

## Reflections on the message by Allan Jones on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2010

### “Divine Healing”

The Bible is a miraculous book, yet so many try to deny it. One speaker claimed that Moses was able to lead the Israelites across the Red Sea, not because it parted, but because it was only a few inches deep. But one of his hearers pointed out that was a greater miracle – because that would mean that Pharaoh’s army drowned in only a few inches of water. At the Enlightenment of a few centuries ago, people began to question the possibility of miracles, and this developed so that today many people do not believe that they can happen. But in the last century, the doctrine of divine healing was restored, particularly by preachers who practiced it as part of their ministry, such as Smith Wigglesworth.

Every movement has its extremes, and this has been true of divine healing just as it has in preaching.

Divine healing is relevant for today’s church. People are interested in the supernatural and in healing, as evidenced by popular interest in such movements as New Age. Healing cannot be separated from God’s activity. No believer can use healing as his own possession – it comes from God.

Our God is a healing God. He has a ministry of healing because He is a healer. It is in His make up. God’s very nature constrains Him to provide healing. It was there before the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. In those days, no-one questioned that Jesus was able to heal, only what was the source of His healing. In Exodus 15:26, God revealed His healing nature to the children of Israel.

*And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth thee. (KJV)*

God heals as part of who He is. It is in His very name – Jehovah Rapha is one of the names of God. It is not constrained to physical healing alone. God heals spiritually, emotionally and nationally. For example, He heals depression. God is concerned for the whole person. To heal spiritually is the most important, but God is concerned about healing in every area. God sometimes healed Israel from apostasy and from military defeat.

That God heals bodily is supported by Psalm 103:1-3.

*<sup>1</sup>Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. <sup>2</sup>Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: <sup>3</sup>Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases. (KJV)*

God as forgiver applies spiritual healing, but God as a healer destroys diseases.

God sent fiery serpents among the children of Israel because of their rebellion (Numbers 21:6), and many people died when they were bitten. No-one could cure the effects of the bite. Then God told Moses to make a brazen serpent and put it on a pole. Anyone who looked at this brazen serpent would be healed and live. Though the people rebelled, God gave them opportunity to be healed.

Our ultimate healing is salvation. It is the greatest miracle. It is invisible. We can’t see that someone is saved. Yet the Bible tells us that salvation of one sinner causes rejoicing in heaven. It does not say this about someone who is healed physically. So we should see divine healing as part of God’s plan of salvation. The Greek word for salvation means to make whole, and this word is also used for healing.

In Isaiah 53:4-5 we see the sorrow of Jesus predicted.

*<sup>4</sup>Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup>But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (KJV)*

We see that Jesus willingly carried our afflictions. The disciples understood Jesus’ healings as a fulfilment of prophesy (Matthew 8:16-17).

*<sup>16</sup>When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: <sup>17</sup>That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. (KJV)*

They knew that the Messiah had been sent to heal. Josephus, a first century, Jewish, secular historian, records that there was a man named Jesus who had a reputation of being a healer.

1 Peter 2:24 looks back to the cross as the source of healing.

*<sup>24</sup>Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (KJV)*

God has provided divine healing by the afflictions of Jesus Christ on the cross. After this life we will have a new body and there will be no more pain because of the cross. Not everyone is healed in this life.

Faith is the key to receiving divine healing. Jesus commended the Roman centurion for his faith when he asked Jesus to heal his servant (Matthew 8:10). Jesus was often disappointed at the lack of faith that He met with. We need to be people of great faith so that we believe that God will do what He says. Luther in his day preached that “the just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, Hebrews 10:38).

Part of the disciples’ training was to do as Jesus did in healing the sick (Luke 10:9). After Jesus ascended this healing became the ministry of the church. James 5:14 -16 shows that this became the practice of the early church.

*<sup>14</sup>Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: <sup>15</sup>And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. <sup>16</sup>Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (KJV)*

The use of divine healing was normal in the local church. It was ministered by the leadership, by elders using olive oil to represent it as the work of the Holy Spirit. It also involved confession of sins. In scripture forgiveness is often linked to healing.

Jesus’ ministry of healing didn’t cease with the formation of the church. Acts 3 records the Peter and John healing the lame beggar at the temple. This healing was like the miracles of Jesus. Peter drew attention to the name of Jesus and put out his hand to the man. It not only gave Peter an opportunity to speak to the temple crowd but also to speak before the Sanhedrin about Jesus. This is known as “power evangelism”. Miracles are not an end in themselves. We need to see more miracles so that we may have greater evangelism. We have to believe that God is in the healing business today.

There is a movement sometimes called the Word of Faith movement. It is characterised as “name it, claim it and frame it”. It leads to the doctrine that every believer should be prosperous, but God does not say this. Rather, He said that the poor shall always be with you (Matthew 26:11, Mark 14:7, John 12:8). This kind is faith in the faith of others to force God’s hand to command a blessing. But we do not need to force God’s hand. Divine healing is having faith in Him instead.

Mark 16:17-18 records some of the last words of Jesus on earth about the ministry of the church.

*<sup>17</sup>And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; <sup>18</sup>They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. (KJV)*

Jesus instituted divine healing as part of the ministry of the local church by these words.

*Acts 4:23-31. <sup>23</sup>And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. <sup>24</sup>And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: <sup>25</sup>Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? <sup>26</sup>The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. <sup>27</sup>For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, <sup>28</sup>For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. <sup>29</sup>And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, <sup>30</sup>By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus. <sup>31</sup>And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. (KJV)*

These men were sincere before God. They had religious people against them and they prayed for boldness in speaking and for divine healing. A tremendous power was released. After this, bold preaching with signs and wonders following caused many to be saved. Stephen’s martyrdom resulted in a greater good as preachers like Philip were scattered to preach the gospel in other places (Acts 8:4-7).

*4Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word. 5Then Philip went*

*down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. 6And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. 8And there was great joy in that city. (KJV)*

There were astounding miracles, but they were only a vehicle to people being saved. The supernatural was part of the culture of that time. There is a good supernatural as well as a bad supernatural.

Are we following as a church in the footsteps of Jesus in His healing ministry? We need to ask the elders to pray and anoint us with oil for healing. It is an overlooked practice in the church. Come and confess your sins that you might be healed.