

[R1997 : page 147]

RESTITUTION, FAITH CURES, PRAYER CURES AND THE GIFT OF HEALING.

"Behold, ye *despisers*, and wonder and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." – Acts 13:41.

WE are constantly in receipt of inquiries concerning Mind Cures, Faith Cures, Prayer Cures, etc. We make general answer again, that since the Scriptures teach that we are already in the "harvest," the lapping time during which the Gospel age closes and the Millennial age dawns, we should expect to see just what we do see, – *beginnings* of great changes. And not only do we see political, social and religious changes in progress, but, as we should expect, we see also beginnings of personal, *physical* restitution here and there. These great changes are stealing along so quietly as not to attract much attention or occasion [R1998 : page 147] great surprise, just as inventions and general knowledge are spreading gradually. This is God's usual method of operation: he is thus preparing the world in some measure for the wonderful manifestations of his power in the near future, which will be in restoring both health to the sick and life to the dead, – the great work of Restitution "of that which was lost" by the fall. Thus the new dispensation is being gradually ushered in as the dawning day.

Accordingly, just as the troubles of this Day of the Lord break out here and there, and in intermittent paroxysms, but gradually and to the unobservant imperceptibly, increasing in severity and bitterness with each spasm, so with the marks of physical healing: they come in a *variety* of ways, here and there a number, and then a subsiding, a lull in which there are few or none, but all the while gradually becoming more common, and from a greater variety of sources and seeming causes.

THE GIFT OF HEALING.

But, one inquires, is not this the "*gift*" of healing mentioned by the Apostle in 1 Cor. 12:28,30? And has not this gift been in possession of the Church ever since Pentecost?

No; the *gift* of healing possessed by some members of the early Church was totally different from the healings of to-day. The Apostles in exercising this *gift* did not practice "mental healing," nor even "prayer healing."

Take as an illustration the case of the lame man healed by Peter and John as related in Acts 3:1-11. Peter and John did not kneel down and pray with the man, nor did they get him to fix his attention as "mind-healers" would; they gave him no medicine and used no oil, nor did they even require the man to believe in Jesus first, nor to have faith in their power to heal him. But while he looked at the apostles expecting to receive some money, Peter took him by the hand and lifted him up, saying, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." And immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength, and he, leaping up, stood and walked. This is an illustration of the use of the *gift* of healing, and there are many more such recorded. – See Acts 9:34; 14:10; 16:18; 19:12.

We do not think that after a careful scrutiny of [R1998 : page 148] the subject, any one to-day would claim to possess this *gift*. The gifts described by Paul were given only to the early Church, as a means for its introduction to the attention of both Jews and Gentiles, and also as a means for edification and instruction to the Church itself. For this last named reason one or more gifts were bestowed upon each one who associated with the Church (1 Cor. 12:7,11; 14:26), being conferred, by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, upon all who confessed Christ by immersion. Thus it was that these gifts became a token or sign of the possession of the holy spirit. Yet the gifts of the spirit and the spirit itself are separate and distinct. To-day we possess the spirit, but certainly not all of those miraculous gifts. And even then some had *gifts* of the spirit

who were evidently far from being filled with the spirit. That one might have those gifts and yet be "nothing" and as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, devoid of love, and hence without Christ's spirit, the apostle clearly shows in 1 Cor. 13:1-3.

The power of conferring those gifts was vested in the apostles, and in them only: none others in their day or since have been able to confer those gifts which Paul describes; hence they did "vanish away" when the apostles died. By that time the Church had been brought prominently before the attention of the world, and therefore those miraculous gifts were not necessary for that purpose; and by that time, too, they began to have the New Testament and parts of the Old Testament in the possession of each congregation, so that coming together they could edify and instruct and build one another up with the truth from those inspired sources, and not longer require, as at first, the miraculous gifts as a means for their edification and instruction.

That only the apostles could confer those gifts is proved: first, by the fact that the claimed successors of the apostles cannot communicate them since, and second, by the cases recorded which show that none except the apostles ever did have the power to bestow those gifts. Notice, in proof of this, that though Philip, the evangelist, possessed gifts and preached and baptized, yet he was not able to bestow gifts of the holy spirit upon others, and when a necessity arose for their impartation the apostles Peter and John were sent from Jerusalem for the purpose. Further, notice the case of Simon Magus: although one of the baptized, and evidently one of those granted a gift, he had no power to bestow gifts upon others. It was this *apostolic privilege*, of bestowing these gifts upon others, which Simon wanted to purchase with money, and for which he was so sharply reproved. – Acts 8:13-20.

Instead of miraculously receiving gifts as at first, we now *grow the fruits* of the spirit, which are meekness, gentleness, patience, moderation, brotherly kindness, charity, etc. These fruits may really be counted as gifts or acquirements also, though they come to us not by

apostolic benediction, but in a different way – by cultivation. Hence we find, too, that although St. Paul calls these graces "gifts" in one place, he calls them "fruits" elsewhere. (Compare Gal. 5:22; 1 Cor. 13:1-8. In Eph. 5:9, these are called fruits of the *light*. See readings of old MSS.) Under God's present dealing, all the needs of the church are none the less provided for than when the "gifts" were bestowed, as at first, in a miraculous manner, by the laying on of the apostles' hands. Now we find that the spirit of truth is pleased to mould and fashion and use every consecrated one by utilizing his *natural talents* and advantages of education, language, etc., in teaching, edifying and nourishing the true Church which is the body of Christ.

So, then, whatever may be said of the various prevailing mind cures, faith cures and prayer cures, they surely are not of the *gifts* possessed by the early Church, and recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

"THESE SIGNS SHALL FOLLOW."

But, says one, you seem to take no notice of that remarkable passage so frequently quoted by our Faith Cure friends, "These signs shall follow them that believe, In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover." – Mark 16:17,18.

Yes, we are aware of this claim, but we have two objections to urge. First, neither observation nor history attests the fulfillment of such a statement. Of one thing we all have evidence; *viz.*, that those signs do not now accompany belief in Christ. Nor is there evidence that they extended beyond the apostles' days and the time of the miraculous gifts. Even then, we have no record of all these things being fulfilled in *all that believed*.

Second, the oldest and most authentic Greek manuscripts (the Sinaitic and Vatican MSS.) do not contain these verses at all, but end

at verse 8. It seems evident that Mark's gospel was originally incomplete and that some one undertook to finish it for him about the fifth century; for the Alexandrine MS., written in the fifth century is the oldest Greek MS. which contains the last twelve verses. Read these spurious verses carefully, note the marginal reading in the Revised Version, note their untruthfulness in the light of facts, and mark them in your Bible.

"ASK WHAT YE WILL."

But, suggests another, even setting aside this spurious statement of Mark 16:17,18, and all claim to [R1998 : page 149] possessing the "gifts" of the early Church, did not our Lord's promises regarding the answering of our prayers cover the entire ground, and make possible the healing of the sick or even the moving of mountains during this entire age; and is it not because of lack of faith that these things have not been more common in the past? And is it not because of increased faith, rather than because of the dawning of the Millennium, that the healing of the sick is now becoming more frequent?

Our answer to both of the questions is, No: a great misunderstanding prevails concerning our privileges in prayer. And it is because of this misunderstanding concerning *what* we may ask for and *who* may ask, and not because of any unfaithfulness to his promise on our Lord's part, that so many thousands of prayers offered daily go *unanswered*.

The statement, "*Ye shall ask what ye will* and it shall be done unto you" is linked with certain *conditions* and *limitations*, found in the sentence preceding, which reads: "*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you.*" These limitations are wonderfully comprehensive: they show who may ask, – *ye*, believers, who are *in me*, whose wills are buried or immersed into the will of Christ Jesus; and not only so, but *ye* are privileged to ask thus, only so long as ye "*abide* in me;" for if any man abide not in Christ, he is not only "cast forth" (John 15:6), but he has no longer a share in the promise of having his petitions granted. These limitations evidently cut off from all share in this

promise the vast majority of the prayers offered. And as we continue to scrutinize our Master's words we find still further limitations which cut off many other prayers, even of those offered by the class abiding in Christ. We refer to the second condition mentioned by our Lord, as describing who may ask what they will; *viz.*, if "*my words abide in you.*" [R1999 : page 149]

Alas! that we must write it – There are few among God's professed children, very few even among those who profess to be entirely consecrated to and abiding in him, who have *his Word* abiding richly in them.

The significance of this last specification or limitation is this: In going to God to ask for anything we should realize his omniscience and wisdom, and that he is ordering and operating general affairs according to a perfect and orderly plan – his Plan of the Ages; and we should realize our own finiteness, our lack of such wisdom and appreciation of surroundings, etc., as would enable us to rule creation, if God were to give it over to our control. All true children of God who are not the merest "*babes*" realize this, and if God should say without limitation, Ask what you will, and your will shall be done, sensible ones would shrink from so grave a responsibility and cry, "Not so, O Lord,"

"I dare not touch things which involve so much."

As for the Lord's promise that if we had faith we might command a mountain to remove and it would obey us, we reason thus: This, like the other promises, was given only to such as abide in him and have his words abiding in them, and is given merely as an extreme illustration: If an emergency should occur so great as to *necessitate* the removal of a mountain, either literal or figurative, and we were sure it were the will of God, we might ask and receive.

But we need not speculate about how the mountains and lakes, seas and clouds, and rain and sunshine would move promiscuously about, and interfere with one another, if all the prayers offered heavenward in

Christ's name were answered. God is not devoting himself to the answering of such prayers; but, ignoring them, he is working out gradually his *own grand plan*, predetermined before the foundation of the world; and he assures us that notwithstanding the prayers of those who do not search his Word to know what his plan is, but who pray to him to carry out their plans and schemes, yet nevertheless, "*All his purposes shall be accomplished.*" And though few even of his children respect his Word or seek to learn from it his plan, – content rather to follow the plans and theories of men as laid down in creeds and confessions and voiced by councils and human standards, nevertheless, in the end, God's Word shall not return to him void, but shall accomplish that which he intended, and prosper in the thing whereunto it was sent. – Isa. 55:11.

No, thank God, he has not left his plan, even in spiritual matters, subject to the prayers of his prejudice-blinded and sectarian children, else each would want the whole world moulded to his own ideal whether that were Methodism, Lutheranism, Presbyterianism, Brahmanism, or what not; and all the various errors would flourish, while ZION'S WATCH TOWER and MILLENNIAL DAWN would have been financially swamped long ago. Yes, we may well thank God that he does not answer all prayers.

There was then, we see, a special and very particular reason for the close and searching limitations which our Redeemer placed about the promise that the Father would grant our requests. The import of his words, as we study them and endeavor to grasp their meaning, appears to be this: –

If you abide in me, entirely subject to my will and plan, even as I abide in the Father's love, and seek not to do mine own will but the will of him that sent me, – if thus my will is your choice and your own wills are buried and ignored, then you will seek earnestly to know *what the Father's will is*, which you know I am seeking to accomplish, that you may use your time, talents, prayers and all in the same direction [R1999

: page 150] toward the same end. And if you have this heartfelt desire to know the will of God you will remember how I studied his plan as revealed in the Law, the Psalms and the Prophets, and how I endeavored to carry out that plan, and not plans of my own making or choosing.

Then you will remember how I pointed out to you how – "Thus it is written and thus it behooveth us to fulfill all that is written," and how I taught you to search the Scriptures. Following in this course, the holy Spirit will guide you, as it has guided me, into an understanding of more and more of the divine plan as it becomes due. And if this be your attitude, if your hearts and energies are thus absorbed in the Father's plan, you may ask all the desires of your hearts – "Ye may ask what ye will." I make you this liberal promise, not by way of intimating to you that the Father would change his plans to yours, and do *your* will, but as intimating to you that, in the course I have specified, you can come so fully into sympathy with the Father and the plan of the ages which he is working out, that you will never be dissatisfied, but always able to see *your wishes* being accomplished, because your will and wish, your pleasure and satisfaction, will be to see God's will and plan progressing in God's own way and time. Thus your every prayer and wish will be accomplished – the very reverse of the experience of those who seek to do their own wills and carry out human plans, and pray for their *own* desires; for they are ever meeting with disappointments.

Settle it therefore in your hearts and have no fear for the results. No matter how dark may be the storm, or how sharp the persecution, God's great and gracious plan will not miscarry, and thus your will and your plans (which are *his*) cannot fail; and your prayers in that interest will always be heard and will be answered so far as they are correct or not in conflict with the Father's plan. And you, if perfectly in harmony with the Father, would desire to have it so. And in any case, where there is the slightest room to question his will in the matter, having my spirit or disposition, and not the spirit of the world, you will pray as I have done in your hearing, saying in connection with your petition, – "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, Father, be done." All such prayers

are sure to be answered; and in proportion as you come closer and closer into harmony with the Father's plan, and understand it, you will be less likely to ask or desire anything which would be contrary to his good pleasure to grant.

As you come to see the bountifulness of the Father's provisions, and the wisdom and care exercised by him touching your earthly interests; as you come to realize that he who has clothed the lilies of the field with beauty, and who provides food for the sparrows, loves and cares much more for you than for them, and knoweth better than you do *what* things you have *need of*; – what would strengthen and benefit, and what might injure you, as runners in the race for the great prize he has offered through Christ – as you *realize* these things your prayers for temporal things must become very modest and moderate. Indeed, you will by and by, as you realize his wisdom and care, use prayer principally as the avenue for spiritual communion. Contenting yourself with laying the cares and burdens of life at the Master's feet, you will tell him of your confidence in his love and wisdom, saying, Thy will be done; and instead of your cares you will "bear a song away." More than ever your prayers will be for the spiritual gifts, graces, fruits and blessings, singing in your hearts –

"Content whatever lot I see,
Since 'tis my God that leadeth me."

Thus, properly instructed, all who abide in Christ and in whom his word abides, might be relieved of all care (worry) concerning those earthly things which constitute the burden of so many prayers. Leaving those things to our Father's wisdom and love, our prayers would be more in the nature of thank-offerings, our hearts going out toward God in worship and adoration and in recounting the blessings and favors we already enjoy, rather than in asking those things for which the Gentiles seek. – Matt. 6:32.

True, earthly affairs sometimes perplex us, and we cannot help wondering and feeling a deep interest as to how they will result. But the

soul that *abides* in Christ, and in which his words *abide*, would not dare take the helm into his own hands to steer his own course, even where he thinks he can see; but, laboring still at the oar, pulling as best he can, he leaves the *helm* in the Father's hands and *could not ask* to have the course changed in any degree.

But may we not in all our trials and perplexities take them to the Lord in prayer? Yes, yes; truly we can. And no comfort will be greater to the perplexed or sorrowing than the privilege of telling all to the Lord. His ear is ever open to the cry of his "little ones;" and the very telling of them to him and realization of his interest in all our affairs will refresh and cheer us. It will bring to remembrance his promises never to leave nor forsake us, and his wisdom and love and ability to cause all things, favorable and unfavorable, to work together for our good. Casting all our care upon him, and realizing that according to his promise, present trouble and all other things may be overruled for the good of all concerned, and to his praise, we may arise from our knees stronger, happier and more confident, as well as in closer fellowship and communion with the Lord, than if we had attempted to order our own affairs, and to get the great Jehovah to become our [R1999 : page 151] *servant* to execute our plans, which doubtless often are foolish in his sight, and would, if permitted, work injuriously to us or to others.

THE PRAYER OF FAITH.

Death is not, as most people suppose, a natural, normal, necessary thing. It is not a step in a process of evolution to a higher state of existence, but, on the contrary, it is a catastrophe, a calamity, a penalty for sin. God indeed shows us that his wisdom is sufficient to enable him to bring a good lesson out of an evil thing, [R2000 : page 151] but it is nevertheless an evil, an enemy, an awful thing; as truly so as is sin, which God also promises that his wisdom shall yet cause to work out a result the very opposite of its natural course and action, to those who obey him. This fact, that death is a penalty, we shall not discuss here, but merely refer the reader to Paul's statements in Rom. 5:12-20.

As death is a curse and penalty, so is sickness; for sickness is the death-poison working in our systems. All sickness is part of the dying process, and hence it is as foreign to man's natural, normal condition, as designed by God, as is death itself. As death is a mark of sin, and would not have come except as a penalty for sin, so sickness is likewise a mark or brand of sin, because it is part of the dying process.

Hence it was that our Lord (who came to ransom the race of sinners), being free from sin, was free also from pain, sickness and death: so whatever he experienced of these had to be by his own consent, – *a sacrifice* on our behalf. The penalty of our sins was *death*, the sickness and pain being only incidentals; hence our redemption price was fully paid by our Lord's death. But it pleased Jehovah to bruise him [to allow him to have an experience with pain, sorrow, etc.], as well as to make *his soul* [being, existence] *an offering for sin*. (Isa. 53:10.) And since he could not suffer pain and sickness because of sin, being without sin, he was placed for a time among sinners, where his full, generous, loving sympathy for the poor and sick and miserable would lead him to spend for others his own vital energy. And as "virtue [vitality – healing vigor] went out of him" to the sick (Luke 6:19 and 8:46), so their weaknesses and pains bore down upon him. And it was in this way that "*himself took* our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." (Matt. 8:17; Isa. 53:4,5); and thus he was "touched with a *feeling* of our infirmities" and is able perfectly to sympathize as a great High Priest, – now on behalf of the church or under-priesthood, and by and by, in the Millennial day of trial and blessing, on behalf of "all the people."

As it pleased the Father that the High Priest should taste of the sinners' cup, so we may reasonably read his will relative to all the members of the Royal Priesthood to be, that they also should drink of the cup of suffering, and be immersed in the baptism of death with their Lord and Leader, in the pathway to divine glory and power.

Thus reading the Father's plans for ourselves, in the light of his will exemplified in his dealings with our Master, we may settle it at once that it is not his will to keep us from all pain and trial and sufferings, and to carry us triumphantly to glory on flowery beds of ease. Quite the reverse, indeed, must be our course if we would follow in the footsteps of him whom God set forth to be, not only a satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, but also a pattern to the church which is his body. And this much learned of God's plan and will promptly teaches us that we must not expect and should not ask freedom from pain and trouble, which his wisdom has ordained to be the path to glory.

Here some will ask: Did you not say that sickness is a mark of sin, and that Christ died for our sins, and is it not your claim that whosoever believeth in him and accepts of his ransom work is freed or justified from all sin? And this being the case, ought not such to be free both from sin's penalty, death, and from all its attendant evils, such as pain and sickness?

Yes, that reasoning is good; but you do not take all the circumstances into account: you have left out an important part; namely, It is the Father's plan that the suffering and death of the Redeemer should be followed by the suffering and death of every member of his "body" or church, before the Restitution age should be ushered in, the purpose of that age being to heal the morally and physically sick and blind and lame; to restore all who will to perfect life and every blessing lost in Eden by Adam, and redeemed at Calvary by our great High Priest's sacrifice – once for all. The plan of the ages needs to be recognized, if we would avoid the error of so many, in striving for present glory, in the time appointed for trial and suffering with Christ. Examine Rom. 8:17; 2 Cor. 1:5; Col. 1:24. Surely the Bible gives no suggestion that the "body" will be free from like sufferings with the "head."

When the sufferings of the body of Christ are ended, their glory we are assured will follow (1 Pet. 1:11); and then will ensue the great work

of filling the world ocean-deep with the knowledge of the Lord, the "restitution of all things spoken by the prophets," and the blotting out of the sins of those who accept the terms of the New Covenant sealed by the precious blood. (Acts 3:19-21.) Thus in God's due time and order all tears will be wiped away, when the former **[R2000 : page 152]** things, sin, sorrow, pain and death, shall have passed away. See the beautiful picture of this in Rev. 21:4.

But we may suppose another inquiry, – Why did our Lord and the apostles heal the sick, if that work is not really due to take place until the Millennial age of Restitution begins?

There were several reasons why they were granted the "gift of healing," as well as other gifts, not granted now. One reason was the necessity for such miracles, to introduce Christianity to the attention of the people. Our Lord mentioned his miracles to John the Baptist as a proof of his Messiahship. Messiah was to heal the sick, cause the blind to see and the deaf to hear (Isa. 29:18; 35:1-6; 42:6,7); consequently our Lord must do these things and in a measure begin the work of restitution so that Israel could recognize him and be responsible for rejecting him and his "works." (John 10:38.) But when they as a nation rejected him, as God had foreseen (Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:5), then they were rejected from the position offered them as the "royal priesthood" and Seed of promise. And then, as God had foretold, the Gospel was sent to the Gentiles to complete from them the "Seed of Abraham," the "body" of Christ, the "royal priesthood;" and the restitution work which had a beginning in our Lord's ministry was deferred until the true Israel should be complete, when Messiah, at his second coming, shall accomplish *fully* all those glorious features of the divine plan foretold by the holy prophets, and *foreshadowed* faintly in his miracles at the first advent.

That our Lord's restoring work at the first advent – the healing of some of the sick and the awakening of a few of the dead in Israel – merely shadowed forth the greater work to be accomplished at his

second presence, during the Millennium, seems clear. Had God designed a *general* healing of all the sick, even among the people of Palestine, it could have been done on a large scale instead of in exceptional cases here and there; for undoubtedly many others than Lazarus, the son of the widow of Nain, and Jairus' daughter, died during Christ's ministry. And there were many more lame and palsied and leprous and blind than those then healed.

Our Lord's object in performing the miracles is explained by the statement, "These things did Jesus and *manifested forth* [showed beforehand] his glory" – the coming glory of the Millennial age. And it was of his people's share in that coming glory, rather than of any physical healings which have since taken place amongst his disciples, that he said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father." (John 14:12.) His redemptive work at Calvary and his subsequent presentation of it to the Father as a "propitiation [satisfaction] for the sins of the whole world," was the basis for all the great works of restitution in which we with him shall be engaged in the Times of Restitution – which will indeed be far greater than anything done by our Lord at the first advent; for then the sick and the dead were only partially restored, and for a limited time only – which is as nothing compared to the full restitution of the health and vigor of perfect and everlasting life, and all that *was lost* in Adam, which will be offered to all on the terms of the New Covenant during the Millennium.

The thought we wish to impress is, that God not only had a *due time* for REDEEMING the world from sin, but that he has also a *due time* for restoring the sick and the dead. Therefore whatever work of this sort takes place before the due and appointed time must be for some special object and reason, as shown in our Lord's ministry, and in that of the Church in the days of the apostles. Just so it was in the redeeming of the world, – typical sacrifices were instituted and were permitted to stand good for temporary, typical justification, but those were not

the *real* sacrifices for sin, and never actually put away sins. As God deferred the redemption of our race until his due time, and in the fullness of time sent forth his Son to redeem us, so, in the matter of healings, though it has pleased God to make exceptions in the past for the purpose mentioned, let us not forget that these were exceptions, and that his appointed time for restitution is the Millennial age. Seeing this to be God's plan, and realizing that his plan is wisest and best, we must restrain ourselves and neither desire nor ask restitution work before restitution times – except we see cases in which it would seem to be the Father's will, and reasons why it would seem to be to his glory to make exceptions to his general rule and arrangement.

This subject will be continued in our next – considering what are the causes of sickness, the proper methods of prayer (for sickness and other matters), prayer cures, Christian Science and other unscriptural methods of healing, etc., etc.

Continued
