



BEFORE YOU PRAY FOR HEALING

Consider what may hinder your healing!



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To Heal, or Not to Heal... That is the Question

Every Sunday at the beginning of the Sundry School Class I attend, we go through a list of Prayer Requests, most are requests for healing. I often wonder as to how many people in the class believe that God will indeed heal them! I also wonder, how many *erroneously* believe that God is the one that put various maladies on them as some kind of punishment for their disobedience or failure to measure up to his standards. I have come across many people over the years that believe this to be true as even I once did. They believe God put sickness on them to teach them, or someone close to them a lesson, as if it is God's will that they are suffering with sickness or pain because of their disobedience! Although some might believe that God can heal them even miraculously, most really aren't expecting to be healed without a doctor's intervention, [more on this later]. Most people seem to feel that unless they make some kind of atonement for their recent transgressions which they believe made them "unworthy" to be healed, they won't be healed. Therefore, some give up on approaching God concerning healing before they even get started, pointing to the times in the Old Testament when God in fact *did* put sicknesses on those who disobeyed him, as illustrated in the following passage as verification of their unworthiness.

Lev 26:14–18 ¹⁴But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments,¹⁵ and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant,¹⁶ I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.¹⁷ I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you.¹⁸ 'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

What can you pick out in the passage above that would differentiate the way God did things back then [Old Testament Times] as opposed to now? Hint: The answer is embedded within verse 18! First consider these facts: Jesus at no time put sickness or a curse on anything but a fig tree during his ministry on earth! He healed everyone brought before him unless something interfered with him doing so. I know that some of you reading this may be thinking, "wait a minute... God doesn't change... he's the same yesterday, today and forever!" I agree with that thought 100%! Others may be thinking, "if Jesus is God in the flesh and God is "sovereign," nothing can hinder or thwart his will... whatever the will of God is will come to pass, right?" Concerning that thought I must respectfully disagree based on the following passages:

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Matt 9:35 Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Here we have Jesus healing every sickness and disease, but what about the following passage from the same book?

Matt 13: 57-58. But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house.” ⁵⁸ Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.¹
[Emphasis Mine]

It is apparent according to this passage that even the healing power of God can indeed be hindered... by us! Jesus did not heal anyone at this time, why... because of the “**Unbelief**” of the people around him! Perhaps the best illustration of God’s will being “thwarted” by us is the following passage followed by a simple question:

2 Pe 3:9 ⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.²
[Emphasis Mine]

Now for the question: “Are all people saved... have all people repented?” If it is God’s will that all should repent and that all would not perish, that would mean all people must be saved, and our freedom of choice is thereby rendered irrelevant! However, it is obvious that many continue to reject God’s will by refusing to repent, and as a result, not all people are saved! Have they not therefore thwarted God’s will? Going back to an earlier question, **“What is the difference between the way God dealt with sin in during Old Testament times versus now,”** the answer is simple... **Jesus!** The penalty for sin is the same now as it has always been [Death] however, Jesus paid the price for the sins of the entire world through his death, sins, past – present – and future! Some people might say, “How did he pay for sins not even committed yet?” You had better hope he could, as you weren’t even born yet when he died for your sins! As far as God is concerned, **all** our sins have been atoned for by Jesus, yes, even the ones we’ll commit tomorrow! The bible teaches, Jesus gave his life for the atonement the sins of **All People, Once for All!** **Heb10:10** ¹⁰ **By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.**³ Therefore, if we have accepted Jesus as our savior, we are “Justified” [Just as if we’d never sinned] in the eyes of God! That my friends, is **Good News!** If we do fall back into sin, we still suffer

¹ The New King James Version (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. Mt 9:35 Mt 13:57–58.

² The New King James Version (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. 2 Pe 3:9.

³ The New King James Version (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. Heb 10:10.

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the *guilt and consequences* in this life, but it does not affect our relationship with God at all, as our Salvation is based on our Faith in Jesus alone, not by our Works.

Heb 19:16-18¹⁶ *"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"*¹⁷ then He adds, *"Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."*¹⁸ Now where there is remission of these, *there is no longer an offering for sin.*⁴ [Emphasis Mine]

Hinderances to Miracles & Healing

Did you ever wonder as to why we don't see many miracles today like the ones we read about in the bible? Referring back to **Matt 13: 57-58** above, it is easy to see that unbelief is the major stumbling block, not only concerning healing, but other gifts and abilities God has given his followers as well. So where does all this unbelief come from? The simple answer is "ignorance!" This doesn't imply stupidity, it simply means people in many cases do not know what the word of God says pertaining to healing and other gifts of the Spirit. As usual, "Religion" is the biggest culprit, as religions are nothing more than an adherence to interpretations of God's Word. Many people put their faith in religious leaders based on how many letters they have after their name on a theology degree, not whether they back up what they are saying with scripture! It is hard to believe that God would eventually make his word available to everyone on the planet and at the same time make it impossible for the average person to understand it! No... The bible is not impossible for the average person to read and understand. It is doubtful the passages referred to so far in this writing were too hard for even someone with basic reading skills to comprehend. All you must do is read what it says! What causes many to get confused is that most people fail to consider the meaning of the words they read, they skim through passages just for the sake of being able to say that they read it! This is one of the dangers of "Devotional Books" as a primary source for reading the Scriptures. Additionally, just like the Pharisees of old, there are many people that believe that their interpretation, is the only "correct" interpretation. Unfortunately, some of these people are charismatic enough to convince others of this, and before you know it, another religion [or cult] is born! The only things that are "absolutely" true and infallible are God and His Word. Everyone has an opinion, how they form their opinion is the more important question. Is it based on hearsay, or facts and evidence? Is it based on the Word of God?

⁴ *The New King James Version* (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. Heb 10:16–18.

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You say you Believe...

Faith and belief are usually lumped together as being one in the same, but are they? The answer to that question is complex and is dependent on the mindset of the person, and to what, or to whom their faith or belief is directed towards. Another thing to consider is the differences between modern definitions and biblical definitions of the words in question. For example, most people, and this is especially true in modern times, equate the word “Believe” as to simply “acknowledge” something or someone. This is illustrated in James 2:19 shown below. James is making a point of the fact that to simply acknowledge the existence of God is something that even demons are capable of! Most people today may acknowledge the existence of God (or a god), however, as James goes on to say, even the devil and his demons do that!

James 2:19 You believe that there is one God. You do well.
Even the demons believe—and tremble! ⁵

Considering the next passage (Mark 16:16),
it gets a little more confusing for some people.
But only if the secular definition of the word believe is used.

Mark 16:16 ¹⁶ He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. ⁶

Does this mean that baptism is the key to our salvation as long as we acknowledge the existence of God? The answer is No... Many people believe this to be true but the biblical meaning of the word “Believe” is much deeper than simple acknowledgement of God’s existence. **The word believe means, “to trust in, cling to, rely on, have faith in!”** Baptism is a public declaration of one’s belief in God in those ways, something an infant is not capable of, making infant baptism irrelevant to one’s salvation. I think it is safe to say that the devil and his demons would have a problem with the terms, relating to the Biblical definition of “Believe” compared to how they believe in God! Nevertheless, a proper understanding of the word “Believe” is crucial when it comes not only to Salvation, but for Healing as well. Do you really Believe that God wants you to be healed? If so, try doing this simple self-check based on the above definition of Believe: **Do you Trust in God for healing** or do you only turn to God as a last resort when the doctors say that they can do nothing more? **Do**

⁵ *The New King James Version* (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. Jas 2:19.

⁶ *The New King James Version* (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. Mk 16:16.

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you Cling to God as you source of healing or do you cling to an army of physicians? **Do you Rely on God for healing**, or do you give up on believing for healing if you aren't instantly healed? **The bottom line is this, do you have Faith in God, and that He wants you well?** I have noticed that before the prayer session in Sunday School, *I have yet to hear anyone mention what passage of scripture they are leaning on for their healing!* When asked for updates, every single person invariably goes down a long list of what the doctors are saying, and what test they will be getting next. But to date I have heard no one say, "regardless what the doctors say I am trusting God for my healing" based on a particular passage from God's Word! Many people put all their faith in doctors, if that is you, consider this: My son told me of something he saw on "Social Media." Someone had recorded their very first class in Medical School and this is first thing the professor wrote on the board in front of the class: "A Cured Patient is a Lost Patient!" Now that is something to think about!

God Does Want Us Well

Many people have issues with the statement that God wants us well, nevertheless, the truth is that God doesn't want any of us to be sick - ever! If you believe that God picks and chooses who gets healed and who does not based on their performance, here are a few questions and illustrations for your consideration. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he gave us some *hints* as to God's will concerning healing. Just about everyone in the world has heard or read "The Lord's Prayer," so I will state a few lines of the prayer he taught us, and then I'll ask you say *out loud* the next line... **"Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name. Your Kingdom come. Your will be done..."** *say the next line out loud...* What was that He said... **On earth as it is in heaven!** *Selah...* [think about that-dwell on that]. So now here is an important question: "Is there sickness and disease in heaven?" Going back to the Garden [before the fall] was there sickness and disease in the Garden? The answer in both cases is no! There is no sickness in heaven, and there was no sickness in the Garden before the fall! Even after the fall God made some promises to His people, to those who would be obedient to him... **Deut. 7: 15¹⁵ And the LORD will take away from you all sickness, and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known, but will lay them on all those who hate you.** This was a promise made to the Jews, "His chosen people." Haven't those of us who have accepted Jesus been grafted into that vine; are we not also considered to be among God's Chosen People upon accepting Jesus as Savior? I know I have been making some radical statements here which will likely ruffle a few feathers as they say, but there are many other references that contradict the notion that God does not desire health for all of His children, and that he would put sickness

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on his chosen ones to teach them a lesson; not since he made a ***New Covenant*** with his people! Do you know any parent that would wish sickness on their child? The belief that God would put sickness on those who love him as a form of discipline is absurd, especially when so many enemies of God are living in relatively good health! This does not make any sense at all, especially when you consider the following: **1 Thes 5: 9** ⁹ **For God did not appoint us to wrath...**⁷ As Christians, we are no longer subject to God's wrath, [which includes punishment]. Jesus took the Father's wrath upon himself for us, ***Praise His Holy name!*** It is interesting that some modern bible translations leave out "***On earth as it is in heaven***" in the ***Lord's Prayer***; that may explain some of the confusion concerning God's will concerning our health and healing. After all, God has done, and *is* doing everything he can to bring us back to the life he had planned for us in the first place!

Belief & Unbelief

Imagine Belief and Unbelief as two equal forces pulling in opposite directions, like two horses pulling on a heavy weight in opposite directions. Being the forces are equal they would cancel each other out... there would be no movement of the weight in either direction. However, if one or the other horse loses strength or stamina, the lesser would lose ground and the greater would gain ground. Let us explore the reason the disciples couldn't heal a certain demon possessed boy, a story as told in **Mark 9:17-24**.¹⁷ Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. ¹⁸ And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not."¹⁹ He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me." ²⁰ Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.²¹ So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. ²² And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."²³ Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things *are* possible to him who believes."²⁴ Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"⁸ [Emphasis Mine in Verse 18 & 19]

The word translated "faithless" apistos (ἄπιστος in verse 19 can also be translated as untrustworthy, distrustful, unbelieving, meaning not worthy of confidence or belief.

⁷ The New King James Version (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. 1 Th 5:9.

⁸ The New King James Version (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. Mk 9:17–24.

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Many pastors and bible teachers tend to make this story about faith, or the lack thereof based of Jesus' retort in verse 19, "*Oh Faithless Generation.*" The first thing to consider is the fact that if the disciples didn't have faith they wouldn't have even tried to heal the boy! The second thing to consider is that in verse 23, Jesus says to the boy's father, "**if you can believe...**" he didn't say if you have faith! Keep in mind that Jesus taught his disciples that if they had faith the size of a mustard seed, they could cast a mountain into the sea! (the mustard seed is one of the smallest seeds) This indicates that apparently even the slightest portion of faith goes a long way! So, is this story really about faith, or is it about unbelief? Now for something else to consider: The story concludes with the following verses 28 and 29, ²⁸ **And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?"** ²⁹ **So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."**⁹ Most people interpret this passage as referring to the demon, but does that mean that some demons can give God a problem and others not so much? The fact is that no demon is a problem for our Sovereign God! It makes more sense that this passage refers to unbelief... *this kind "of Unbelief" comes out by nothing but prayer and fasting.* If faith the size of a mustard seed can move mountains, there is no demon able to resist even a little faith, not even Satan himself! Remember, demons cower in fear at the mere mention of the name of Jesus!

About Prayer & Fasting

Throughout the ministry of Jesus, I cannot recall one time that Jesus had to resort to prayer and fasting while engaged in healing or casting out demons. Nor can I find any reference of the disciples doing so when they were sent out in pairs to heal the sick and cast out demons! When Peter restored life to Dorcas in Acts 9:36-43, he did pray as he knew it wasn't his own power that would raise Dorcas from the dead but the power of God's Spirit within him, but he did not fast. So why did Jesus tell his disciples, "**This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting**" in the story of the demon possessed boy? First, we must analyze the meanings and functions of prayer and fasting. Below are the definitions according to the **New Oxford American Dictionary**

prayer / **prer** / *noun: a solemn request for help or expression of thanks addressed to God or an object of worship: I'll say a prayer for him | a commitment to a life of holiness through prayer and Bible-reading.*

fast² / **fast** / *verb [no object] abstain from all or some kinds of food or drink, especially as a religious observance. Noun: an act or period of fasting: a five-day fast.*

⁹ *The New King James Version* (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. Mk 9:28–29.

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Using the above common definitions, why did Jesus tell his disciples Prayer & Fasting was required in this case for them to be successful in casting out the demon? I cannot speak for Jesus, but we can perhaps analyze the mindset of the disciples seeing the reaction of the boy caused by the demon. It appears that this demon had total control of the young boy and when the disciples tried to cast it out, perhaps they were startled when they did not see with their eyes [one of their five senses] immediate results, thereby causing their belief in the power of the Spirit within them to falter! After all, the boy was flopping around on the ground like a fish out of water even as Jesus spoke to his father! So, how can prayer and fasting possibly help in this situation. It is doubtful that prayer was the main issue as I am sure that the disciples called upon the Lord when confronting the demon. However, when their physical senses registered failure upon not seeing immediate results, unbelief set in causing them to fail. To sum it up, Faith wasn't the issue – Prayer wasn't the issue – Unbelief was the issue, because the disciples defaulted to trusting in their senses rather than God! *Remember that Greek word previously mentioned: The word translated “faithless” apistos (ἄπιστος in Mark 9:19 can also be translated as untrustworthy, distrustful, unbelieving, meaning not worthy of confidence or belief.*

Perhaps it is because they were influenced more by their senses, this is why Jesus told them that in addition to prayer, fasting was necessary to overcome their unbelief. **What happens when you fast?** By abstaining from food, your body goes into panic mode! You get hungry and your body starts telling you need food – Now! As you continue to deny your body, the craving for food builds until about the middle of the first day and after that the hunger pangs usually begin to subside. You wake up the next morning and to your surprise, you're not really that hungry! What is going on here? Basically, you are beginning to control your body instead of it controlling you by telling you that you will drop dead if you don't eat something right now! It's that simple, you are gaining control of your senses; in this case your sense of hunger... although you may have started out overwhelmed with hunger, you are beginning to take control of your sense of hunger and weakness. I believe that Jesus was really telling his disciples that they must take control of what their senses are telling them and put their belief in what He is telling them! Fasting would help them to train themselves to do that. All of us rely on our senses [Sight, Sound, Hearing, Tasting, and Feeling] every day of our lives. For us to truly believe in the power of God residing within us, we must learn to override our senses and put our total trust in God and His Word. This I believe is why so many people have a problem with healing and receiving other blessings from God these days.

So, what have we learned so far? We learned that faith may not have been the issue at all as to why the disciples could not cast the demon out of the demon possessed boy, because if they didn't have faith, they wouldn't have even tried! What

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then may have caused their failure? Could it be that they faltered, because they trusted more in their senses than in the Holy Spirit and God's Word? Could it have been that because they didn't see immediate results, unbelief immediately set in, their belief in their ability to cast out the demon being overridden and thereby canceled by their physical senses? *Could this also be why we don't see a lot of healing and other miracles happening in our modern churches?* Do we in fact trust our physical senses, doctors and medicine more than the Word of God? Is it fair to say that most people, when they pray about healing, they expect instant miraculous healing, and if this is not the case, they assume their petition was denied? There is mind you, a difference between praying for healing, and praying for a miracle. Sometimes healing involves a process. It is important to remember that God has chosen to work through people to accomplish His will; those people may indeed also include, doctors, nurses, and physical therapists! [Selah] Too many people forget this, and quickly fall victim to *unbelief* because of it! There are well over a hundred verses in the bible pertaining to healing; most of them specifically refer to physical healing from sickness, injury, or disease, not only "*Spiritual Healing*" as many people are taught! Which healing passages do you lean on? Most people will not be able to say what passage they are claiming; and once again "Religion" is one of the main culprits as many are taught that healing is a thing of the past.

Nevertheless, we are told to pray for the sick, but how or what should we pray? Perhaps it is more prudent that we should pray for the sick person to be *enlightened* as to the fact that *God wants them to be healed, and that healing was part of the atonement provide for by Jesus*. Instead of going down a list of people and merely listing their maladies, perhaps we should be claiming some of the passages pertaining to healing over them, and more importantly presenting those passages to them thereby reinforcing their faith thereby countering their unbelief! Most churches have prayer sessions and prayer chains for the sick that don't go much farther than going through such a list of names, and that is where it ends! Perhaps we should be taking it to a different level! Consider the following passages: **James 5:13-15** ¹³ **Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? 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. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up.**¹⁰ [Emphasis Mine] If you are among a group of believers that practices this directive, good for you; however, out of the dozens of pastors and elders I've met over the years, I know of only one that carries "Anointing Oil" with him at all times, and actually uses it! The rest just carry prayer lists and maybe pass the list to others. As for how many people

¹⁰ *The New King James Version* (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. Jas 5:13–15.

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pray for those on the list, God only knows. I confess that even I have fallen short in that regard more often than not.

If You Don't Truly Believe in Healing & Miracles, Guess What... You Won't See Healing & Miracles!

"The Bible says it – I believe it – that settles it!" How many would agree with this popular proclamation? I suppose if this question was asked of a Christian audience, many would raise their hands in agreement. However, many people, and unfortunately many pastors and seminary students these days, would not raise their hands! There are many people who do not actually believe what they read in the bible... **they do however believe what they are told the bible says!** *Many people, especially religious people, do not let the bible get in the way of what they believe!* They go more by what they are led to believe by perhaps one of the many "False Teachers" Jesus warned us about, but sadly sometimes they are led astray by well meaning solid Christians who at some points were themselves led astray either by false teachers, or the same culprit we mentioned a few times already... Religious [Or Denominational] bias. We live in a society saturated with opinions and bias; simple logic and / or truth are increasingly dismissed or ignored, sometimes even by people with degrees in theology! Some good illustrations of this can be found on modern college campuses where truth and logic are not only ignored, but virtually banished! You can pick any subject you want, and you will see that the things that were accepted as fact throughout history are now being challenged, not by material or scientific facts or evidence, but rather by opinion driven by either political, or religious bias, sometimes both! **Spoiler Alert! Facts and Evidence will eventually win Every Time... without fail!** This is why it is so important to test what you take in and what you believe by using God's Word as the standard. This applies to everything in our lives, especially what we are told about God, and the Bible! Beware, *bias* can be so subtle it is almost imperceivable, even so, it can still rob you and others from receiving blessings, these include both healing and other blessings from God.

Some say, Healings and Miracles are a Thing of the Past?

The Nay Sayers

Many Christians are taught that healings and miracles died off with the original Apostles. This teaching gives the following verse as evidence: **1 Cor13:10¹⁰ But when**

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that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.¹¹

Some interpret the word “Perfect” to mean the Bible. In other words, now that we have the Bible there is no longer a need for the various gifts of the Spirit mentioned within *1 Cor 13* and else ware! It is extremely dangerous to base an entire doctrine on one verse, especially without considering the context and the meaning of the word, or words in question. With that in mind let us look at the definition of “perfect” as it appears in this passage. It comes from the Greek word, *teleios* (τέλειος, 5046), **“complete, perfect,” from *telos*, “an end,” is translated “of full age” in Heb. 5:14, KJV (RV, “fullgrown man”).¹²** When kept in the context of the passages before and after its use pertaining to the gifts of the Spirit, tying it to the Bible as being, “The Perfect” does not make much sense, especially if you keep reading down to verse 12. **1 Cor 13:12¹² For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.¹³** An alternative interpretation seems to make more sense especially when considering the above passage.

Right now, we are living in what is called the Church Age. When Jesus spoke to his disciples during what came to be known as the last supper, he made many profound statements. Here is a small sampling as recorded in **John 14:1-3 Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ² In My Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.¹⁴**

[Emphasis Mine] Allow me to remind you that Jesus is the only “perfect” person that ever walked the earth; and you just read for yourself him stating, “I will come again!” Considering 1 Cor 13, doesn’t it make more sense that it is referring to the return of Jesus? In other words, Jesus is being referred to as “*The Perfect!*” For the passage goes on to say, **“for then we will see Him face to face!”** The main body of 1 Cor 13 is concerning the gifts of the Spirit that are *active* within the church prior to His return. When Jesus receives us unto himself those gifts are no longer necessary as we will be in the presents of Jesus Himself! Remember, the Apostle Paul is talking to the members of the Corinthian Church telling them that when Jesus returns, the *Church Age* will have come to the end., Our Body and Soul will also be perfected at that time, and we will be with Jesus for eternity! I will let you determine which interpretation

¹¹ *The New King James Version* (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. 1 Co 13:10.

¹² Vine, W.E., Unger, M.F. and White, W., Jr. (1996) *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Nashville, TN: T. Nelson.

¹³ *The New King James Version* (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. 1 Co 13:12.

¹⁴ *The New King James Version* (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. Jn 14:1–3.

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seems more likely. If “the perfect” is a reference to the Bible, one would at the very least expect some reference to “The Word.” Another point to ponder... which of the many translations are deemed to be perfect as there are so many debates on that very subject! As you can see, the teaching that “The Perfect” is referring to the Bible opens the door to a lot more debate. There are translations of the bible that have been clearly proven to be less than perfect; may I submit the *New World Translation* used by Jehovah’s Witnesses as a prime example.

Beware... Religious Extremeism Can Go Both Ways!

Those who Tempt the LORD.

While there are many religions or denominations that sweep healing and miracles under the rug as being a thing of the past, there are others that take it to the opposite extreme. There have always been extremists regardless of the subject or cause; unfortunately, they all, regardless of what extremism they favor, usually end up doing more harm than good. Many reading this are familiar with some of the churches that are predominantly in various parts of the Appalachian Mountains in the U.S.A. where they take the “Spiritual Gifts” to another extreme. The services in these churches have replaced the Gospel message with demonstrations more akin to a circus performance or a magic show! These churches focus almost exclusively on the following passage: **Mark 16:17-18¹⁵ And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; ¹⁸ they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”¹⁵** Some of the people attending these “extreme” services, are sometimes referred to as *Snake Handlers* as they view what is said in verse 18 above as a way to “demonstrate their faith!”

Unfortunately, many members of these churches over the years have apparently demonstrated that their faith wasn’t as strong as they thought as many have died from venomous snake bites and from drinking poison as they flaunted their “faith” [more so their pride in themselves] as they blatantly tempted God. They are bringing attention to themselves rather than to God. The gifts that God provide to us are for His glory not ours! **Matt4:7 ⁷ Jesus said to him, “It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God.’ ”¹⁶** Picking up deadly snakes and drinking poison to flaunt your supposed superior faith in front of others, most definitely comes under the heading of “Tempting God.” Extremeism always distorts truth. When

¹⁵ *The New King James Version* (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. Mk 16:17–18.

¹⁶ *The New King James Version* (1982). Nashville: Thomas Nelson, p. Mt 4:7.

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people focus their attention on one extreme or the other, the result is that they ultimately reject anything that challenges their position, even the Word of God! As mentioned earlier, some people don't even let the bible get in the way of what they believe although they profess faith in the Word! When this happens neither side wins, and it usually ends up causing such division that it can tear congregations apart! As also mentioned earlier, this is how Cults and new Religions come into existence. It is amazing how Satan can use a gift from God and compassion for others amongst the followers of Jesus, to cause division within the Church; Satan is indeed a "Master Manipulator!" Could this be a contributing factor as to why we don't see healing like the early church did when it began? Are we all to some degree focused more on our personal opinions concerning healing, rather than what the Word of God says about it? This is something we all must think about; do our beliefs concerning healing line up with the Word?

What is the Truth Concerning Healing?