



**Healing
and
Down Syndrome**
by
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The Terms

Because of a lack of knowledge of what the Bible teaches, and in particular doctrine, many Christians are often confused about the doctrine of healing. Many do not understand that *miraculous healing* is very often different from the ‘*gifts of healing*’ and the claims thereof. At the outset this author would state that miraculous healing is sovereign and of God and thus scripturally could not be said to have ceased, just as any miracle of God is possible. But the twentieth Century has seen an epidemic in the teaching of, and the claims for, the *gifts* of miraculous healing. The Pentecostal/Charismatic movement claims the gifts of healing have returned or are for today. Yet the general teaching and historic witness of the early Church Fathers and down through the centuries has always been that the gifts of healing ceased after Jesus and His disciples ended their ministries.

Have the gifts of healing returned? Are there tests to see if the gifts of healing are current?

This debate rages back and forth - on one side people attempt to use scripture to state the sign gifts have ended; others cite experience and examples of modern healings. But one approach this author feels is largely forgotten in this debate is the very *purpose* of these gifts in the first place. When I have asked this question of Christians (even at Bible colleges) the question has often been met with silence.

The Purpose of the ‘Sign Gifts’

The gifts of healing, miracles, tongues, etc, are called ‘sign gifts’ because they, like a sign, point to something - a purpose. This purpose is unequivocally stated in scripture as being *the proof of the Messiahship of Christ*, the anointed one (the ‘christos’) sent by God. The Jews needed to know Jesus Christ was truly the Messiah as detailed in the Hebrew scriptures. The sign gifts proved and credentialed Jesus as the Messiah and his apostles as ordained by him (Lk.9:1; 2Cor.12:12 ‘*signs of an apostle*’) to perform these signs. ***And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God...*** (Jn.20:30,31); ***‘...Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you...*** (Acts 2:22).

When John the Baptist asked the disciples for *proof of the Messiahship* of Christ, Jesus said to His disciples: ***‘Go your way, and tell John what things you have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached’*** (Lk.7:21-22).

The passage above is one of the most telling scriptures in this debate! What is so special about *‘the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached’*? The actions are exactly the actions prophesied for the person of the Messiah in the Old Testament: ***‘...behold, your God will come...he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing...’*** (Is.35:4-6). In the synagogue Jesus also quoted another verse from this same book for himself being the Messiah: ***‘And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind...’*** (Lk.4:17-19). This was a quote from Isaiah 61:1,2 and it shocked and angered the Jews that Jesus was claiming this for himself *as the Messiah*.

The signs of the Messiah were shown in the sign gifts which he performed and which pointed clearly to the Messiahship.

If the sign gifts were to authenticate the Messiahship of Jesus then do we need these gifts today? Why did they historically cease after the first century and that fact testified to by the early church fathers? Why would they return in the twentieth Century with the Pentecostal movement? Do we need them for the same purpose, when we have the closed canon of scripture *with the full completed revelation of Jesus Christ as the Messiah*? Why is it that scripture attests to these signs being ‘past’? ***‘Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds (2Cor.12:12); ‘How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own***

will?' (Heb.2:3,4). The Greek here uses the *aorist indicative* - which means a *definite* time in the *past* rather than any continuity. Even in the epistles we see the sign gifts ceasing - Epaphroditus was '*sick nigh unto death*' (Phil.2:27); Trophimus was '*left at Miletum sick*' (2Tim.4:20); Timothy took medicine for his sickness (1Tim.5:23).

The Test for the Sign Gifts

There is a litmus test for the 'sign gifts' and in particular the 'gifts of healing'. Simply compare the claimed 'healings' of today with those of the time of Christ and the Apostles. In the Gospel of Matthew alone it is clear that Jesus healed '*all*' (Matt. 23:24; 8:16; 10:1,8; 12:15; 14:36; etc.); and '*every sickness*' that came to him were *completely* healed (12:13; 20:34;). Jesus healed '*all*' whether they had faith or not! (Lk.17:11-19; Matt.8:1,14; 12:10; 13:58). Added to this, many healings were to do with *organic diseases* which cannot be healed psychosomatically.

A *functional disease* is one in which an organ does not function properly. Functional diseases change the function of the tissue but not its structure and can be affected by the mind, hence 'healing' can be by psychosomatic influences.

An *organic disease* is one in which the organ is diseased, maimed or even defunct. Diabetes, Down Syndrome, heart attacks, some cancers, broken bones and congenital deformities are all included as organic diseases. A functional disease might be a sore arm; an organic disease might be a withered arm or no arm at all. Today's so called faith 'healings' are more to do with functional diseases. Even then only *some* are 'healed' and often 'partially' with the symptoms returning in a few days. These 'failures' are simply not *instant, complete* and 100% successful as in the true *gifts* of healing. No one has ever been raised from the dead (modern healers give funeral parlours and cemeteries a wide birth) or healed of incurable diseases such as AIDS or Down Syndrome!

We must be honest with ourselves and admit that no one today possesses the true gifts of healing as Jesus and the Apostles did!

The One Test to Challenge the ‘Gifts of Healing’

Down Syndrome is a good test for those claiming to have the *gifts* of healing. It cannot be healed psychosomatically. It is a genetic disorder caused by the presence of all or part of a third copy of chromosome 21. Derived from this are physical growth delays, characteristic facial features, and an intellectual disability (often with an IQ of an 8-10 year old or less). Typical is a small chin, slanted eyes, flat nose, a single crease of the palm, a protruding tongue in a smaller mouth, a short neck, instability in some joints and stunted growth.

To cure this syndrome would require a re-creation and sorting of chromosomes apart from the symptoms above. Apart from a miracle of God there is no cure for this condition. Has any faith healer or any claiming the gifts of healing ever cured any of these people? The answer is a resounding ‘no’! Such healers need to be challenged to do these healings if any are to claim that the gifts of healing are here today. Today we hear many stories of faith healings, which when checked forensically are found to be psychosomatic, partial healings, handed down exaggerated stories, misplaced diagnosis, and many actually are fraudulent and lies. The Pentecostal/Charismatic movement and the Internet are awash with such claims.

You don’t see faith healers working with cases such as Down Syndrome or in hospitals, just as you don’t see psychics winning the lottery or prophets predicting world events. *Such healers are not exhibiting the true gifts of healing.*

Yet amazingly there have been some rare and foolish claims of healing of Down Syndrome by Christians. Some of these are rather disputed claims of ‘improvements’ which again is not exhibiting the true gifts of healing. There have been some claims of prenatal babies being healed of Down Syndrome after prayer. One of these claims came from a large Pentecostal church in Seoul, South Korea which claimed 21 women with Down Syndrome babies in the womb were healed after prayer. (1) But when asked for results of tests, they were not forthcoming. Eventually only eight QUAD tests were revealed. This test tests four factors in the blood of the foetus to help make a decision about further genetic testing. *The test is not conclusive as to Down Syndrome.* The results in the eight patients were: The first child’s QUAD test result was 1:60 (one to sixty); the second child was 1:216; the third was 1:100;

the fourth was 1:41; the fifth was 1:100; the sixth was 1:69; the seventh was 1:33; and the eighth child was 1:267. The problem with the particular test is that it is not failsafe nor as thorough as other tests such as even high resolution ultrasounds. And many of these tests can have 'false negatives.' The QUAD tests here actually showed that for the women the odds remained high that they would NOT have a child with Down Syndrome, rather than that they would! Yet the church claimed that God had answered prayers: '*God is almighty. He can change the abnormality of zillions of chromosomes in a moment...*' But clearly there was no evidence that these babies were miraculously 'healed' of Down Syndrome.

There have been several other foolhardy claims of the same healing of Down Syndrome. In 1990 the world famous Pentecostal leader, John Wimber, claimed to have prayed over more than 200 children with Down syndrome. On questioning he admitted to his disappointment that only one of the 200 had shown any sign of healing. But on further examination the truth was that this child still had symptoms of Down Syndrome. The claim was that the child had '*reached the lower end of the normal range*'.

Even if this was a true healing then the healing rate here was .5% - hardly anything like *the 100% success rate for the true gifts of healing* as in scripture. Further it was found that this child was not any more unusual for Down Syndrome children which can reach the lower end of the normal range of academic achievement - something also not hard to find in 200 cases. In fact this result is less than what can be achieved by health professionals!

One of the most dramatic accounts of a healing of Down Syndrome came from Benny Hinn, believed by many to be the greatest signs and wonders exponent of the last few decades. He claimed to heal a teenage girl from Pakistan called Sarah, with Down Syndrome. We were told she had been given six months to live by doctors, due to 'holes in her heart' and she needed a wheelchair and oxygen. Sarah had been at several Benny Hinn crusades and *not been healed*. But on this occasion Hinn walked her around the stage and she 'fell down in the spirit'. Benny proclaimed God was healing her heart condition. An investigator rang Sarah's family some weeks later and was told she was not using a wheelchair any more. But what we were not told was that the diagnosis

of six months to live was given *three years before*. And *the Down Syndrome was not healed*. (2)

When investigating many claims of healing it will be found over and over that the person was either not healed fully, the person never had the claimed illness, exaggerations abound, or the story simply cannot be collaborated with documentation and the ones claiming the healings cannot provide evidence.

One author has boldly issued a challenge that exemplifies the farce of the claims that the gift of healings are in existence today: *'I put a challenge to all those who lay claim to a personal ongoing 'healing ministry' today: Don't just tarry in your tent meetings waiting for all those poor people to line up in front of you. Instead, go out into the casualty departments of your local hospitals on a Saturday night and bring instantaneous organic healing to the battered and broken victims of the brawls and accidents that present themselves here for treatment. Then nip up to the surgical wards and lay your hands on the amputees and hopeless cases, so that their truncated limbs and diseased entrails will be returned to them. When those places have been emptied, find your local 'institute for the blind' and bring some colour into their lives for the first time with your remarkable healing powers. Then buzz over to the offices of the 'spastic society' and get them to take you out to their many training centres, where you can restore those withered limbs on the spot...make that Down Syndrome melt away from those little faces...take a taxi across to the local mortuary and bring some of it's frigid occupants out with you for a breath of fresh air...While we're on the subject, isn't it about time you discarded those eye glasses?...Why wait? For those are the kinds of healings which the Lord Jesus and the Apostles carried out in the course of their ministry (Lk.22:50,51; Mk.3:1-5; Lk.8:43,44; Jn.9: 1-11; 11:43,44)...Do not make the false claim you are doing the works of Jesus...'* (3)

The Root Issue

This author believes the signs and wonders movement and the many claims of the gifts of healing being used today is one of the greatest spiritual deceptions of the twentieth century. But the biggest concern this author has is that this healing epidemic and the false claims of

healing *detracts from the true Gospel*. In much Pentecostal teaching this healing is taught as part of the atonement Jesus procured for us on the cross. Healing becomes an *addition* to the Gospel of Jesus dying *for our sins*.

The gospel of physical healing is a false gospel and offers false hope. It is an *addition* to the vital doctrine of the atonement. It *detracts* from faith alone and *adds* with sight and the sensations. It confuses, minimises and adds to the message of the Gospel of grace that comes from the work of Jesus on the cross *for our sins*.

One author says: *'If Christians believe the unsubstantiated claims of present day Charismatic leaders they will believe anything! If they believe the ludicrous and extravagant yarns of extrovert, spiritually deluded showmen, how will they stand against the lying wonders to be unleashed by the Devil during the final apostasy?'* (4)

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(1) <http://www.downsyndromeprenataltesting.com/pastor-heals-down-syndrome-prenatally-with-prayer/>

(2) November 2013 *'My night with Benny Hinn'*

<https://www.premierchristianity.com/Past-Issues/2013/November-2013/My-night-with-Benny-Hinn>

(3) Alan Morrison, England 2001; *Diakrisis* Jan/Feb, 2001

(4) *'The Charismatic Phenomenon'* by Masters & Whitcomb, P.68