

FAITH & HEALING - The right relation of faith to healing

The formula '**If you have faith you will be healed**' has caused as much misery as it has blessing. That is why I am dealing with the topic in this article.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Church world-wide has experienced a recovery of faith in a God who is alive, and at work among us. For countless Christians their spiritual life has risen from the dead! Prayer is real, the Scriptures speak, lives are changed, and there is a thirst for teaching.

Part of that change has been the rediscovery of Christ's healing work at various different levels, and with it has come a wealth of teaching. Some have taught the formula '**If you have faith you will be healed**'. That's fine when things turn out that way, but when they do *not*, then there can follow guilt, depression, and the loss of the very faith that was promised to guarantee so much.

A balanced and biblical understanding of *faith*, and in particular its relation to healing, is therefore vital if folk are to be rightly encouraged rather than misled. God heals; faith is certainly important. What matters is that we understand not only how the two *do* link, but also how they do *not*.

'FAITH HEALING'?

Those who promise that '**healing**' will follow '**faith**' rarely define either the meaning of 'healing' or the meaning of 'faith'. Indeed the formula is used by non-Christians, and led to the recommendation over forty years ago that Christians would be better off *not* using the term 'faith healing' because it is so vague and means almost anything according to who is using it.

[see The Report of the 1958 Archbishops' Commission *The Church's Ministry of Healing*, edited by John Richards, and available from Renewal Servicing, P.O.Box 463, Staines, Middlesex, TW18 3WL.]

The term *faith healing* means to some faith in the human 'healer'; to others, it means a mental certainty of healing on the sufferer's part. Neither view need be even religious, let alone Christian!

HOW DO WE FIND THE BIBLICAL VIEW?

We cannot simply reply – 'Because it is in the Bible'. Biblical statements lifted out of their Biblical context do not give us the true Biblical view. For example Psalm 14:1 asserts ***There is no God*** ! Only when we look at the *context* and the setting in which those words were spoken do we learn that '***There is no God***' is what the ***fools say in their hearts*** ! To find what is truly 'Biblical' we must -

- relate what is said to its immediate **context**,

- relate what is said also to the **main truths of God's revelation of himself** in Scripture, and draw no conclusions that are contrary to that.

This explains why what follows will not simply be a list of texts with the word *faith* in them, but a look at them in their contexts, so that the truly 'Biblical' view can be seen.

2. 'FAITH' IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

The word 'faith' is seldom used in the Old Testament.

The Hebrew Bible talks, instead, of *Trusting in the Lord*. It is another way of saying the same thing.

So the Psalmist sings:

*Trust in the Lord and do good....
Take delight in the Lord,
and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him...*

[Psalm 37:3-5, see. also e.g. Ps.18:2, *The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield....*]

Our faith, or trust, in the Lord is due to the fact that -

- **God has repeatedly demonstrated that he can be utterly trusted.**
- **What he says is trustworthy.**
- **We should therefore trust his promises.**
- **We should therefore obey his commands.**

To put one's faith in God means **not** putting one's faith in the usual human things on which, then as now, we tend to rely, e.g. *personal insight*, the quality of *spiritual life*; *military strength*; or *man-made idols*.

[Proverbs 3:5,

**Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight...**

Ezekiel 33:13,

**...yet if they trust in their righteousness and commit iniquity,
none of their righteous deeds shall be remembered;**

Isaiah 31:1,

**Alas for those...who rely on horses, who trust in chariots...
but do not look to the Holy One of Israel**

Habakkuk 2:18,

For its maker trusts in what has been made, though the product is only an idol...!]

In the Old Testament Abraham was the supreme example of the man of faith; knowing that God would keep his promise, he handed everything over for God's direction and disposal.

- **In the Old Testament the only object worthy of our faith is God himself.**

This prepares us well for understanding *faith* in the New Testament.

3. FAITH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Similarly in the New Testament the only right object of our faith is God himself, *but a great change has occurred!*

- **The stepping of God into our life and history, means that the object of our faith has become focused on a PERSON - Jesus Christ!**

So the basic Greek word for 'faith' (either as a verb or noun) comes about 500 times in the New Testament. It gets translated in English by two different words:

- *faith* and
- *belief*.

For instance, the New English Bible translates the traditional *Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief* equally accurately as *I have faith...help me where faith falls short.* [Mark 9:24]

Since English uses *two* words for the original one in the Greek New Testament, it means that some passages mentioning **belief** will be as important for us to look into as passages that refer to **faith**.

Because **Jesus Christ is the centre and focus of Christian belief and faith in God**, New Testament writers use the word *faith* as a shorthand term for many great Christ-related things. Thus -

- The **Gospel message** about Christ becomes known simply as *the faith*.
[Where 'faith' = the Gospel message, see Acts 24:24
...he sent for Paul and heard him speak concerning faith in Christ Jesus.]
- The **Church** is described as *the family of faith*.
[Where 'faith' = the Church, see Galatians 6:10
...let us work for the good of all, and especially for those of the family of faith.]
- The **Christian life** becomes known simply as *the faith*.
[Where 'faith' = the Christian Life, see Acts 14:22
...and encouraged them to continue in the faith,...]
- **Christian Belief** can be called simply *the faith*.
[Where 'faith' = Christian Belief, see Jude 20
...build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit;]

THE FOCUS OF FAITH

For Christians, the centre of Faith is Christ. I had this in mind when I designed the cover for this article when it originally appeared in pamphlet form. I wanted to symbolise the main point of the New Testament's teaching about faith in relation to healing.



The formula '**if you have faith you will be healed**' can so easily have **I** at its centre: my need; my faith; my healing. The centre of New Testament Faith is *not I but Christ*.

4. 'FAITH/BELIEF' in TWELVE N.T. HEALING STORIES

- English translates the *one* basic Greek N.T. word by both '**belief**' and '**faith**'.
- There are **34 different events** in the N.T. of individual healings, exorcisms or raisings.
[26 in the Gospels and 8 in the Acts of the Apostles]
- Because these 34 events are often recorded by more than one Gospel-author, there are altogether **55 different accounts**.
- There are **12 mentions of faith/belief** in the 34 events, i.e. roughly a third of them.

a) Where faith/belief is mentioned.

THE TWELVE STORIES ARE:

- In **Mark, Matthew & Luke** (5 events)
- (1) **Paralytic carried by friends** [healing]
[Mark 2:1-12, esp. v.5, and parallels in Matthew 9:1-8 & Luke 5:17-26]
 - (2) **Woman with haemorrhage** [healing]
[Mark 5:25-34, esp. v.34, and parallels in Matthew 9:20-22 & Luke 8:43-48.]
 - (3) **Jairus' daughter** [raising] (*Faith/belief* omitted in Matthew)
[Mark 5:21-24,35-43, esp. v.36, and parallels Luke 8:41-42, 49-56, & Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26.]
 - (4) **Epileptic demoniac** [exorcism] (*Faith/belief* omitted in Mark)
[Mark 9:14-29, esp. v.24, and parallels in Matthew 17:14-21 & Luke 9:37-43]
 - (5) **Blind Bartimaeus** [healing]
[Mark 10:46-52, esp.v.52, and parallels in Matthew 20:29-34 & Luke 18:35-43.]

- In **Mark** and **Matthew** only (1 event)
- (6) **Canaanite woman's daughter** [exorcism] (*Faith/belief* omitted in Mark)
[Matthew 15:21-28, esp. v.28. and parallel in Mark 7:24-30]
- In **Matthew & Luke** (1 event)
- (7) **Centurion's servant** [healing]
[Matthew 8:5-13, esp. verses 10 & 13. and parallel in Luke 7:1-10]
- In **Matthew** only (1 event)
- (8) **Two blind men indoors** [healing]
[Matthew 9:27-31, esp.v.29]
- In **John** (2 events)
- (9) **The Official's son with a fever** [healing]
[John 4:46-54, esp.v.50]
- (10) **Lazarus** [raising]
[John 11:1-44, esp. v.26-27]
- In **The Acts** (2 events)
- (11) **Lame man at Gate Beautiful** [healing] (Peter's ministry)
[Acts 3:1-10, 16, 4:7-12 esp. 3:16]
- (12) **Cripple at Lystra** [healing] (Paul's ministry)
[Acts 14:8-18, esp.v.9]

To summarize, *Faith/belief* is mentioned -

- in 12 (out of 34) individual healings /exorcisms /raising events.
- these 12 events are related in 20 accounts.

b) Where faith/belief is *not* mentioned

- *Faith/belief* is **not** mentioned in nearly two-thirds of the events.
- We must be careful what we conclude from this.

i) Jesus may certainly heal without faith in him being present -

The man at the pool, in John's Gospel, *did not know who it was* who had healed him.
[John 5:13]

ii) But an omission of the mention of faith does not prove it was not there!

For example, Mark records that the Father of the epileptic-demoniac said to Jesus –
'I believe; help my unbelief!'

But when Matthew and Luke summarise Mark's story and retell it in half the space, they miss this out.

[Mark – 9:14-29, especially verse 24. Compare with Mark, Luke.9:37-43 and Matthew 17:14-21. Matthew omits the father's faith, and he alone of the Gospel-writers mentions

Christ's explanation of the disciples' earlier failure to heal the lad, '*Because of your little faith*' 17:20!]

iii) Some accounts, like Peter's mother-in-law and the healing of Malchus' ear are only two verses long and too short for such details.

[Peter's mother-in-law – Mark 1:30-31 and parallels Matthew 8:14-15 & Luke 4:38-39.
Malchus – Luke 22:50-51.]

iv) Some accounts were healings at a distance, others were raisings of the dead. One would hardly expect the faith of the person involved to be mentioned in either case!

5. THE FAITH/BELIEF SAYINGS

- **There is no uniform or clear role of *faith* in the N.T. healing stories.**

The use of the word '**Faith**' may be loosely grouped under six headings.

The use of numbers like this > (1), (2), (3), etc., refers to the 12 Healing stories listed above.

a) Faith is ENCOURAGED.

Jesus to Jairus. (3) Mark.5:36

- '***Do not fear, only believe.***'

Jesus to Martha prior to Lazarus' raising. (10) John 11:26-27

- '***Do you believe this?'***...'***Yes, Lord, I believe you are the Messiah.***'

b) Faith is NOTICED.

The four with the paralytic. (1) Mark.2:5

- '***When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son your sins are forgiven.'***

Jesus to Centurion.(7) Matthew.8:10

- '***'...in no one in Israel have I found such faith'***

Cripple at Lystra. (12) Acts 14:9

- '***Seeing he had faith to be healed,...***

c) Faith is CONFESSED.

Father of epileptic-demoniac. (4) Mark. 9:24

- '***I believe; help my unbelief!***'

d) Faith is RELATED to the healing.

Jesus to centurion concerning his servant. (7) Matthew 8:13

- '***let it be done for you according to your faith'***

Cripple at Lystra. (12) Acts 14:9

- '***Seeing he had faith to be healed,...***

e) Faith is part of the EXPLANATION.

Jesus to woman with haemorrhage, (2) Mark 5:34

- '*...your faith has made you well*'

Jesus to Bartimaeus. (5) Mark 10:52

- '*Go; your faith has made you well.*'

Peter about man at the Beautiful Gate. (11) Acts 3:16

- '*...by faith in his [Jesus'] name, his name itself has made this man strong... and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health...*'

f) Faith is GENERATED by the event.

Official with ill son. (9) John 4:50

- *The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him...*

The categories cannot be rigid, and alternative classifications could easily be made. This illustrates the important point that -

faith in the N.T. healing stories has no one clear role!

- It is not always present.
- It is not always the sufferer who has it.
- It is not always linked directly with the healing.

But having stated that, ***faith/belief*** is often present and is sometimes linked (in ways not easily defined) to the healings.

How should we best understand ***faith***?

6. HAVING 'FAITH-IN' SOMEONE

If you have 'faith in' someone, it will help you to understand *faith* in the New Testament!
I hope you have **faith-in** your family doctor.

If you do **not**, you will probably avoid meeting him/her, or ignore his/her advice.

But if you do have **faith in** him/her you will be willing to

- meet
- listen
- obey

Such obedience may mean doing things that you neither understand nor enjoy; it may mean agreeing to surgery that frightens you. Such obedience is possible if you have **faith-in** your doctor that all he/she directs is for your ultimate good.

- If you did not have faith in your doctor you would not summon or visit him/her, but **stay away**.
- **Having faith-in/belief-in your doctor may bring you to the place of healing, that you might not have reached without it.**
- **Faith-in your doctor does not *by itself* bring the healing.**
- **It may bring you to the right place, and enable you to listen and to obey.**

Trust and obey!

On one occasion I remember a doctor advising me to do something.

He actually asked me why I didn't, like other patients, question his advice or argue with him!

I said, '*You're* the expert not me! I lack the necessary knowledge to argue against what you suggest. I've come to you to help *me*! I'm here to do what *you* say! I don't see that I have any choice!'

(He was sufficiently startled for me to conclude that **faith-in** one's doctor can nowadays be pretty rare! – but that doesn't alter the point I am making about what it means!)

7. FAITH & OBEDIENCE

Faith shows itself in OBEDIENCE,
that is the heart of the matter.

In the twelve stories with ‘faith-sayings’ that we have noted **obedience** is there in almost all of them.

[The numbers (1), (2), (3), etc. refer to the **12 Healing Stories** (1) - (12), listed in **section 4** above, in which *faith* is mentioned.]

The **Paralysed man**, (1) is healed because he *obeyed* three seemingly impossible commands of Jesus '*...stand up, take your mat and go to your home.*' [Mark 2:11]

In the raising of **Jairus' daughter** (3) , Jesus not only *commands* the child to rise, but after clearing away the crowd, Jesus *strictly ordered* them to tell no one but to give the child some food. [Mark 5:41ff]

In the account of the **epileptic demoniac** (4) Jesus *commands* the father to bring his son to him, because he probably lacked the freedom of will to do so himself. [Mark 9:19b]

Jesus *commands* others to lead **blind Bartimaeus** to him (5) [Mark 10:49].

The **Canaanite woman's daughter**.(6) was freed from demonic forces by Jesus' word of *command*. '*Great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.*' [Matthew 15:28]

It is the **Centurion's** description of military authority and *obedience* that prompted Jesus to say '*in no one in Israel have I found such faith.*' (7) [Matthew 8:10]

The **Two Blind Men** (8) had exemplary faith, but Matthew sharply points out how they failed to *obey* once they were healed, when what Jesus commanded did not suit them!

[Matthew 9:30,31 **Then Jesus sternly ordered them, 'See that no one knows of this.' But they went away and spread the news about him...**]

The **Official with the sick son** (9) is *commanded to go* by Jesus, and it is in going that he finds his son healed. [John 4:50]

In the **Raising of Lazarus from the dead** (10) the Lord *orders* the stone to be removed, and *commands* the dead man '*Lazarus, come out!*' [John 11:43]

The **man lame from birth**, (11) was *ordered* to do two seemingly impossible things: '*...Stand up and walk.*' and did so – with help. [Acts 3:6]

The **man crippled-from-birth** (12) was *ordered* by Paul, '*Stand upright on your feet*' (12) and he obeyed him! [Acts 14:10]

Why are **faith, command** and **obedience** so closely related? The answer is very simple.

- **Faith's** focus is in **Jesus** as **Lord**.
- When **Jesus** is recognised as **Lord** then that involves the believer in a relationship not only of worship, but of **service**.
- Such a role requires **listening** to orders and **obeying** them.

Where lives are transformed by the Lord Christ it is by *his* authority over sin, sickness and death. Such authority is most free to be wielded positively among those who have faith in Jesus and are willing to listen to him and obey him.

Matthew writes of the Lord at Nazareth –... *he did not do many deeds of power there, because of their unbelief* (or lack of **faith** as other translations have it, e.g. CEV, NAB, NCV, NIV.) [Matthew 13:58]

There is one New Testament healing-story in particular that says so much about **faith/belief** that I shall reflect on it in detail in the next section.

8. JESUS, JAIRUS & the WOMAN in the CROWD

These stories are interwoven and each illuminates the other by its contrast.

The earliest and fullest text is Mark 5:21-43 (used below) with the story of the woman coming between verses 25 and 34.

[Matthew and Luke each retells the story. Luke reduces it by a third (8:40-56), and Matthew's précis is but a third of the length of the original (9:18-26).]

Jesus is by the lakeside with a great crowd around him.

²²*Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came, and when he saw him, fell at his [Jesus'] feet ²³and begged him repeatedly 'My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.'* ²⁴*So he went with him. And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him.*

- Jairus is an example of **faith**. He comes to Jesus honestly and face-to-face. He *kneels* before Jesus thereby publicly demonstrating his submission to Jesus as Lord, and is not afraid publicly to state his need.

[The translation *fell* suggests that he tripped! He did no such thing, he made an act of homage, best translated in today's terms as *knelt* (as the C.E.V.)]

- Jairus believes that Jesus will be willing to lay his hands on his dying daughter and heal her.
- Jesus' relationship to Jairus is so good that when Jairus says *Come* – Jesus straightaway goes with him!

Jairus's story is interrupted by the woman. As we shall see, her approach to Jesus is the very *opposite* of Jairus's.

²⁵*Now there was a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years.*

²⁶*She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse.*

- Her ailment made her ritually 'unclean' (like a leper) but, fortunately for her, her condition was hidden. She would make 'unclean' all she touched, and should not have joined any crowd. So she was dishonestly keeping it all secret. She had no intention of letting Jesus or anyone else know what her need was. She didn't want to be embarrassed. She wanted to keep herself to herself. She wanted to remain anonymous. She had no faith-belief relationship with **Jesus himself**; so she did not come to worship and obey him. Her faith was in the healing power emanating *from* Jesus. So she doesn't want instinctively to pay Jesus homage, or to approach Jesus face-to-face or to speak with him. So, having heard about Jesus, she -

²⁷*...came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸for she said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.'* ²⁹*Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.*

- Jesus - who was going off with Jairus to his dying daughter - then does an **astonishing** thing! He STOPS!

³⁰**Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, 'Who touched my clothes?'** ³¹**And his disciples said to him, 'You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, 'Who touched me?'** ³²**He looked all around to see who had done it.**

- It is very unusual for mention to be made of *power* in the New Testament healing stories. It is important to this particular story (not to Christian healing generally) because it was not the healing *person* who was important to the woman, but the healing *power*. She viewed Jesus as a sort of spiritual battery – a view held by others – then and now.

[Mark 6:56 the crowd begged Jesus **that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and all who touched it were healed.** The original can refer either to touching it (the cloak) or **him** (Jesus). The translations are equally divided. Devotionally we would prefer it to be Jesus. Touching the *cloak* is the most likely in the light of the later role of Peter's **shadow** and the use of **handkerchiefs and aprons** for healing and deliverance(Acts 5:15 &19:12) .]

- Matthew, in his 8-verse summary of this story obviously omits many details, but the woman is not an ideal example of Christian behaviour or belief. Matthew, therefore, has her healing *resulting* from Jesus' words not preceding them.

[Here are the relevant verses in Mark and Matthew.

Mark:

²⁸**'...If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.'**

²⁹**Immediately her haemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of the disease...**

...³⁴ He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.'

Matthew, in chapter 9, rearranges the sequence thus, in two consecutive verses, and produces a better example of faith in Jesus:

²¹**'If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well.'**

²²**Jesus turned, and seeing her he said 'Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.'**

And instantly the woman was made well.]

- Some translations correctly stress that *Jesus kept on looking around*. There was no escape for the woman! [Translations include NCV, NIV, NLT, Message, etc.]
- The Lord was offering wholeness and salvation, he cannot allow a cure to be snatched from behind his back with all the guilt and misunderstanding that it would generate. You cannot build wholeness on lies.

In one sense - poor woman!

Everything that she had hoped for is dashed!

Everything she feared most is now about to happen!

The privacy she had hoped for will be shattered; her dishonesty will be exposed; the crowd may turn nasty; Jesus (she probably assumed) will be cross with her. She has been caught virtually red-handed. Already guilty, she is now racked with guilt – and her body-language says so!

³³***But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.*** Luke adds by way of further explanation *she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed* [better 'cured '].

[Luke 8:47. The New RSV translation (which I use in all these articles) has *healed*, but *cured* is better.

The story makes an important distinction between the woman's state *before* coming face-to-face with Jesus and *after* he has spoken to her. Quite different words are used. The first word is related to the word *doctor* ; the second to the great words *salvation/saviour*.

The King James' Bible has *healed ...whole* but the NIV with its *healed...healed* ignores the distinctions completely.

The translations *cured...saved* seem to me to be exactly the right pair (e.g. JB, and CCB).]

- Jesus' stopping forced the woman to the relationship and position that Jairus chose voluntarily!
- She had taken a cure from Jesus on her own terms; Jesus – for her own good – forces her to come to him on *his* terms.
- Jesus' terms require her to be public about her faith and her need, not private.
- Jesus requires honesty of her and wants her deceit acknowledged and exposed.
- Jesus requires that she speak when she would so much rather have kept silent.
- Jesus is not afraid of embarrassing her temporarily knowing that it will be to her benefit permanently.
- Jesus demands of her the things she feared most.

She has always seemed to me a very '*English*' type Christian! Her views and assumptions are wide-spread.

She probably hated doing anything in public!

She wanted to remain anonymous!

She needed the shelter of the crowd!

Her religion, she probably felt, was a private matter, and not something you talk about!

She feels she has the right to be left alone, by others and by God himself!

God is useful to have in an emergency!

Confrontation and commitment must be avoided at all costs!

She had enough faith in something to be convinced that she was religious!

It was not a faith in which she wanted to grow!

She stood on the edge of religion but had the stirrings of faith. It moved her in the direction of Jesus.

- Her God existed to meet her wishes, she was, as yet, unaware that she existed to meet his!

**She hoped that her faith in Christ's power would ensure that she got what she wanted.
The Lord builds upon this to give her what she *needed*.**

Jesus' stopping and asking who touched him brought the woman to the right place for real and total healing.

Had she left Jesus' presence cured but guilty she would have left him with dis-ease.

Now, as she prostrates herself before him, being honest and straightforward, Jesus can turn the stolen cure into a truly healing event.

She had taken steps for the cure of her ailment; Jesus now takes five steps for her total healing and salvation. Jesus says to her,

- ***Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.***

As we unwrap this gem of pastoral caring we will be able to see clearly what Christ meant when he used the phrase within it '*...your faith has made you well*'.

HEALING of RELATIONSHIPS.

Jesus first heals the relationship between the woman and himself, and in so doing heals her relationship to the crowd.

She was, you remember, *in fear and trembling* because she knew that her relationship to the crowd and to Jesus was wrong. She had been dishonest with both. Those in the crowd who had been touched by her were undoubtedly furious that they were now ritually unclean. [Leviticus 15:25-27] She is trembling on the ground because of her guilt and fear.

My criticism of the woman is clear, and over the decades I always find it difficult to see beyond her shortcomings!

How very different is the Saviour!

Jesus does not remind her of her failures, nor does he list them! It is plain to all that she is going through punishment enough. The time has come to be positive and to build upon the cure she had taken from him.

Jesus turns to the woman, and welcomes her as a Father would his child, and he uses a word of parental affection - ***Daughter*** – translated more warmly by some as ***My daughter***

[e.g. TEV, NEB, Jerusalem Bible. I would suggest ***My dear daughter***.]

Jesus does not add to her judgement or condemnation, but heals both with a single word!

***Daughter* !**

No condemnation now I dread, Jesus and all in him is mine!

That warm, friendly address declared everything she needed most – acceptance and forgiveness.

It establishes **a right-relationship with Jesus.**

The story of Jairus and the Woman might be headed **the Healing of the Two Daughters.**

Hugh Anderson has expressed it clearly:

Jesus' affectionate mode of address denotes that a crucial thing had happened: she has been brought into close personal relationship with Jesus.

[p.153, *The Gospel of Mark*, Oliphants,'76.]

It is as if Jesus can turn to Jairus and say – “I too have a daughter now!”

The transformation of the relationship between Jesus and the woman undoubtedly changed the attitude of the crowd.

The day I wrote that sentence I saw a TV programme about a British comedian, Stanley Baxter, who, decades ago, was the first person to impersonate the Queen. He recalled getting 'hate mail' from many royal supporters world-wide, and cited Colonels who wanted him horse-whipped! What he had done caused many to hate him. They assumed that his comedy must have *broken* his relationship to the Monarch. But then the hate-mail suddenly stopped!

What had happened was that the Queen had agreed to Baxter being publicly presented to her! When everyone could see that the Queen had not broken off the relationship with Baxter because of what he had done, their grounds for hatred were instantly removed.

Jesus' perfect love for the woman must have defused the anger of the crowd in an ever greater way.

HEALING of BELIEFS.

Jesus' next level of healing is to heal her wrong beliefs, just as he would heal Zacchaeus's. There are few things more important than the healing of wrong belief, since our decisions and actions arise mostly from them, whether the beliefs are good or bad!

It is clear from the accounts that the woman regarded Jesus as a source of supernatural power, and that was true enough. She believed him to be a spiritual battery whose power she could tap anonymously by touching his clothes. (Indeed one translation uses the word *discharge* of Jesus' awareness that power had left him!)

- THIS IS THE CONTEXT IN WHICH JESUS SAYS – *Your faith has made you well.*

Why does Jesus say this and what does Jesus mean?

It is in **this** context of her wrong-thinking about *power* that Jesus says this.

The woman needs a ministry that is positive.

Jesus therefore does three things -

- He takes what little is **positive** in her life and builds his positive ministry upon it.
- He replaces her thinking about impersonal *power* by the fact of personal **relationship**.
- He commends her by taking the only positive thing in her life – her belief that prompted her to see Jesus; her *faith* that if she touched Jesus' clothes she would be well.

Jesus says – *Your faith has made you well.*

Out of context it could be taken to mean that her faith was the cause of her cure, and is such, therefore, that it should be commended!

No!

Her faith was immature and misguided, but it **set her on the right path, the path to Jesus.**

I noted earlier that faith-in our doctor might well enable us to visit him/her. It gets the healing ball rolling – it does not, in itself, bring or guarantee the cure.

(How sad today that this story, which so clearly demonstrates the initial **inadequacy** of her faith, provides a Biblical faith-text by which some teach that faith guarantees healing! Indeed, the image of the woman touching Jesus' garment appears in some Christian publications as a symbol and example of faith and Christian healing!)

HEALING of DIRECTION

Jesus first establishes his saving relationship with her as Saviour and Lord.

He then re-interprets her cure not in terms of *power* but in terms of **relationship**. What some might today call 'the healing of the past'.

In her new faith-relationship to Jesus, Jesus is now able to *command* and she to **obey**. (See section 7 above, Faith & Obedience).

Having first assured her of his close personal relationship to her, Jesus can then command her to **Go**. (The assurance has to come first, otherwise the foundation is too shaky to leave him.)

There are two permanent dangers in healing situations.

a) The first is that the healed person will continue in the pattern of life that was previously dictated to by the illness. (Which is why Jesus makes cripples pick up their bed!)

b) The second is the tendency for the healed-one to develop an over-dependent attachment to the healer – dubbed 'gruesome-twosome' by some!

The command to **Go** safeguards both of these, and features frequently in Jesus' healing ministry, e.g. the leper, the demoniac, the paralytic, etc.

[The leper - Mark 1:44, the paralytic -, Mark 2:11, the demoniac – Mark 5:19, the blind man of Bethsaida - Mark 8:26, the centurion's servant - Matthew 8:13, the man with dropsy - Luke 14:4, the ten lepers – Luke 17:19, the man born blind - John 9:7.]

The HEALING of GUILT

Go in peace is here not just a Jewish 'Goodbye', but a command and a blessing. It is the very opposite of the picture of the woman on the ground trembling with fear at the feet of Jesus.

It is a great word of healing in the New Testament, and translates the Hebrew *Shalom*. One idea behind it is rest from strife, but primarily it is of that wholeness that comes from a right relationship with God, and from which alone comes real **peace**.

Had the woman left Jesus anonymously, guilty and troubled, she would have left with a physical cure but dis-eased. Jesus' words are to heal the dis-ease that is not physical.

Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven! She received, like us, more than she either desired or deserved.

The HEALING ASSURANCE

'Be healed of your disease'

This is Jesus' final recorded comment to the woman. At first sight it seems unnecessary! She was already cured wasn't she?

Yet, on her return, thoughts of her surreptitious theft of a cure from Jesus might always have bothered her. Did the reconciliation-scene with Jesus really put it right? Had he really forgiven her? Had she really made clear what she had done? Was the cure part of Jesus' will for her?

Against such nagging doubts and uncertainties, Jesus gives his word.

- Jesus freely **gives her** what she had set-out to **take** from him! A lovely - and almost ingenious - way of solving her future dilemmas of anxiety and doubt!

She could relax, and rest assured, that the cure of her ailment was freely given by Jesus. The unusual Greek construction indicates a *strong assurance* that could be translated **Your disease has gone for good!**

Space means that I must leave the story at this point, and most readers will know that the news of Jairus's daughter's death comes immediately. Jesus goes off to her home, expels the crowds, takes Peter, James and John with him, and taking her by the hand commands her to get up. She does! Jesus demands that she be given something to eat.

A Story of Faiths

It is a great story of faiths. Of faith rightly placed and of faith misplaced; of strong faith, of growing faith, of faith transformed, of faith rewarded.

It shows how God in his love wants to draw us ever more fully into that faith-relationship to his Son; into that place where we will learn to listen and obey that we may move into the riches of that full salvation that he has for us.

The two intertwined stories illustrate the sovereignty of God at work. Our Lord did exactly what Jairus hoped and did exactly what the woman feared most! However much we stress **faith** we must stress God's sovereignty **more**, lest we distort and exaggerate what God has disclosed to us in Scripture.

If we divorce **faith** from the sovereignty of God then we will fall into the trap of thinking that if we can produce enough of it we can get God to do what we want! Such thinking turns Scripture on its head! It can lead to a faith that God will obey *us*, rather than a faith which enables us so to trust God that we want to obey *him*.

9. TWO QUESTIONS OFTEN ASKED

1. Does God require our faith before he can heal us?

and

2. If we have faith will he automatically heal us?

The answers are not difficult. To each the answer is –**NO!**

How can we be so sure of our answers?

That God is **not** dependent on our faith to heal us is clear from those Scriptures which record the healing of those with no faith. In particular one would note in John’s Gospel the detailed account of the healing of the man at the pool, a man who, when questioned, did not know who Jesus was. [John 5:2-18, esp. v. 13] Also, the dead son of the widow at Nain was presumably unable to exercise any active faith at the time! [Luke 7:11-17]

Nowadays there are reported healings through Christian ministry of those of other religions, whose healing cannot be the result of Christian faith, though often the prelude to it.

If God could only heal us when we had faith and then only in the way that our faith demanded then he would not be our Lord, but we would be lording it over him.

If God ‘automatically’ did anything in response to us we would be in the realm of magic, not of sovereignty and grace.

Both Scripture and present-day experience show that the Christians of faith are not invariably granted physical healing. Health is not a sign of Christian faith, nor is illness a sign of Christian faithlessness.

St. Paul asked the Lord three times to remove his ‘thorn in the flesh’. He was not physically healed, but learnt instead that God’s grace is sufficient, and that his power is made perfect in our weakness. [II Corinthians 12:9] Paul urged Timothy to take wine for the sake of his stomach and his *frequent ailments* [I Timothy 5:23]. Yet Paul rejoices in Timothy’s *sincere faith*. [II Timothy 1:5] *Faith* does not guarantee healing.

10. REAL FAITH

It is not necessarily strongest when we affirm our certainty of what God is going to do because of it! Indeed, too restrictive an anticipation of what God is going to do on any particular occasion can actually be a *lack* of real trust in him that is willing to accept *whatever* God wishes to do, at whatever timing he wishes to accomplish it.

For me the greatest faith is expressed in a **total surrender to God's will** whatever it is, rather than in any attempted bargaining with him. John Wesley's prayer expresses, for me, the essence of faith –

‘LORD GOD: I am no longer my own, but yours,
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to enduring;
Let me be employed for you or laid aside for you,
Exalted for you or brought low for you,
Let me be full, let me be empty;
Let me have all things, let me have nothing;
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and
disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours.
So be it.’