***Epaphroditus - PH60-02

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 2:25-30***

Please open your Bibles to Philippians 2:25-30 as we continue looking at the segment on Epaphroditus whom we have found to be a strenuous worker. We'll have just a brief review to bring us up to date in this context.

Paul exemplifies the type of Christian who is ready to give his life in the Lord's service. That is example number one in this section, beginning in Philippians 2:17. The second example to us as believers is this man named Timothy. He exemplifies the Christian who is occupied with the spiritual needs of others apart from his own promotion. Thirdly, we have been looking at Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus exemplifies the Christian who serves the Lord with unbounded physical energy. We shall see that this man's unbounded physical energy in the Lord's Service actually led him into a physical illness.

Paul esteemed Epaphroditus from the Philippians church as his brother; as his fellow worker; and, as his fellow soldier. We showed you how these are ascending levels of relationship within a local church of a pastor-teacher communicator and the congregation. All are brothers. Out of those who are brothers, some are fellow workers. Out of those who are fellow workers, some are fellow soldiers. The more that a pastor-teacher has in each category, the more effective is the outreach of the Word of God from that church, and the more stable is he in being able to conduct the ministry of that church.

Epaphroditus was in Rome with Paul as one who had been commissioned by the Philippian church, as their agent and as their minister to aid Paul in his work.

Paul has decided to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi. Epaphroditus was concerned over a problem that had developed in the Philippian congregation due to some news that had come back concerning himself. That was that the people back home at Philippi had heard that Epaphroditus was sick; and furthermore, that he was very sick. As we pointed out, in the New Testament world, illness was no small thing. A lifespan of 40 years was considered something outstanding. When you did get sick, you just got over it on your own. If you didn't have a physical body that could take it and survive, you simply died at a comparatively early age. So Epaphroditus had been serving Paul, and this church had sent him away. So they were concerned for him. Furthermore, we're told that Epaphroditus, was yearning to see the Christians back home.

**Epaphroditus's Illness**

So beginning at verse 27, we read, "For indeed he was sick near unto death. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." The word "for" is the Greek word "gar." The word "gar" introduces an explanation concerning the illness here of Epaphroditus. This word in the Greek language usually comes second in the sentence, and it has a way of placing emphasis upon the word that comes before it. The word that comes before it in this case is the Greek word "kai" which means "indeed." "Gar" is stressing the fact that indeed Epaphroditus was sick. The information they got about him was very true. It was no mistake that this man had a real physical problem. The illness, Paul goes on to point out, became very serious. What he had is described in the Greek as "astheneo." That's the Greek word for "sick." Literally this word means "without strength," and thus we get the idea of "sick." This is because when people are ill, the physical body lacks strength.

The physical body of Epaphroditus was invaded by some kind of disease or some kind of breakdown. The result of this was at one point very serious, so that he stood literally at the threshold of death. This is in the aorist tense which means that period as a whole when he was sick in Rome. It is active which means it was his physical body that was ill. It is indicative. It's a statement of fact. The phrase "near unto" is the Greek word "paraplesios." This is an adjective and it means "coming near to." It is in the neuter tense, and it indicates that what he was doing was coming near to something in his sickness. The thing that he was coming near to is described as "thanatos" which is the Greek word for "death." Epaphroditus, in other words, was dying in Rome. That's what it means. He was at death's door. He was near unto death itself.

Christians who are in the prime of their spiritual life (that is, they are super grace maturity Christians, and they are in temporal fellowship with God the father) sometimes get sick. Sometimes they even die. Job, of course, is a splendid and classic biblical example. It is not true that people only get sick because they have done something bad. It is not true that people who die young die because they have been guilty of the sin unto death. Epaphroditus was obviously in neither one of these categories. Yet he was sick, and he was sick to death. He was a godly man. He is recorded here in Scripture, along with Paul and Timothy, as an example of what Christians ought to be in their service.

Whatever the cause of this man's illness was, he was at death's door. So sickness and death are not always the result of something that is in the way of punishment. However, it is true that sometimes sickness and death is in the form of divine discipline. You have this very specifically stated in 1 Corinthians 11:30. The apostle Paul describes Christians out of fellowship, and says, concerning them, "For this cause, many are weak (that is, their physical strength begins to ebb, and then it becomes an organic illness) and sickly among you." And then some go to the point of dying and "sleep," which is a word for a Christian death.

So 1 Corinthians 11:30 tells us that sometimes Christians, under the discipline of God, find their physical strength ebbing and their emotional strength ebbing. If they persist in their willfulness and do not confess sin and come back into fellowship, they will transfer that into an organic illness. If they persist, they will die. That is known as the sin unto death. We have this further discussed in 1 John 5:16 which tells us that there is such a thing as persisting in sin to the point where God takes your life and takes you home to heaven, and in Acts 5:1-11 which describe the situation of Ananias and Sapphira. Sickness and death are sometimes matters of discipline.

**Isaiah 53:5**

There is a group today, of course, in the charismatic movement which claims that nobody has to be sick if he's a Christian. They claim that when Jesus Christ died upon the cross, He not only died for the healing of our souls, but He also died for the healing of our bodies. This is based upon Isaiah 53:5. Let me explain that to you. Isaiah 53:5 says, "He was wounded for transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes, we are healed." There is the phrase, "With His stripes, we are healed."

In the Bible there are two kinds of healing. You could take this word "heal," and you could follow it through the Scriptures. You would find that sometimes the Bible talks about healing of the soul (spiritual healing), and sometimes it talks about physical healing (healing of the body). Therefore, when you have a reference to healing in the Bible, you must determine whether it is talking about healing of the soul (a spiritual healing), or whether it is talking about a physical healing.

Well, if you would look here in the context of Isaiah 53:5, you will notice that it is speaking about the matter of sin. It is speaking about sickness of the soul. For he says, "He was wounded for our transgressions (our sinfulness). He was bruised for our iniquities (our wrongdoings). And the chastisement for our peace was upon Him." That is, He was punished in order to bring us to spiritual peace with God. The reason that Jesus Christ went to the cross was because of our sins–because of the sickness of our souls. So Isaiah 53:5, in this context, is very clearly using the word "heal" in terms of healing of a spiritual nature, not healing of a physical nature.

Matthew 8:17 says, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'He himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.'" The charismatics will point to Matthew 8:17 and say, "Here it says right here that He himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses." What he is quoting is actually Isaiah 53:4 which says, "Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows."

Now, again, we have to take a look at what Isaiah is referring to in Isaiah 53:4. What he is talking about is indeed Jesus healing certain sicknesses of the body. But if you look back at the context of Matthew 8:17, you will discover that this is dealing with the healing ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ on the earth. When Isaiah 53:4 talks about Christ carrying the physical ills of people and bringing healing, it is referring to His ministry of healing while He was on earth, before He ever went to the cross. Thus, healing could not be in the atonement, because the reference is to healing that He performed before He ever got to the cross.

Notice Matthew 8:14: "When Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother lying in sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her. And she rose and ministered onto Him. When the evening was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with demons. And He cast out the spirits with His Word, and healed all that were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet saying, 'He himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.

When you read those verses altogether, then Matthew 8:17 is very clear that it is talking about the fact that it has just described in the previous three verses how Jesus went about healing people here on this earth before He ever went to the cross. Also, that that healing ministry fulfilled what Isaiah 53:4 predicted the Messiah would do. What Isaiah was doing was giving us a clue to identify the genuine Messiah when he arrived. One of the things that would mark the true Messiah was that he would be able to perform healings such as had never been seen on the face of the earth before.

That, of course, is what we have in John 9 with the man who was born blind. One of the things he says is, "Never in the history of the world had such a thing been heard of, that a man who was born blind has received his sight again. Therefore," he said, "this man, Jesus, is of God. If he were not of God, he would not have been able to give me my sight back. Isaiah had said, "When that happens (when someone comes along who can do such a thing), it will be one of the marks that this is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament Scriptures."

So Isaiah 53:4-5 deal with the healing ministry of Jesus Christ on the earth before He ever went to the cross. Matthew 8:17 is not connecting Christ's atoning death for sin as being an atonement for physical healing. Matthew 8:17, instead, is pointing out that Jesus Christ fulfilled the promise of physical healing before He ever went to the cross.

So Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, not for our diseases. Disease is not a sin. Disease is an expression of sin. He did not die for sicknesses. He died for the thing that causes our sicknesses, the sin of our souls. As a matter of fact, logically, if healing were in the atonement, and we are under the blood of Christ and the forgiveness of sins that that connotes, then you could never die physically. Once you are born again, spiritually, you can never lose your spiritual life. If healing is in the atonement, then once you have been born again, you should not only have had healing for your soul which can never be reversed, but healing for your body which can never be reversed. But obviously, even those in the charismatic movement who think that healing is in the atonement are doing regular business with the local funeral people. Godly believers get sick. Godly believers die. This is not because of some element of sin, but just because it's the sovereignty of God.

We have a very strange condition here. We have Paul sitting here in Rome. He has been sent an assistant, this man Epaphroditus, from the church of Philippi. In the process, Epaphroditus, working with Paul, for some reason falls sick. The sickness turns to the point where it looks like it's going to be fatal. Paul sees Epaphroditus at death's door. What do you think you would do if you were in this position of the apostle Paul? What do you think the apostle Paul should have done as, with horror, he saw the life ebbing out of Epaphroditus, whom he esteemed so highly, and who is on such a very special mission from a very important church of the New Testament world?

**Paul's Gift of Healing**

We would conclude that what Paul should do is to heal this man, because one of the signs that a man had the gift of an apostle was that he had the gift of healing. 2 Corinthians 12:12 points that out to us. Paul says, "Truly, the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs and wonders, and mighty deeds." These signs and wonders and mighty deeds refer to miracle workings. An apostle, if he were a genuine apostle, would be able to perform miracles. One of the miracle gifts was the gift of healing. The question is, "Did the apostle Paul possess the gift of miracle healing?" And the answer is, "Affirmative."

Acts 19:11-12 describe the apostle Paul in action with his healing gift. It reads, "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul, so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." Paul very definitely had the gift of healing, and it was of such a nature that if a cloth that he touched, or an article of clothing from his body, were taken to a sick person and laid upon that individual, that person would become well. He definitely had the gift of healing, and he used these pieces of cloth as a method of delivering healing.

This is where, of course, the practice has come from where the operators within the charismatic movement, as you saw in the movie Marjoe, sell the prayer cloths. These prayer cloths are sold as cloths which have been blessed by a healer (have been touched by him), and you can send in through any number of places for a prayer cloth. Just listen on the radio. They're constantly advertised. You can send in for a prayer cloth and you put this on wherever you're hurting. This is under the promise that you will get well. With the apostle Paul, this was a genuine technique that he used, and it worked. So obviously, the apostle Paul had some very dramatic experiences of healing.

However, this was healing in the course of his daily ministering. He didn't get together and say, "We're going to have a mass meeting." Paul did not put out advertising, "We're going to have a healing meeting." Then when you got there, you didn't see this vast auditorium there, and Timothy didn't get up as a mouth-full-of-teeth smile song leader to start leading the congregation in a lot of songs to get the Spirit moving. There weren't lights that were dimmed and made dramatic so that the healings could take place.

The last healing meeting I was in, in California a few weeks ago, very dramatically came to the point that, "Now we're ready for the healing." Down came the lights. I felt better myself right away because the drama was mounting. Right away, everybody was looking around: "Where's it's going to happen? Where is it going to strike?" The expectancy was built up. That's just the whole travesty of all that. As you read the simplicity and the integrity of the New Testament accounts, what is happening today is something absolutely horrendous.

The apostle Paul, like the Lord Jesus, was not out to remove sickness from the world. You understand that. The gift of healing was never meant to do that. It was meant to authenticate a message and a messenger. It was meant to authenticate the fact that the New Testament era of Christianity was just as much of God as had been the Old Testament era of Judaism. Judaism was dead. Christianity had now come upon the scene to replace it temporarily.

So these healing miracles are constantly presented as authentication of the message of the apostles, and of the fact that they were acting with divine authority. We have this in Acts 2:42-43. We have this in Hebrews 2:1-4. This passage in Hebrews explains to us that these were authentication of the apostolic authority: "Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest that any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken (first class condition 'if') by angels was steadfast (it was) in every transgression, and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken of by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them (the apostles) witness both with signs and wonders and with diverse miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will."

There we have a clear declaration that the apostles learned from Jesus Christ, and then what they were teaching was authenticated directly to their hearers through these miraculous signs and gifts of God the Holy Spirit. So there was a place for miracles. Tongues and healing were part of those miraculous expressions. And it was for authentication of the New Testament church in its infancy stage. Therefore, the miracle gifts are for the babyhood stage of the church. After you get past the authenticating of the church, the infancy stage, then these miracle gifts no longer have a purpose. To try to claim that we have those gifts today is done on just assumption. You could not go to the Bible and say, "Why do we had this gift to begin with, and why do we have it now?" Because now the condition no longer exists. That made it necessary to have these miracle gifts.

So the authenticating testimony of the apostle miracles are now recorded for us in the New Testament. If you need authentication, just read the Bible. They're recorded there. The authentications are now permanently registered. Therefore, no more signs are needed today. They would have no purpose.

Paul's healings were always complete. They were always permanent. In the healing meeting that I attended in California, the healer was running the meeting in a very large charismatic church. This was a special meeting during the week. This charismatic church has come up with a brilliant idea. It has forbidden any expression of tongues or healings in the public Sunday meetings. It has forbidden any emotional expression outwardly of any kind whatsoever.

If you're in the group, as I sensed this, particularly among women around me, there is an undercurrent of tension; of emotion; and, of just under-their-breath speaking, but no open expression. You have to wait until later in the week for what's called the believers' meeting for where the things of emotion are turned loose. This has worked beautifully on the West Coast. It has dignified this church and its ministry, and given the impression that it is a Bible ministering church. But as you listen to the Bible study, you discover, if you know anything, that it's extremely shallow, and it does titillate the emotions a little as it goes along without letting them break out. Every now and then, a few chunks of meat are thrown into the speaking. But generally, it's a lot of conjecture and opinion.

Yet, you have to get there early to get a seat. Young people, particularly, with notebooks and pencils, are sincerely waiting to get something from the Word of God. I sat and watched a girl sitting on the floor right near me for an hour-and-a-half preaching. She wrote, I think it was about six sentences. It was about that many times she found something she could write down, and she was obviously no dummy. She was there to learn. But that's how little understanding she could get to record. It was just kind of a running commentary. It covered six chapters of the book of Revelation. Man, if you're a preacher, and you're going to cover six chapters of the book of Revelation, you don't even have to study to do that. It'll take you that long to read them, and then make a few observations as you go along.

This church had a very deliberate plan to dignify what it is doing, and to give people who don't understand, who are sincerely looking for the real thing, the impression that they are getting all of this out of the Word of God. Well, in this healing meeting, after the lights were dimmed, the healer called upon a father to get up and tell about how he, the healer, had just healed this man's daughter that week. So the father got up and explained how his little daughter had had scarlet fever when she was younger, and that she could not hear out of her left ear. The bearded healer had now healed their daughter that particular week, and she could hear. "That was Tuesday," he said. "Now, today, she doesn't hear as well as she did when she was first healed."

My number three son leaned over and said, "The Lord wasn't unable to do a very good job. The thing is breaking down." I wondered, "What's the healer going to say?" It would be kind of startling to me if I had said, "Now daddy, I want you to come up and tell what a fine job I've done in healing. I want a testimony to my healing." Then the father would say, "She can hear, and it's gotten worse since then."

What did he say? He got up and said, "Now there's one thing about the gift of healing that I don't understand. That is her not hearing as well today as when she was first healed. I've observed this in healings–this retrogression. I don't understand this about the gift of healing." Boy, was it hard for me not to raise my hand and say, "I understand about it." Of course he couldn't understand. The family had been psyched. The child had been psyched. And now when the emotions settle down and realities were coming back in, things were about the same indeed as they always were. Yet when we look in Scripture, what do we find in the way of healing?

That's where we have to look for the gift of healing in operation–not in experience today. When we look in the Scripture, we find such examples as the man in John 9, where the ailment was genuine. The Pharisees (the religious leaders) didn't believe it. They went to his parents and said, "Is he lying to us? Was he really born blind?" They said, "He was born blind." Well, then they said, "How can he see now?" And they said, "Don't ask us. He's of age. Go ask him," because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Of course, this man was born blind, and now knew that he could see, and he could see just as well as when he had first been healed. He could see just as well to the day of his death unless he caught a New Testament world illness in his eyes or something like that. But the work of the Lord was complete. It was perfect. There was no doubt in this man's eyes that, "Whereas once I was blind, now I can see." That was characteristic of all of the healing ministries.

One of our men this week told me that he was listening to a healer here in the Dallas area who was doing his stuff on the radio. So he called him up, and he said, "I understand that in your healing, you asked us to put our hand on the radio today if we wanted to receive healing for something we needed. Where do you get that kind of thing out of the Bible?" The healer said, "Oh, that's just a point of focus. That's just a way to get people something that they can focus on."

Well, he didn't realize what an interesting thing he was saying, because this is exactly what happens in séances. They also give you a focus. One of the things that Jeane Dixon, with her communication with the demonic world, tells you is that she uses a crystal ball. But she says, "I don't need the ball." When she used to go to see President Roosevelt to tell him what was going to happen in our national relationships with the Russians, and with what he was planning to do, she would sneak into the White House with her crystal ball under her coat. But she said, "I don't need it. It's just a point of attention to focus on."

In séances, you sit at a table, and you put your hands on the table. That's characteristic of a séance. You hold hands around in a circle in order to establish a chain. Sometimes the healer has done this. One of you puts his hand on the radio; the rest of you form a chain; and, then the last one in the chain puts his hand on the radio, and you make a chain. It's like one of those penny arcade electric machines (which now cost 50 cents) that you used to have, and everybody made a chain, so everybody would get the shock. These people don't realize what they're talking about. They don't understand how they are right in tune with the spirit world. They are using the same techniques of the spirit world.

Well, this man on the radio said that he was just using the radio as a point of focus. He said, "This is how God heals. Now, let me tell you. Just this week I had a lady in my church. She is blind in one eye, and she has been blind in this eye for years. This week I healed her." So our man said, "How do you know you healed her?" He said, "Well, she covered up her good eye and said, 'Pastor, you have gray eyes,'" as if she hadn't observed that previously with the good eye.

So the man said, "Well, did the doctor say she was really blind in that eye?" The healer said, "Absolutely, the doctor said she was blind." The man said, "Did the doctor say that now she can see in that blind eye?" The healer said, "When I heal, I don't go asking a doctor. I believe God."

You say, "You must be kidding me." No, I'm not. He said, "I wouldn't think of sending this woman to the doctor to ask whether she can see in that eye. That would not be believing God."

Can you imagine the apostle Paul telling somebody, "Don't you dare go to the doctor and see whether you can see, now that I have healed you." Could you imagine the Lord Jesus saying to the man born blind, "Listen, don't check with your doctor? Just believe Me."

All of this goes back to the fact that you have a group of people who sincerely want something real with God. We can't get into it in this session, but I'm working on this subject. I've noticed there's a re-occurring thesis that comes through the charismatic movement. I caught it on the radio interview the other night: "When I got into the charismatic movement, my Christianity came alive. Now, I love to read my Bible; to pray; to attend church; and, to give my money." There is a dullness and a deadness indeed in the local church. And Satan is taking monumental advantage of it. The charismatic movement is cashing in on the fact that it's bringing life. Yet, what does the Word of God tell us? The Word of God is alive and powerful. If you want kicks in your spiritual life that are genuinely from God the Holy Spirit, you will only find it through Bible doctrine. You will never find it through the emotional manufactured highs of the charismatic movement.

One of the things that is not widely advertised is how many people have come out of the charismatic movement. You heard a man here in this pulpit last week give you a little testimony concerning that. I want to tell you that I've heard that testimony again and again and again. I get a little tired of these pumpkin poor idiots who are trying to teach me something about the charismatic movement, or trying to explain something to me about how this movement works, who themselves have never researched it, and have had very little contact and understanding of the thing, let alone to have any scriptural frame of reference. But what that man told you, I can assure you, is a repeated testimony again and again–that same thing–that sincere-looking person.

Finally, a person comes to the day where he says to himself, "Just a minute. I'm through being a hypocrite. I've been trying to con myself and psyche myself and tell myself that this is so, but it isn't so. I'm going to back up, and I'm going to admit that I'm not talking in tongues. I'm going to admit that I'm not healing people, and Oral Roberts isn't healing people, and Kathryn Kuhlman isn't healing people. I'm going to back off and admit that, and I'm going to go back to the Word of God, and I'm going to start all over again." And when they get back to the Word of God, I've heard that phrase repeated as you heard that man last week say, "Then I learned why I couldn't get what I was looking for." Thank God somebody put him on our tapes, and he got straightened out with the Word of God. It's not because they're our tapes. It's because the Word of God is on them that made them significant to him.

The New Testament healings were always complete. They were always verifiable. They were always something you could authenticate. Whenever Paul was in the status of temporal fellowship with all known sins confessed, he could exercise the gift of healing just like you can exercise your spiritual gift fruitfully whenever you are in fellowship.

The ultimate expression of the gift of healing would obviously be the total healing of a person's body at the total extremity of that person's condition. And the total extremity relative to the physical body is for a person to be dead. The ultimate expression of the gift of healing in the New Testament was raising people from the dead. This is exactly what the Lord Jesus did with the gift of healing. This is exactly what the apostles did with the miraculous gift of healing. They actually raised people from the dead.

The apostle Paul, because he had the gift of healing, therefore, was able to perform this. He did this on one occasion in Acts 20:9-12. We have this incident described concerning a young man named Eutychus. Paul is visiting here in the city of Troas. The Christians are delighted to have him coming through. As always, when a communicator of the Word of God comes into an area where people have not had access to Bible doctrine, and the communicator knows what he's talking about, he may be very certain that he will be bombarded with requests for contacts and for information concerning the Word of God. The apostle Paul knew exactly that experience, and it wore him to the end of his brain cells. But that was his job, and that's what he was there for. So in Troas, they knew he was leaving the next morning. So they got together, and they weren't about to have a short meeting. The meeting went on and on. It went up to midnight, and it went on past.

Acts 20:9: "There sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep. As Paul was long preaching, he sank down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead." He just falls asleep in the window; just relaxes; tumbles out three stories down; and, crashes to the pavement below. There are some people who are dumb enough to think that he wasn't dead here–that he didn't get killed. But I remind you that this record in Acts is being written for us by a doctor, Dr. Luke. One of the things that Dr. Luke knows something about is whether people are alive or dead.

Verse 10: "And Paul went down and fell on him, embracing him, and said, 'Trouble not yourself, for his life is in him.'" In verse 9, Dr. Luke says, "He was taken up dead." That in the Greek is in a point of time–period–over and out–dead. He was dead. Paul goes down and uses an old technique that Elijah and Elisha used to use in the Old Testament. He puts his body down on the body of the dead man. Then Paul says, "OK." Everybody immediately, you know, is horrified. The whole congregation is down there. They're in tears. They're stunned by what has happened here in the course of a tremendous Bible class. One of their members gets killed. And Paul says, "It's alright. Settle down. His life is back in him."

"When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread and eaten (that is, Paul), and talked a long while even until break of day, so he departed. They brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted." Paul went back up and said, "He's alive. He's alright. You take care of him now." Paul went upstairs and had a little snack. Then they went back to Bible class after the break again. He went on until the next morning, and then he said, "Goodbye."

One of the people there waving goodbye to him was Eutychus, just as good as ever. So when Paul healed a person, Paul did a good job. The ultimate expression of the gift of healing was to raise a person from the dead.

In the charismatic healing meeting that I attended in California, I was stunned to hear this bearded healer after he had to cover his tracks concerning why the little girl's hearing was deteriorating. I was stunned to hear him say that he was a little confused also about why people died when he prayed for them to be healed. He said, "The first three people I ever prayed for to be healed died." Everybody thought, "Oh, boy, isn't that funny?" He thought it was cute, too. Then he said, "Then the Lord taught me a lesson. I realized then that the ultimate expression of the gift of healing is when a person dies. He is then completely well." Who's going to argue with that? Are you going to go up to the corpse and say, "How are you feeling? Is anything bad now? Is everything okay now?"

Yet, in the New Testament, the ultimate expression was to be raised to life. Now, man, I tell you one thing I respect the charismatics for. They would have make good scouts for Davy Crockett and his boys because they know how to cover their tracks. This is so pathetic that even young people, who sit and think, say, "That can't be. It doesn't ring right. Yet, if I dare say it doesn't ring right, I'm expressing a lack of faith. I won't say it. I'll hang in there. I'm going to say, 'Yes, it is so, and I accept that if a person dies, God has wonderfully healed.'"

There is another factor that's interesting about Paul's expression of the gift of healing. That is that the time came when he could not heal. Obviously, and this is what I've been leading up to here in Philippians 2, Epaphroditus is on the verge of death. He's dying on Paul's hands. Now, Paul has done such tremendous things as just sending a handkerchief out to a person, and the person was healed. Paul has taken Eutychus when he was dead on the pavement and raised him to life. Why didn't he heal Epaphroditus here in 61 A.D.? Because in 61 A.D., obviously something was changing. The gift of healing had established its authentication of all of the apostles as indeed having the authority of apostles. It had established and authenticated that their message was of God as much as the message of the Old Testament prophets was of God. Now the healing gift had begun to phase out.

All that Paul could do from his prison room in Rome was pray for the healing of Epaphroditus. All he could do is exactly what you and I are able to do today: "Dear God, if it please You (if it is Your will), I ask you to save my friend's life." Paul said, "Please Lord, don't add this sorrow to all the other sorrows I bear now by taking the life of Epaphroditus. Let me send him back to Philippi well and good. As you see, Paul was mightily rejoiced because that's exactly what God did. But Paul was not able to put his hand on Epaphroditus and snap the illness out of him. It had to come as the result of the sovereign act of God in response to the prayer.

This is not the only evidence that we have that that condition had developed. If you'll turn to 2 Timothy 4:20, you will see that the same thing happened again to Paul. This was with another man named Trophimus: "Erastus abode at Corinth, but Trophimus have I left at Miletus sick." Trophimus was a man that is referred to elsewhere in Scripture as accompanying Paul on one of his missionary journeys. Here Paul was writing 2 Timothy, which is the last letter he wrote. He is now in his second imprisonment. He is about to be executed by Nero. He's at the end of his life, and at the end of his ministry. One thing that characterizes him is that he cannot heal people. So Trophimus was on the team, and anybody who was a working member of Paul's team was important to him. Paul said, "I had to leave Trophimus behind at Miletus because he was sick. He couldn't travel with us any further. We had to just make arrangements for him to be taken care of while we went on ahead."

Now, again, we must say, "Paul, you sent out handkerchiefs, or you put your coat around a person and he was healed. Why can't you heal Trophimus? Why leave a valuable member of the team behind just because of disease? It doesn't take too much judgment to come to the conclusion that it was because Paul was not able to exercise the gift. Don't you fall for that nonsense that the exercise of the gift of healing was only up to whether God decided it could be used or not used? That is not so. Once you have a spiritual gift, if you are in the status of spirituality and you are filled with the Spirit, you can exercise your gift. They could exercise gifts. They could talk in tongues when they chose to talk in those foreign languages. They could heal whenever they chose to heal people. Trophimus was not healed. Here Paul is at the end of his life, near 67 A.D. to 68 A.D., and he cannot heal anymore because the healing gift had been phased out in general among the Christians.

**The Temporary Nature of Miracle Gifts**

Healing is classified, remember, as a miracle gift. We have this in Act 19:11-12. It is one of the miracle gifts, so you would expect it to be a temporary gift, wouldn't you? You should understand that miracles phase in and out. Those of you who listened to the radio program found that one man that called that into question found that hard to understand. That apparently bothered him when I said that miracles occur only at certain times. In the New Testament, miracles occurred for a while and then phased out as they had previously. By miracles, I tried to clarify to him (we'll have to do better in the future on this), that we mean a miracle worker. The first miracle worker was Moses. He was the first one who had the capacity to perform miracles as a human being.

The man the other night was asking, "Didn't I think that Isaac was a miracle?" Well, Abraham had been the recipient of a miracle there. He hadn't performed the miracle. Abraham was sexually dead. He couldn't have done anything. That was what the miracle was all about. So Moses came on the scene as the first miracle worker. Then for centuries, there was not another person who could work a miracle. Along came Elijah and Elisha, and there were miracles again. Why? Because Israel again, as in the time of Moses, had fallen into fantastic apostasy. Darkness, spiritually, ruled the land as it did in the time of Moses. In the time of Elijah and Elisha, Ahab and Jezebel were riding high, and the Baal phallic cults were having their heyday. So along came miracle workers, and then it phased out until Jesus came along and started performing miracles. In the meantime, there was not a miracle worker, not even John the Baptist. Then the apostles of the New Testament church performed miracles, and after them they were phased out. So healing, being a miracle gift, you would expect to come to an end.

I haven't gotten to a very significant point in this session. Our time is up. But there's a lot of confusion on these gifts today. We're going to look into what is really happening in a charismatic healing meeting. If you're interested in that, I'd suggest you not miss the next few sessions.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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