

THE GIFT OF HEALING.

There is nothing strange in the fact that men of the world, people who have not become new creatures (by faith) in Christ Jesus, should doubt the power of God to heal diseases without any visible agency; but that any who have been "chosen through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth," should doubt it, is strange.

We can hardly believe that any who are thus chosen do doubt, either God's power or willingness to heal in answer to the prayer of faith, without any visible remedial agent. Why should the child of God limit the power of Him "in whom we live, and move, and have our being?" But perhaps some who do not doubt the power of God, doubt that He has the will, or that He does in these days heal the sick in answer to the "prayer of faith."

For our part we do not doubt the power, nor the will, nor the fact that He does thus heal in answer to the prayer of those who are inspired with faith to ask for it.

But as it is very desirable to be healed when suffering with diseases, the question naturally arises, "May all be thus healed?" We think we may safely answer, that if all men were thus inspired with faith, they might. By the term "inspired with faith," we mean, to be animated by the Spirit of God with faith.

We will not here enter into a discussion of the different meanings of the word faith, which are so various, but only say that, as it is used here, it means confidence.

Confidence or faith in what? In God's word. But, says one, "faith cometh by hearing." Yes, and "hearing by the word of God,"

and when the Spirit of God speaks the word to us, as it does sometimes, it inspires us with faith.

How shall I then obtain that much to be desired object, inspiration of faith for healing? Find out if possible if it is God's will to heal you. But, says one who is very enthusiastic, surely it is his will to heal us, if we only will to have him, for "whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." (Mark 11:24.) But notice, it is as if he had said, "whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray," see that those desires are in accord with the Spirit and word of God, so that ye may have a foundation to "believe that ye (are entitled to) receive them, and ye shall have them." If one were desiring to offer a petition to some earthly potentate, the proper thing would be to find how it could be done in harmony with His laws; and it is fully as important when offering a petition to the "King of kings."

The apostle says, "Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss." (James 4:3.) This is what Jesus wanted those to whom he was speaking to guard against, viz., careless asking; that whatsoever they desired there should be sufficient ground for believing they would receive, and when such was the case they would receive it. An all-sufficient ground for believing would be to know that it is His will.

The leper offered a very good prayer (Matt. 8:2.) when he said, "Lord, if thou wilt thou canst make me clean." He was inspired with faith as far as his knowledge went, and Jesus graciously supplied the missing link by saying, "I will."

Now, let us suppose we are diseased and suffering. We wish to be healed. But are we sure that we do? The confiding child of God, he who has faith in His wisdom and love says, "If it is His will; He knows better than I do what evils I am exposed to, understands my **[R437 : page 8]** nature better than I do myself,

knows what influence I would exert in whatever condition. If it is His will to rebuke the enemy now, Amen."

But shall I try to find out what His will is in the matter? Certainly, for how can I ask "according to His will" (1 John 5:14,15) unless I do?

Then I will inquire if it is God's will that all diseases, and death even, should be removed now in this age? Manifestly not, for they are the penalty of sin, and the penalty must be executed (Gen. 3:16,19.) All the descendants of Adam must die, all must become acquainted with the exceeding sinfulness of sin by experiencing the sorrowful effects of it. Then only in exceptional cases can it be asked "according to His will." What are those cases then, those exceptions? Under what circumstances may I ask my Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus, to heal or cure? Under the same circumstances that Jesus did.

He was invested with the power of God (John 5:30), and used it to do miracles and thus attest His divine commission and glorify God in the fulfillment of the Scriptures (Matt. 8:17), giving to the world the assurance that in the fulness of time (Eph. 1:10), this same power manifested in the sons of God (Rom. 8:19), complete in him, should restore fallen humanity to its sinless, painless, physically and morally perfect condition.

But does He not heal for any other purpose now? None that we know of. What is done now we understand to be done to attest to divinity and give assurance that He will "show the exceeding riches of His grace in the ages to come." (Eph. 2:7.)

What, attest to divinity now? Yes, divinity operating through the chosen members of the body of Christ. (Eph. 1:22,23.) Then, shall we expect that every member will be invested with the power

of healing, and that this is an only evidence of membership in the body? Oh, no, certainly not, that which should be satisfying to us is that the gift of healing is retained in the body.

We have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." "Having, then, gifts differing according to the grace given unto us." (Rom. 12:4,5,6.) "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. For to one (member) is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom: to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:4,8,9.)

But do you ask, "Will my prayer of faith heal the sick, either myself or others"? Yes, your "prayer of faith" would, if you are an individual belonging to that member to whom the gift of healing is given. But if I am not, then how? In that case the Apostle James gives the best advice we know of: "Call for the elders of the church (congregation) and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up."

But when he calls for the elders he should use discrimination.

As in the physical body we would not make use of the foot, to perform the work of the hand, so now; send for those elders who have the "gift of healing" if you know of any such, if you do not, you might as well not send for any. Those having the "word of knowledge," or the "word of wisdom," or the "discerning of spirits," though imparted "by the same spirit," would be of no service to you for healing, and you should not feel like chiding them for not possessing that gift, or for not being an individual belonging to that member whose office it is to heal.

We have reason to believe that when the Lord is about to do through any member of the body, a supernatural work, he will make it known beforehand to that member through whom the work is to be accomplished. (Amos 3:7.)

"The Spirit of truth will declare to you the coming things." (John 16:13. E.D.) We understand by this and other Scriptures, that the Spirit of truth shows, not only the things of the coming age, referred to in God's Word, but impresses the member or members through whom God would do a work, that he is about to do it; and this is what we mean by being inspired with faith; and it is this inspired prayer, we think, which the Apostle James calls "the prayer of faith."

Let us not fall into the error of thinking that any individual constitutes a complete member of the body of Christ, for it cannot be that there are so many members as there are individuals; but all those having "the same office" constitute one member, and those having another office another member, and so on, and herein we see the significance of the provision made in the promise that two (or more) shall receive what they are agreed in asking (according to His will of course). (Matt. 18:9.) We see the beauty of many members constituting one body, let us not lose sight of the beauty of many individuals constituting one member; as there are in the natural body individual muscles, tendons, nerves, veins, &c., constituting one member. If we should bear this in mind, we should not feel any uneasiness because certain individuals of some member had not the qualities belonging to the individuals of some other member, but would allow the mind to dwell with delight upon the necessary difference between the individuals constituting the members, and the difference between the members themselves, and yet the beautiful oneness of the whole. One individual may sometimes represent a member, but it requires more than one to

constitute a member. Therefore we can see that the different individuals in a member should be united in their petitions, and because the greater share of our spiritual wants are in common.

It is no cause for discouragement, that we can see, because more have not the gift of healing, any more than it would be, that one person does not have more than two eyes, or a greater number of any members in the natural body. But it is blessed to know that the body of Christ is thus in connection with the throne of God. It is blessed also to know that there is yet an active member in the body, having "the word of wisdom," and another having "the word of knowledge" imparted by the same Spirit, and so of other gifts and graces, and to each (member) is given the manifestation of the Spirit, for the benefit of all" (the members.) (1 Cor. 12:7 E.D.)

So if one member, or individual of a member, has not a certain gift, for instance, the gift of healing, it may be benefited by some member that has. If one has not the word of knowledge it may be benefited by some member that has, and so on.

Let us not despise each other's gifts, nor wish that we belonged to some other member, for "all these things performs the one and the same Spirit, distributing to each in particular as it will." E.D.

Neither should we despise our own gifts, and thus undervalue what God has given us. "If the foot should say because I am not of the hand, I am not of the body. Is it, therefore, not of the body?" We are glad and rejoice that the gifts of this Spirit are still manifested in the body, and among them, "the gifts of healing," but let us not all desire the gifts of healing, nor find fault with those who have them not, for "now hath God set the members, every one of them, in the body as it hath pleased him," and "if they were all one member where were the body?"

So we see the need of a diversity of gifts. Hence "he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

This is the work of the members now, "till we all come in (into) the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

We are sorry to think that any should doubt that the gift of healing is still an office belonging to a member of the body of Christ, and we are somewhat surprised to see that some individuals of that member should think that any, or all of the other members, might, or should, have the same office.

"But you earnestly desire (are we not too apt to?) the more eminent gifts, and yet a much more excellent way I point out to you," (in the thirteenth chapter of 1 Cor.)

J. C. SUNDERLIN.
