner. ‘We have been praying for you,’ they said afterwards. This nettled him. ‘Why don’t you pray for the people?’ ‘Because you need the power of the Spirit.’ ‘I need the power?’ And Moody puffed. He had not a chance. ‘No opportunity was lost after that in urging upon him his great need.’ ... he hid from them ... but they set him thinking. [He said:] ‘I asked them to come and talk with me, and they poured out their hearts in prayer that I might receive the infilling with the Holy Spirit. There came a great hunger into my soul. I did not

know what it was. I began to cry out as I never did before. I really felt that I did not want to live if I could not have this power for service. [But] it would not come: because he refused [his call to preach all over the land] ... [One Friday] 'Mr Moody's agony was so great that he rolled on the floor and in the midst of many tears and groans cried to God to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and fire.' Rolling on the floor in prayer was un-Moodylike ... at that time Moody had been 'continually burdened and crying to God for more power. He was always wanting to get a few praying ones together for half a day of prayer and would groan and weep before God for the baptism of the Spirit.' The heavens remained brassy ... For Moody would not place himself on the altar [not yield to God in his determination to stay in Chicago] ... Moody began to pace New York streets at night, wrestling, panting for a Pentecost. In broad daylight he walked down one of the busiest streets ... while crowds thrust by ... The last chain snapped. Quietly, without a struggle, he surrendered. Immediately, an overpowering sense of the presence of God flooded his soul. 'God Almighty, seemed to come very near. I felt I must be alone.' He hurried to the house of a friend ... 'I want to be alone. Let me have a room where I can lock myself in.' His host thought best to humour him. Moody locked the door and sat on the sofa. The room seemed ablaze with God. He dropped to the floor and lay bathing his soul in the Divine. Of this Communion, this mount of transfiguration, 'I can only say that God revealed Himself to me, and I had such an experience of His love that I had to ask Him to stay His hand.' ... The dead, dry days were gone ... Moody became . the man of God" (John Pollock: Moody Without Sankey, Fearn: Christian Focus Publications 1995, p94-101). *[Moody longed for power but what did he receive when the power finally came? He was immersed in love just as Jesus was loved first and foremost at his own empowering for ministry when he was baptized in the Spirit (Luke 3:21-22). The deeper you go into God, the more you will experience his love. With his love and through his love the blessings come. How good is that?]*

Moody was not impressed when two women suggested to him that he needed prayer for the baptism with the Holy Spirit and power. After all he had already been in the ministry for years. Likewise, we may not be impressed by the suggestion that – as seasoned Christians – we – nevertheless – need more of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Hear another testimony from a missionary: "John Hyde set sail for India after graduation in October, 1892, with mixed ambitions. To be sure, he wished to rescue the perishing among India's millions, but he also hoped to make a name for himself, to so master the languages necessary that eventually he would become a missionary of fame. When he went to his cabin, he found a letter addressed to him in a familiar handwriting. It was that of a ministerial friend of his father, one whom the young man greatly admired for the depth of his spiritual life. As he read, he was startled. 'I shall not cease praying for you, dear John, until you are filled with the Holy Spirit.' Clearly the implication was that he was not so filled. 'My pride was touched,' he confessed later, 'and I felt exceedingly angry, crushed the letter, threw it into a corner of the cabin and went up on deck. I loved the writer, I knew the holy life he lived. And down in my heart was the conviction that he was right and I was not fitted to be a missionary.'

Back to the cabin John went. 'In despair, I asked the Lord to fill me with the Holy Spirit,' he said, 'and the moment I did this the whole atmosphere was cleared up. I began to see myself and what a selfish ambition I had. It was a struggle almost to the end of the voyage, but I was determined long before the port was reached that, whatever the cost, I would be really filled with the Spirit.' When he arrived in India, he attended a meeting where, in no uncertain way, the fact was emphasized that Jesus Christ is able to save from all sin. When one of the listeners, at the close of the service, approached the speaker with the pointed question, 'Is that your personal experience?' John was extremely thankful that he had not been thus questioned. He acknowledged to himself that, although he had been preaching such a Gospel, experimentally he was a stranger to its power. Plainly there was no side-stepping the spiritual issue now confronting him. Without the baptism of the Holy Spirit experienced by the 120 at Pentecost in the upper room in Jerusalem, he was a complete failure. He retired to his room, saying to God, 'Either Thou must give me victory over all my sin, or I shall return to America to seek there for some other work. I am unable to preach the Gospel until I can testify to its power in my own life.'

John was now where God wanted him. In simple faith, he looked to Christ for the deliverance from sin for which his heart was craving. He said later, 'He did deliver me, and I have not had a doubt of this since. I can now stand up without hesitation to testify that He has given me victory''

(<http://www.pawcreek.org/articles/testimonials/JohnHyde.htm>).

John Hyde – like Dwight Moody – was not impressed when he received a note, saying: "I shall not cease praying for you, dear John, until you are filled with the Holy Spirit." Both men – like many Western Christians today – had no idea that they were lacking more from the Holy Spirit. They did not understand

the Bible on this matter and therefore they did not have the faith by which to receive the baptism with the Spirit. Furthermore, their incomplete repentance – their professional pride or resistance to surrender completely to God – delayed the infilling with the Holy Spirit.⁵² Yet, when God finally answered their prayers, they experienced him. Moody needed to ask God to stay his hand because he had such an experience of his love. And then there was power in their ministry.

Jesus promised – all of us – power and subsequent experiences of the same by way of the Holy Spirit. He said – Acts 1:4-8: “... you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit ... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; then you will be my witnesses ...” Jesus promised that we will do mission work – Romans 15:19: “by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit ...” What the apostle Paul explained also applies to us – 1 Corinthians 2:4-5: “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration [an experience] of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.”

The Bible is insistent on this – 1 Corinthians 4:20: “. the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.” Ephesians 1:18-23: “... you may know ... his incomparable great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead ...” Ephesians 3:20: “... able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power ...” 1 Thessalonians 1:5: “... our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction ...” 2 Timothy 3:5: “[People that are] having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.”

We can finally return to the disciples who asked Jesus – Mark 9:28: “... Why couldn’t we drive out the demon from the sick boy?” They were right to question their lack of power and Jesus answered them – Mark 9:29: “This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting.”⁵³

“This [more powerful] kind can come out only by prayer and fasting.” When I recently gave a book on healing to a pastor friend, he glanced at it and then disapproved of what he read – saying to me: “The author is making such a strong point that the gift of healing is to be sought and prayed for with persistence but I think that a gift from God shouldn’t require so much effort on our part.” There are many in the church like him. [Only there is an inconsistency when the gift of revelation is sought via the “effort” of intense Bible study.] Yet, listen to Jesus. He said: “This kind can come out only by prayer and fasting.” Therefore, do make an effort. Do step up. Do pray and do fast. Follow the advice of John the Baptist who declared – John 3:30: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” Be aggressive in decreasing. Power – ongoing power for healing – can be pursued and developed and nevertheless – at the same time – remain a gift from God because what child earns the provisions of his dad by keeping up the petitions? This is humanly speaking but even the nagging of a child does not earn him the new bicycle.

Jesus modeled what we are to do. The Bible records in Luke 5:16: “. Jesus often withdrew [fasted from the world] to lonely places and prayed” – with the result that one Bible verse later – Luke 5:17: “... the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick.”⁵⁴

You and I – pray and fast. Jesus promised – all of us – power and subsequent experiences of the same by way of the Holy Spirit. Any kind of sickness will come out and be healed. Amen.

A Core Program
(On Healing By Deliverance)

When the apostle Peter preached his first sermon to the soldier Cornelius who was at home with his family and close friends, Peter introduced Jesus to them and he summed up Jesus' ministry with these words – Acts 10:37-38: "You know ... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him." I read the same verse again from a different Bible translation – Acts 10:37-38: "You know ... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him."

Jesus went about doing good and healing people. By now we have learned to accept that and we have learned that as his disciples we are to do the same: do good and heal people. Jesus sent us out, saying – Matthew 10:7-8: "As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick ... " – that much we accept by now (even though there may be lingering unease about the supernatural) – **but – are we at this stage ready to go one step further and confront the deeper root cause of sickness – at least how it is spelled out in this verse of Acts 10:37-38: Jesus was "healing all who were oppressed by the devil ... " Jesus was "healing all who were under the power of the devil ... "**

What does this mean? What does the devil have to do with sickness and how widespread is this cause of sickness? One Bible teacher made this observation: "It is noteworthy that people came to Jesus seeking healing for their sicknesses, but many of them had demons cast out of them. Apparently the people did not realize that some of their sicknesses were caused by demons. One remarkable characteristic of Jesus' ministry, from beginning to end, is that he never made a hard and fast distinction between healing people's sicknesses and delivering them from demons" (Derek Prince: They Shall Expel Demons, Grand Rapids: Chosen Books 1998, p21).

This is challenging for us who have grown up with Western medicine and thus, another Catholic minister writes: "Some of my closest friends find it easy to accept healing as a beautiful ministry of God's love, but to them any emphasis on the demonic seems like a retreat from reason into the realm of superstition" (Francis MacNutt: Healing, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press 1974, p211).

We may clarify at once that not all sickness is caused by a demonic presence. You do not have to have a demon to be sick. Our conflict with the devil can be more indirect. The Bible says that – James 1:13: " ... when tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone." **God does not tempt anyone but the devil does and therefore the temptations that we all experience are in their origin from the devil. Thus, he tempted our first human ancestors, saying to them – Genesis 3:1-5 (I paraphrase): "Eat from the forbidden fruit. You won't suffer punishment but instead be like God." They believed the lie, therefore sided with the devil and suffered the consequence of sin by coming under his dominion. The Bible explains that – Romans 5:12: " ... sin entered the world through the first human couple [original: one man] and [with that sickness and] death [entered the world] through [their] sin, and in this way [sickness and] death came to all people, because all sinned ... " Thus, sickness does not need to be caused by a specific demonic presence. It can simply be swallowed up in the basic fallenness of our world where the devil – successful with his temptations – has a right to demand that according to God's holy law – Romans 6:23: " . the wages of [our] sin is [must be] death ... "**

Even worse – the first sin made all of humanity dead on the inside already now – corrupted our human nature – and for that reason – throughout what is left of life – whether it is by direct or indirect means the devil wields much power over us because of sin. The Bible articulates our condition in blunt words – Ephesians 2:1-3: " ... you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of the world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit [Satan himself] who is now at work in those who are disobedient ... " Hence, without any intervention from God humans are and remain dead – devoid of God – "by nature objects of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3) – **in their transgressions and sin with the devil at work in them.**

Then the Bible further warns all of us – 1 John 3:8: "He who does what is sinful is of the devil because the devil has been sinning from the beginning ... " Ephesians 4:27: " ... do not give the devil a foothold [through sin]."

Yet – and more about this later – **Jesus did come to do good and heal all those who were under the power of the devil and** – coming back to what may be rather foreign to us – **at least he made no hard and fast distinction between healing people and delivering them from demons. Contrary to our current church practice Jesus recognized the common need to expel demons.** [*One pastor said to me: “Ten years ago I had one case where a person was demonized but no one in our church was able to help. Even the church leaders advised me to seek help elsewhere.” This has now changed. Two years ago there was a mission team from a Lutheran congregation in Australia serving in Uganda. At the end of a worship service they were praying for people in small groups but – due to the great number of people coming forward – they were soon praying on their own for those in front of them. One man from Adelaide had a young man from Uganda come to him with the following request: “I have a demon monkey on my shoulder and want to get rid of it.” The man from the mission team was out of his depth, looked around for help but everyone else was quite busy. Thus, he stepped out and prayed for the demon to go in Jesus’ name. The man from Uganda seemed satisfied and left. Back in Australia he said to his wife: “It is funny. In Uganda there seem to be lots of these demons but they don’t seem to be here in Australia.” His wife had a talk with him.]*

The Bible says – Luke 4:40-41: “When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. Moreover, demons came out of many people ... **“When Jesus healed a crippled woman, he declared that** – Luke 13:16: “... this woman ... Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years ... **“In one account Jesus healed a fever by rebuking a demonic presence** – Luke 4:39: “... he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her ... **“King Herod wanted to kill Jesus but he replied** – Luke 13:32: “Go and tell that fox, ‘I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’” **In Matthew 10:1** “Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.” **The disciples of Jesus** – Mark 6:13: “... cast out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.” Acts 8:7: “With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed.” Acts 19:12: “... illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.” Luke 11:1: “Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed.” **After this healing Jesus declared** – Luke 11:20: “... if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.” “... if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.”

May it dawn on us that the kingdom of God is still coming in the same way – to us. According to the book – the Bible – healing by deliverance from demons was common in Jesus’ ministry – a core program – and therefore an evangelist writes: “It is unscriptural to pray for the sick if one is not prepared also to cast out demons. Jesus did not separate one from the other. He never sent anyone out to preach the good news without specifically instructing and equipping that person to take action against demons in the same that he himself did. Mission work that does not include the casting out of demons is not mission work according to the Bible” (modified; Derek Prince: They Shall Expel Demons, Grand Rapids: Chosen Books 1998, p10-11). **Is that right?**

By the spiritual standards of the time – in the early 1950s – in Britain – **a minister was quite successful.** Each week a person would come to the Lord or he would witness a miracle of healing or some other demonstration of the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Yet, he nevertheless had a continuous inner sense of frustration. An inaudible voice seemed to whisper in his ear: “Others may succeed, but you won’t.” Despite a series of outward successes – including earlier promotions at school and the army – at times depression descended on him like a gray mist – a prison with no escape.

He tried to shake off the depression by reading the Bible at least twice a day, fasting once a week and sometimes devoting several days or an entire week to praying and fasting. At such times the depression would lift for a while but inevitably it returned which made his hopelessness grow even deeper.

The minister was familiar with Romans 6:11, which instructs us to “reckon [ourselves] to be dead indeed unto sin”. Day after day he would reckon himself dead to sin and to any consequence of depression but – try as he might – the experience of the latter half of the verse kept eluding him: being “alive unto God through Jesus Christ”.

Finally in 1953, when he had exhausted all of his own resources, God came to help him in unexpected ways. He was reading the opening verses of Isaiah 61, which describe the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in bearing testimony to the message of the Gospel – verses Jesus applied to himself in the

synagogue of Nazareth (cf. Luke 4:16-21). **As he came to the words in verse 3, “the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness”** (KJV, emphasis added) – also called “a spirit of despair” (NIV) and “a spirit of fainting” (NASB) – **he could read no further. It was as though the phrase “the spirit of heaviness” was underlined by some invisible hand.**

He repeated the phrase to himself: “the spirit of heaviness”. Was this God’s diagnosis of his condition? Could it mean that the force he was struggling with was not part of himself, but an alien person – an evil spirit being that somehow occupied an area of his mind?

This was a decisive moment in his life. He had always regarded his depression and negative attitude as an expression of his own character – something he had been born with. He had felt guilty that he was not a “better” Christian. Now it became clear to him that his struggle was not against part of his own personality at all.

Immediately, the Holy Spirit brought to his mind the promise of Joel 2:32: “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered”. From his study of Hebrew, he knew that this verb also means “to save, to rescue”. He determined to apply this promise and to act on it. He said a simple prayer that went something like this: “Lord, you’ve shown me that I have been oppressed by a spirit of heaviness, but you have promised in your word that if I call on your name, I shall be delivered. So I’m calling on you now to deliver me, in the name of Jesus!”

The response was immediate. Something – in his words – like a huge, heavenly vacuum cleaner came down over him and sucked away the gray mist that had shrouded his head and shoulders. At the same time a pressure in the area of his chest was forcibly released, and he gave a little gasp.

God had answered his prayer. Suddenly everything around him seemed brighter. He felt as if a heavy burden had been lifted from his shoulders. He was free (Derek Prince: They Shall Expel Demons, Grand Rapids: Chosen Books 1998, p30-33). [And then he had to learn to walk in freedom.]

The root cause of his depression surprised the minister. He never knew that his mind and emotions were under the influence of a demon and therefore – for all of these years – he never sought the right treatment for his condition which begs the question whether we are likewise suffering from the same ignorance. What other diseases have demonic causes? What other conditions – in us and in the church and in the world – can be traced to demons? The Bible makes frequent references to a whole array of unclean spirits: 1 Timothy 4:1 – “deceiving spirits”; 1 John 4:6 – “spirit of error”; 2 Timothy 1:7 – “spirit of fear”; Romans 11:8 – “spirit of stupor”; Romans 8:15 – “spirit of bondage to fear”; Acts 16:16 – “spirit of divination”; Luke 13:11 – “spirit of sickness”; Luke 11:14 – “demon of muteness”; Zechariah 13:2 – “spirit of impurity”; Hosea 4:12 – “spirit of prostitution”; 1 Kings 22:22 – “spirit of deception” (cf. Gary Greig – Kevin Springer, eds: The Kingdom And The Power, Ventura: Regal Books 1993, p414).

One pastor reports that at times he would have a sore throat, cold or sinus congestion, pray for healing but nothing would change. Then he read how Jesus rebuked the fever of Peter’s mother-in-law (Luke 4:39) which gave him the idea to rebuke his next cold with the consequence that the condition cleared up within a day – instead of lasting a week or two (Derek Prince: They Shall Expel Demons, Grand Rapids: Chosen Books 1998, p82).

Then, the wife of a pastor said one day: “I wonder if humanism could be a spirit.” She renounced that spirit, commanded it to leave, and then was taken by surprise when she began to shake violently. A spirit was indeed cast out – how unexpected – a spirit that had to with abstract and intellectual world-views caused such powerful physical sensations (Derek Prince: They Shall Expel Demons, Grand Rapids: Chosen Books 1998, p82).

What other symptoms are there among us that may have demonic causes and therefore do not require more prayer but deliverance by commanding a demon to go in the name and authority of Jesus Christ? Would we ever recognize when a demon was on our case – pressuring us with darkness – confusion, anger, deception, lust, greed, fear, sickness, terminal disease, accidents, business failure, bad dreams, pride, jealousy, self-pity, ... ? All of these can be names of demons. [Only a few weeks ago a lay church-leader shared with me how he was suffering burn-out, called for help and then a minister came who also addressed a long-standing problem. At the age of twelve he had become addicted to pornography which continued to have its hold on him for all of the years in ministry and marriage. The pastor prayed for any demon to depart and the lay church-leader found himself yawning (which can be a sign of demons leaving) but did not sense that anything much happened. Yet, the power of the addiction was broken and – some time later – a woman remarked: “There is something different with him. He no longer has a spirit of lust.”]

It is of interest that the pastor from before did not share his newfound freedom from depression with his congregation. According to his own words he was too proud. What would people think of him as the pastor? How could the preacher be oppressed by something so unclean – some dark creature – complete with knowledge, emotion and will – that may even speak on occasions – repulsive? Then, his denomination did not believe that any Christian could have a demon but – what a convenient teaching for unclean spirits that like to remain hidden and therefore safe from Christian action – demons gain access to people through sin and even Christians do sin. Then Christians may also suffer from generational baggage, curses, and so on.

Even when Jesus preached his first sermon, it was (so it seems) a faithful member of the congregation that suddenly manifested because the holiness of Jesus challenged the unclean demon that was attached to him. Jesus was preaching and – Mark 1:22-23: “ ... just then a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit cried out ... “ Maybe we can learn from the experience of others. For instance, an Anglican priest writes: “I suspect demonic influence when I find: i) an irrational and violent reaction against the name of Jesus ... ii) Violent struggles with a strength out of all proportion to a person’s size ... iii) An involvement in occult practice now or in the past; including ... all animistic Eastern religions. iv) The possession of or exposure to any objects which have been used in the occult ... charms, amulets, bracelets ... v) A disturbed history in previous generations ... vi) Unnatural bondage to sexual perversion or other compulsive habits, unsought blasphemy, or uncontrollable mockery of God and holy things. vii) Strange behaviour, including sharp bursts of temper or moodiness, mutterings, frothing at the mouth, palpitations of the heart, sudden fluctuations of mood. viii) Change of voice in speech or laughter. ix) The grip of a nameless fear ... x) Compulsive inability to pray even when the person longs to do so. xi) Something strange about the eyes. The eyes are the window to the inner man. The eyes of the demonized are often unnaturally bright, glazed, or full of manic hatred.”

The Anglican priest continues with a word of caution: “These characteristics are neither exhaustive nor always present ... Some are found in common with mental sickness. Diagnosis of demonisation should never be arrived at lightly or without consultation ... “ (Michael Green: I Believe In Satan’s Downfall, London: Hodder And Stoughton 1981, p134-135).

In this respect the Bible talks about the spiritual gift of discernment – 1 Corinthians 12:10: “ ... to another [is given] the distinguishing between spirits ... “ *[When a family visited us for a social dinner engagement (as they were walking past me), I suddenly “knew” that the woman had a demon. My mind was not focused on ministry and at that time I had no experience with any deliverance ministry. And then, how would you break the news to someone that they have a demon? Yet, I “knew” and the discernment would prove to be right because a few years later – as the woman drew closer to God – a demon would manifest in her.]* **And sometimes – when we are not quite sure what we are dealing with – we may simply do both for the person: pray for healing and – just in case – command any unclean spirit to leave.**

Now – in more detail – what does the cure look like? What is required for healing? In the beginning of this message we heard how the apostle Peter summed up Jesus’ ministry. He said – Acts 10:37-38: “You know ... how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around ... healing all who were under the power of the devil ... ” **If we are now to follow in Jesus’ footsteps and do the same as he did – or even more – as he has promised – John 14:12: “ ... anyone who has faith in me will do ... even greater things than these ... “ – then we can expect the same words to sum up our ministry: “You know how God anointed them – this church – with the Holy Spirit and power, and how they went around healing all who were under the power of the devil.” **Like Jesus – we must receive and keep receiving an anointing with the Holy Spirit and power. Otherwise we may have all the methods but no authority.****

The Bible records one incident where this became painfully obvious – Acts 19:13-16 – I read: “Some others [original: Jews] who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, ‘In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.’ Seven sons of ... a chief priest were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?’ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.”

The method without authority – the method of invoking Jesus’ name without the anointing – without the Holy Spirit and power – ended up in failure – a beating and naked bleeding. Therefore we take special

care and position ourselves to receive an infilling and refillings with the Holy Spirit. We take to heart the command – Ephesians 5:18: “ ... keep being filled with the Holy Spirit.” Therefore – waiting on God – (being intentional and determined) – we exercise faith, we shy away from sin and instead pursue holiness, we seek what he promised in fasting and prayer.

Yet, even then – brimming with power – as was Jesus’ own experience – **the healing of all those who are under the oppression of the devil can somehow be messy. At times a simple command would silence the demons and drive them out** – so in Luke 4:41: “ ... demons came out of many people, shouting ... but Jesus rebuked them and would not allow them to speak ... “ **and there can be moments of unintentional comedy** – in one case a spirit of epilepsy charged the pastor, saying: “You fool! I’ve been medically certified” (Derek Prince: They Shall Expel Demons, Grand Rapids: Chosen Books 1998, p194) – **but then at other times even in the presence of Jesus the demons would argue** – Matthew 8:29: “What do you want with us, Son of God? ... “, **they would bargain** – Matthew 8:31: “If you drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs ...”, **throw a man down** – Luke 4:35: “‘Be quiet!’ Jesus said sternly. ‘Come out of him!’ Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him” (which was apparently worth mentioning) **and once a demon almost left a man for dead** – Mark 9:26: “The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, ‘He’s dead.’ ... “

Somehow the healing of people from demons can be a tussle with unclean powers which requires commitment from us and a readiness to get our hands dirty in ministry. Accordingly the Bible explains that – Ephesians 6:12 – “we wrestle [that is: a hand-to-hand and foot-to-foot struggle] ... against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” **In other words: we wrestle demons of varying strength in a hand to hand grapple which means that we need to be as active and alert as we can be and this includes the person requiring deliverance. A pastor writes:** “When people come to me for prayer ... I usually tell them, ‘You need to know that the demon may put up a fight before it leaves. Are you prepared to fight ... ‘ In every case that I can remember, the person has been willing to fight, and God has given us the victory. I have no faith, however, for people who simply remain passive, without taking their own stand against the enemy. *As a general rule, I do not pray for those who expect to be released only on the basis of my prayers.* A person unwilling to take an active stand against the demon will probably not have the defenses to keep it from returning. Matthew 12:43-45 warns us that the evil spirit will return [or try to return], bringing ‘seven other spirits more wicked than himself ... and the last state of that man is worse than the first.’ ... “ (Derek Prince: They Shall Expel Demons, Grand Rapids: Chosen Books 1998, p194).

When demons leave, we need to remain on the alert – close the vacuum with faith and the Holy Spirit.⁵⁵ **However, victory is assured. What makes the Holy Spirit effective and what even the seven sons of the chief priest reflected in their method** – copied from Christians – **is this: victory comes through the name and authority of Jesus Christ. The words were right:** “In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.” **When we Christians speak these words** – as those who are sent by Jesus – **we will always gain victory over anything demonic.**⁵⁶

And the Bible explains why – Philippians 2:6-11 – **I read:** “ ... being in very nature God, ... [Jesus] made himself nothing ... in human likeness ... became obedient to death ... on a cross! Therefore God [the Father] exalted him ... and gave him the name that is above every name ... “ **Jesus gave up heaven to become a mere man and even die with blood pouring out from his human body on a cross** – for us. **In this way Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice and therefore his name was made great** – by God the Father.

Another Bible passage explains further how this is saving us – Colossians 2:9-15: “ ... When you were dead in your sins ... God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins ... having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

No longer do any devil or demon have a right to accuse or torment us. Jesus triumphed over them by the cross because his sacrifice disarmed the powers and authorities. The triumph of the cross is our forgiveness in Jesus’ name – Acts 2:21: “ ... everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” Acts 4:12: “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to humans by which we must be saved.”

This the demons know and must respect. Hence, at one time disciples of Jesus returned to him with joy, saying – Luke 10:17: “ ... Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.” **Later Jesus confirmed this as the church’s program, saying** – Mark 16:17: “ ... In my name they will drive out demons ... “ **This is good news! Since Jesus triumphed, we experience victory in his name.**

This is indeed good news – joyful news – which brings us to another weapon of warfare in our tussle with demons, that is: praising the name of Jesus – on account of salvation. One pastor discovered that praising God – glorifying the name of Jesus – would surround him with an atmosphere that repelled demons (Derek Prince: They Shall Expel Demons, Grand Rapids: Chosen Books 1998, p36). Likewise – according to the Bible we do not have to attack each and every demon with specific commands in Jesus’ name. (Demons are not worthy of that much attention. Who wants to focus on them?) Many a time an atmosphere of praise – the lifting high of Jesus’ name – is a better way of establishing victory.⁵⁷

For instance, even before Jesus was born the people of God won a victory against a superior army when the king – 2 Chronicles 20:21-23: “... appointed men to sing to the Lord and praise him for the splendour of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying: ‘Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever.’ As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the [invading army] ... “Praise – singing to the Lord – released the power of God and victory.

Paul and Silas experienced the same when they were stripped, beaten and locked in a cell with their feet fastened in the stocks. The Bible records – Acts 16:25-26: “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God ... Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody’s chains came loose.” **Again: Praise – singing to Jesus – released the power of God and victory.⁵⁸**

They knew the name above every name. They had hope that could not be silenced and this – according to Ephesians 6:10-18 – is the helmet of salvation. There the Bible instructs us – I quote: “to put on the full armour of God ...” **And then the pieces of our spiritual armour against the devil are listed: “... the belt of truth ... the breastplate of righteousness ... feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace ... shield of faith ... [then] the helmet of salvation ... [and] the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God ... “**

There is no time to elaborate on all of these pieces of armour but we may identify the helmet of salvation as certain hope and therefore an attitude of praise which Paul and Silas experienced in prison and the people of God before them. A helmet protects the head and our Christian heads – the minds inside our heads – need to be protected from despair when the hand-to-hand grapple with the demonic seems to be overpowering us. Thus, the Bible cross reference reads – 1 Thessalonians 5:8: “[Put on] ... for a helmet, the hope of salvation.”

The helmet is hope. The helmet is continuing optimism based on the promises of God and thus – by extension – the helmet is an attitude of praise and God – so the promise – Psalm 22:3: “... inhabits the praises of his people.” **Victory is in praising God.**

Nothing works without the helmet. Nothing works without the right mind. Therefore protect the head and express your hope. Praise God. In closing we expand on this some more – a small excursion.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he promised the disciples that they would all be baptized with the Holy Spirit and receive power – Acts 1:8 – he said to them: “... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you ... “ **This then happened on the day of Pentecost – Acts 2:4: “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit ... “ but – as we know – immediately the power of the Spirit then released something strange – the verse continues: “... and they began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.”**

The disciples spoke in tongues and we know what they said. They did not preach (the sermon from Peter would come later). They did not pray. They praised God.⁵⁹ God even then released power by making them declare his praises. The Bible says – Acts 2:7-11: “... amazed, [foreigners] asked: ‘... how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? ... Cretans and Arabs – we hear them declaring [praising] the wonders of God in our own tongues!’”

Not all Christians speak in tongues but if you do, may I encourage you to use this gift.⁶⁰ Right from the start – on the first day of church mission – the day of Pentecost – God used the speaking in tongues for declaring his praises and thus releasing power in mission. There is victory also in this kind of praise and it may throw light on another Bible verse – 1 Corinthians 14:4: “He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself ... “ and some others would also make reference to Jude 20: “... building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit ... “ Edify yourself. Experience what the one pastor from before discovered: a praise atmosphere that repels demons.

If you cannot speak in tongues, then don’t worry. Simply praise God in English or another language that you know. And if you want the gift, then you begin to pray for the gift with faith because the Bible gives you encouragement, saying – 1 Corinthians 14:1: “... eagerly desire spiritual gifts ... “

Victory over demons is ours. Praise him. Like Jesus – in his name – we are healing all who are under the power of the devil.” Amen.

As we now pray, I encourage you to meet four conditions (Derek Prince: *They Shall Expel Demons*, Grand Rapids: Chosen Books 1998, p64):

1. Be sure you have repented – that is, turned away from every form of sin.
2. Look only to Jesus; He alone is the Deliverer.
3. Base your appeal solely on what Jesus did for you through His death on the cross, not on any “good works” of your own.
4. Be sure that, by an act of your will, you have forgiven every person who ever harmed or wronged you.

Take hold of the promises:

1. Joel 2:32: “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”
2. Mark 16:17: “In my name you shall expel demons.” => In the name of Jesus you have authority to expel them from yourselves.

Derek Prince: *They Shall Expel Demons*, Grand Rapids: Chosen Books 1998, 216:

- 1 *Personally affirm your faith in Christ:*
“Lord Jesus Christ, I believe You are the Son of God and the only way to God – that you died on the cross for my sins and rose again so that I might be forgiven and receive eternal life.”
- 2 *Humble yourself:*
“I renounce all pride and religious self-righteousness and any dignity that does not come from You. I have no claim on Your mercy except that You died in my place.”
- 3 *Confess any known sin:*
“I confess all my sins before You and hold nothing back. Especially I confess ... “
- 4 *Repent of all sins:*
“I repent of all my sins. I turn away from them and I turn to You, Lord, for mercy and forgiveness.”
- 5 *Forgive all other people:*
“By a decision of my will, I freely forgive all who have ever harmed or wronged me. I lay down all bitterness, all resentment and all hatred. Specifically, I forgive ... “
- 6 *Break with the occult and all false religion:*
“I sever all contact I have ever had with the occult or with all false religion – particularly ... “
“I commit myself to get rid of all objects associated with the occult or false religion.”
- 7 *Prepare to be released from every curse over your life:*
“Lord Jesus, I thank You that on the cross You were made a curse, that I might be redeemed from every curse and inherit God’s blessing. On that basis I ask You to release me and set me free to receive the deliverance I need.”
- 8 *Take your stand with God:*
“I take my stand with You, Lord, against all Satan’s demons. I submit to You, Lord, and I resist the devil. Amen.”
- 9 *Expel:*
“Now I speak to any demons that have control over me. [Speak directly to them.] I command you to go from me now. In the name of Jesus, I expel you!”

Each time you experience a release, praise and thank God for it. Giving thanks and praise is the simplest and purest expression of faith. It also creates an atmosphere that demons find intolerable.

When you feel your deliverance is complete, or that you have come as far as you can at this time, be sure to kneel down and *make Jesus Lord of every area of your life*. Remember the warning of Jesus that if a demon comes back and finds the house empty, he will return and bring others with him ...

If you feel your deliverance is not complete, wait until your strength returns or you feel prompted by the Holy Spirit. Then continue with the process of getting the demons out ...

Finally, here is a reminder that applies to every Christian: *You never need to be ashamed of having been delivered from demons*. In the gospel record there was one person to whom God granted a unique and glorious honor: to be the first human witness of the resurrection of Jesus. The incident is recorded in Mark 16:9: "Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons."

Think of it! Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, who was identified as the one "out of whom He had cast seven demons." ...

The Sin Poison
(On Healing By Forgiveness)

“Is any one of us sick?” “Is any one of us desperate?” Then listen to three precise verses in the Bible – James 5:14-16 – I read them to you from God’s book: “Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

From these verses any sick person can learn what to do. One: Exercise faith. God works by faith. “The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well.” **Two: Pursue righteousness. God works healing power through righteousness.** “The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” **Three: Honour leadership. God works through the authority of the appointed leadership. The reading said: “Call the elders of the church.” **Four: As a church, set apart some anointing oil and follow the simple instruction: “Anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.”** **Five: Get ready to glorify God because the Bible promise is definite: “The prayer ... will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up.”****

These principles and ingredients of treating sickness according to the Bible are becoming more familiar to us by now. Perhaps we are not immediately clear about the role of the elders or anointing oil but what is quite clear is this: We pray for the sick with faith – and (to make a brief comment) the anointing oil (representing the Holy Spirit) fits here because the anointing with oil is a faith action – we pray for the sick with faith and we pray for the sick with the power that comes from being close to God in righteousness – and (to make another brief comment) the elders fit here because they are meant to lead the church in righteousness.⁶¹

Yet, there is more. On the positive side – righteousness – loving God without sin – releases healing but – on the negative side – the reverse is also true: unrighteousness – lukewarm love and sin – takes away healing and even causes sickness. This is at the core of the Christian faith. Righteousness matters because sin separates us from God and for that reason sin can cause sickness. Are we agreed on this? Sin is poisoning our relationship with God. Sin is drawing the judgement of God upon ourselves and therefore sin is cursing us with possible sickness – even Christians.

The three Bible verses from before – James 5:14-16 – leave us in no doubt. Hear some of the words again: “Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him ... If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed ...”

“ ... confess your sins ... so that you may be healed ... “ That is: remove the root cause of your sickness – the sin that makes you live under judgement – and you may be healed.

I know that this is not a popular teaching. Speaking for myself – on a certain level I am keen on God to be as corrupted as I am – excusing sin, not worrying about sin, downplaying the seriousness of sin, comfortable and relaxed in sin. But he is not like me. He is not like you. He is holy! According to the Bible – Hebrews 12:29: “ ... God is a consuming fire ... “ and – 1 Timothy 6:16: “ ... lives in unapproachable light ... “

1 John 3:5-6: “ ... in him is no sin ... “ which has consequences for us. The last Bible reading continues with a shock to the system for those that have been weaned on cheap grace – 1 John 3:5-8 – hear some more: “ ... in him is no sin. [Therefore] no one who lives in him keeps on sinning [at least not willfully]. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. Dear children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning ... “ These words may be too radical for some – unpopular – but – if you are looking for healing – don’t shy away from them. Sin is a serious problem before a holy God and may be at the root of your sickness.

However – before anyone misunderstands – let me make this very clear. Sin may be the root cause of your sickness but at the same time not every sickness is caused by a particular sin. We must not jump to conclusions. The Bible reading from before said – James 5:14-16: “ ... If he has sinned, he will be forgiven ... “ “ ... If he has sinned ... “ Sin is a possible root cause of sickness but not so in every instance.

At one time Jesus himself corrected the assumptions of his disciples – John 9:1-3: “As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ Jesus said, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.’”

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned.” We don’t jump to conclusions and we don’t add to the misery of the sick by burdening them with wrong accusations. There may not be a specific sin that caused the cancer – that caused the deafness – that caused the sleep apnea. **If you are on a mission to find sin in a sick person, you will always find some – you will always find some in yourself – because – this side of eternity – none of us is perfect – and the Bible knows, saying – 1 John 1:8: “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us ...” – so if you are looking for sin in a sick person, you will always find some – but be careful because Jesus may correct you with the same words – “neither this man nor his parents sinned” in the sense that a specific sin caused this particular sickness.**

Furthermore – and more about this later – sin is not an insurmountable problem for a Christian. Don’t keep bringing up past sin when God has dealt with the past. God is faithful and therefore the previous Bible reading winds up with some of the best moments of grace – 1 John 1:8-9: “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. [But] if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

God is faithful and grants healing from sin. However, back to the problem. There are times when sins do cause sickness and – as uncomfortable as that may be – we need to know because there is no cure without the right diagnosis. At the pool of Bethesda Jesus healed a man who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years and when he met him later in the temple, he said to him – John 5:14: “... See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you ...” **Stop sinning or something worse – more sickness – may happen to you. Stop sinning.**

The apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth and warned them – 1 Corinthians 11:17: “... your meetings do more harm than good ...” **These Christians at Corinth were like many Christians today. They did not know their sin (they were deceived) and therefore they did not understand – never even questioned – why their members were becoming sick and even died. But Paul wrote to them about church divisions, drunkenness at Holy Communion, disregard for the poor, and so on. Then he said – 1 Corinthians 11:30: “That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.” Sin was the surprising cause of sickness in many church people and a number of them died. Not an easy truth.**

How would we respond to anyone writing to us: “... your meetings do more harm than good ...” We might want to defend ourselves and point out the strong points of Living Grace (the Jubilee ministry, the trips to Hopevale, vibrant small groups) but the church in Corinth was likewise not without blessings. Paul commended them, saying – 1 Corinthians 1:7: “... you do not lack any spiritual gift ...” **And yet, sin made them sick. Sin caused their meetings to do more harm than good because – take note of the principle – the closer we get to the holiness of God in worship and life, the more intolerant he becomes about sin. (As you get close to God, take off your shoes!) Therefore, the strong points – the moments of intimacy with God – the multitude of spiritual gifts – must not blind us to the sin that remains but make us even more vigilant.**

The apostle Paul concluded with timely advice – also for us – 1 Corinthians 11:30-32: “That is why ... you are ... sick ... But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgement. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.” **If we judged ourselves – in other words: if we took a long and hard and honest look at ourselves and then turned away from the wrong that we are doing – then we would not come under judgement. We would not be judged with sickness. [In church history people like Martin Luther would meditate on God’s law – the ten commandments – every day. They would compare their life to the standard of God’s holiness and then repent – daily. They would scan their behaviour – their thoughts – their priorities. They would judge themselves – repent – and thus be forgiven rather than judged by God.]**

However, when we are judged by the Lord with sickness, then not everything is lost either. It is just that – in love – we are being disciplined. Being sick is a humbling experience. Suffering the end of our own strength we have nowhere else to go but reach out again to God – the one unfailing source of all strength – which is what he intends with his discipline – in the words of the apostle Paul – “so that we will

not be condemned with the world”. **Better some sobering sickness now than eternal sickness in the hands of eternal darkness.**

The Bible wants us to learn from history. God is the same today as he was yesterday – 1 Corinthians 10:1-13: “Remember . history, friends. All our ancestors were led by the providential Cloud and taken miraculously through the Sea. They went through the waters, in a baptism like ours, as Moses led them from enslaving death to salvation life. They all ate and drank ... meals provided daily by God ... But just experiencing God’s wonder and grace didn’t seem to mean much – most of them were defeated by temptation during the hard times in the desert and God was not pleased. The same thing could happen to us. We must be on our guard ... “ (The Message, vv1-6) “ ... Do not be worship false gods ... We should not commit sexual immorality as some of them did – and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord as some of them did – and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did – and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us ... “ **Remember history! Sin has consequences – at times solid consequences – and may be at the root of our sickness.**

Now what would be one of the most common sickness causing sins? The Bible reading mentioned the worship of false gods, then touched on sexual immorality but concluded with grumbling which includes complaining, unhelpful gossip, holding grudges, taking offense and unforgiveness. Now most Christians would concede that the worship of false gods and sexual immorality are sins of a serious nature – we would not condone kneeling before Buddha or adultery – but grumbling seems to be a rather normal everyday occurrence. Everyone grumbles and yet – according to the Bible history from before – people are being killed for grumbling. The Bible warns in another place – James 5:9: “Don’t grumble against each other . or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door.” **And then, Jesus was careful to instruct his disciples with these words – (the only pointed reference to human behaviour in the Lord’s Prayer) – Luke 11:2-4: “When you pray, say: ... Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us ... “ “ ... for we also forgive everyone who sins against us ... “ and do not grumble against them – let go of the grudge.**

A pastor writes: “When I was first ordained a priest, I believed that over fifty percent of all problems were at least in part due to unforgiveness. After ten years in ministry, I revised my estimate and maintained seventy-five to eighty percent of all health, marital, family, and financial problems came from unforgiveness. Now, after more than twenty years in ministry, I have concluded that over ninety percent of all problems are rooted in unforgiveness.”⁶²

This is a stark assessment but a helpful one and a common one (shared by many other pastors and counselors)⁶³ and – therefore – we need to unpack this further. If unforgiveness causes over ninety percent of all sin-related sickness and other troubles, then most of us are affected. This is becoming practical now and personal. Are we sick – are you sick – because you grumble, take offense and do not forgive?

Who do you need to forgive? It may be your brother or sister. Or is it your father or mother? A stranger? People inflict great wounds on each other and then the hurt penetrates deep.⁶⁴ Who do you need to forgive? Be honest: It may be God.⁶⁵

First of all, he is the one that is speaking such uncompromising words. I quote from the Bible – 1 John 1:9-11: “Anyone who ... hates his brother is still in the darkness ... “ Matthew 6:14-15: “If you forgive people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive people their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”⁶⁶

“If you do not forgive, then God will not forgive.” Does this sound reasonable? A part of me doesn’t want this to sound reasonable. This is too hard. This doesn’t seem fair. God should not impose his standard on us. And what is his standard anyway? He doesn’t always seem to be so consistent himself. This is another talk on what God can do – his supernatural power – but why is not everyone healed? Why does not everyone receive visions of angels? Every so often we may feel like saying: “What about me, God? Others speak in tongues. Others receive prophetic pictures. Others get filled with the Holy Spirit. Others are so happy in you but what about me? Why does it seem to be so much harder for me?”

One evangelist was in the midst of a healing revival in the US when his mum died in Canada – of a stroke. Just the day before he was in a meeting when two or three people, crippled and paralyzed from stroke, were instantly healed and all their symptoms disappeared. Why not his mum? “Why not my mum, God?”⁶⁷

We may think that those who are seeing miracles every week are free from resentment but not so. Another pastor – in great demand across the world – he counsels others from experience: “Feed yourself on what God has done and is doing rather than what he has not yet done because that gives room for an offense against God and is faith destroying” (Bill Johnson). **The Bible shares the wisdom with us – Philippians 4:6 – I read: “ ... with thanksgiving [feeding yourself on what God has done and is doing] present your requests to God.”**

Even the very first sin by the very first humans was in that same league of taking offense at God. The first man and the first woman were placed in a garden with many fruit-bearing trees (so they should have been satisfied with the abundance of God’s grace – so many trees were at their disposal) but they looked at the one which was forbidden and then they took offense. Instead of rejoicing in what God was doing for them, they came to the conclusion that God was mean – I paraphrase from the Bible – Genesis 3:4-6: “He doesn’t want us to eat from the tree because it would make us like him.”

The sad irony is that we get offended at the goodness of God. Healings and miracles are meant to be God’s way of loving us and with compassion leading us to repentance but we pick at them (why not more God and then we tend to forget easily) and therefore may end up rejecting the move of God among us. Jesus said to another community – Luke 10:13: “Woe to you ... if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in other cities [original: Tyre and Sidon], they would have repented long ago, sitting in sack-cloth and ashes.” *[I do not even know whether we still understand that testimonies are meant to bring us to repentance. As soon as we hear only one testimony which points to the presence of God we are meant to bow down before him and yield to him with humility. Instead we like to retain the more superior position of the grumbling judges.]*

Are you offended at God? A nurse wrote this letter: “ ... Two weeks before ... I had a miscarriage at three months and developed phlebitis in my left leg. During the Friday night session in the Chapel, I was able to ‘forgive’ God for this miscarriage, allowing his healing love to replace the anger and resentment I felt toward him. What a tremendous relief it was for me! Early Saturday morning, about 3.30 a.m., I awoke with the feeling I should be praying. Soon ... I got up and walked on my leg which was no longer painful. In fact, I jumped up and down to see if it would hurt and it didn’t ... Now it has been seven months and I have not had a twinge of discomfort in my leg.”⁶⁸

The nurse “forgave” God which subsequently allowed God’s healing to flow into her leg. And even before the healing of her leg she experienced tremendous relief when healing love replaced her anger and resentment. Can we “forgive” God?

A girl of seventeen remembered the brutal treatment which she had received from men. She was not comfortable talking to the pastor in front of her and was downright skeptical when he told her that Jesus was Lord, that he was the master of all things, that he was Almighty and that he would help her. She scoffed at the pastor and with bitterness in her voice demanded to know: “Tell me then. Where was your Master when these men were doing this to me”.

The pastor said that he didn’t know what God was doing but that he would ask Jesus to tell her. The contempt in the eyes of the girl told him what she thought of this – what a load of rubbish.

However, he began to pray and when he couldn’t think of anything else to pray, he switched to this language of tongues (words given by the Holy Spirit which the speaker does not understand). The young woman was alert and listening – in much the same manner that a dog cocks its ears when it senses something. The pastor saw that reaction and impulsively held his hands in front of her, in the manner of a book, and continued to use this prayer language. As she focused on his hands, her eyes almost popped out of her head. She stared, and stared, with such intensity, as though she was watching a video clip.

The pastor stopped praying. She looked at him. He asked: “What was Jesus showing you?” “When ... they were doing that to me ... they were doing it to him too.” **The pastor simply nodded. She asked: “But why did both of us have to suffer like that?” The pastor said the first thing that came into his head, and from that day to now, he has been certain that what he said was true: “So that when you were ready to face this, and deal with it, you would know you could leave it with him!” The girl nodded, able to accept what was said (Fred Veerhuis: Shit Happens. Grace Surprises, Mount Colah: Ferryhouse Publishing, 2006, p115).**

Whatever is done to us, is done to him. We don’t know why God doesn’t intervene more often and protect the innocent. We don’t know why evil must run its course for now but we do know that God himself shares our suffering to the maximum of our own pain and anguish. When horrible persecution came on the first Christians – beatings and torture – Jesus appeared to the chief persecutor and asked him

this question – Acts 9:4: “ ... Why do you persecute me?” Jesus felt the pain that was happening to his people. He asked: “Why do you persecute me?”

The Bible talks about Jesus becoming one with his church in perfect love – not unlike husband and wife are becoming one in marriage. The Bible touches on this reality in Ephesians 5:31-32 – I quote: “ ... a man will ... be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church.” There is a deep mystery of oneness – union – between Jesus and us which again means that when we suffer, he suffers.

Love makes him share every human heartache and then there is his heartache over the masses of people who are lost and heading to eternal judgement. Sometimes in prayer Jesus shares his burden for people with those that pray and it can be an overwhelming sensation of loving anguish for the salvation of sinners. Like most parents cannot bear the suffering of their children, so Jesus cannot bear our suffering – your suffering – and it tears him apart.

What was done to you, was also done to him. And more! What should have been done to you according to God’s holy law – what should be done to every sinner – was not done to you but to him. The Bible says – Romans 5:9: “ . we have been justified by his blood ... saved from God’s wrath through him ... “ Again, how can we remain resentful toward Jesus? We are all sinners and sinners deserve eternal punishment. God does not owe them anything but Jesus came and he shed his blood on a cross – for us. He saved us from God’s wrath.

Hear another Bible passage – 1 Peter 2:21-25: “ ... Jesus Christ suffered for you ... He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats ... He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree [on the cross] ... by his wounds you have been healed ... “

“By his wounds you have been healed” which includes the whole package of healing your sin, healing the memories of the abuse which you suffered and healing your disease.

Who wants to be healed? In closing we go back to the Bible reading which began this message – James 5:14-16 – I read from God’s book: “Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

We simply do what the Bible says: call the elders, anoint with oil, pray in faith, pray with righteous power and – finally – after what we have considered at length in this talk – we deal with the possible connection of sin and sickness – according to the instruction: “ ... confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed ... “

As one last objection we may ask why we are to confess our sins to each other. Would it not be less embarrassing to keep the worst sins private? Who is keen to share their shame with anyone else? Yet – God knows what he is doing. Jesus – on purpose – authorized us to apply healing in his name to each other – commissioning us with these words – John 20:22-23: “ ... Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven ... “ (cf. Matthew 16:19; 18:18).

Jesus knew that sin thrives in secrecy – there is bondage in being isolated with secret shame (it keeps accusing you) – but bring it out into the open, come clean, break through pride by humbling yourself before another person, be accountable, and the sin – the shame – loses its foothold. What we may have thought can never be forgiven, will be forgiven. God makes us hear the precious truth from another mouth: “In the name of Jesus Christ, God is forgiving you.” We get help from each other: “What was done to you, was done to him. Trust him. Exercise faith. He is forgiving you.”

Is any one of you sick? Then do what the Bible says: call the elders, anoint with oil, pray in faith, pray with righteous power and “ ... confess your sins to each other ... so that you may be healed ... “ This is the promise: “ ... the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up ... “ Therefore – this minute – confess your sin – let go – and be healed. Amen.

If it is true that over ninety percent of all our problems in health, marriage, family and finances are due to the root problem of unforgiveness, then we may do well taking the following steps together.

10 *Ask for God's help:*

"Lord Jesus Christ, please strengthen my will. I do not feel like forgiving those that hurt me. I am in pain but I put my trust in you. Help me."

11 *Acknowledge what was done to you:*

"Lord Jesus Christ, you know what happened to me and you agree that it was wicked. You hate sin and you hate what was done to me. I can be honest in my grief and cry out to you about my pain. This is what I am feeling ... "

12 *Ask God to comfort you:*

Father God, you said that nothing will ever separate me from your love. Please, love me now. Heal my hurt in your loving arms. Dry my tears with your compassion."

13 *Confess your own faults:*

"I renounce all my pride and admit that I am not perfect either. Jesus, I have no claim on Your mercy except that You died in my place."

14 *Make a commitment to forgive others:*

"By a decision of my will, I freely forgive all who have ever harmed or wronged me. I lay down all bitterness, all resentment and all hatred. Specifically, I forgive ... and I 'forgive' you, Jesus. What was done to me, was done to you. I commit myself to loving you and praising you. "

15 *Pray blessings on others:*

"By a decision of my will, I pray blessings on all who have ever harmed or wronged me. Bless them, Jesus. Specifically, I pray that you pour out your favour on ... "

16 *Pray for renewed relationships:*

"Lord Jesus Christ, you offered friendship to me. Therefore, by a decision of my will, I ask that you heal the rift between me and those who have harmed or wronged me."

17 *Receive forgiveness and healing:*

"Lord Jesus Christ, according to your word I receive your forgiveness now and I receive my healing by faith. You make me well and raise me up. I praise you for what I am receiving at this moment and later. Your healing is coming into my body. Amen."

¹ Francis MacNutt: *The Nearly Perfect Crime. How The Church Almost Killed The Ministry Of Healing*, Grand Rapids: Chosen 2005, p203 : " ... the major denominations, by and large, have not considered changing their regular Sunday services or liturgies to include any charismatic dimensions. They go by the book: the Missal or the Book of Common Prayer."

² Philip Yancey concedes: "However, I mostly hear from earnest believers whose prayers go unanswered, and for this reason I present a perspective that may well seem unbalanced, focusing on those who do not readily find healing.

³ Philip Yancey would never say that God is random or unjust but points to God's superior perspective and ultimate wisdom. However, his book explores many angles and sometimes they seem to warrant different conclusions.

⁴ Cf. Francis MacNutt: *The Nearly Perfect Crime. How The Church Almost Killed The Ministry Of Healing*, Grand Rapids: Chosen 2005, p99 : " ... We also lost another motive for healing: God's compassion for His sick and wounded children ... "

⁵ 2 Corinthians 1:3-5: "Praise be to God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles ... For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows." Romans 8:31-39: " ... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword ... No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us ... neither death

nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present or the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Cf. Ephesians 3:16-19.

⁶ Cf. Todd Bentley: Dynamics Of Faith, Podcast: “ ... You think I just showed up in a meeting with this great faith ... I had to take steps. I had to break through. Every meeting I gave an altar call and prayed for the sick and layed hands on everyone ... many meetings where not one person reported any physical change. Can you imagine praying for one thousand and no one is healed? I said: ‘God, I am going to do it again’ because God is a rewarder of those that are seeking him diligently. When I break through the first time, I’ll crack the dam ... I need to get it open first ... I started with my faith and my faith was pain, arthritis ... that was my faith ... when I got a few healings then I heard God telling me that it is time to pray for the deaf ... my mum was deaf ... It is time to exercise your faith muscle ... you can work your way into the gift of healing ... You can have a grace gift and I will give it to you because you desire it so much ... You can have no healing gift but end up with a healing gift ... It starts in faith but ends up in a gift ... I went after healing with no call for healing, no angelic visitation, no words of knowledge ... I started teaching healing and I prayed for how many deaf people (probably hundreds) and no one gets healed ... In British Columbia there was a deaf woman who reminded me of my mother and even talked like my mother ... and when that compassion ... because I thought she was like my mother ... an extra little tear in my eye, an extra emotional moment ... If you don’t have compassion and love ... When that love welled up because she looked like my mother and sounded like my mother ... my faith worketh by love ... a connection between ... to love the one ... When that faith rose and that love touched, she was instantly healed. From that day forward I don’t know how many thousand deaf are healed ... Bring me the deaf and they get healed ... “

Francis MacNutt: Healing, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press 1974, p244: “ ... The pastor and I pulled up a chair in front of them. I began to turn inwardly, being bathed in God’s love ... The Lord began just to bathe my heart with love. People are aware of the power of love, aren’t they? So I said to Mae: ‘Mae, something is happening – the Lord is giving me great love for you and I know he wants to minister to you.’ ... “

Carlos Annacondia: Listen To Me Satan, Lake Mary: Charisma House 1998, p84: “One day as I was praying I saw her standing in line for prayer. When I saw her, I said to the Lord, ‘Please give me discernment; I really don’t know what’s wrong with her. Lord, may your Holy Spirit guide me. I know that someone has cast a spell on her. But why doesn’t she get free?’ While praying for other people, I was also praying for her. Suddenly tears started to roll down my cheeks, and as I was approaching her, I felt an incredible compassion from the Lord in my heart. I know that when God puts compassion in the heart of his children it’s because something is about to happen. The Holy Spirit said to me, ‘Do you know what’s wrong with her?’ ‘Yes,’ I replied. ‘It’s a work of witchcraft, a spell.’ ‘So what are you going to do?’ asked the Holy Spirit. ‘I don’t know. I’ve already rebuked the spirit several times, and nothing happened.’ Then God asked me, ‘Who are you?’ ‘A priest of God,’ I said. ‘Who bound her?’ He asked. ‘A priest from Satan.’ ‘And who has more authority?’ said God. ‘I do,’ was my immediate response. ‘Then use it!’ He ordered me. I just stood there, surprised. God was teaching me something I didn’t know. I had rebuked the spirit of witchcraft, but I hadn’t exercised authority to set her free. Then I approached the woman, put my hand upon her head, and said, ‘Satan, you who are in there, you know the authority I have because I am a priest of the Most High God. I undo all your works in this woman’s life, and I order you to go. I set this soul free from the spirit of witchcraft in the name of Jesus.’ At that instant, the woman fell to the ground and was taken to the tent of deliverance, but she was already free ... “

D.G.S. Dhinakaran: Gifts Of The Holy Spirit, South India: Word Of Christ, p11,22,277,310 with testimonies on p151,153,166, 208,279,281,284,290,294,311.

⁷ From the internet – Sylvia Poareo: The Healing Power Of Holding: “ ... I remember one night when I was in college. I was crying in my room in great pain over feelings of abandonment, when my very loving roommate (who had had love modeled to her from a caring mother) came over and put her arms around me from behind and just held me. This was an incredibly powerful moment for me. I could not remember ever having been held, let alone with such love. Until then I could not define Love’s embrace; God was theoretically loving but I did not know what that love would feel like. In that moment, acting as a vessel, she made my experience of God real. Suddenly, I knew what the loving arms of Spirit felt like and I could draw on that experience when I needed to visualize God’s presence all around me. As I began to learn about taking responsibility to become my own loving mother and re-parent myself, this holding served as a model of love for me. I would often visualize myself with arms around my child and Spirit’s arms around me. And it was no longer just a visualization but a visceral experience because I could access the sensory memory of having been held this way ... “

⁸ When Jesus prayed a similar prayer of submission about his desire to avoid suffering, he knew that his desire was contrary to the revealed will of God and therefore what he prayed was right at the time: “ ... not my will, but yours be done” (Lk 22:42). However, this prayer is not appropriate when the prayer is in accordance with the promises of God. Then a more confident prayer of faith is called for.

⁹ Francis MacNutt: The Power To Heal, Indiana: Ave Maria Press 1977, p134-135. Cf. T.J. McCrossan: Bodily Healing And The Atonement, Oklahoma: Kenneth Hagin Ministries 1982, p82: “Andrew Murray truly says, ‘It simply is impossible to pray with faith when we are not sure that we are asking according to God’s will. As long as one prays thus, inserting the proviso, ‘if it be thy will,’ one is praying with submission but this is not the prayer of faith.’ ... When we pray for a very sick person and ask God to heal him, if it be His will, we virtually say, ‘Lord, I do not know whether You desire to heal this person or let him die, but whatever you do, Lord, will please me, so do not let my request to have him live make any difference to You whatsoever.’ Such a prayer as this reveals fatalism, not faith.” Cf. Agnes Sanford, Benny Hinn: Lord, I Need A Miracle, London: Word Publishing 1993, p89.

¹⁰ Even when Jesus initially denied a healing request, the episode ended with Jesus healing the person (Matthew 15:21-28).

¹¹ Kathryn Kuhlmann: Never Too Late, South Plainfield: Bridge Publishing 1975, p46.

¹² Kathryn Kuhlmann: Never Too Late, South Plainfield: Bridge Publishing 1975, p45.

¹³ Cf. Psalm 105:37: “He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.” Psalm 107:20: “He sent forth his word and healed them ... “

¹⁴ Agnes Sanford: *The Healing Light*, London: Arthur James 1949, p48.

¹⁵ Francis MacNutt: *Healing, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press 1974*, p86; Barbara Leahy Shlemon, Dennis Linn & Matthew Linn: *To Heal As Jesus Healed, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press 1978*, p86: “Some people have a rare vocation to suffer redemptively and to grow in their power to love as they endure illness ... This type of suffering is redemptive to the degree that it leads us to give and receive the Lord’s love. Suffering is redemptive if it is healing.”

¹⁶ Barbara Leahy Shlemon, Dennis Linn & Matthew Linn: *To Heal As Jesus Healed, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press 1978*, p40: “Sickness and pain are usually not Jesus’ will because they leave a wake of self-centredness, making it difficult to love God, others and ourselves.” Helmut Thielicke: *Auf dem Weg zur Kanzel*, Stuttgart: Quelle Verlag 1983, p134: “... Denn in zwei Faellen versagt dieser Trost: *Einmal*, wenn der Schmerz zu gross wird ... *Der andere* Fall ... wenn das Leiden zu *lange* dauert ... “

¹⁷ Accordingly Paul did initially persevere and pray for the removal of the thorn three times.

¹⁸ Basilea Schlink: *The Blessings Of Illness*, Basingstoke: Lakeland Marshall Morgan & Stott 1973, p9-16: “... written out of my own experience, after many years of ill health ... But each illness has been chosen for us personally, by our Father, out of love for us. Jesus can transform every trial and trouble into blessing, if only we trust in His love ... It is especially through His blood that we are offered His healing power. So, during those days of illness, it became very important to me to receive Communion ... When illness strikes us, we must accept it with love and thanksgiving ... If we do this we shall sometimes experience His immediate healing. But because we are truly children of God, we may also experience that ‘the Lord disciplines him whom he loves’ (Heb. 12:6) ... A period of prolonged suffering will show us how little patience we have, how demanding and touchy we really are ... It makes us dependent on others and we feel humiliated. But this is the kind of illness that is specially able to make us humble. Also it teaches us to become dependent upon our heavenly Father and to cling to Him in faith ... The Scriptures regard suffering as something precious ... Why do we suffer illness? The Scriptures say that God is to be glorified through our suffering. He is glorified when He performs a miracle of healing in us. Then His name is praised. But He is glorified just as much, perhaps even more, when someone bears an illness with patience and love for Jesus, in complete surrender to the will of God. Many sufferers have been a living testimony to others because, in spite of their pain, they were radiant with joy – the joy that comes from Jesus alone ... “

¹⁹ Cf. Basilea Schlink: *The Blessings Of Illness*, Basingstoke: Lakeland Marshall Morgan & Stott 1973, p13: “Paul did not miraculously heal his helper Epaphroditus, who was near death (Phil. 2:25-30). He left Trophimus ill at Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20). He recommended a natural remedy to Timothy for his stomach trouble (1 Tim. 5:23) ... “ However, a merciful God is so often a healing God – Philippians 2:27: “Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.”

²⁰ Francis MacNutt: *Healing, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press 1974*, p56.

²¹ Vincent Cheung: *Biblical Healing*, Boston: Reformation Ministries International 2003, www.rmiweb.org, p10: “... it is unnecessary to deny that healing is provided in the atonement because to affirm that healing is provided in the atonement does not necessarily compel one to also affirm that perfect and complete healing is available to every believer in this life on demand ... “

²² Consider also Mark 16:18: “... and they will be able to place their hands on the sick and heal them.” John 14:12 – Jesus said: “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”

²³ *Miracles Of Healing*, Trowbridge: Eagle Publishing 2004, p13-15.

²⁴ Agnes Sanford: *The Healing Light*, London: Arthur James 1949, p24.

²⁵ Vincent Cheung: *Biblical Healing*, Boston: Reformation Ministries International 2003, www.rmiweb.org, p27-29: “... ‘... Every healing ministry I am familiar with depends largely on prayer. Jesus healed primarily by command ... Peter prayed for Tabitha in Acts 9:40. Paul prayed before healing the father of Publius in Acts 28:8 ... ‘... Whereas Christ tells them that they would have needed to pray in order to expel the evil spirit, Christ himself did not pray; rather, as Matthew Henry observes, ‘Christ can do that with a word’s speaking.’ ... “ Cf. *Healing by prayer*: 1 Kings 13:4-6; 2 Kings 20:1-6; James 5:14-16.

²⁶ John 5:8-9: “Then Jesus said to him: ‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.’ At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.”

²⁷ See also Acts 19:11-12: “God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.”

²⁸ Charles & Frances Hunter: *How To Heal The Sick*, New Kensington: Whitaker House 1981, p30. Cf. Agnes Sanford: *The Healing Light*, London: Arthur James 1949, p18: “... a method so simple that it is child-like ... It is an experimental method ... If it does not succeed, one seeks a better adjustment with God and tries again ... “

²⁹ Even though God judged David and told him that his son would die, David knew the loving character of God and nevertheless persevered with healing prayer – 2 Samuel 12:15-25: “... David pleaded with God for the child. He fasted and went into his house and spent the nights lying on the ground ... He answered: ‘While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept. I thought, ‘Who knows?’ The Lord may be gracious to me and let the child live.’ ... “ Another person was told by Jesus that the time was not yet right for mission work outside of the people of Israel and therefore he would not heal her daughter but she also nevertheless persevered and heard these words from Jesus – Matthew 15:25: “... Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted ... “

Mahesh Chavda: *The Hidden Power Of Prayer & Fasting*, Shippensburg: Destiny Image 1998, 59-62: “... During this same series of meetings, a certain woman who had been born blind was brought to the front by her grand-daughter. Each time this little lady would come to the front with her hand on her grand-daughter’s shoulder, and I would pray for her. Every time the anointing of God would hit her and she would fall down like I had hit her with all my strength, although I barely touched her. I knew something had happened, but each time I helped her up and asked, ‘How are you, Grandma?’ she would blink her still blind eyes and say, ‘I can’t see.’ I could only answer, ‘Okay. Come again.’ The same thing happened each service after that for seven days and nights. She would be led forward by her grand-daughter. The power of God would hit her, her body would shake, and down she would go. I knew it was the genuine power of the Lord hitting her. It was so obvious that I almost wanted the Lord to be gentle. Yet each time I helped her up again and asked, ‘How are you?’ she would shake her head and say she still couldn’t see. I was really struggling with this situation ...

By the fourth day, I was getting tired of seeing Grandma coming forward for prayer ... On the last service of the last day of the outreach ... my favourite grand-mother came forward to the front once again ... But this time the Lord said, 'Help her up.' So I said, 'Okay.' I went back to help this dear lady to her feet. Once again I asked her, 'How are you, Grandma?' She blinked her eyes and said, 'I can see you clearly!' God had totally recreated her eyes and given her sight for the first time in her life! Outwardly I exclaimed, 'How wonderful!' but inwardly I said, 'You know, Lord, you could have done this the first day!'

Many months later during an extended time of fasting and prayer ... suddenly, right in front of my eyes, I began to view scenes of the times I had prayed for that ... grand-mother. It was almost as if I was watching a full-color videotape of those prayer times ... this time I was seeing through the eyes of the Spirit. As this woman came up for prayer in each service, the Lord showed me that there was a creature that looked similar to an octopus with several tentacles wrapped around the woman's eyes. Every time I prayed, the anointing of God would hit her and knock off one of the tentacles. During the second prayer, a second tentacle was supernaturally removed. During the third prayer, a third tentacle came off. Finally, on the last night in the last service, the woman came forward with a single tentacle still wrapped around her eyes. It was like a spirit of blindness, the main demon that had kept her bound in a world of darkness. When I prayed for her the last day, the last tentacle came off and she could see clearly. The Lord revealed to me that at times, demonic obstructions hold us or cling to us with several arms. Every time you pray under the anointing, *something happens*. You can count on that. The Lord would say to many of us, 'Don't get discouraged. Keep praying through until the last tentacle comes off and you see the healing and deliverance!'"

³⁰ Bill Johnson: *The Supernatural Power Of A Transformed Mind*, Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers 2005, p85-86: "During the days of the Roman Empire, much of what was then called the Church had little understanding or assurance of salvation. While the experience of salvation by faith has always been a part of the true Church, this revelation was put on the back burner for most. But a few hundred years ago, it was moved to the forefront, and the Church began to proclaim again that salvation is only by faith. Even so, it was more of a prolonged process than it is today. Many would seek God in prayer and search the Scriptures, sometimes for weeks or even months, before having the assurance of their salvation. But because the Church embraced this revelation wholeheartedly, teaching it, practicing it, building up people's faith in it, today we consider it the simplest thing in the world. We pray for a sinner to receive Jesus, and we have absolutely no doubt that he or she will be instantly converted. Many of us don't realize that it's only 'easy' now because previous generations labored in planting and watering this revelation by putting it into practice. For two centuries the Church in this nation has not lost sight of the power of conversion. It has taught it, preached it, gone into the streets with it, written books about it. Today we are riding the wave of a heritage of faith that has increased for many generations.

A similar thing happened with worship ... The revelation of healing is on a similar trajectory. Christians are absolutely responsible for bringing divine healing to people, 'proving the will of God,' bringing earthly reality into line with what's true in heaven. Healing is part of the normal Christian life. God put it in His book; He illustrated it in the life of Jesus. He told us to emulate what Jesus did. So why is it so easy for us to be fully convinced when we pray for someone to be saved that our prayer will work, yet when we pray for healing we find it difficult to believe they will be healed ... "

³¹ Mark Stibbe: *Fire And Blood*, London: Monarch Books 2001, p120-121.

³² Smith Wigglesworth: *Greater Works*, New Kensington: Whitaker House 1999, 17-18: "Six people went into the house of a sick man to pray for him. He was a leader in the Episcopal Church, and he lay in his bed utterly helpless. He had read a little tract about healing and had heard about people praying for the sick. So he sent for these friends, who, he thought, could pray "*the prayer of faith*" (James 5:15). He was anointed with oil according to James 5:14, but because he had no immediate manifestation of healing, he wept bitterly. The six people walked out of the room, somewhat crestfallen to see the man lying in an unchanged condition.

When they were outside, one of the six said, 'There is one thing we could have done. I wish you would all go back with me and try it.' They all went back and got together in a group. This brother said, 'Let us whisper the name of Jesus.' At first, when they whispered this worthy name, nothing seemed to happen. But as they continued to whisper 'Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!' the power began to fall. As they saw that God was beginning to work, their faith and joy increased, and they whispered the name louder and louder. As they did so, the man rose from his bed and dressed himself. The secret was just this: those six people had gotten their eyes off the sick man and were taken up with the Lord Jesus himself. Their faith grasped the power in his name. Oh, if people would only appreciate the power in this name, there is no telling what would happen."

Smith Wigglesworth: *Greater Works*, New Kensington: Whitaker House 1999, 19-21: "... Everything he said was true from the natural standpoint. The man was helpless. He was nothing but a mass of bones with skin stretched over them. There was no life to be seen. Everything in him spoke decay. I said to him, 'Will you shout? You remember that at Jericho the people shouted while the walls were still up. God has a similar victory for you if you will only believe.' But I could not get him to believe. There was not an atom of faith there. He had made up his mind not to have anything.

It is a blessed thing to learn that God's Word can never fail. Never listen to human plans. God can work mightily when you persist in believing him in spite of discouragement from the human standpoint. When I got back to the man to whom I had sent the postcard, he asked, 'Are you ready to go now?' I replied, 'I am not moved by what I see. I am moved only by what I believe. I know this: no man looks at the circumstances if he believes. No man relies on his feelings if he believes. The man who believes God has his request. Every man who comes into the Pentecostal condition can laugh at all things and believe God.'

There is something in the Pentecostal work that is different from anything else in the world. Somehow, in Pentecost you know that God is a reality. Wherever the Holy Spirit has the right-of-way, the gifts of the Spirit will be in manifestation. Where these gifts are never in manifestation, I question whether he is present. Pentecostal people are spoiled for anything other than Pentecostal meetings. We want none of the entertainments that other churches are offering. When God comes in, he entertains us himself. We are entertained by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! Oh, it is wonderful!

There were difficult conditions in that Welsh village, and it seemed impossible to get the people to believe. 'Ready to go home?' I was asked. But a man and a woman there asked us to come and stay with them. I said to the people, 'I want to know how many of you can pray.' No one wanted to pray. I asked if I could get seven people to pray for the poor man's deliverance. I said to the

two people we were to stay with, 'I will count on you two, and there is my friend and myself. We need three others.' I told the people that I trusted that some of them would awaken their privilege and come in the morning and join us in prayer for the raising of Lazarus. It will never do to give way to human opinions. If God says a thing, you have to believe it.

I told the people that I would not eat anything that night. When I got to bed, it seemed as if the Devil tried to place on me everything that he had placed on that poor man on the sickbed. When I awoke in the middle of the night, I had a cough and all the weakness of a man with tuberculosis. I rolled out of bed onto the floor and cried out to God to deliver me from the power of the Devil. I shouted loud enough to wake everybody in the house, but nobody was disturbed. God gave the victory, and I got back into bed again as free as I had ever been in my life. At five o'clock the Lord awakened me and said to me, 'Don't break bread until you break it around my table.' At six o'clock he gave me these words: '*And I will raise him up*' (John 6:40). I elbowed the fellow who was sleeping in the same room. He said, 'Ugh!' I elbowed him again and said, 'Do you hear? The Lord says that he will raise him up.'

At eight o'clock they said to me, 'Have a little refreshment.' But I have found prayer and fasting the greatest joy, and you will always find it so when you are led by God. When we went to the house where Lazarus lived, there were eight of us altogether. No one can prove to me that God does not always answer prayer. He always does more than that. He always gives '*exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think*' (Eph 3:20).

I will never forget how the power of God fell on us as we went into that sick man's room. Oh, it was lovely! As we made a circle around the bed, I got one brother to hold the sick man's hand on one side, and I held the other, and we each held the hand of the person next to us. I said, 'We are not going to pray; we are just going to use the name of Jesus.' We all knelt down and whispered that one word, 'Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!' The power of God fell, and then it lifted. Five times the power of God fell, and then it remained. But the man in the bed was unmoved. Two years previously, someone had come along and had tried to raise him up, and the Devil had used this lack of success as a means of discouraging Lazarus. I said, 'I don't care what the Devil says. If God says he will raise you up, it must be so. Forget everything else except what God says about Jesus.'

A sixth time the power fell, and the sick man's lips began moving, and the tears began to fall. I said to him, 'The power of God is here; it is yours to accept it.' He said, 'I have been bitter in my heart, and I know I have grieved the Spirit of God. Here I am, helpless. I cannot lift my hands or even lift a spoon to my mouth.' I said, 'Repent, and God will hear you.' He repented and cried out, 'O God, let this be to your glory.' As he said this, the power of the Lord went right through him.

I have asked the Lord never to let me tell this story except the way it happened, for I realize that God can never bless exaggeration. As we again said 'Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!' the bed shook, and the man shook. I said to the people who were with me, 'You can all go downstairs now. This is all God. I'm not going to assist him.' I sat and watched that man get up and dress himself. He sang the doxology as he walked down the steps. I said to him, 'Now, tell what has happened.'

It was soon told everywhere that Lazarus had been raised up. The people came from Llanelli and all the district around to see him and to hear his testimony. God brought salvation to many. Right out in the open air, this man told what God had done, as a result, many were convicted and converted. All this occurred through the name of Jesus, '*through faith in his name*' (Acts 3:16). Yes, the faith that is by him gave this sick man perfect soundness in the presence of them all (v. 16)."

³³ In his hometown – so it says in the Bible – Jesus could not do any miracles because of their unbelief and – Mark 6:6: “. he was amazed at their lack of faith.”

³⁴ Cf. James 1:18: “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, ... “ Mark 4:1-20; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; Romans 1:16; Acts 6:4; Acts 12:24; Hebrews 4:12; Isaiah 55:11.

³⁵ When we listen to a sermon or read the Bible or read a Christian book, then – according to John 16:13 “. the Spirit of truth [in a supernatural powerful way]... guides us [original: you] into all truth ... “ (cf. John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:8-11). The Bible further explains – 1 Corinthians 2:14: “The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned” – and here I add – as the Spirit works faith by hearing the word of God.

Frequently – in addition to mere preaching – as seen before in the way Jesus amazed people – the word is further confirmed by the Spirit. Jesus always preached and at the same time healed the sick and drove out demons, saying to his detractors – John 14:11: “. believe on the evidence of the miracles ... “ (cf. John 20:30-31). Likewise the first Christians said – 1 Thessalonians 1:4: “. our good news came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit ... “ The apostle Paul wrote – 1 Corinthians 2:4-5: “My message and my preaching were not wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.”

Cf. Acts 4:29-30: “. enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” Acts 15: 18-19: “. Christ has accomplished through me in leading the non-Jews to obey God by what I have said and done – by the power of signs and miracles, through the power of the Spirit ... “ 2 Corinthians 12:12: “The things that mark an apostle – signs, wonder and miracles – were done among you with great perseverance.” Hebrews 2:3-4: “. This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.” John 14:12: “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.” 1 Corinthians 4:20: “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.” Galatians 3:5: “Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?”

The Spirit's demonstrations of power can only ever point to the truth but are not the truth itself. Therefore, 2 Corinthians 5:17 remains valid: “We live by faith, not by sight.”

³⁶ While it is not wrong to seek God with all of our heart – repent and turn away from sin, fast and pray – faith – in the end – is never about our own power but God and his power – born out of his love for us – intimacy with him. Cf. Galatians 3:2-5: “. Did you

receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you have heard? ... Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?"

³⁷ Cf. 1 Timothy 1:5: "The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

³⁸ In Mark 9 advises the disciples that they could not drive out the demon because this kind can come out only by prayer (v29). Jesus was praying beforehand and importantly in his time with God the Father he learned again about intimacy with him. The Father told him: "This is my son, whom I love ... " (v7). Then Jesus frequently prayed with the language of intimacy and encourages us to do the same, calling the Father in heaven *Abba*: Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6.

Jesus frequently healed by the power of compassion and love. Cf. Matthew 9:35-36: "Jesus went ... preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them ... " / Matthew 14:14: "When Jesus ... saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them and healed their sick." / Matthew 20:34: "Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed him."

³⁹ Charles Price: *The Real Faith*, p27: "For twenty years and more I have been conducting campaigns in which a prominent place has been given to prayer for the sick and the suffering. To this ministry my Lord has called me, and to that call I have responded with all my heart. To His glory and praise, I record that I have seen the eyes of the blind opened. Miracles of power divine have raised cripples and paralytics from their wheel chairs and cots, and cancers and tumors have melted by the healing power of our wonderful Lord. But—do you know what I have noticed? All *great* healing services have been preceded by nights of consecration and seasons of prayer. When the crowds have rushed forward, seeking *healing*, the meetings have been hard and difficult. When they have sought the *Healer*, rather than the *healing*, however, the sweetness of His presence has broken the *power* of the enemy; and the *sunshine* of His presence has melted the icy feeling that gripped the heart. It may be self-pity, or even self-love, which brings us to His feet; but our whole viewpoint is changed—once we are there—as *we at last see Him!*"

⁴⁰ The faith that is empowered by love – the faith that begins to grasp the extent of Christ's love – is also the faith that knows peace and joy.

⁴¹ Cf. Philippians 1:25: "... your progress and joy in the faith."

⁴² Charles Price: *The Real Faith*, p34: "Some years ago I was conducting a meeting in a Presbyterian Church in Medford, Oregon. The Lord led us to hold a healing service one afternoon. The place was crowded, and many were standing outside and on the window ledges, looking into the building. One of that number was a little crippled boy who walked with the aid of crutches. My heart bled for the little fellow, for there was such a look of pathos about his blue eyes that my heart was stirred. Silently I lifted my heart to the Lord, and asked for faith for the healing of the little lad.

Then across the platform there came for prayer a line of children, most of whom were accompanied by their parents. A little girl stood in front of me. Her mother was weeping. I laid my hands on her head and prayed. Nothing happened; but the spirit of the meeting seemed to change. There was a deadness and a heaviness which weighed heavily upon me. I prayed again; and the feeling seemed to increase. I looked at the weeping mother in bewilderment. She was sobbing. At last she cried out, almost hysterically, 'Why won't Jesus heal my girl?' 'Where do you worship?' I asked. 'I go to the Methodist Church,' was her reply. I looked at her closely. Then into my heart there came a suspicion. Just at that moment the Lord imparted the gift of discernment to one of the people by my side who asked the woman this question: 'Have you ever been in Mysticism or Occultism?' She had, she confessed. Her little girl did *not* go to the Methodist Church. She, herself, had not been there for months. She had been attending a spiritualist séance week after week.

Then I knew why my Lord had withheld His blessing and His faith. The mother continued to cry in her agony of soul, 'He has healed others; please ask Him to heal my little girl.' I said, 'Sister, do you know anything about salvation through the shed blood of Jesus on Calvary?' She said she had at one time, but a sorrow had come into her life and, instead of taking a little tighter grip on the hand divine, she had turned away from God. In response to my appeal, she said that she would like to give her heart to Christ then and there, and asked me to pray for her. She repeated a prayer of surrender after me, and then I closed with the words, 'I am trusting in Jesus as my personal Savior, and I claim the promise of the blood as the atonement for all my sin.' Into my heart, and into hers too there swept a glory wave from heaven.

As I reached out my hand once again to her little girl, I knew that her days as a cripple were over. She sprang to her feet. She was healed! Then I looked at the poor little crippled boy and held out my hand for him to try to climb through the window and come to the platform for prayer. He did not *come*. Instead, he fell through the window, leaving his crutches on the outside! He too was healed. The Holy Ghost took such charge of that service, that I have seldom seen anything to equal it. Not only were people healed, but many were saved. Down the aisle came a dear, old lady who had been in a wheel chair for years. She was leaping, shouting, and praising God, even as they did in the days when the Savior walked the streets with men. What a meeting! What a time to make men adore Him and angels to rejoice.

Now, *suppose I had possessed faith for the healing* of that little girl. Suppose that when I first laid hands on her head, she had gone away well. Her mother would have taken it as a sign that the séance was in the order of the Lord, and from that moment on she would have been more deeply enmeshed in the spiritism that I do not believe is of God. So, when I prayed in my lack of understanding, the spirit of faith and assurance was lifted from me. How empty I felt. Then, when the mother accepted Jesus as her personal Savior, faith was *imparted* and the work was done. Instead of struggling to be healed, how much sweeter and richer life would be, were we to look to Jesus who is "the Author and the Finisher of *our* faith."

⁴³ Cf. Charles Finney's book *Power From On High* as a pdf file on the internet.

⁴⁴ Michael Scott Horton, ed.: *Power Religion. The Selling Out Of The Evangelical Church?* Vereeniging: Moody Press 1992.

⁴⁵ Charles Kraft: *Confronting Powerless Christianity. Evangelicals And The Missing Dimension*, Grand Rapids: Chosen Book 2002, p7-8.

⁴⁶ Cf. Gary Greig & Kevin Springer, eds.: *The Kingdom And The Power. Are Healing And The Spiritual Gifts Used By Jesus And The Early Church Meant For The Church Today?* Ventura: Regal Books 1993.

⁴⁷ Charles Kraft: *Confronting Powerless Christianity. Evangelicals And The Missing Dimension*, Grand Rapids: Chosen Book 2002, p17.

⁴⁸ The quote continues thus: “When I had intellectually accepted the testimony concerning him with an unwavering belief, the next and the indispensable thing would be a voluntary act of trust or confidence in his person, a committal of my life to him, and his sovereign treatment in the cure of my disease. Now this illustrates the true nature or psychology of faith as it actually exists in consciousness. It does not consist in any degree of intellectual knowledge, or acceptance of the doctrines of the Bible. The firmest possible persuasion that every word said in the Bible respecting God and Christ is true, is not faith. These truths and doctrines reveal God in Christ only so far as they point to God in Christ, and teach the soul how to find Him by an act of trust in His person.

When we firmly trust in His person, and commit our souls to Him by an unwavering act of confidence in Him for all that He is affirmed to be to us in the Bible, this is faith. We trust Him upon the testimony of God. We trust Him for what the doctrines and facts of the Bible declare Him to be to us. This act of trust unites our spirit to Him in a union so close that we directly receive from Him a current of eternal life. Faith, in consciousness, seems to complete the divine galvanic circle, and the life of God is instantly imparted to our souls. God's life, and light, and love, and peace, and joy seem to flow to us as naturally and spontaneously as the galvanic current from the battery. We then for the first time understand what Christ meant by our being united to Him by faith, as the branch is united to the vine. Christ is then and thus revealed to us as God. We are conscious of direct communion with Him, and know Him as we know ourselves, by His direct activity within us. We then know directly, in consciousness, that He is our life, and that we receive from Him, moment by moment, as it were, an impartation of eternal life” (Charles Finney: *Power From God*, New Kensington: Whitaker House 1996, 140-142).

⁴⁹ The importance of understanding the Word of God and accepting the truth by faith is emphasized in another quote from Charles Finney: “With some the mind is comparatively dark, and the faith, therefore, comparatively weak in its first exercise. They may hold a great breadth of opinion, and yet intellectually believe but little with a realizing conviction. Hence, their trust in Him will be as narrow as their realizing convictions. When faith is weak, the current of the divine life will flow so mildly that we are scarcely conscious of it. But when faith is strong and all-embracing, it lets a current of the divine life of love into our souls so strong that it seems to permeate both soul and body. We then know in consciousness what it is to have Christ's Spirit within us as a power to save us from sin and stay up our feet in the path of loving obedience” (Charles Finney: *Power From God*, New Kensington: Whitaker House 1996, 142).

⁵⁰ Martin Luther: “No one can correctly understand God or His Word unless he has received such understanding immediately from the Holy Spirit. But no one can receive it from the Holy Spirit without experiencing, proving, and feeling it. In such experience the Holy Spirit instructs us as in His own school, outside of which nothing is learned but empty words and prattle” (W. VII, 546, 24ff; LW 21, 299).

Martin Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans: “... ‘Faith’ is not the human notion and dream which some regard as faith. When they see that it is not followed by an improvement of life nor by good works, while they are, nevertheless, able to hear and talk much of faith, they fall into the error of saying: Faith is not sufficient; we must do works if we want to become godly and be saved. The reason is because, when hearing the Gospel, they go to work and by their own power frame up a thought in their heart which says: I believe. That they regard as genuine faith. But, inasmuch as it is a human figment and thought of which the inmost heart is not sensible, it accomplishes nothing and is not accompanied by any improvement.

On the contrary, *faith is a divine work in us*, which transforms us, gives us a new birth out of God, John 1:13, slays the old Adam, makes us altogether different men in heart, affections, mind, and all powers, and brings Martin Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans with it the Holy Spirit. *Oh, it is a living, energetic, active, mighty thing, this faith*. It cannot but do good unceasingly. There is no question asked whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked the works have been done, and there is a continuous doing of them. But any person not doing such works is without faith. He is groping in the dark, looking for faith and good works, and knows neither what faith is nor what good works are, although he indulges in a lot of twaddle and flummery concerning faith and good works.

Faith is a *living, daring confidence in the grace of God*, of such assurance that it would risk a thousand deaths. This confidence and knowledge of divine grace makes a person happy, bold, and full of gladness in his relation to God and all creatures. The Holy Ghost is doing this in the believer. Hence it is that a person, without constraint, becomes willing and enthusiastic to do good to everybody, to serve everybody, to suffer all manner of afflictions, from love of God and to the praise of Him who has extended such grace to him.

Accordingly, *it is impossible to separate works from faith*, just as impossible as it is to separate the power to burn and shine from fire. Accordingly, beware of your own false thoughts and of idle talkers, who pretend great wisdom for discerning faith and good works and yet are the greatest fools. Pray God that He may create faith in you; otherwise you will be without faith for ever and aye, no matter what you may plan and do ... “

⁵¹ Jesus also experience power in the following instance: “Somebody touched me, for I perceived power going out from me” (Luke 8:46).

⁵² Cf. Acts 2:38: “... Repent and ... you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

⁵³ “Fasting” is not included in important manuscripts of the Greek New Testament but the power principle of fasting is attested in the Bible.

⁵⁴ Cf. After Jesus spent prayer time on the Mt of Transfiguration, power descended on Jesus with the result that “as soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder ... “ (Mark 9:15) and “when the Spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into convulsion ... “ (Mark 9:20).

⁵⁵ After battling a series of major illnesses for several years, one woman had received a word from the Lord, saying: “Your time of sickness is over.” Yet, a few weeks later, on a day that was set aside for prayer and fasting, this woman was attacked by pain in every area of her body, from her head to her feet. She wailed: “O Lord, please, not again!” A worship tape was put on and – as she was lying on the bedroom floor – she exclaimed: “These are lying symptoms – lying spirits – trying to steal God's promise from me!”

Then, she and her husband stood together, in the name of Jesus, against those lying spirits and the woman was completely delivered from pain (Derek Prince: *They Shall Expel Demons*, Grand Rapids: Chosen Books 1998, p198).

One inexperienced pastor witnessed how another pastor was shouting in a loud voice at a middle-aged woman: “You evil spirits, I command you to come out of Esther!” Nothing happened. “I command you to come out!” Still nothing happened. The pastor continued: “I know you are there and I command you to come out, in the name of Jesus!” The moment he mentioned the name of Jesus, there was a definite reaction from Esther. Her countenance changed. A yellow, sulfurous glow appeared in the center of each eyeball. The shouting made no progress. Then the inexperienced pastor stood in front of Esther and said something like this: “Now, you evil spirit that’s in this woman, I’m talking to you and not to the woman. What is your name? In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command you to answer me.” The answer came immediately – just one syllable, uttered with incredible venom: “Hate!” The promptness of the demon’s answer took the pastor by surprise. He commanded: “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you spirit of hate, come out of this woman.” An insolent voice replied: “This is my house. I’ve lived here for 35 years. And I’m not coming out.” Unbidden, there came to the pastor’s mind a Bible passage in which the unclean spirit that goes out of a man says, “I will return to my house from which I came” (Matthew 12:44). So the demon’s reference to Esther as “his house” was in line with Scripture. Then the pastor said to the demon: “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are coming out.” The demon continued to defy him while he continued to say: “In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, you are coming out.”

It was a real conflict of wills. It seemed that the pastor had to beat the demon down stage by stage. Each stage took quite a while. But the more he quoted Scripture and used the name of Jesus, the more he gained victory over his enemy. Eventually the demon began to bargain with him: “If I come out, I’ll come back.” The pastor said: “No, you’ll come out and you’ll stay out.” Then it said: “Well, even if I come out, my brothers are here and they’ll kill her.” The pastor replied: “No, you’ll come out first and your brothers will come out after you.” He had picked up some useful information. There was more than one demon.

After some more time – suddenly – a hissing sound came out of Esther’s mouth. Her head fell forward limply and her body relaxed. The demon had gone out. Following the same procedure the other demons – among them fear and jealousy and self-pity – all came out as well. The session lasted about five hours.

Maybe if the pastor had been more experienced and if he had been more certain of his authority, the deliverance session would have been completed faster. Yet, we all need to be in the school of learning as we begin with baby-steps in deliverance ministry. The pastor was intrigued by the names of these demons and what trouble they caused in people – it changed how he diagnosed people’s behaviour – and he also learned by experience the importance of Jesus’ name and the truth of the Scriptures.

⁵⁶ Cf. Acts 16:18: “... Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, ‘In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!’ At that moment the spirit left her.”

⁵⁷ How good is it to be captured by the glory of God in praise? Cf. Revelations 4:9-10: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on earth.” All of creation is taken up in this core activity of praising God and history seems to be released through it – Revelations 5:11-6:1: “Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: ‘Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!’ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and that is in them, singing: ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever!’ The four living creatures said, ‘Amen,’ and the elders fell down and worshipped. I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals ... “

⁵⁸ Lilian B. Yeomans: *Healing From Heaven*, Springfield: Gospel Publishing House 1935, p58: “... There was a missionary to China staying at Mrs Carrie Judd Montgomery’s Beulah Heights in Oakland, California. She had the most wonderful healing of smallpox while on the field by the application of the praise cure. She fearlessly nursed a sister missionary who had the disease though she had not been vaccinated, standing on God’s promise that no plague should come nigh her dwelling. Then a very bad case of confluent smallpox ... came out on her ... The Lord had shown her a vision of two baskets, one containing her praises – half full – and the other, in which was her testing – full. He told her that the praise basket must be filled so that it would outbalance the other, so she kept at it. Her songs and shouts were so Spirit-filled that they were contagious, and the Christian nurses couldn’t resist joining in; so they kept the place ringing. At last the Lord showed her that the praise basket was full and overflowing. She saw it sink and the testing basket rise in the air; and in a moment, as it seemed, the eruption and all attendant symptoms vanished, leaving no trace in the way of so much as a single scar ... “

⁵⁹ Cf. Acts 10:46: “For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.”

⁶⁰ Do not be among the more than 95% of tongue-speaking Christians that never use the gift.

⁶¹ Cf. Romans 10:8: “... authority the Lord gave us for building you up ... “

⁶² 2008 Presentation Ministries, 3230 McHenry, Cincinnati, Ohio 45211, www.presentationministries.com/brochures/UnforgivenessCause.asp.

⁶³ A Catholic minister writes: “I have found that many sins do not block God’s healing power to the same extent as does a lack of forgiveness” (Francis McNutt: *Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press 1974, Healing*, p172). And this is from another evangelist: “I used to pray for the sick at regular midweek healing services. I noticed that quite a few would come back with the same aches and pains again and again. I was quite concerned for them. After questioning a few, I found out that the pain left instantly but it returned within a few days. They were coming to the meeting for their regular spiritual pain killing injection. I finally realized that unforgiveness was **the** most common blockage. We were able to release most of them into permanent healing through a prayer of forgiveness” (Stuart Gramenz: *How To Heal The Sick*, Rochedale South: Spirit Led Network 2006, p214).

⁶⁴ Pastor Tommy Tyson and another local pastor went for a ride in the country when the local pastor said: “Tommy, I guess this is the reason we came on this drive, not just to see the view, but there is a home down there; I had forgotten about those people, but we

should visit them.” They went down to the farm house. On the porch sat a man and his wife in their mid-60’s. Mae and Nelson were their names. Mae was sitting in a wheel-chair with her right arm folded against her paralyzed side. The local pastor and Tommy Tyson pulled up a chair in front of them. Tommy began to turn inwardly, being bathed in God’s love. The Lord just began to bathe his heart in love. So he said to Mae: “Mae, something is happening – the Lord is giving me great love for you and I know he wants to minister to you.” She said something through clenched teeth. She was paralyzed. As he sat there some prophetic pictures began to come to his mind. There was a picture of her child-hood home and then another picture of her sitting at an organ – losing herself in music. Mae was helping with the interpretation of these pictures. She married Nelson, her husband, against the wishes of her parents, then became unhappy and disappointed in her marriage and escaped into playing music.

Another big block was identified. At church Mae and another woman had a falling-out which ended with the other woman saying: “Mae, either you or I with my whole family will have to leave this church!” So Mae left. Pastor Tommy asked: “Mae, how soon after that did you become paralyzed?” She guessed it was about three months. So he said: “Mae, where is your hand of fellowship? Where is your forgiveness?” And there it was. That was the problem.

Not all paralysis comes from lack of forgiveness but in Mae’s case the following happened. She confessed her anger – her rage and hate – against this woman. Pastor Tommy laid his hands on her and said: “Mae, in the light of God’s word, you are cleansed from you sin and you are washed clean in the blood of Jesus.” Then they spent the next hour learning to walk again. She was healed (Francis McNutt: Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press 1974, Healing, p244-246).

An Anglican rector asked a Bible teacher to accompany him and visit a sick parishioner – a woman bedridden with some paralysis. He was not in the woman’s room for more than a minute before she launched into a stream of angry invective against her sister. She accused her of all manner of wickedness. The Bible teacher tried to suggest gently that God’s will is forgiveness and that sometimes paralysis comes from our attitudes. But she shouted at him: “I’d rather be bedridden than forgive that no-good sister of mine!” He tried to tell her that what she shouted would probably happen.

One year later he asked the rector: “Is So-and-So still angry?” He replied: “Yes.” “Is she still bedridden?” “Of course.” Another year passed and the Bible teacher was invited back to the church to teach once again. He made sure to visit the woman.

“I suppose you’re going to try to convince me to forgive my sister, aren’t you?” was how she greeted him when he entered the room. He replied: “No, actually, I’m not. Quite honestly, your attitude and health do not affect me one bit, except for the fact that I do care about you. You can be bitter; you can forgive. It’s your choice, not mine.”

After a long pause, she looked at him through heavy eyes and said: “I’m tired of being bedridden. I’m tired of being angry. I know I should forgive, but how? I don’t feel it even though I know I should” (Mark Pearson: Christian Healing, Grand Rapids: Chosen Books 1995, p90-91).

⁶⁵ When Jesus died, he forgave those that tortured him (Luke 23:34) and so did Stephen (Acts 7:60)

⁶⁶ Cf. Matthew 18:15-35.

⁶⁷ Todd Bentley: Christ’s Healing Touch. Volume I. Abbotsford: Fresh Fire Ministries 1005, p41.

⁶⁸ Barbara Leahy Shlemon – Dennis Linn – Matthew Linn: To Heal As Jesus Healed, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press 1978, p35.