

Luke 9:1

What About the Gift of Healing?

Maybe you've seen him on television. His program, *This is Your Day*, is seen all over the US and in 50 other countries around the world. His name is Benny Hinn, and right now he's the most popular TV preacher in our nation.

Benny Hinn was born in Israel in 1953. He was raised as a Greek Orthodox and went to a Catholic school. He claims to have had visions and an appearance of Jesus at age 11. After this he claims Jesus has appeared to him repeatedly.

Benny Hinn's greatest claim to fame is his assertion that he possesses the gift of divine healing. He holds crusades all over the US called miracle crusades, which pack stadiums and domes from coast to coast.

In Hinn's book *The Anointing* he explains that in 1990 God directed him to begin monthly miracle crusades. He writes: At these crusades I immediately began to receive power to drive out devils of sickness and affliction...Hundreds of verified healings and thousands of conversions have occurred, including people rising from wheel chairs and leaving crutches. Several blind eyes and deaf ears have been opened and verified.

If you're familiar with the Gospel accounts of Jesus' ministry this sounds similar to what the disciples must have seen on a regular basis.

This morning, for our study of the Gospel of Luke, we're going to something a little different than what we've been doing. Rather than examine a series of verses, I'd like us to turn to just one verse and use that verse as a launch pad to look at the subject of divine healing.

Turn to Luke 9:1 pg 1002

There is no question that not only did Jesus heal people of diseases but at this point His disciples were given that power too. After Jesus resurrection and ascension it's clear that the Apostles had been given the gift of healing. The gift of healing is mentioned in I Corinthians 12 in the list of spiritual gifts given to believers.

Some people say those miraculous gifts were given to, the early church and not to us today. Others argue just the opposite. They say that all the things that Jesus and His disciples did can be duplicated by us today.

What is the truth about divine healing? Is God giving people the gift of healing today?

This is a vitally important question for a number of reasons. One reason is because of the sheer numbers of people coming to healing crusades. Benny Hinn has 14 or 15 thousand people at a time.

The German evangelist Rienhart Bonnke held crusades in Nigeria this year attended by millions of people. One night alone in the city of Onitsha there was 800,000 people in the crowd!

So the sheer number of people being affected makes the question a priority. These are hurting people with genuine needs in their lives. These are people who have faith in the God of heaven.

Another reason this is important is because it's imperative that we interpret the Bible correctly. We've all probably heard someone try to use the Bible to support something that was totally bogus.

God commands us to use precision when we interpret His Word. 2Ti 2:15 *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.* The word translated "rightly dividing" *orthotomeo* means "to make a straight cut."

We're under a Biblical mandate to make sure that we carefully & precisely understand the Bible. That means looking at verses in their context, trying to discover the meaning of each word, considering all the passages dealing with the subject, and never interpreting a clear statement by an unclear statement.

That's not rocket science; it's just good common sense rules that we'd use when we're trying to understand any written document.

If we claim to honor the Bible as the inspired Word of God then we can't be guilty of handling it carelessly.

As we cover the subject of healing this morning, I want you to remember that the question we're dealing with is not, "Can God do miracles and heal people today?" If God is God then He can do miracles. The question is, "Has God gifted people in this age with the ability to heal others?"

See the difference between those two questions? A person with the gift of healing doesn't say, "I'll put you on the prayer chain." A person with the gift of healing has the God-given power to cure diseases.

Is God actually gifting people with the ability to physically heal? Is it wrong to go to the doctor? Is it right to go to a faith healer? Has God guaranteed healing for all Christians? These are important questions to try to answer.

In *Rise and Be Healed* Benny Hinn writes, Sickness does not belong to any of us. He promises to heal all -every one, any, any whatsoever, everything- all our diseases. That means not even a headache, sinus problem, not even a toothache- nothing! No sickness should ever come your way. God's greatest desire for the church of Jesus Christ...is that we be in total and perfect health.

I believe the best way to approach this issue is to first define the gift of healing by Scripture, then to discover the Biblical purpose for the gift, and finally to see if the purpose still exists and what people are doing today is comparable to the NT.

So first of all let's look at the purpose of healing in the NT.

As we've seen in our study of Luke's gospel, the clear teaching of Scripture is that Jesus' miracles were done to confirm His messiahship. The main purpose of healing people wasn't to help people.

We know that because He didn't heal everyone that was sick on the earth. He only ministered in Israel. Healing was a side issue. It was one that fit perfectly with Christ's compassionate nature, but it wasn't the main issue.

For the first 30 years of His life Jesus didn't perform any miracles at all. We have false gospels that purport to tell us what He supposedly did as a boy but John tells us that Jesus' first miracle was turning the water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana.

When it time in the plan of God for Jesus to introduce Himself as Israel's messianic king, then He began to do miracles. Not before.

This was the beginning of a new era of revelation. Christ was revealing the truth of God in a new and unique fashion and the Father bore witness to the Son through miracles.

In John 10:24 we read: *Then the Jews surrounded Him and said to Him, "How long do You keep us in doubt? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me.*

In Acts 2 Peter preached to a crowd in Jerusalem: *"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know--*

The OT prophet Isaiah predicted: *In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book, And the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. (Isaiah 29:18)*

The healing miracles of Jesus were attestations to His Messiahship. They had a clear and definite purpose in history.

Now of course Jesus' earthly ministry was limited to just over 3 years. Ten days after His ascension back into heaven, on the Jewish feast of Pentecost a new entity was formed and a new dispensation began. The church was born and although Jesus wasn't present physically His Spirit worked through the apostles to build that church.

Again, this was a distinct era of revelation. Now not only was God confirming that Jesus was Israel's messiah, but now He was validating the ministry of Jesus' Apostles.

In Mark 16 we read: *And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs.*

In Acts 14 we read the same thing about Paul & Barnabas: *the Lord bore witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.*

Turn with me to Heb 2 pg 1148 Read vs 3 & 4

Jesus Christ spoke. Those directly associated with Him went out to share the Gospel with others, and God bore witness to their message and authenticated their ministries with signs and miracles.

The Biblical purpose of sign gifts, including healing was to confirm God's special messengers in an era of revelation.

The second thing we need to find out is just who was involved in miraculous healings. If my first deduction is correct then we would expect miracles and healings to be restricted to a certain group of people. We would expect them to be limited to God's special messengers.

Some today would want us to believe that during the NT era everybody in the church was doing miracles. It wasn't that way at all.

In fact to show you just how limited miracles were look with me at a key verse of Scripture: **II Cor 12 pg 1119**

II Corinthians was written by the Apostle Paul as a defense of His Apostleship. His critics had come to Corinth and said, "Paul isn't a true apostle and he's been lying to you."

Here's his answer: **Read vs 11 & 12**

The reason you should know I'm an Apostle is that I'm performing the signs of an Apostle. What are they?

Signs	<i>semeion</i>	English: "semaphore"
Wonders	<i>teras</i>	used 16 times, always trans as "wonders"
Mighty Deeds	<i>dunamis</i>	English: "dynamo"

There was something that distinguished an apostle from other people within the church. The ability to work miracles.

According to Acts 1, Romans 1, and I Corinthians 9 an Apostle was someone who had physically seen the resurrected Christ. That limited the Apostles to the time of Christ.

Now as you go to the Book of Acts, which gives the history of the early church, you find something very interesting. The only people in the entire book who are said to do a miracle are the Apostles, Barnabas, Steven and Philip. And the only people who are said to use the gift of healing are Philip, Peter, and Paul. that's it.

These were the signs of an apostle and were confined to a small, select group of individuals. Just like Hebrews 2 said. They were eyewitnesses of Jesus.

If you want to do an interesting word study take a Greek concordance and look up the use of the words *semeion*, *teras*, and *dunamis* in the Book of Acts. The Book of Acts is a history of the early church that covers it's first 30 years.

Those words are used 32 times. 26 times in the first third and 6 times in the second third,. They're not used at all in the last third. I believe the significance is clear. As the purpose faded out because the Word of God was being penned, those particular gifts passed of the scene.

So, so far we've seen two things: #1 God had a unique purpose in miracles, confirming His messengers in a time of revelation. We don't live in a time of revelation today. God isn't giving out new truth, we have the Word of God in it's entirety.

#2 Healings were limited to a small group of individuals who, like the powers they possessed, are no longer with us.

There's one more thing we need to do in a study like this. Look how the gift of healing operated in the NT era and compare that with what we see today. The difference is staggering.

Let's look at the gift of healing in operation:

Turn to Acts 3 pg 1053 Read 1-9

1. He's genuinely lame. Couldn't walk at all.
2. This was an instant and complete healing.
3. This was done in public
4. This man had no faith.

Acts 5:14-16

1. No failures
2. No requirements
3. Done in public

Acts 9:32-35

1. The man was genuinely paralyzed
1. The healing was total
2. The healing was immediate

Acts 14: 8-10

This is the only place where the faith of the person being healed is mentioned. the difference is that Paul was preaching not just passing by.

1. He's genuinely lame. Couldn't walk at all.
2. This was an instant and complete healing.
3. This was done in public

One more Acts 19:11&12

There were no failures. The apostles healed real organic diseases. They didn't hold special meetings. They went out on the streets and healed.

Why don't we have people going through hospitals emptying out wards? Why aren't they walking the streets of Manila, Bombay, Mexico City healing crowds?

Benny Hinn claims to have seen thousands healed through his crusades. He even has a staff that supposedly verifies the healings. Hank Hannagraff, of the Christian Research Institute, who is charismatic himself, asked Hinn to give evidence that healings had taken place. That should be a simple task.

This was Hinn's response: (You can read the details in Hanagraff's book, *Christianity in Crisis*.) Benny Hinn provided three testimonies with doctors documentation.

#1. Healing of colon cancer. The medical records showed the tumor had actually been surgically removed.

#2. Healing of a case of Lupus. That's a tough one because Lupus can go into remission for years at a time. What is known is that because of the Lupus the individual had joint damage which was not healed.

#3. Spinal tumor. The medical record showed that the tumor was shrinking months before the purported healing and that it was still there 3 months after.

After examining all the evidence with physicians, Hanagraff's conclusion is: "After years of miracle rallies with a staff working at each rally to document cases of healing, there is no credible evidence that he has ever been involved in a bona fide healing."

Rick Ross writing about Benny Hinn in The Orlando Sentinel, June 9, 1999, "I sat on the arena floor with the truly infirm, those suffering from paralysis, muscular dystrophy, missing limbs. I watched a woman with a dying boy scrape together crumpled bills for the collection because Benny took the offering right before the miracles began. Give to the Lord and he shall return your gifts a thousandfold.

Right after they gave their money, the crippled watched those in the bleachers run down to the stage to announce they had been cured of bad backs, bum knees and environmental disease. Then, with the service over, they slowly were wheeled out in a most depressing procession. The cameraman never came down to the arena floor.

Why does God never work a miracle that can be documented on an X-ray?"

People today tell us that God guarantees we'll all be well if we just have enough faith. It didn't even work that way in the NT.

Paul himself had very serious eye problems. He dictated his letters because he couldn't see well. In II Timothy 4 Paul writes: *Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick*. Why didn't he heal him?

In I Timothy Paul gave this advice to Timothy: *No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent sicknesses*. I'm not trying to be facetious, but think about it. Did Paul run out of prayer cloths?

It's all so different when we compare the NT situation to today. God gifted certain individuals to heal as the gospel message was going out into new areas as a confirmation of the speakers' words.

God did not give the gift of healing to keep Christians healthy! The Bible is clear that there will be a day of total healing but that isn't until we're in the new heavens and the new earth.

So what should you do if you're sick? James 5 says, *Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him*. James goes on to explain that there can be a link between sickness and personal sin so he deals with confession of sin.

Next, we should use every sensible means that the Lord makes available for recovery. When Paul told Timothy to use a little (operative word "little") wine for his stomach's sake and his frequent infirmities he was recommending the treatment of the day. He couldn't say take Prilosec, the purple pill because they didn't have anything like that. Instead he said take a little wine.

All the ingredients which go into modern medicine, the abilities of doctors, the make-up of our bodies that allow us to respond to treatment, all come from the hand of God.

The Bible gives us hope in the midst of a troubled, fallen world. It says: *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

The death of Christ does guarantee our total physical well being, but not until the resurrection when we'll have glorified bodies.

We have a hope, a Scriptural promise of being free from all disease if we're children of God. I'm looking forward to that day, and it's all, because of Christ's death on the cross.

I don't have the gift of healing. I can't tell you how many times I've stood at the bed side of someone suffering and would have given anything to have that gift. But I don't.

But I can do this: I can share with believers the truth that one day we'll be like Christ with new bodies that will never again face suffering and disease.

Do you have that hope this morning? Have you experienced the forgiveness of your sins?

Do you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ?

Isaiah 53 the prophet prophesied that Messiah would heal the sick. He also prophesied something else. He wrote: *He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

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. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

The price for the sin we've all committed has been paid. Salvation, eternal life is offered to each one of us. The Bible puts it simply Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

If you want a miracle today it's yours. It's the greatest miracle of all. Forgiveness.
Being made part of the family of God. Being accepted and loved by your Creator.