



By John Tanner

GOD'S HEALING POWER TODAY

Why seek a fuller understanding of God's healing power?

There is no doubt in my mind whatsoever that God heals people today just as He did in the days of Jesus' earthly life. I have ample evidence from my personal experience to make this statement. Let me illustrate.

Firstly from my more than forty years of ministry to people. I must confess right up front that I do not have the healing gift and I did not minister in Churches where healing was expected regularly, unless I count the time I spent in the Solomon Islands. While I ask for forgiveness for any significant healings that I can no longer recall, I do know of some significant events where I am certain that God intervened. I can also remember one where God chose not to heal and my friend passed away soon after into the glorious presence of His Lord!

Examples of true healing.

The young son of close friends and ministry partners was diagnosed with terminal cancer. He had lost a lot of weight and was no longer able to walk or even crawl. He could only move around the house by lying on a skate board. When the boy was close to death, the parents asked the Church leaders to come and pray for him. We anointed him with oil and prayed for his healing. There was no other hope available to the parents. The boy was healed and went on to live an active life. Sadly, many years later when he was to have his final "clearance" from the doctors about the cancer, the parents were told that it had returned. He eventually passed away. I know he was healed but I cannot understand why God allowed the cancer to return.

A student in our Bible College in the Solomon Islands caught an ocean toad fish and ate most of it one Friday night. He ate the rest on Saturday morning, but ate the meat too close to the poison

parts that the fish's flesh contained. Within a short period of time, he began to show the symptoms relate to the deadly poison – tingling in the hands and feet that would lead to the rapid shutting down of his system. According to the medical books that my wife referred to at the time there was no available cure and his life would end in a matter of hours. We tried to induce vomiting to get the poison out from his stomach, but this did not work and the symptoms increased. Another student and I prayed for him begging the Lord to heal him and save his life. Later that Sunday when the College canoe returned with its load of students who had been on outreach, I decided that it would be wise to send the student up the coast fifty kilometres to the government hospital to have him checked. To my amazement the doctors sent him back to us the next day declaring that he was well and not at any further risk. That student is now a married man, a father and the pastor in his village Church.

A lady student from the Pines Training Centre was involved in leading a youth outreach at a nearby Youth camp. During one night she fell down the steps, put her arm through a glass window and badly slashed her wrist doing serious damage to tendons and muscles. Doctors at the small local hospital stitched her arm and told her to get further treatment from specialists. She returned to the Pines but after many weeks of rehabilitation she still had no strength in her wrist. She decided to ask for prayer. One Friday, just one hour before her weekly visit to the physiotherapist, a group of us prayed for the healing of her wrist. She went to the physio who was surprised that the strength in her wrist had improved to more than ninety percent! Before long she had full strength in her wrist and full use of her arm. Some years later she reported that she had some pain in the same arm which was miraculously healed during a Church service in a Church she had never attended before!

I also clearly recall being asked regularly by a young couple in ministry to pray that they might have a child. It seemed that God was not going to answer their prayer but God had not forgotten. A team of Solomon Islanders visited their Church and stayed in their home. The Islanders prayed for the couple to conceive and bear a child and only two months later the husband called me to tell me that his wife was pregnant!

More personal examples.

We have always prayed for our children and grandchildren that God would bless them and make them a blessing to others. Because of this I cannot claim to understand why God has allowed us to experience so much sickness in the family. But along with the sickness, God has graciously healed some of our diseases.

Before one grandson was born, the doctors warned his parents that one side of his heart was not developing properly. We all prayed for his heart that it would grow normally in the womb. The little boy was born safely and the doctors reported that the heart was improved but still not fully functional. After two lots of major surgery to repair the heart, the little baby was allowed to go home. The Church had prayed long and hard for him. Today he is an energetic youth who loves sport and is growing normally.

Another grandson developed severe intolerances to certain foods while he was quite young. This condition was limiting his life, but not dangerously. One day when he was at a High School function an intercessor told him that God was going to “heal your stomach.” Some months later an African pastor was preaching in the Church that this family attended. He stopped his message in mid-stream and announced that “right now God is healing someone’s stomach in this Church!” And He did! It is a mystery to me that some time after this miracle, the grandson became ill again and was diagnosed with diabetes.

When the African pastor returned a year later to the same Church, the youngest grandson asked for prayer for his poor eyesight. He did not notice any significant improvement during the rest of that day, but the next morning he was able to read without his glasses and has not needed them since!

We have other family members that still live with the restrictions imposed by medical problems. Some of them have experienced God’s power in sustaining them and improving their health, but they remain one of my motivations for understanding what the Lord may want to do in healing today.

I must also give praise to the Lord for His gracious healing given to me personally. I had a deep seated melanoma removed from my

leg, and friends from the Solomons prayed for my healing and there has been no reoccurrence of the problem. Later I suffered from a serious internal cancerous growth that needed surgery. Friends in Myanmar prayed for me and all medical tests since that time have shown no reoccurrence of that tumour.

I have written about my personal experiences of praying for people to be healed and of experiencing God's healing power in my family and in my own body. In so doing I have indicated my first motivation for gaining a confident understanding of what God may want to do in healing ministry today.

My first motivation is to see God work His miracles in the lives of family members who remain unwell despite years of prayers for them to be healed.

My second motivation is a wider one. It is to understand the need for, and place today of miracles, signs and wonders in partnership with the preaching of the Gospel to extend God's Kingdom. In Australia, the sensitive sharing of the Gospel is often met with disinterest and even skepticism. In the New Testament, God attested to the truth of the message by giving signs and wonders. Do we need a display of God's power to authenticate God's truth in a culture that has been robbed of certainty by relativism and atheism?

But here I am getting ahead of myself. What does the Bible teach about sickness and healing? What did Jesus do about the needs of the sick? Did this miraculous ministry carry over into the Early Church and later? I believe that faith is strengthened by hearing the Word of God, so I will hear what God wants to say.

1. The Cause behind sickness, suffering and death.

A question that troubles many of us is, "Where does sickness and suffering come from?" A related question that is more often asked is, "Why does God allow suffering?"

As I reflected on these questions, my mind went back to the beginnings of everything. I believe that in summary form we can state the following points from the Bible narrative.

- **God created everything** and it was “**good.**”
- **Sin had its origins** in Heaven when one of the chief angels decided that he wanted to rebel against the rule of God. Other angels followed this evil one and God punished them all by, (a) casting them out of Heaven and down to the earth, and (b) condemning them ultimately to everlasting punishment in Hell.
- When God created the earth, **He created the first humans and gave them authority** to rule over the rest of creation and to be “stewards” of everything. At first there was no sickness, suffering or death.
- The first humans enjoyed a relationship with God described as “God coming down in the cool of the Evening to meet with them.” But **the humans were tempted** with the same desire that had led to Satan’s downfall and they too rebelled against God, desiring to be self-determining individuals. The results of this rebellion were catastrophic. The relationship once enjoyed with a loving God was broken- a type of spiritual death (now life on earth would end in physical death.) Suffering entered the human experience at this time. They became “ashamed” and hid from God instead of welcoming His visits. When two sons were born to them, one brother murdered his younger sibling in a fit of jealousy. As a punishment for the crime of murder, Cain was put under a curse. As a result, the earth would no longer yield its crops for him and he would become a restless wanderer on the earth. Despite the influence of some good leaders, humanity continued in a downward spiral and spread over most of the earth. Sin, suffering and death became part of the human experience – something not created by God but by humans themselves in league with the Devil.
- Genesis Chapter 6 reveals how God felt about the decline of the humanity that He had created. “The Lord saw how great man’s wickedness had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. **The Lord**

was grieved that He had made man on the earth, and His heart was filled with pain. . I will wipe mankind from the face of the earth – for I am grieved that I have made them.” (Genesis 6:7,8) Here is an early example showing that God also suffered through humanities’ rebellion. But at the same time, God saw that Noah and his family were trying to serve God and He was pleased with them. He decided to save Noah and others who still valued their relationship with Him. Every other human being and every living creature perished under the flood of God’s punishment- proof that Mankind’s sin has a flow on effect to the whole creation. In Paul’s words in the New Testament, “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is Eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

- In some way, **the existence of sickness and suffering reveals God’s displeasure with our sinfulness, both personal and societal.** The presence of sickness and suffering should cause us to say, “these negative experiences do not belong here – they are inexplicable.” Modern medical science can explain the causes of most diseases and provide rational explanations for some abhorrent human behavior, but without an understanding of the link between human sin and suffering, the question of why suffering still exists in the modern world cannot be answered. God is not the prime mover behind sickness, disease and death – humanity is responsible for all the chaos around us.
- **Why does God allow suffering and death?** Only God knows all of the answer, but part of the answer must be that because He loves us, He has made us with free will. Love does not compel compliance; love invites compliance by loving first. One of the results of the exercise of human free will is sin. And sin produces sickness, suffering and ultimately death.
- **Suffering. If handled well, can produce benefits!** This fact is often forgotten. The whole of humanity has benefited greatly through the sufferings that Christ endured. (Luke 24:26.) Enduring suffering produces Godly character (Romans 5:3-6) In our fallenness, humans want to avoid suffering of any kind. Christ was precisely the opposite,

despite knowing the source of suffering, Christ embraced suffering for the sake of others. This is what love does! Part of the Christian's sharing the human experience with others who do not acknowledge Christ is participating in suffering as Christ did. This may provide an insight into why God chooses not to heal everyone.

- **The key question should not be “why does God allow suffering,” but “does God have a remedy for sickness and suffering in the world today?”**
- Before moving on, three statements can be made with confidence –
 1. *We are so involved in sin individually and collectively, that sickness is a normal experience of humanity*
 2. *Sickness is sometimes a consequence of wrongdoing, but not necessarily on the part of the one who suffers: we may reap the consequences of the sins of those who are about us, or sometimes, and perhaps more often of those who have gone before (e.g. Exodus 34:7)*
 3. *God is sometimes pleased to deliver, by a special exercise of Divine power, in response to faith, those who look to him for health. (Wright: Moody Press)*

These three statements offer a brief summary of what I have already written. The third statement is the one that requires more understanding and much greater experience on our part. If sickness and suffering are the results of the original and ongoing sins of humanity, what evidence exists in the Bible record that God desires to heal, and that He does in fact bring healing to some people?

2. The Evidence for God's healing intervention in history (Jesus and the Apostles)

The **Old Testament** contains historical records of people being healed from (then) incurable illnesses and even of people being raised from the dead. In each case, God is praised for the healing that has occurred i.e. God is acknowledged as the source of the miracle. There are also some examples of God not answering

prayers for the healing of a sick person e.g. David praying for the life of his child that was connected to his sin.

The **New Testament** introduces us to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In Christ we see both an example of what God does in the face of sickness and suffering, and a glimpse of what He intends to do today in our period of history. I have included a summary below of what I have discovered.

- Jesus healed many sick people and even raised some people who had died back to life. There is no record of anyone who asked for healing being turned away. Jesus regarded His healing of the sick:
 - ✓ As proof that He was the awaited Messiah
 - ✓ As proof that He had authority on earth to forgive sins
 - ✓ As evidence to others that the Kingdom of God was present
 - ✓ As an evidence of the love of God
 - ✓ As an evidence of the power of God
 - ✓ AS one of the primary aids to evangelism by His disciples

The death of Jesus overcame sin, death and sickness

- Jesus' death provided God's answer for the problems of sin and death. By giving His life on the cross, Jesus paid the price (took the punishment) for our sins and made it possible for people who put their faith in Him to be forgiven and have their death penalty reversed and replaced with the gift of Eternal life! (John 3:16)
- But did the sacrifice of Jesus also make provision for the healing of our diseases that are linked to sin as the primary cause? Honestly, this question has been debated for many years. Isaiah 53:4-5 are the key verses.

“Surely He took up our infirmities (literally “sicknesses”) and carried our sorrows (literally “pains”), yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that

brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.”

I am convinced that the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross included the benefit of healing for those who have faith. This strong conviction comes from Matthew’s statement in Matthew 8:16,17.

“When evening came, many who were 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 by the prophet Isaiah: He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.”

It is clear from our collective experience of life that all people who come to faith in Christ are forgiven for all their sins but not all are healed of their diseases immediately, or even later in life. Nor does everyone experience immediate freedom from bondage to sin, evil spirits, life’s habits or curses that may be upon them. Is there a reason for this phenomena? Healing is not automatic! Further study of Jesus’ healing ministry and words will provide some enlightenment.

Jesus healed in response to faith shown by people “asking.”

- Jesus healed people because someone asked Him to heal. James says, “You do not receive because you do not ask, or, you ask with the wrong motive!” (James 4:2,3) Jesus healed in response to requests from those who were sick, or their friends or families. Four examples out of many are:
 - ✓ Jesus healed the Centurion’s servant when the Centurion asked (Matt. 8:5-13)
 - ✓ Jesus healed Jairus’ daughter after she had died when Jairus asked (Mark 5:22-43)
 - ✓ Jesus healed a leper when the leper asked (Matt.8: 2,3)
 - ✓ Jesus healed “all who had various kinds of sicknesses” when they were brought to Him (Luke 4:40)

Jesus healed as an expression of the love of God for people

Jesus healed people because He always did what His Father told Him to do! God's heart is to heal! God said to the Jewish nation after they escaped miraculously from Egypt,

"If you will hear my voice and do what is right...I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you." (Exodus 15:26)

When God wanted to heal someone, He told Jesus what He was to do. Jesus said,

"For I have come down from Heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me." (John 6:38)

Jesus' healing ministry was proof of the loving heart of God for people in need.

Jesus' healing ministry proved that the Kingdom of God was present

Jesus healed people as proof that the Kingdom of Heaven was present among human beings. Jesus taught that there were two Kingdoms at war with each other on earth – the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan. There is evidence that Jesus believed that Satan was the cause of some sickness. When Jesus was criticized for healing the crippled woman on the Sabbath day, He said,

"Then should not this woman...whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" (Luke 13:16)

Peter also believed that there was a linkage between some sickness and demonic activity. When Peter spoke to the people gathered in the home of Cornelius he told how –

"Jesus went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil." (Acts 10:36-38)

John wrote in his letter (1 John 3:8) about Jesus' mission in coming to earth.

“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work”

Jesus preached that the Kingdom of God was present with Him on earth. He called on His hearers to repent because the Kingdom was now all around them and their day of opportunity had come. Jesus demonstrated that the Kingdom had come by healing sick people and casting out demons.

“But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the Kingdom of God has come to you.” (Luke 11:20)

Jesus gave His followers authority to heal and free those who had been demonized

Jesus gave His followers authority to heal the sick and cast of demons. In Matthew 28:18 Jesus claimed that all authority had been given to Him in Heaven and on earth. Jesus delegated this authority to His followers in Luke 9:1-6. (This authority was later given to the Seventy also.)

“When Jesus had called the Twelve together. He gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and He sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick... so they set out and went from village to village, preaching the Gospel and healing people everywhere.”

As far as I can see, there was only one recorded instance of the disciples failing to heal someone who had asked for prayer. I have studied this story closely to find lessons for my own life and practice of healing ministry today. The story closely follows the wonderful transfiguration of Christ witnessed by the inner core of His disciples – Peter, James and John. The story is recorded in Matthew 17:14-23 and Mark 9: 14-32. Both Gospels should be studied carefully to catch the differences in emphases.

- The case involved a young boy who had a “deaf and dumb” spirit that probably caused his symptoms akin to epilepsy. The illness had been present “from childhood” and had caused much distress and pain.
- The father had “asked” the nine remaining disciples who prayed for the boy with no result.
- When the father approached Jesus to heal his son, Jesus indicated that part of the problem lay in the fact that those

watching were part of a “faithless and perverse generation.”

This general statement included the mocking scribes, the gaping crowds, the father and the nine disciples. The faith level was at a low ebb. This faithless environment hindered the healing of the sick! A warning for today!

- Jesus challenged the father to have greater faith. The pervasive attitude of non-faith cannot hinder the faith of the one! “If you can! Anything is possible to those who have faith. I have a little faith, help me overcome my unbelief!” (Mk 9:23,24) A good prayer for us to pray!
- Later Jesus challenged the disciples by telling them that they had failed through lack of faith. (Mt 17:20). Even the smallest amount of faith was enough to throw a mountain into the sea! “Nothing will be impossible for you!”
- Greater faith can be developed through “much prayer and fasting.” (Mk 9: 29) Prayer and fasting (when directed by God) helps to clear away the anti-faith attitudes prevalent around us and in us; it allows us to draw near to God so He can draw near to us: it weans us from the world, and it helps us to better understand the mind of Christ in any situation through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus healed the boy by first rebuking the deaf and dumb spirit. Jesus commanded the spirit to come out of him AND to never enter him again!” (Mk 9:25)
- Jesus stated that the particular demon was more powerful than others – “this kind.” Some demons have greater authority in Satan’s realm. (Others have been given “legal authority” by the person or those in authority over the person to be there. The legal authority must first be removed then the demon must respond to the authority of the Name of Jesus! - my comment, not based on this passage.)

The authority to set people free and to heal them was not withdrawn when Jesus returned to Heaven.

- **Peter** healed Aeneas who had been paralyzed for eight years. (Acts 9:34)
Note: “Jesus the Christ heals you.”
- **Peter and John** healed the lame beggar at the gate of the temple (Acts 4: 9,10) Note: “that by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth this man stands...”

- **Philip** escaped the persecution initiated by Saul by going to a city in Samaria and proclaimed Christ there. (Acts 8:5)
- *“When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention...With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. So there was great joy in the city.”*
- **Paul** met a man in Lystra who had never walked since his birth. (Acts 14:8-10) The man listened intently to Paul. When Paul looked at him, he saw that the man had faith to be healed and called out,
“Stand up on your feet! At that the man jumped up and began to walk!”

Other examples could be multiplied – of the dead being raised, of people being healed by simply sitting in the shadow of the apostle Peter (Acts 5:12-16), of people being healed by touching the cloths that belonged to Paul. Christ’s authority given to His followers to set people free and to heal all diseases remains evident in the Gospel story, the Book of Acts and the first Centuries of the Church.

3. The Teachings of the Apostles

We have been taught to be careful that we do not formulate doctrine out of the stories contained in the Gospels and the Book of Acts, but rather to study what the Apostles taught about these events in the Epistles. What teaching can be found about healing ministry in the Epistles?

A study of the Epistles reveals that there are very few instructions about the use of the gift of healing. It’s functioning in the Church is assumed however. But nor is there specific teaching about the use of most of the gifts including evangelism. It may be that the reason for this omission is that Christ expects His Church to seek His guidance in how to make the message and ministry of the Holy Spirit relevant in every culture and generation. This is in keeping with Jesus’ model. He gave His followers authority to operate in His Name and sent them out to do it without a lot of competency training – and they succeeded!

What have I learnt from studying the Epistles about healing?

The Gift of Healing

Paul spoke of a specific healing gift entrusted to individual believers for everyone's good. (1 Cor: 12:9-30)

- The implication in this passage is that not everyone has this gift and we are to desire the best gifts for any occasion (v31)
- The gift is given sovereignly by God to a person in the group to be used for everybody. (v7)
- A related gift called "miraculous powers" is similar to, but wider than healing e.g. for raising the dead, smiting evil doers with blindness and the like (v10, 28)
- The whole passage is linked to the gift of a higher level of faith than salvation faith - perhaps a further development of salvation faith rather than another kind. This is important because the operation of the gifts requires more faith in the gifted person and also in the one requiring healing.

Working miracles an indication of Apostolic giftedness

Paul taught that the operation of miracles was an indication of the Apostolic giftedness

- Paul reminded the believers in the Corinth Church that God has approved Paul's apostleship by the working of various signs, wonders and miracles. I assume that these miracles included healings. (2 Cor.12: 12) I am not sure if this proof can be applied today especially as the Church has largely ignored the gift of Apostleship in the modern era. I am confident that the Apostle's gift mix included a higher than usual degree of faith (even today) so I would expect that leaders gifted with the Apostolic gift today may be marked by accompanying signs, wonders and miracles, but this must be tested.

Miracles in the Church – beyond the Jewish world

Paul pointed to the occurrence of miracles in the Galatian Churches so they were not simply a Jewish phenomenon

- God gave His Spirit to the Galatian believers and worked miracles among them because they believed what they heard and not through law keeping. Miracles in the Churches are because of the work of the Holy Spirit and belief in the teaching! (Galatians 3:5)

Paul prayed for personal healing but was refused – He was given sufficient Grace

Paul himself, prayed for his own healing, but was denied for a very good reason.

- In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul refers to his experience of being elevated to a kind of Heaven and witnessing things that could not be told. He said that he was given a “thorn in the flesh” (some say poor eyesight, others bad back pain) to keep him humble. God’s answer to Paul’s prayer for healing was:
 - “My grace is sufficient for you; my strength is made perfect in weakness.”
 - Paul’s response was, “Therefore I will glory in my weakness...”
- If God does not heal, what is His reason? How will He be more greatly glorified when it appears that He cannot heal someone? Christians who have suffered long term debilitating illnesses yet have a history of joy in pain and love for Jesus and others have certainly brought glory to God in spite of their suffering. Is the cross of Christ not the supreme example to us of God being glorified through suffering?

God authenticated the Gospel through signs and wonders

Hebrews links Gospel preaching and miraculous signs in the conversion process

- The Lord Jesus first announced the gift of salvation. The content of the message was then confirmed to later converts by the apostles (those who heard Him.) But there was

another powerful witness to the truth of the Gospel – God Himself! (Hebrews 2:4)

“God testified to it by signs, wonders, and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will.”

This is a key element missing from the testimony of the Church in many, but not all, places today!

God’s discipline – possible reason for delay in healing, or endurance in suffering

Hebrews links God’s discipline with later healing of “the lame.”

- God’s discipline is necessary. He disciplines us because He loves us. (Heb.12:9,10)
- The result of enduring discipline may be the healing of the lame (12:13) “so that the lame may not be disabled but rather healed.”

It is not clear whether “the lame” are spiritually lame, physically lame, or both. It may be that some of the meaning behind delayed healing is here – God is providing necessary discipline for us. The discipline in this case is not a punishment but schooling in Christlikeness.

Submission to God’s will is essential no matter what the answer to prayer is!

Peter quotes the Isaiah 53 passage and links Jesus’ submission to suffering with our salvation.

- Peter tells us that Jesus did nothing wrong but He suffered. Suffering is not always caused by personal wrongdoing. When we suffer without any evident cause we should follow Jesus and submit to God’s will.
“Jesus bore our sins in His body on the cross... and by His wounds we have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)

This verse does not make clear what the exact nature of the healing was – salvation or also healing of other kinds. It does

remind us that submission to God's will is the key whether we are praying for healing for the sick, or expecting healing ourselves.

The instruction of James about healing the sick

James provides us with the only model of healing in the Epistles. (James 5:13-16)

- Clearly from the healing ministry of Jesus and the apostles there are other examples based on “just do it!”, but we can learn much from this instruction.
- The initiative lies with those who are sick (believers in this case). They are to call the elders (leaders).
- The elders are to anoint the sick with oil (symbol of the Holy Spirit's ministry) and pray for them in faith so that they might become well.
- The Lord will raise the sick person up – NOT the elders or their imperfect prayers! And God will forgive the sins of the sick person.
- The process of praying and anointing must include a time of confessing sins to each other “*so that you may be healed.*”
- Why confession? “*Because the prayers of a righteous person are powerful and effective.*”

In many places in the Majority world the Gospel is still preached and accompanied by regular displays of miraculous signs such as healing and deliverance from the demonic. The phenomena recorded in the Gospels and Acts continue today. It is in the Western Church where Christian faith is most often more nominal, cerebral, “sophisticated” and more dependent upon modern science rather than faith that miracles are rare and the Kingdom of Heaven seems to be absent. I am not concerned here with the reasons for the absence of miracles. My concern is to once again witness the tangible evidence of the Kingdom of Heaven today on earth through the powerful preaching of the Good News

(what we hear) and the miraculous healing of sick and demonized people.

4. The Way Forward

What have I learnt and what can I do to move forward today? The following statements summarize what I have uncovered from the Bible in my study:

What I have learnt

- a. **Sickness, suffering and death are foreign to our human condition. God never meant us to experience them. We invited sin into our experience**, having been first warned by God that sin would lead to death. Sickness and suffering are the lesser consequences of this disobedience (Romans 6:23)
- b. **God is NOT the author of sickness and death in the human experience.** Sickness and death are the results of two factors – (1) our rebellion versus the Creator of Life, and (2) the interference of Satan in our God-given role as God’s vice-regents in the earth.
- c. God created humanity “in His own image” with the unique ability to reciprocate God’s love or reject it. **The consequences of rejecting God’s love are death and its lesser subsets, sickness and suffering. The sin of rejecting the Creator’s love and rule affects the entire creation.** (Romans 8) I cannot object that it is unfair for me to suffer because of what someone else did, since my conduct is the same as my forefathers’ today.
- d. **We cannot fully answer the question, “Why does God allow sickness and suffering today** beyond what has been said above, but we should answer the related question, “Does God have a remedy for sickness and suffering today?” Answer – YES!
- e. **Sickness and demonization may be caused by the sins of others** in society or family. (Exodus 34:7) Example of polluting the environment.

- f. **Jesus brought the Kingdom of God with Him to challenge and defeat the Kingdom of Darkness. Jesus healed EVERY kind of disease in EVERYONE who asked him. The kind of faith that leads us to ask is essential to healing. The presence of the Kingdom of God is the source of the healing and deliverance.**
- g. In some cases **healing was linked with prior deliverance from the Demonic.** The story of the healing of the epileptic boy recorded in Matthew 17 and Mark 9 illustrate this truth vividly. The lessons arising from the disciples' failure to heal the boy teach us powerful lessons such as:
- The pervasive anti-faith attitude current within Western society and Churches severely limits our ability to heal people today
 - Healing miracles are possible if only one person will exercise a "little" faith
 - Some healings fail through lack of "prayer and fasting."
 - Jesus dealt with the demonic problem first speaking directly to the spirit commanding him to come out and never to return!
- h. In **His death and resurrection, Jesus defeated both sin and death.** Isaiah 53:4,5 & Matt. 8:17 teach that it was not only death that was defeated, but also the lesser elements of sickness and suffering.
- i. **The Kingdom of Satan deals in sin, sickness and suffering; the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ brings life, healing and freedom.**
- j. **Jesus gave His followers authority to heal the sick and cast out demons (Luke 9:1-6). This authority has never been rescinded.**
- k. **The disciples continued to exercise this authority** after Jesus returned to heaven. Acts and subsequent Church history record many healings.

l. The Epistles contain **few instructions about “how to heal.”** **Believers simply prayed and Jesus answered!**

m. **There is a “healing” gift and another called “miraculous powers”** given to individuals for the common good. (1 Cor.12)

n. **The working of miracles was an indication of apostolic giftedness.** So we may expect to witness miracles through the operation of healing and apostolic gifts in the Church.

o. **When God does not heal, He gives the special gift of His grace** “which is sufficient” (2 Cor. 12). In this event we should accept God’s answer and rejoice. We need to have a greater understanding of the benefits to us and others of God’s discipline and our suffering.

p. **The existence of miraculous signs accompanying the Gospel is God witnessing to the authenticity of the message** (Heb. 2:4) thus making a powerful impact on the hearers.

q. **Jesus Himself submitted to suffering and death even though He was the only innocent human being.** His submission led to our salvation!. Submission to God’s will is essential whether we are praying for the sick or expecting healing for ourselves. We should always try to know God’s will before we pray for healing!

r. **The New Testament provides many examples of healing by Christ and His followers but no formula or method is specified. Faith is essential** however. James gives us the only model in James 5:13-16. Apart from ensuring that we are “walking in the Spirit” each day and expecting God to work His miracles through us, this is a safe place for us to start with confidence.

What can I do?

1. Teach and model the value of suffering.

It is important that Christians understand **the value of suffering** in our lives and in God's plan. Christ Himself suffered as an innocent person in order to bring us to God! The Bible warns us that "all who desire to live a Godly life will suffer!" How we accept suffering and handle it determines whether God is glorified or not. His grace is always sufficient for those who are entrusted with suffering. Like Christ, we Christians must enter into the sufferings of this present world. Sometimes it takes more faith to endure suffering than it does to be healed! What I have just written does not fit comfortably with the average Western Christian worldview. I am responsible to teach and exemplify the value of suffering to people today!

2. Present God's healing power as evidence of His love and power and proof of the presence of Christ's Kingdom here on earth.

Healing is much more than an escape from a life of suffering for any individual. God's healing, when it occurs, shows His love for all humans and His desire to remove the pain and suffering that our sin has brought upon us. God's healing proves that when His Kingdom is present, its power can reverse the defects of the Satanic rule in the world, and release humans from the bondage to self and Satan. God's healing then, must be presented as evidence of God's love and power, and proof of His present Kingdom. I must guard against any human getting glory or personal satisfaction from God's miracles. God's answer to our prayers may be, "be healed!" or, "receive my all sufficient grace for this problem!"

3. Teach that our sin, and not God, causes our suffering.

Sickness, suffering and death are the result of the sins of humanity not the creation of God. As we invited this savage "wolf" into our house, so we must also exercise faith in the Creator God,

our healer, to set us free from it. In some instances such as sinful habits or addictions, repentance may be needed first before the Holy Spirit can administer God's freedom and healing. James' instructions are for us to "confess our sins the one to the other."

4. Inspire the Church towards greater faith and expectancy

God wants to heal people today but He is limited by our non-faith and lack of expectancy. Because God's heart desires to remove our pain and suffering He is grieved when we do not look to Him for release of bondages, suffering and sickness. God's people need to be led out of this non-faith category through the example of Godly leaders who practice and teach an expectant faith in God to act. Asking God to heal is the beginning point for the individual's healing. I must use my influence in this respect.

5. Grow my personal faith levels

I must take steps to increase my own faith levels. I need to read again the Gospel narratives where Jesus healed the sick; I need to read more about the ministry of leaders with significant healing ministry, and I need to listen to people with the healing gift and people who have been healed to learn more about God's ways.

6. "Just do it!"

"Just do it!" seems to be what Jesus instructed His disciples about healing and deliverance ministry. Jesus gave us His authority to preach the Good News, to set the demonized free and to heal the sick. So that I get it right, I must be walking in the Spirit each day, listening to His voice and obeying His word. The James model will be appropriate in some cases as the Holy Spirit leads. If I have neglected to use some aspects of Christ's authority given to me, I must repent and hope that He will restore to me this level of spiritual authority for His glory.

7. Encourage people to pray for and affirm the healing gift.

I must encourage people in my circle of influence – Church and family – to pray for the gift of healing and to affirm the existence of the gift wherever I see it working.

8. Pray for “God to confirm His Word through signs and wonders.”

Signs and wonders are one evidence of the existence of the apostolic gift. I have thought, and been often told, that God has given me the ability to operate out of this gift mix. This severe test comes to me late in life. Am I up to the challenge?

9. Ask my family to prayerfully read this paper and pray about what action we should take

I recognize that all family members who have suffered from some illness have already prayed for God’s healing and asked others in the Church to pray for them. Also we have prayed for each other every day that God would heal those of us who have been sick. Is there something more that we should do?