

Debunking the 11 Arguments Against Divine Healing

In this two-part series, we will explore debunking eleven primary arguments against divine healing. The following are the first five arguments:

Through the years I have witnessed many astonishing answers to prayer along with supernatural physical healings. In my beginning years as a believer I saw virtually nobody healed, which led me to diligently search the Scriptures and church history as well as the lives of contemporary ministers God was using to bring God's healing power to people.

(I reasoned, if I want to learn about something—I should study those who have already been successful in that area of my focus. If I want to learn about nutrition I will go to a nutritionist—not a car mechanic. If I want to learn how to hit a baseball I don't go to a quarterback coach. If I want to learn divine healing I am not going to study the views of a cessationist theologian who never experienced or walked in God's healing power.)

Consequently, I studied the life, methodology and theology of countless people of faith, starting with the Old Testament Scriptures on toward those used of God for healing in the 20th century up till the present time. My study of church history also showed me that there were always threads of divine healing since the beginning of the church; it was not merely a phenomenon that started after the Pentecostal explosion of the 20th century.

My conclusions were astonishing! One thing seems to be clear from my studies: Bodily healing was included in the atonement of Christ. This was also one common theological principle those used by God in healing believed. In other words, they

believed that it was generally God's will to heal the sick. Those who did not start off with that basic biblical presupposition rarely, if ever, saw a person healed.

Furthermore, those God was using to demonstrate His healing power did not claim to have all the answers regarding why some did not get healed. They humbly cited passages like Deuteronomy 29:29a, which says, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us." They merely obeyed the injunction of Scripture in Mark 16 in which Jesus tells us believers should lay hands on the sick for them to recover. That the Scriptures (especially the New Testament) seemed to indicate it was generally God's will to heal the sick was incontrovertible. Hence, I learned never to base my biblical view regarding healing on the experience of other people but always to base it upon the Word of God!

The following were some of the main stumbling blocks I had when I was grappling with the issue of determining if it was generally God's will to heal the sick (I received my initial biblical training in a Baptist, fundamentalist Bible institute that taught that the supernatural gifts of the Spirit and healing ceased with the completion of the canon of Scripture).

Also, there is much more I can say than will be stated in this two-part article. (I do not claim to have all the answers and also leave room for mysteries related to God's will and His ways that I may never understand this side of heaven—also, we can and should be humble regarding this subject and not come off dogmatic—we should focus on praying for the sick and leave the rest to God.)

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1. Jesus only healed selectively

One argument I heard was that Jesus only sought out and healed one out of a multitude of sick people waiting for the water to stir in the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9). Those who say this

miss the main point; while it may be true that Jesus only proactively healed one person in that particular narrative, there is not one single mention in the Gospels of Jesus refusing to heal a person who approached Him for healing. (Acts 10:38 says He healed all that were sick and oppressed by the devil, and John 6:37 says that those who come to Him He would not drive away.) Also, who's to say that others in the area of the pool were not healed after they witnessed this miracle? Scripture only gives us brief snapshots of the life of Jesus (John 21:25).

2. Paul's thorn in the flesh

In my Baptist fundamentalist biblical training, I was taught that Paul's thorn in the flesh was a bodily ailment.

First of all, Scripture interprets Scripture. The context of where Paul talked about having a thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12) started in chapter 11:17 in which Paul describes challenges everywhere he went to preach, primarily outside persecution. This is further backed up by the use of the idiom in the Old Testament, "thorn in your side," which God uses to describe when He allowed outside nations to attack and harass the Jewish people (Num. 13:35, Josh. 23:13). Others may say that Paul had some kind of physical challenge because he told the Galatians that it was because of a bodily ailment that he preached the gospel to them (Gal. 4:13-15).

The word "ailment" or "sickness" can also be translated as "weakness." Perhaps Paul was exhausted from all his challenging travels; perhaps he was beaten up for preaching the gospel and had to stay there. That being said, even if Paul had some kind of eye condition it doesn't take away from the fact that it was generally God's will to heal the sick. God could have used a sickness or weakness in the flesh to get Paul to change his plans so he could plant a church in Galatia. Whatever the situation was, Paul eventually recovered and did not stay in that condition because he continued

walking in his call to preach the gospel and plant churches.

The general principle is to always refer back to the finished work of Christ even more than the experience of a great apostle who could also have challenges in certain areas. (For example, Peter distancing himself from Gentile believers in Galatians 2 did not cause Paul to back away from the truth of the gospel.) Nothing should cause us to alter our belief in certain fundamentals of the faith, including healing.

3. Not everyone we pray for gets healed

People get discouraged and say it can't be God's general will to heal the sick because everyone they pray for doesn't experience healing. Well, if that argument were valid, we could say the same thing about preaching the gospel. Not everyone who hears our preaching gets saved—does that take away from the validity of the gospel message?

4. We make people feel bad when we say it takes faith

I have heard it said that if people are taught that it's God's will to heal, they might feel God doesn't love them if they don't get healed, or they feel condemned because they don't have enough faith to be healed.

Of course, we have to be very careful and pastoral when dealing with sick people and make sure we take the time to build up their faith while we are teaching them about healing. However, should we not teach a biblical truth for fear people will get disappointed? What would be worse—not giving sick people any hope of getting healed because we are afraid they won't receive, it or running the risk of them being disappointed?

Using that same line of reasoning, we should not teach people to give tithes and offerings because of a fear that if they do they may not be able to pay their bills; or we should not tell a husband in a failing marriage to love his wife as Christ

loves the church because she may not reciprocate and stay with him. Not teaching the truth because of a fear of disappointment is not a good line of reasoning.

5. Good Christians have died from diseases

I have known of several great Christians, even children, who died of a sickness. Again, we should never bring the truth of Scripture down to human experience but always attempt to comport human experience up to the truth of the Bible. Also, in many cases, we cannot know the full reason people die of disease this side of heaven—only God knows the heart as well as the future. He does say in Isaiah 57:1, 2 that he takes some away from this world so they would avoid evil, which comes under the category of Deuteronomy 29:29.

Moreover, some committed Christians may have believed God in many areas but when it came to having faith in God to heal their body, they may have not understood how to go from hope (a future event) to faith (Heb. 11:1) in that particular area. For example, I know of many Christians who are strong in faith in one area of their life (finances, for example) but weak in other areas. This doesn't mean they did not love God or were not committed Christians—we have to take account of a person's whole life to have a complete picture not just look at whether or not they experienced divine healing.

(For example, I know of one lady who is used of God mightily to share the gospel even though she is paralyzed from the waist down. This demonstrates the fact that God can redeem any adverse, horrific circumstance for His glory. Of course, someone might say that God would get even more glory if she were healed, but another person can say that her ability to keep a positive attitude and be used of God in spite of her disability gives hope to other physically challenged people who need to believe that God can use them no matter what their challenge. These arguments are circular, and understanding the truth regarding this will remain a mystery until we get to

eternity.)

Next week, we will continue to explore the next six arguments.