***Epaphroditus - PH63-02

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

We're still thinking about Epaphroditus the strenuous worker. This is the eighth in the series. I think we can all agree that the devotion of the charismatic segment of Christianity to their belief in the existence today of the New Testament miracle gifts cannot be doubted. They are genuinely sincere in this belief. They actually do believe that they are able to heal people. They actually do believe that they are speaking in tongues. They actually do believe that when people stand up in the services and say, "I have a prophecy from God," and then they deliver a declaration, that that is indeed a prophetic utterance from God. We cannot doubt the genuineness of their beliefs.

This is certainly evidenced by the fact that they zealously follow their leaders, and participate in their meetings with their presence and with their money in an exemplary way. Would to God that all Christians who have the Word of God and who are sound in doctrine, would indeed themselves be this faithful to the Word of God in their presence and in their financial support. Charismatic leaders are not scraping the bottom of the barrel to pay the bills. Never. There is always adequate funding–funds from people who don't have funds for anything else. That's how sincere and how deep is their conviction that they have something very real of a supernatural nature from God, and that God has carried them to a very special service in this day.

It is a gross sight to see charismatic men dossily standing by in a Kathryn Kuhlman meeting like a bunch of drones around a queen bee while she does her stuff and they follow in her trail. This is repugnant to anybody who has one iota of Bible doctrine understanding relative to the role of women and spiritual things. So there must be some apparent results to their claims. There must be something to keep all these people loyal to a system like this, which even without having to look into it with any great depth, on the very surface of it (such as female pastors), it is out of keeping with the Word of God. That's obviously evident.

Yet, they hang in there with a determination that is indeed inspirational to behold, and is an example to all of us. But remember that the whole charismatic movement is based upon the confirmation that comes from experience. If it can be shown that the experiences of the charismatics are being misinterpreted as to what their experiences are (the nature of their experiences, what is really taking place), then the whole charismatic structure collapses.

Even if you do demonstrate this, there are some charismatics who simply would find it too traumatic to be able to say, "Well, I was wrong. I don't really speak in tongues as they did in the New Testament. I am not really performing healings." That would be so traumatic, they just could not come to admit that. It would for them, in effect, be spiritual shock. So they prefer instead to hang in there; to close their ears; and, to go blindly on. As a matter of fact, people, who are confused on this and who have a propensity toward this, will even refuse to come to a service where that sort of thing is going to be discussed. They don't even want to hear about it. They don't want to be forced to be confronted with the scriptural evidence that contradicts the experience. These people, of course, then, are choosing deliberately to be spiritually ignorant on what Bible doctrine teaches us relative to tongues, healing, and prophecy.

So how shall we deal with them? 1 Corinthians 14:38 lays down the principle for those who are deliberately rejecting the instruction of doctrine. That says, "If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." I want to remind you that this statement is to be found in the portion of Scripture which is specifically geared to giving instruction about spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14 deal with spiritual abuse. When Paul gets to the end of chapter 14, he's says, "Now I'm going to sum this all up. I've given you instruction. I've told you how these gifts work. I've told you their purpose. I've told you their limitations. I've told you how, in time, miracles, healing, and prophecy are going to phase out. I've explained all this to you." But Paul knew also then that there were some who would deliberately refuse to step aside from the delusions that they had already entered into concerning these gifts. So Paul said, "The way to handle those people, if they choose to be ignorant, is just to let them go on and be ignorant. Don't argue with them. Don't try to talk them out of it."

The Lord's purpose for us is expressed in the seven letters that we find in the book of the Revelation. You will find a phrase repeated at the end of every one of these letters. In Revelation 2:7, Revelation 2:11, Revelation 2:17, Revelation 2:9, Revelation 3:6, Revelation 3:13, and Revelation 3:22, that phrase is simply this: "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches." That's God's principle. "You who have an ear." That means that you who are willing to be positive to what God the Holy Spirit has said which we have recorded here in the Bible: "You who are willing to be positive, just listen to Him, and your experience will then conform to doctrine. But those who refuse to listen to what the Spirit has recorded, they are electing to be ignorant, so then let them be ignorant."

The question of healing still remains after all is said and done, and I think we have pretty well covered this subject from the experiential frame of reference with the surveys of Dr. Nolen. We have examined the claims in the healing end of this with Kathryn Kuhlman, and have seen by this medical man's explorations that she's a complete fraud. She is not so deliberately, he doesn't think. Probably she isn't, but she is a fraud. She is not performing New Testament healings.

However, the question still remains as to how we are to explain the fact that some people do experience certain physical changes in charismatic meetings. These are changes which they describe as healings. These are changes which they describe as removing certain physical problems, which they have.

**The Autonomic Nervous System**

For example, in Dr. Nolen's book, Healing: A Doctor in Search of a Miracle, on page 24, he says, "Still, we have to admit that healers (and I use the term to refer to people outside the medical profession who profess to heal) do heal in a certain sense. Kathryn Kuhlman cures the pain of a backache. Norbu Chen stops a migraine. David Oligani gets rid of a patient's stomach ache. (Chen and Oligani are psychic healers.) How do these healers, without any medical training, manage to achieve these results? To understand the successes of healers, we have to know something about the autonomic nervous system and hypnosis, or the power of suggestion."

The autonomic nervous system is part of everybody's body. It is a very critical part. It is the thing that causes you to breathe, for example, without your having to stop to think about it. You could start thinking about breathing right now. Go ahead and start thinking about taking a breath every few seconds. It's going to bother you. Pretty soon you are going to get very uncomfortable by breathing. It is a great gift of God that you can forget about it. This is why, when your beautiful little youngster says, "I'm going to hold my breath until I die," he isn't going to do it. He's going to hold his breath, and he may pass out, but as soon as he does, the autonomic nervous system is going to click in, and it's going to make him start breathing.

The same thing is true with your heart. Just tell your heart, "Keep beating, heart. Keep beating" You'd be nervous to say, "Now, if I forget to keep my heart beating, I'm going to be dead." So God says, "Just forget it. I'm going to give you a system that will control that so that you cannot change that." Now, there are some people who have great mental controls, and they can actually slow down their heartbeat, but they could not stop it.

So what Dr. Nolen is going to tell us about now is how the autonomic nervous system works, and I think this is a critical part of the instruction that we need on this subject. So I'm going to read from his book beginning on page 245, to give you some background, because this is what is happening in the charismatic movement. This is the explanation for healings that do take place:

"Each of us has two nervous systems which, for purposes of this discussion, we can call the voluntary nervous system and the autonomic nervous system. The voluntary nervous system is (when we're healthy) under our control. The autonomic nervous system ordinarily is not. Anatomically, the voluntary nervous system is composed as most of the brain, the spinal cord, and the nerves which run from the spinal cord to the muscles of our arms, legs, face, and abdomen–all of those areas where muscle movement is under our control. The nerves, which are part of the voluntary nervous system, vary considerably in size. Close to the spinal cord, they may be as thick as a pencil, but as they continue to run farther and farther from the spinal cord, they become as thin as fine threads. These nerves, even as far out as in the fingers can be seen by an operating surgeon, and protected from damage, or repaired if cut.

"When you pick up a glass of water, it is your voluntary nervous system that you use. From the cerebral cortex of your brain, where the decision is made, a message passes down the spinal cord and through the appropriate nerves to the muscles of the arm and hand. These muscles contract and relax as necessary to permit you to reach out; pick up the glass; and, lift it to your lips. Simultaneously, other messages, which enable you to tip your face properly and swallow, pass from the brain to your mouth, neck and throat. Any voluntary action (walking, talking, writing) depends on messages passing from the brain along the spinal cord and peripheral nerve pathway. Exactly how these messages originate and pass from one area to another, whether it is an electrical or chemical reaction, is still not resolved. Research into the function of the nervous system has a long way to go, but at least we can see and understand the anatomy.

"Anywhere along the line, the integrity of this pathway may be disrupted. Hemorrhage of the brain (a stroke) may prevent an individual from sending the message. A crushing injury to the spinal cord may interrupt the message at that level. A cut nerve in the wrist will not prevent the patient from lifting his arm, but because there is no path along which the orders may be delivered to the muscles of the hand, the patient will not be able to close his hand around the glass. Illness and injury may hamper the function of our voluntary nervous system. Otherwise, it's under our control.

"The autonomic nervous system is another matter entirely. This system includes, besides some small parts of the brain, a network of nerves. These nerves, most of them as fine as cobwebs, and some invisible to the naked eye, lie along the inner lining of the back wall of the chest and abdomen, and send branches out to the heart, lungs, eyes, blood vessels, intestines, bladder, and all those parts of our body which are not normally under voluntary control. The autonomic nervous system can be subdivided into the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems, which sometimes oppose each other.

"For example, the sympathetic system may cause a blood vessel to contract. The parasympathetic may cause that same blood vessel to relax. For our purposes, we can consider them together as integral parts of the autonomic nervous system. If you'd like to see the autonomic nervous system at work, step into a dark room with a friend, and flash a light into his eye. You will see his pupil, which was dilated in the dark, contract when the light hits it. This is caused by a tightening of the iris, controlled by a muscle innervated by the autonomic nervous system. Your friend will not be aware of his pupil dilating and contracting any more than you are aware of this when it occurs, as it has hundreds of times a day in response to changes in the intensity of light to which you are exposed. Nor can you order your pupil to dilate or contract. It is not under the control of the voluntary nervous system, but under the control of the autonomic, self-governing nervous system.

"Another example: check your heart rate as reflected in your pulse. If you're sitting and reading, as I assume you are, your pulse rate is probably running between 60 and 90 beats a minute. Stand and jump up and down as fast as you can for two minutes. If you count your pulse rate, you'll find it is 10, 20, or 30 beats a minute faster than it was when you were at rest. Your heart responded to exercise by increasing its rate. You didn't order your heart to do this. Unless you are a master of yoga, you can't order your heart to speed up or slow down. Your heart is under the control of the autonomic nervous system.

"A third example: go outside and run around a track or tennis court for half an hour on a hot day. You'll perspire. Your sweat glands will function in such a way as to help cool off your body and maintain your body temperature at 98.6 degrees. Can you order your sweat glands not to function? Can you remain perspiration-free despite the temperature? Can you order your body temperature to go up two or three degrees? No. Your sweat glands, and the entire temperature control system of your body, are not under your voluntary control.

"Other examples include your intestine, when it contracts and dilates, churning and digesting your food; or, your skin, when it blushes in shame or blanches in terror. You can neither will these things to happen nor prevent them from occurring. They are all under the control of your autonomic nervous system. It is the faulty function of the autonomic nervous system that causes many symptoms and diseases. These include: ulcers; colitis; constipation; many menstrual disorders; many skin rashes; impotency; high blood pressure; irregular heartbeat; diarrhea; and, headaches. All of these things and many others may, and usually are, caused in whole or in part by a malfunction of the autonomic nervous system. If we can correct the malfunction, we can and do cure the symptom or disease.

"Let's consider the patient with an ulcer in the duodenum, the first part of the small intestine. This is the area where 90% of so-called stomach ulcers occur. The cells in the stomach wall produce hydrochloric acid, which helps digest food. When we eat, the vagus nerve, a part of the autonomic nervous system that innervates the stomach, stimulates these acid-producing cells. I don't order my stomach cells to produce acid. They do it because of stimulation from the vagus nerve, a nerve not under my voluntary control.

"Suppose the vagus nerve begins to malfunction; that is, to stimulate these acid-producing cells too often and too long, so that the quantity of acid poured out by my stomach is far greater than is necessary to digest the food I eat. After a while, that acid, as it flows from the stomach into the duodenum, will burn a hole in the lining of the duodenum. I will have an ulcer. If the acid continues to work on the duodenum, the ulcer may eventually go all the way through the duodenal wall, and I'll have a perforated ulcer. Possibly, the ulcer may erode a blood vessel in the wall of the duodenum and cause a hemorrhage. It's important to stop this excess acid production before I develop a severe, possibly fatal, ulcer problem. How do I do this?

"Ideally, I'll order the vagus nerve to stop working so hard, but the vagus nerve is not under my voluntary control. As an alternative, I take antacids to neutralize the acid; take pills which work on the stomach cells to reduce acid production; or, take sedatives such as phenobarbital, which may make me less anxious, and indirectly slow down the activity of the vagus nerve. If none of these things work, then I must have to have a part of my stomach removed, and possibly have my vagus nerve cut.

"But let's get back for a moment to the ideal treatment–simply ordering my vagus nerve to stop its excess activity. I can't do that directly, as I can order my hand to pick up a glass. But if I'm lucky, perhaps I can get the message to my vagus nerve indirectly. We know from experience that tension and anxiety are what caused the vagus nerve to overreact. Taxi drivers and high-powered businessmen are notoriously prone to ulcers. So sometimes, by changing a patient's environment or lifestyle, we can cure an ulcer. However, it's often difficult, and sometimes impossible, for a patient to make a radical shift in lifestyle. After all, most of us have to earn a living, and it may be difficult to find a new job. Besides, we are what we are, and it's difficult to shift abruptly from being a highly competitive driving individual to a relaxed, who-cares sort of person.

"If we can't change our lifestyle, there is another approach that may be used to influence the autonomic nervous system. Sometimes a doctor or a healer can persuade a patient to think positively, "I'm not going to be so tense. I'm not going to let things aggravate me. I'm not going to let my stomach upset me." Then the vagus nerve will stop its excessive acidity, and the ulcer will heal. The doctor may simply sit and talk with the patient, trying to help him develop insight into his problem. And he may use more formal hypnotic techniques. The healer may, and probably will, use what the patient believes are super normal powers. Kathryn Kuhlman, for example, lays on her hands; invokes the power of the Holy Spirit; and, says, "I rebuke that ulcer." The patient believes, and the activity of his vagus nerve slows down. Norbu Chen hits the patient with his mysterious Tibetan whammy and tells the patient, "Your troubles are over." The patient believes, and his acid production dwindles. For some patients, any or all of these techniques are successful.

"The point I'm trying to make is that, although we don't know exactly how we do it, we can sometimes influence the autonomic nervous system by suggestion. A person with a forceful character, one who can persuade patients to have faith in him, may, using any of a variety of techniques, cure a symptom or ailment that is caused by a derangement or malfunction of the autonomic nervous system.

"I've written at some length about the vagus nerve and the duodenal ulcers, but the techniques would apply with equal force to all the other so-called functional ailments–ailments caused by the malfunction of an organ or system under the control of the autonomic nervous system. I've given a partial list before, but let me repeat, and expand, on what this might include: alopecia areata (loss of massive clumps of hair); acne and a multitude of other skin ailments (The skin is notoriously susceptible to derangements of the autonomic nervous system.); asthma; irregular heartbeat; heartburn; ulcers; bloating; diarrhea; colitis; impotency; migraine headaches; menstrual disorders; and, high blood pressure.

"All these ailments may, without any need for invoking miraculous powers, be cured or relieved by modifying the function of the autonomic nervous system. Sadly, we don't know yet how to control the autonomic nervous system with predictability. It's a hit-and-miss proposition. Yogis spend years learning, by trial and error, to raise and lower their heartbeat and temperature, with some success. But most of us don't want to take the time to do this. Besides, controlling one's heartbeat and temperature have little practical application.

"The purpose of all the current research in biofeedback is to try to make personal control of the autonomic nervous system possible and practical. For example, by attaching devices to the body which show the patient a continuing record of his blood pressure, some people can learn to raise or lower their blood pressure at work. Usually, it's a matter of thinking angry thoughts or reflecting on a peaceful scene. A patient may even learn to raise and lower the temperature of one part of the body, when the patient can see a recording of what the temperature at any given point in time is. Hopefully, the research and biofeedback may help us cure the functional diseases I've just listed.

"We have to remember, however, that it would be terrible if the autonomic nervous system were not autonomous: if we had to decide for ourselves how much to increase our heart rate when we walked upstairs; how much to perspire when we were out in the sun; or, how rapidly to digest the pizza we've just eaten. We would be too busy regulating our bodily functions to accomplish anything imaginative or artistic. The autonomic nervous system has to remain largely autonomous, or we'll be in serious trouble.

"Let me repeat. *A charismatic individual (a healer) can sometimes influence a patient and cure symptoms or a functional disease by suggestion, with or without laying on his hands.* Physicians can do the same thing. These cures are not miraculous. They are the result from corrections made by the patient in the function of his autonomic system. We don't know yet how to control the system, but we're learning."

**The Power of Suggestion**

That lays the background for understanding how this automatic autonomous nervous system works within us. That lays the background for understanding why Kathryn Kuhlman and Oral Roberts get away with murder. It is the fantastic power of suggestion that these people are able to handle and manipulate in a monumentally effective way. Every one of them, remember, is an actor. You cannot be a healer in the charismatic movement unless you have some kind of stage presence–unless, when you walk out, people take a look at you, and they do something other than yawn. They create some kind of a magnetic impression that they are there, and they have arrived.

Here's one of the most fascinating sections of Dr. Nolen's research on the power of suggestion. You'll have trouble believing this. Beginning on page 250:

"Hypnosis or suggestion will often cure patients whose symptoms are neither functional nor organic, but rather neurotic or hysterical in origin. Among these patients are many who complain of loss of hearing; loss of vision; or, paralysis of one sort or another."

Right off the bat, I want to stress what he said there, so you don't miss it. He's saying that people who have nothing wrong with their ears, sometimes cannot hear. People who have nothing wrong with their eyes, sometimes cannot see. These are a functional disorder. It isn't because the eye is diseased. It is because of something in the mind of a hysterical nature. Continuing:

"Among these patients are many who complain of loss of hearing; loss of vision; or, paralysis of one sort or another. These symptoms usually develop because the patient is unable to cope with some new development in his life. The man who is afraid he is going to lose his job, suddenly claims he cannot see out of one eye. The woman whose son has been picked up for possession of marijuana discovers that she can no longer move her right arm. These patients have converted their emotional problems into physical problems, a pattern that is known to physicians as conversion hysteria.

"Louise Flynn is an example of the sort of hysterical patient with whom healers have such great success. When Louise was 63, her husband Kevin died in an auto accident. Kevin had been drinking at the time, and he and Louise had had a fight just before he left the house. Louise understandably felt guilty about Kevin's death. Neither her minister nor her friends were able to console her. About two weeks after Kevin's funeral, Louise caught a cold; developed laryngitis; and, lost her voice. She got over her cold in ten days, but her voice didn't come back. We assured her that it would only be a matter of time, and that her vocal cords were slow in recovering. But time went by and still Louise talked in a whisper.

"I referred Louise to an ear, nose, and throat specialist. He examined her and said, "Everything's fine. Your vocal chords work just as they should," but she still couldn't speak in a normal voice. Finally, I sent Louise to a psychiatrist. After a couple of visits, he came to the conclusion that the loss of her voice was hysterical. She was punishing herself for arguing with her husband on the night of his fatal accident. I tried to get this message through to Louise gently, of course, but she couldn't or wouldn't accept it. For four years, she continued to talk in a whisper.

"Then Louise developed gall bladder trouble, and I had to remove her gallbladder. After the operation, I decided to try something rather unorthodox. 'Louise,' I said, when I visited her the day after surgery. 'When we operated on you, we had to put a tube into your windpipe to give you the anesthetic. When we did that, I noticed your vocal cords were stuck together just a bit, so I spread them apart. I bet that's why you've had to whisper all these years. By tomorrow, I think your voice will be back to normal.'

"Sure enough, when I made my rounds the next day, Louise was all smiles. She spoke to me in a perfectly normal voice. 'It's wonderful, Dr. Nolen,' she said, 'spreading those cords did it. Thank you so much.' Wouldn't Kathryn Kuhlman have loved to have gotten her hands on that one? That was in June, 1972. Louise's voice has remained normal to this day. I didn't cure her by spreading her cords, but after four years of mourning, Louise was ready to forgive herself, and I gave her an excuse for getting her voice back. She didn't think of it this way, of course, but that's the way it worked. The medical literature is full of cures of hysterical symptoms like Louise's. Patients that go to a Kathryn Kuhlman service, paralyzed from the waist down as the result of injury to the spinal cord, never have been and never will be cured through the ministrations of Miss Kuhlman. Miss Kuhlman cannot cure a paralysis caused by a damaged spinal cord.

"The patient who suddenly discovers, at a Kuhlman service, that he can now move an arm or a leg that was previously paralyzed, had that paralysis as the result of an emotional (not a physical) disturbance. Neurotics and hysterics will frequently be relieved of their symptoms by the suggestions and ministrations of charismatic healers. It is in treating patients of this sort that healers claim their most dramatic triumphs. There is nothing miraculous about these cures. Psychiatrists; internists; G.P.s; or, any M.D. who does psychiatric therapy, relieve thousands of such patients of their symptoms every year. Psychotherapy, in which suggestion plays a significant role, is just one of the many tools with which the physicians work. Pseudocyesis, false pregnancy, is an example of the hysteria that can affect not only the menstrual cycle, but other organ systems of the body. In The Making of a Surgeon, I wrote about one such patient, and perhaps the story will bear repeating."

Now listen to this one. This one alone should pretty well settle Kuhlman, Roberts, and the whole bit for you. If it doesn't, you need to see a healer. Continuing:

"This woman, Rosalind Kaiser, was 35 years old. She had been married for 12 years, and despite all sorts of fertility studies (and such therapy as was done in 1954 was available), she had failed to conceive. She was obsessed with the desire to become pregnant, and refused to adopt children. One month, she missed their menstrual period and came in to see me about a week after her due date. I was in the army at the time at a small hospital in South Dakota. I had had only one year of internship, and one year of surgical residency. My only obstetrical training had been in medical school. I'd never even heard of pseudocyesis. 'I suppose it's a false alarm, Dr. Nolen,' Rosalind said. 'But maybe you could examine me anyway. I'd like to know.'

"One week after a missed period is usually too soon to tell by physical examination if a woman is pregnant. But being young and inexperienced, I thought nothing of it. I examined Rosalind, a rather stocky woman, and couldn't even feel her uterus, but I hated to admit this. I said, 'I can't be sure, Rosalind. It just may be that you are pregnant.'

"'Oh, my God,' Rosalind said. Do you really think so?'

"'I can't be certain,' I replied. Why don't you just come back in another three weeks if you still haven't had a period?' Rosalind left my office a very excited, hopeful woman.

"Three weeks later, she came back to see me. 'Still no period, Dr. Nolen,' she said with a big smile. 'And now my breasts are getting sore and full. I've been sick every morning. I must be pregnant.' Rosalind convinced me. Because she was so heavy, I still couldn't feel the uterus when I did a pelvic examination. But all the other evidence: the swollen breasts; the morning sickness; and, the continued absence of the menstrual period supported the diagnosis. I started Rosalind on vitamins, and scheduled her for regular monthly checkups.

"For seven months, I followed Rosalind and her pregnancy. Except for not being able to feel her uterus, which I continued to attribute to her stocky physique, she had all the usual physiological changes we see in pregnant women. She had an uncomplicated pregnancy. At eight months, when she came to the hospital for her checkup, I was on vacation. My associate, an experienced GP, saw her, and immediately suspected something was wrong. He ordered an X-ray, and unhappily found that there was no evidence of a fetus. The diagnosis was pseudocyesis. All of the physical changes that had taken place in Rosalind's body were the result of her emotional stresses mediated through her autonomic nervous system. Rosalind's was a hysterical pregnancy whose long duration was due to the ignorance of her physician, me. My associate gently explained to Rosalind what the true situation was. A few days later, she had a menstrual period, and in two weeks her breasts were back to normal. Rosalind adopted a child. Six months after the adoption, her anxiety over pregnancy gone, Rosalind became pregnant, a not uncommon sequence of events.

"Separate the mind and the body? Impossible. Patients who are good subjects can, while under hypnosis, be talked out of symptoms. Aches and pains will disappear promptly, if not permanently, if a forceful person tells a patient that the symptoms will disappear. Mass hypnosis (or mass suggestion, for those who don't like to use the word 'hypnosis') is what Kathryn Kuhlman is using when she persuades patients with backaches to stand in the aisles and touch their toes: 'You can do it. You know you can. The Holy Spirit has healed you.' Admittedly, the patients who bend and twist at her call are not in a deep stage of hypnosis, but they are in a hyper suggestible state. That, by definition, is an early stage of hypnosis. All healers use hypnosis to some extent: 'See, your pain is going away. Isn't that wonderful?'

"This is often used with success. Making forceful verbal suggestions as one lays on hands, or offers prayers, works better than the laying of hands or prayers used alone. Doctors use hypnosis or suggestion frequently. When I give a patient a pill or a shot, I make a point of saying, 'This medicine should make you better in 24 or 48 hours,' or whatever length of time I think is reasonable. The medicine always works very well. I know that in some cases I'm going to get better results if I suggest to the patient that the medicine will work than if I would say, 'Well, I don't know about the medicine. Sometimes it works pretty well. Sometimes it's not so hot. We'll give it a try and hope for the best.' There's a lot to the power of positive thinking, particularly where functional disorders are concerned.

"There is a pertinent experiment reported in Hypnosis: Research Development and Perspectives, a book edited by Erica Fromm of the University of Chicago and Ronald E. Shor of the University of New Hampshire. 13 subjects were studied. All were highly allergic to the poisonous leaf of the Japanese wax tree. None were allergic to the non-poisonous leaves of the chestnut tree. Five subjects were hypnotized and then blindfolded. They were told that their arm was going to be touched by the non-poisonous chestnut leaf. In fact, their arms were touched with the poisonous wax tree leaf. None of the five showed any allergic reaction to the poisonous leaf. They were then told that they would be touched on the opposite arm by the poisonous leaf. In fact, they were touched by the non-poisonous leaf. All five showed a dermatitis as the result of being touched by the non-poisonous leaf.

"We would probably conclude from this experiment that hypnosis is an amazing phenomenon, except for one thing. Eight patients were blindfolded, and without being hypnotized, the same experiment was carried out. All eight of these patients developed a dermatitis from the touch of the chestnut leaf, and only one of the eight reacted to the poisonous leaf. If this experiment proves anything, and I think it does, it is that the power of suggestion, with or without hypnosis, can be very effective, particularly in situations such as skin reactions, where the autonomic nervous system plays an important role. Suggestion (or hypnotism) can be used in a negative as well as a positive way.

"A charismatic person, a healer, for example, might say to a patient, 'Unless you pray three times a day for the next week, you will develop a rash over your entire body.' Or he might say, 'I received a message from the Lord. He wants you to donate $1,000 to my chapel. If you do not donate this sum in the next three days, you are going to be afflicted with severe headaches, which would bother you day and night.' A patient who believes that the healer has miraculous powers may indeed develop these symptoms if he does not follow the healer's instructions. In these instances, the healer is using suggestion or hypnotism to cause, rather than cure, the symptoms."

So here is the final conclusion of Dr. Nolen, as a result of his 18 months of examinations of the charismatic healers. Continuing:

"And so I finally gave up. After doing my very best for 18 months to find some shred of evidence that somewhere there was someone who had miraculous healing powers, I concluded that no such person existed. I realize I could have pursued this will-of-the-wisp forever, and that I might have to spend the rest of my life looking for a healing miracle, but to do so seemed to me pointless. As some wise man once said, 'It wasn't necessary to eat the entire steer to tell if the steak is any good.' I've eaten all I could digest of this particular animal. It was time for me to go on to other things."

**The Charismatic Movement**

So how shall we act toward the charismatic Christians? First of all, I must remind you that charismatic Christians are all their own priests. They have a right to pursue their views. They have a right to be ignorant if they choose to be ignorant. However, we cannot avoid remembering the Bible doctrine principle which is declared to us in Amos 3:3, where we read, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" The answer to that is, "No." You cannot have genuine Christian fellowship with those who are enmeshed in the charismatic movement. Young people in the charismatic movement find that they have to be dishonest. They have to literally be hypocrites, because they have to pretend that something is so, which is not.

Every now and then, it's interesting to be able to talk to a person who was deeply involved in the charismatic movement, who has come out of it. I have found that when you ask these people, "When you were speaking in tongues, and when you were claiming healings, why were you doing that? Almost inevitably, the answer is psychological: "I just determined it had to be, and I psyched myself, no matter what, that it was taking place." That is the thing that bothers young charismatics, because, as Dr. Nolen has pointed out, the proof is in the practice and the evidence is there. And the evidence is that Kuhlman and Roberts and the rest of them are not healing organic diseases or broken bones. They're taking opportunity. They're taking advantage of the autonomic nervous system. They're doing some people some good in that way, but they are not exercising the New Testament gift of healing, and they have no right to be claiming to do that.

It is very naive to think that it makes no difference if these people want to hold this view concerning the working of spiritual gifts, and that our fellowship with them will not in any way affect our own spiritual lives. As you know, the Southern Baptist Convention has suddenly found itself playing with the charismatic movement. I drove by the Bronco Bowl today, the Beverly Hills Baptist Church, which was recently kicked out of the Dallas Baptist Association. It's a huge building, as you know. There it is–that old bowling alley, necessary for them to meet in in order to have church services. It is one of the most fantastic things in the city of Dallas. The pastor can actually stand up and say, "We don't need your money. We're already $100,000 over what we need that we can't use." Yet, it's a delusion. It's a fantastic monumental delusion.

The Texas Baptist Convention does not want to withdraw fellowship from the charismatic churches within their circle. The new president is the pastor of a large church in Fort Worth. Recently on television, I heard someone ask him, "Do you think there is any problem about associating and fellowshipping with charismatics?" He said, "Oh, I have several of them in my church, and as long as they just don't try to get together to start something, I see no problem in having them there." That is something comparable to saying, "I've got six cancer cells in my body. As long as they don't get together to try something, I don't see any problem having them there." The one thing you know about cancer is that they're going to get together, and they are going to start something. And charismatics do it together. They inevitably get together, and they do start something.

I wish I had time here to go with you into the report of a pastor who made an examination of different churches, and particularly from his own experience in his own church, of what happens when, within a church, people come in who pretend to have the gifts of healing and tongues and prophecy, and they are not rebuked for that heresy. They're not rebuked for that apostasy, but they're permitted to enter into the fellowship of the church. It is amazing what he discovered the results were, and it is always bad upon the local church that does not rebuke and dismiss from its membership people who practice the charismatic claims.

So this is very naive. It's political talk on his part, as the leader of the Texas Baptist Convention. It is not scriptural talk. What the Bible says is that fellowship with charismatics is dangerous to one's spiritual health and to God's blessing.

Romans 16:17-18 declare this to us: "Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own body. And by good words and fair speeches, deceive the hearts of the innocent." Could you have a better description of the charismatic movement and its influence than that? Again, Romans 16:17-18: "Now, I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions (which charismatics do in a local church) and offenses contrary to doctrine (They are certainly offending contrary to doctrine.), which you have learned, and avoid them." Did you see that? As always, here in this church, the speaker is not responsible for the remarks which are made. The views which are presented in this church are entirely the responsibility of the management upstairs. The management upstairs has just declared in the book of Romans, "Avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ."

If you think that's not so, go back and read Matthew 7:22-23, and see how there will be people who think they are serving the Lord Jesus Christ, and they're going to find out they are not. "But their own body." It is the physical healing. It is the physical feeling. It is the physical effect that's big in charismatic circles. But do they love you? They can't tell you that enough, "by good words and their fair speeches, they deceive the hearts of the innocent." All those poor ignorant Christians, that sit in churches where nobody ever teaches them doctrine, are deceived by the fair speeches of the charismatics.

So the principle of the Word of God is, "Avoid them." The charismatic movement is dangerous to your spiritual well-being and to God's blessing upon you. That's because it is an emotionally dominated system that is being used of Satan for his ends, and to prepare the world for his control of the tribulation world. He's going to use the charismatic movement out there to exercise that control (Matthew 7:21-23).

If you have any further question about this, in order to clarify this in your mind, I'd suggest you get the Berean tapes on the spiritual gifts, and see what's for today, and what is not. You have a lot at stake. Someday you will stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Those who have been in the charismatic movement are going to be the poorest Christians in heaven. They're going to be the paupers for all eternity, because they pursued serving God in a way that was the result of the emotions of their soul, and not the leadings of God the Holy Spirit. May God preserve you from that fate.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

[**Back to the Advanced Bible Doctrine (Philippians) index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/philippiansdanish.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)