

Part 4 - Inheriting the Promise of Healing

Special Gifts

Paul teaches that there are special gifts of healing that not all believers have:

“And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?” (1Co 12:28-30)

It is not clear why there is a special gift of healing. Jesus commissioned all His disciples to heal and He passed that commission on to us all. Perhaps Paul is making an observation rather than pronouncing revealed truth. No doubt some people have a particular passion to see the Kingdom demonstrated and enjoyed in healing; but he urges us all to be zealous in seeking the Spiritual gifts. It is my conviction from the Gospels that all believers should be Spirit-filled and pray for and confidently expect divine healing.

Faith to Minister Divine Healing

Jesus taught that we need faith in order to bring divine healing. When His disciples asked why they could not heal the possessed boy, Jesus replied, “Because you have so little (lit. short-lived) faith¹. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” (Matt 17:20). A little later Jesus said, “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.” (Matthew 21:22)

Note that Jesus never scolded the sick for their lack of faith, but He scolded the disciples for their lack of faith. But we must be sure to put our faith in Jesus, not in faith!

“By faith in the name of JESUS, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is JESUS’ name and the faith that comes through HIM that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.” (Acts 3:16)

Faith to Receive Healing

In addition to the faith of the person ministering healing, Jesus commends the faith of those receiving healing. Indeed, when amongst sceptical people we are told: “He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief” (Matt 13:58 NKJV).

It is common for people to have the faith of the leper who “begged him on his knees, ‘If you are willing, you can make me clean.’” The faith that Jesus *can* heal, if only He were willing is hardly faith at all! It leads to pleading prayer. We need to inject faith with Jesus’ reply, “I am willing. Be clean!” (Mk 1:40-41). The leper’s prayer is a poor foundation for faith. Jesus gave His answer and we must receive it and stand firm upon it: “I am willing. Be clean!”

The two blind men had steadfast faith. They called out to get Jesus’ attention. When Jesus asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to heal you?” they replied “Yes, Lord”. Jesus said, “According to your faith you will be healed”; and their sight was restored. (Mt 9:27-30) These men knew that if they could attract Jesus’ attention, they would receive their healing.

The woman who had bleeding for twelve years had more extensive faith. She said to herself, “If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.” She did not even try to get Jesus’ attention. She knew that He healed everyone who came to Him, and all she needed to do was reach out to Him. Jesus said to her, “your faith has healed you” (Mt 9:20-22).

¹ See full discussion of this verse in Part 2 - Ministering Divine Healing.

Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would." And his servant was healed at that very hour (**Matt 8:13**).

Jesus commended this man for his great (lit. extensive) faith. We see in these examples that both the steadfastness and extensiveness of faith are significant for those asking for healing. Jesus was actively trying to encourage people to grow steadfast in their faith in Him as the Messiah. The Disciples were told to move on from people and places where there was unbelief (**Matt 10:14**).

Grow your Faith

Divine healing is part of our inheritance in Christ. The writer to the Hebrews describes the “laying on of hands” as a *basic* foundation for the Christian. Everyone should be praying for the sick and seeing them healed (**Heb 6:1-2**). He writes in the expectation that his readers will have “tasted the heavenly gift” ... and “the powers of the age to come”. He said in chapter **2:4** that the gospel has been confirmed amongst them with “signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit.” He then goes on to urge them to keep on walking in these things and so bear the fruit of faith that glorifies God. He wants them to be faithful in walking in the “things that accompany salvation” (**v9**). This they will do if they resist the temptation to become lazy in their faith, but instead are diligent to “imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”

Things that Accompany Salvation

We learn from this passage that there are things that **accompany salvation** which we may fail to inherit if we are not diligent. These things are “the powers of the age to come” which God wants us to enjoy now and to demonstrate now in order to give the gospel authority. There are many blessings of the age to come that we can receive by faith. Jesus said that all we need to do is ask. Anyone who is saved should seek the whole package – gifts of the Holy Spirit, effectiveness in prayer, blessing in every endeavour and the resources to be a blessing to others – and divine healing, the particular blessing we are discussing.

Jesus demonstrated healing, promised healing and commissioned us to heal. Let’s get passionate about it and start to see inroads made against the deceit of Satan and see God glorified.

Resist the Temptation to Become Lazy

If we are to bear good fruit as believers we must not become lazy in our faith. Sadly, many Christians just sit back and accept the world as it is – horribly messed up by sin and the Devil, and wait for death to carry them into Glory. This is not what we are called to. We are called to do God’s will and demonstrate and extend God’s Kingdom on earth. Jesus showed us that God’s will is for healing, so let’s not be lazy, but passionate! Healing takes faith and courage and boldness and persistence. These are not qualities that come easily so we need to resist laziness and giving up.

Diligence

The writer to the Hebrews says that diligence is needed to inherit the promises. Diligence is the disciplined, steady, earnest and persistent application to an undertaking. We set our minds on a goal and continue faithfully pursuing it until we achieve it. Diligence is the opposite of laziness and is required when attempting challenging goals, especially where we might face resistance.

If we are to inherit the promises we need diligence. Let us recognise that from the beginning and settle in our hearts and minds that we will face the difficulties and persevere in faith, holding fast to God’s promises and giving no ground to the Devil. We will prevail.

Imitate

The next key to inheriting the promises is to find people who are a step ahead of us and imitate their faith. It is all too common to find people imitating the dress, hairstyle and mannerisms of people they admire, rather than the faith and diligence that has got them there. Let us learn what we can from those who have already made some progress towards our goal. If possible it is good to spend time and even travel with such people. We need to pick up their faith and passions, their confidence in God and the way they deal with setbacks. A real person is always much better than a book or a sermon, because books and sermons are usually heavily edited to show the good stuff. But it is often the way a person deals with setbacks and failure that makes all the difference between someone who inherits and someone who doesn’t.

Through Faith

It is through faith that the promises are inherited. Our initial salvation and the forgiveness of sins come through faith in the effectiveness of Jesus’ death on the cross and God’s love for us. The “things that

accompany salvation” do not come automatically, but as we believe God’s promises and receive them by faith. We are persuaded by the scriptures and by the Holy Spirit that God wants us to receive some promise – such as the gift of divine healing. So we ask God to give it and take Him at His word when He says again and again in scripture, “Whatever you ask in faith you shall receive.”

God is not pleased with people who say “The challenge is too great. I cannot do it” They are relying on their own strength and denying the power of God! On the other hand, God is honoured and glorified when we have confidence in Him. The scripture says, “no one who believes in him will be put to shame.” (**Rom 10:11**)

We must then stand firm on those promises, even in the face of contrary evidence, until we do see the evidence that we have received what we asked. Faith is not a shot in the dark, it is not a raffle ticket for a prize. Faith does not say, “Oh well. That didn’t work. I’ll try something else.” James warns against such half-hearted faith: “But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord” (**Jas 1:6-7**). If our faith wavers in this way there is something seriously wrong. Either our faith has not been placed in God, or we think that God is unreliable.

Faith is the assurance that God has made a promise and that He is faithful, so giving up is not an option.

Through Patience

If you discover that you have inherited a house from a relative, you are not going to give up as soon as some solicitor says there are complications. You will be persistent and patient and even insistent until you receive what is due. The same is true of our inheritance in God. Satan will no doubt do all he can to hinder us and delay things and make us lose hope. But Jesus assures us that God is not slow in answering His elect (**Lk 18:8**), nevertheless, because of the opposition we face we may give up. Despite all Jesus’ assurance of answered prayer, He asks, “when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

Again the writer to the Hebrews says, “So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, ‘He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.’ But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.” (**Heb 10:35-39**).

We believe God and His promises, we acknowledge that we are opposed by a lying enemy, we learn the sad lessons from Israel’s unbelief and we determine, by God’s grace to maintain our confidence in God and persevere through all difficulties until we can say, “I have inherited what God promised.”

Inheriting what God has promised

The goal of our resistance, diligence, imitation of faith and our own faith and patience is to inherit what God has promised to those who believe. In Hebrews 11 we have a catalogue of Old Testament saints who though “having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise” (**11:39**). Now it may be that having pursued the promises with diligence and faith some of us die before inheriting them. But that is not our expectation. These are promises for now, not just for glory! We know that we have come into our inheritance when we see the sick healed, the lost saved and our prayers answered. This encourages us to maintain our confidence in God and keep going for more and more of God’s kingdom revealed on earth.

Fight the fight of faith – and win!

Paul tells Timothy to “Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called” (**1Ti 6:12**). And to “fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands” (**2Ti 1:6**).

Faith is a fight because we have such a limited sense of the spiritual world. We are used to believing what we can see and touch and things we can understand and explain. We trust in cause and effect. To trust in things we cannot see or touch, and which are not subject to the normal principals of cause and effect is thoroughly unnatural to us – especially to those brought up in a “western” education system. A Christian

has to reverse this notion of reality. “So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal” (**2Co 4:18**). This is a constant and universal challenge. If we had nothing more than the scriptures to go on then it would be a very great challenge, but in fact God gives us faith and we have the inner witness of the Holy Spirit who encourages our faith and we also have the testimony of 2000 years of Christian experience of God’s faithfulness – and of course our own experience of God working.

So our rootedness in the material world is, I think, our main challenge to faith. But in addition there is the opposition of our defeated foe Satan. Paul says to the Ephesians, “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (**Eph 6:10-12**). When we face particular difficulties or opposition from other people, we should remember to take our stand in God, knowing that Jesus disarmed Satan on the cross.

The Israelites had to learn how to prevail against their enemies, pressing on with the promise of God’s presence with them. “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you” (**De 31:6**). We too must “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong” (**1Co 16:13**).

God is looking for courageous Christians who will dare to believe God and act with the confidence that He is with them and for them. He wants us to take hold of the promises He has given us.