

Facts About Faith Healing

No Bible believer will deny that healing is divine or that we should pray for the sick. The question is: Does God heal miraculously today? A miracle is an act above the laws of nature; something which nature could not do in its ordinary course of operation. Our society has so perverted this word that anything from a narrow escape to a successful telethon is called a miracle.

Even in the first century, the gift of healing was never used merely as an end in itself. In fact, not all the sick were healed (see Philippians 2:25-30; 1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20). The ultimate purpose of such gifts was to produce faith. "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 ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30,31).

Why do we flatly deny the existence of miraculous gifts today?

(1) Miraculous power was given through Holy Spirit baptism and by the apostles laying their hands on certain ones (Acts 2:1-4; 8:14-18). But there is now only one baptism (Ephesians 4:5), which men can perform (Matthew 28:19). And there are no apostles alive today, thus no means of receiving spiritual gifts.

(2) Those who claim to have miraculous gifts do not claim all of them. 1 Corinthians 12:1-10 lists nine spiritual gifts. If one gift still exists, all do. If God's inspired prophets are still on earth, we should be adding their words to the New Testament. But this is contrary to those scriptures which affirm that revelation is complete (2 Timothy 3:16,17; Jude 3). In addition, modern "prophets" contradict the revelation which God has already given! (Galatians 1:6-9)

(3) The purposes of miraculous gifts have been fulfilled. God's messengers once used miracles to prove their message came from Heaven, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds" (2 Cor. 12:12). But God's word is now confirmed (Hebrews 2:3,4), and we can know what to believe by reading God's revelation (Eph. 3:4).

(4) The New Testament itself says that miracles would cease when "that which is perfect" would come (1 Corinthians 13:10). We now have God's "perfect" revelation (James 1: 25), thus miraculous gifts have ceased. (Note: The effort to make "that which is perfect" refer to Christ is not only out of context for 1 Corinthians 13, it is actually contrary to the context. The perfect must be of the same nature as the "in part" referred to in verses 9, 10. Paul did not have "Christ" or "His coming" in part. He "knew" in part. This knowledge would be made perfect when the revelation of God was made complete.)

(5) The miracles of the New Testament were performed by godly men who never begged for so much as a dime for any miracle. What a contrast to the fake healers of our day. Further, the apostles did not have to debate with anyone over their ability to work miracles, for even their enemies could not deny the facts (Acts 4:16). They were willing to be put to the test. Jesus commended the church at Ephesus for testing those who claimed to be apostles (Revelation 2:2). Is this true today? "Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain" (Proverbs 25:14). Don't let boastful deceivers lead you astray.

- by Rick Duggin

God's Image

Marcus Terentius Varro (118 - 27 BC) is described as "Rome's greatest scholar." He wrote more than 400 books on many subjects. Among his writings is this statement. "**They who first introduced images of the gods removed fear and added error.**"

This thoughtful statement helps us understand even more why Moses reminded Israel at Sinai of God's form. Deut. 4:14, "You saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire." It also highlights the reason behind God's command prohibiting any physical depictions of Him. Vs. 16, "lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure." Exodus 20:4, "You shall not make for yourselves any carved image or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above or that is in earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth."

We cannot love and serve the Lord in an acceptable manner unless we have an accurate understanding of His character. Any physical portrayal, however, whether with pictures, symbols, or statues, distorts our awareness of His true character and lessens a healthy respect for His awesome holiness and power. If we knew what God really looked like, we would inevitably make an image and seek to understand him through that image, instead of through what is revealed in His Word.

If Rome's greatest worldly scholar could see the dangers of misrepresenting their false gods, how much more should we who have God's Word, which makes us complete for every good work, understand the danger.

Our desire must be to have a proper respect for God and to grow in our knowledge of Him. We are made in the image of God, let us not make Him in our image.

- by Shane Williams

Preparing for the Storm

We've seen it many times: the report on the news tells of a big storm approaching. Predictions are made of wide spread damage and devastation. Images of people boarding up their homes and evacuating threatened areas flash across the screen. But, did you notice? The sun is usually shining brightly while all of this is taking place. The skies are wonderfully blue. Why all the fuss? The answer is simple, of course. You can't wait until the storm hits to make your preparations. So, while the storm is yet hours, even days away; the necessary precautions are being taken.

There's an important spiritual lesson to be learned from this. Life is a constant cycle of periods of relative calm followed by often violent storms. It is essential that we prepare for these turbulent times, even when it appears for the moment that all is well. If we wait for the storm to hit, it will be too late! Jeremiah said, "If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, then how can you compete with horses? If you fall down in a land of peace, how will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?" (12:5). His point is an obvious one. If you can't stand firm when the going is easy, you'll never make it when the going gets tough.

Our strength for living comes to us through the Bible. It provides the "power" for our salvation (Rom 1:16), and gives us hope which is a sure "anchor of the soul" even in the raging tempest of life (Heb. 6:19). The question is: are you using it, learning it, so that you can endure the coming storms? Think!

- by Greg Gwin