

Awesome Healing
January 12, 2020

Today's message is a bit different than usual. I will explain how after we look at 2 Timothy 3:16.

2 Timothy 3:16 (NIV) All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,

Today's sermon falls into the rebuking and correcting categories. I am declaring one particular teaching to be false. This is a teaching that you may have heard. Or maybe a friend has heard this. The danger of false teaching is stressed throughout the Bible.

We have almost finished another Christmas season. Our tree is still up. Some of our neighbors still have outside lights up still.

The Christmas movies have wrapped up. Some of these pretend that there really is a Santa Clause. I was reading about one in the TV guide. A woman starts dating this guy, not realizing that he is the son of Santa Clause. I did not watch it.

The premise of these movies is just so ridiculous. Most of the adults in the movie don't believe in Santa. Then the main character is shocked to learn Santa is real. But no one explains how most adults missed the fact that Santa is real. How could Santa be real and no one know about it?

Imagine that folks in our community awake to find gifts under the tree for their children that they did not buy and that were not delivered by UPS from the grandparents. They would check the doors and windows for a break in. They would check the security cams. They would call the police to come search for strange fingerprints. Soon the police are getting calls from every home where there are children. People are reporting that a stranger has been in the house. He did not take anything, but left presents for the children. But nothing like that ever happens.

If Santa were real, everyone would be aware of it. Everyone would know. Everyone would believe. But there are no strange gifts under the trees. There is no hint anywhere that a real Santa has been dropping off presents for good little kiddies.

Now some of you might be thinking, "What does this have to do with healing?" I will show you in a few moments. But first, a word about health.

On average, world health is improving, and not just in the more wealthy nations. In every part of the globe most people are living longer, healthier lives, on average. Not all people are living longer, healthier lives. But the averages are a lot higher than 200 years ago.

In 1800, more than 40% of the world's newborns died before the age of five. That is forty out of every 100. Today, only a tiny fraction die before the age of five. This is due to modern medicine, the discovery of germs, and improvements in housing, sanitation, and diet.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2017/11/30/why-the-world-is-getting-better-why-hardly-anyone-knows-it/#31b67ccf7826>

Another reason is rising standard of living even in third world countries. In 1950, 75% of the world's people were living in extreme poverty. But today, less than 10% live in extreme poverty. And this is with a much high population. Life is getting better for most people.

But even while we celebrate the advances in medicine, there are warnings of more bad news. New diseases and dangers keep popping up. There is the rise of allergies, diabetes, heart disease, new diseases like Legionnaires, Ebola, West Nile Virus, and the reduction in the effectiveness of antibiotics.

So we have a mixed bag. Modern medicine can do a lot for us. But doctors cannot cannot heal or control everything that ails us.

Well, two thousand years ago it was much worse than today. There was little that doctors could do to help people. People did not get antibiotics for strep throat or a sinus infection. Most of them died of these things.

So it was a really big deal when Jesus began his ministry and healed people of any and all diseases and physical handicaps. It was for this reason, more than his message, that whole towns of people flocked to him.

Today, sick people, those the doctors can't cure, are as desperate as people in the first century were. And they will grasp at anything that might bring them healing or relief. And as in any situation where people are desperate for something, there will arise those who seek to take advantage of them. Con artists arise to trick such people out of their money.

There are so called "faith healers" who preach a message of healing for all through the death of Jesus. They teach that there is physical healing in the atonement. They travel the world promising that Jesus wants to heal people of whatever it is that ails them. The claim for such healing comes in the form of a prophecy in the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 53:4-5 (NIV) Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, 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.

This passage is primarily about the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord's Suffering Servant who we know to be Jesus. Some translations use the words weaknesses or sicknesses instead of infirmities. This and that last word, healed, are pounced on by the faith healers to say that there is healing of illnesses in the atonement. But the rest of the Bible does not support this interpretation. Look what Matthew's gospel reveals about this passage.

Matthew 8:16-17 (NIV) 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 through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases."

Matthew writes that part of Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in the healing ministry of Jesus. Make note that this healing took place before Jesus died on the cross. This healing was not part of the atoning action of Jesus on the cross. All the healings Jesus accomplished, he did before his death, not as a result of it. Let's look at how Jesus healed.

1. Jesus healed with a word or touch.

Jesus spoke the healing or He touched people to heal them. On some occasions He did both. At other times he did not do the touching, but other people touched him and were healed.

2. Jesus healed instantly.

When you are sick enough to have to go to the doctor, you do not expect to be well by the time you leave the doctor's office. That just doesn't happen. Doctors can't heal you fast. Medicines can't heal you fast. But Jesus healed people instantly.

3. Jesus healed totally.

There were no partial healings. We see these first three points in the following passage.

Luke 4:38-39 (NIV) Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

It did not take hours or days to restore her strength enough to fix supper for Jesus and the group. She was immediately and completely healed.

4. Jesus healed everybody.

There was never a case where Jesus could not heal someone. The faith healers today often fail. In fact their failures outnumber their supposed successes. People leave disappointed, with less money in their pocket, which leads to the next point.

5. Jesus never asked for donations.

Jesus used healing to gather a crowd to hear the good news of the kingdom of God, to prepare them for Gospel to come. He never asked for money. In contrast, the faith healers make a good living off the desperation of people seeking healing.

6. The faith involved was faith that Jesus could heal them, not that he would.

If you go to a faith healer for healing and are not healed, what do they say? Who do they blame? They blame you. They say you did not believe enough that you would be healed, so you were not.

You don't see this in the Bible. You see people that had faith that Jesus was able to heal them, not that he would heal them. Look at the following example.

Luke 5:12 (NIV) While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

Jesus was not the only one in the Bible to heal people. In Luke 9 Jesus his 12 apostles to preach in the towns and villages. The Bible specifically states that Jesus gave them the power to heal sickness as a part of their mission trip. (Luke 9:1-6) At a later date Jesus sent out 70 disciples to preach in the towns and villages. (Luke 10:1-17) Jesus had many disciples, but 12 of them he also named to be apostles. The 70 returned with the news that they were even able to command demons out of people. But there is no mention that these 70 disciples were able to heal anyone of illness. So what does the evidence in the gospels show?

In the Gospels we only see Jesus and the apostles healing people of illness.

How about beyond the gospels, in the book of Acts? Do we see healing like Jesus there?

In the book of Acts we see lots of healings in the early years, by the apostles and even the deacon Philip. This healing ministry was to connect the apostles and their teaching with Jesus. Jesus was the only person in history who could heal like he did. No one else even came close. The power to do those miracle healings was obviously God's power. The healings authenticated Jesus' message as being from God. After Jesus ascended up into heaven, the healing miracles of the apostles affirmed their connection to Jesus. However, their primary purpose was to testify to the resurrection of Jesus, not to heal people.

That is why even... **Among the apostles the healing ministry faded over time. Examples:**

Philippians 2:25-27 (NIV) But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus... whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died.

Surely, if Paul could heal all diseases like Jesus, he would have cured Epaphroditus as soon as he got sick. But he was sick long enough for someone to take word back to the church in Philippi and tell them he was sick. And then there was the issue of failing to heal Timothy or Trophimus.

1 Timothy 5:23 (NIV) Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

Timothy evidently had recurring stomach problems. So why didn't Paul heal Timothy? Why did he not heal Trophimus, as recorded in the next passage?

2 Timothy 4:20 (NIV) Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus.

Poor Trophimus. Paul could heal people but he refused to heal this coworker? I do not believe so. Jesus healed a lot of people. The apostles healed some people initially, and not so many in the decades after the first of the church age. God still heals some today in miraculous ways. I could share a story of one being healed of brain cancer. But such healing, when granted, is in response to the faith and prayers of God's people.

The healing that took place by Jesus was unique and not to be repeated over and over in the church age.

Now let's go back to Santa Clause. If every year mysterious gifts showed up in your home for your children, and the same happened to other families in your neighborhood, even all over the country, then everyone would believe in Santa. But this never happens. It does not happen anywhere in the world, even for the kids that believe.

The same can be said of healing. If someone really had the ability to heal like Jesus, the whole world would know of it. People would be flocking to that person. Every news outlet would cover the story. Doctors would be testifying that they can't explain it scientifically. You would not be able to hide such a power. But none of this is happening.

Listen, nowhere does the Bible teach that the healing ministry of Jesus was to continue beyond the first century. Jesus is NOT still inviting us to walk on water. Jesus is NOT still turning water into wine. Jesus is NOT still giving us tax money from the mouths of fish. And **Jesus is NOT still healing all those who want to be healed of their physical handicaps and illness.**

But Jesus IS still offering everyone forgiveness of sins through faith in his death and resurrection. And every person on the planet needs this spiritual healing.