

# I am the Lord who heals you



**Healing isn't something that God does. It's who he is, writes Alison Morgan who draws upon her wide experience in the healing ministry to reflect upon our theme. 'Healing means more than just making people better' she says**

I first became involved with the ministry of healing 23 years ago, when Mike Hutchinson, a consultant haematologist, invited me to join the church healing prayer team overseen by him and his wife Ann, a nursing lecturer. Since then I have seen many people healed, through prayer in the name of Jesus, of physical, emotional and spiritual afflictions. I have also seen many people not healed of these things. From the earliest times a 'sign of the kingdom', the ministry of healing remains an undoubted part of what we are called to today. But it raises questions; and some of those questions are difficult.

## The theology of healing

I think if we want to understand healing we need to start not with the healing itself but with God. What kind of a God is he? Who is it we are asking to heal us? This was the question faced by Moses and the people he had led out of slavery in Egypt. They had set off with great hopes of a new life of freedom and prosperity, only to find

themselves starving in the desert. They complained; what kind of a God was this? Did he actually care about them? God's response was, for the first time, to make them 'a statute and an ordinance'. Obey me and I will look after you, he said. You want to know who I am? 'I am the Lord who heals you' (Exodus 15.26). And so we have God's first clear self definition. Healing isn't something that God does. It's who he is.

## 'Today these words have been fulfilled in your hearing'

So it comes as no surprise to find that in the New Testament healing turns out to be a key aspect of the ministry of Jesus. It seems that for Jesus too, healing is not just something he does. The name Jesus (*Yeshua* in Hebrew) means both to heal and to save. To be saved is to be healed; to be healed is to be saved. So, like his Father, Jesus announces his very identity as being to do with healing – he comes, he says one day in Nazareth, to proclaim

release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed. The next sabbath he goes to Capernaum, delivers a man from an unclean spirit, heals Simon's mother in law from a fever, lays hands on 'all those who were sick with various kinds of diseases' and cures them. He summarises the day's work as having 'proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God.'<sup>1</sup>

So healing is not just who God is, it's who Jesus is too. Healing is what happens as we enter the kingdom of God. It seems that our faith does not just encourage us to look for healing; it is about healing. The God in whom we have faith is a God who heals.

## Healing in history

If healing is part of the gospel, we should expect to find that it has been a continuous mark of Christian ministry – which indeed we do. Jesus made it quite clear to his disciples that this was not just what he was doing but what they also were supposed to do: 'Proclaim the good news: the kingdom of heaven has

come near. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.<sup>2</sup> So after His death they continue to do it; the Book of Acts contains many stories of people being healed through prayer in the name of Jesus. Prayer for healing continued to be a part of ordinary Christian experience throughout the next centuries and beyond; people have in fact experienced healing in every century from then to now.<sup>3</sup>

## Healing today

It's clear from both the Old and New Testaments that when we refer to 'the God who heals' we are not simply talking about a God who sometimes performs amazing works of physical healing; this is not about emergency medical treatment. In Hebrew the word 'heal' is related to the word 'whole'; the name Yeshua means both to heal and to save. Healing means more than just making better.

Paul refers to three areas of healing as he prays for the Thessalonians that God would keep their spirit, soul and body sound and blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> Taking these in reverse order, we can talk about healing, wholeness and salvation.

## Physical healing

Physical healing is not complicated to understand: we pray, people are healed. That's the idea, anyway, and



From a 13th century manuscript  
**St Cuthbert heals a boy's eye**



**Jesus heals ten lepers, Luke chapter 17** from an 11th century manuscript

for many it's an experienced reality. I have often seen people receive physical healing, sometimes instantly, sometimes gradually: Christians and not yet Christians, adults and children, here in the UK and all over Africa. I have stood in awe as the Lord pours out his healing grace on his people – I think of the ministry of Damian Stayne, a Roman Catholic layman who regularly sees people healed of longstanding infirmities; or of the healings which take place at New Wine, or recently in Cwmbran in Wales.<sup>5</sup> And yet I know too that many people are hesitant not only about praying for healing, but even about sharing testimonies of healing, for fear of upsetting those who are not healed. My guide is John Wimber, who used to say: 'when we didn't pray for healing, no one got healed. When we did pray for healing, some got healed and some didn't get healed. We think it's best to pray.'

## Inner healing – wholeness

Then there's inner healing. This is how Paul prays for the Ephesians:

*'I pray that . . . he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.'*

For me, praying for inner healing is about walking alongside people, helping them move from their place of pain into the loving presence of God. It can be even more remarkable than physical healing.

## Spiritual Healing – salvation

Finally Paul talks about being made whole in our spirit. Remembering the link between the words to heal and to save, the first thing we need to be healed from is sin, broadly defined as everything which separates us from God. It's a simple process, a matter of changing direction, making a decision; a matter of repentance and belief, to use the Biblical phrase. But there may be a darker element to spiritual healing too; there may be specific spiritual obstacles which prevent a person from responding fully to Jesus, and from which they need to be set free. This too is a ministry which is found throughout history. In the early Church every baptism service included exorcism, and an element of that remains even today, when we say 'I turn to Christ, I repent of my sins, I renounce evil' and receive the sign of the cross.

## Healing of the land

There is one final dimension of healing mentioned in Scripture: the healing of land. In Genesis we are made responsible for all of creation. But as part of the alienation between us and God pictured in the story of the Fall, there is an alienation between us and the land on which we live, and the earth 'groans in pain' as with us it waits for freedom which is to come.<sup>6</sup> Many years ago God gave this promise:

*'If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land'* (2 Chronicles 7:14).

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It seems that just as God will sometimes bring healing to our bodies, so too he is willing to bring healing to our environment.

## The hard questions

So healing is not just about what God does, but more fundamentally about who he is. Now for the big question: why does God not always heal? I have thought about this question a lot. The obvious answer of course is that healing is presented in both the Old and the New Testaments as a sign, not a right. And yet stated as baldly as that, it raises the anxiety that God may be capricious, sometimes willing to heal, sometimes not. I think there's a simpler way of thinking about it.

It's clear that physical healing is granted sometimes through our prayers, but that's all – perhaps more often when we pray, as Jesus did, for non Christians than when we pray for each other – but it's all a bit of a mystery. Inner healing is more certain, and can be confidently expected as we are slowly transformed into the likeness of Jesus; my experience is that the vast majority of those for whom I have prayed in depth for inner healing do receive it. And spiritual healing is more or less guaranteed – anyone who wants to be freed from sin or



**St Guthlac cast a demon out of a madman in Lincolnshire**

*From a 13th century manuscript*

released from evil can be sure that this will happen here and now; it is my experience that all those who wish to come to God can do so, and that all those who seek deliverance receive it.

In other words, it seems that the further we move from time into eternity, the more certain and sure the healing we receive. One day all healing will be complete; Paul talks about the permanent healing which will come as we are given new bodies, and John's vision in Revelation is of a new world in which there is no more disease, mourning or pain. For now, we see through a glass, darkly. **r**

*This article summarises a talk prepared for a series of Resource Open evenings which we run in local churches. Each evening includes worship, teaching and prayer ministry. Please contact us if you would like to host one of these evenings – or visit [www.resource-arm.net](http://www.resource-arm.net) for more information and to read some of the feedback we have received.*

## FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Luke 4.18-19 and 4.43.
- <sup>2</sup> Matthew 10.8.
- <sup>3</sup> For examples see Alison Morgan, *Doing What Jesus Did*, Resource 2009.
- <sup>4</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5.23.
- <sup>5</sup> <http://www.coretlumenchristi.org/>; <http://vimeo.com/69160227>.
- <sup>6</sup> Romans 8.22-23.

## about the writer

**The Revd Dr Alison Morgan** is ReSource's thinker and writer. Alison is the author of *The Wild Gospel*, *The Word on the Wind*, *Doing What Jesus Did* and co-author with John Woolmer of ReSource's healing training course, *In His Name* (all available from our website). She led the healing prayer team at Holy Trinity, Leicester for 12 years and has written and taught widely on the healing ministry. Alison is married to Roger and they have three grown-up children.

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**We are often asked to provide teaching and support for the healing ministry. We publish *In His Name*, a training course for healing prayer teams, written by Alison Morgan and John Woolmer and based on many years of practical experience. Alison has taught on the healing ministry at St Mellitus College in London and in various diocesan programmes, and she and Martin Cavender have run healing days and workshops in cathedrals, healing centres and churches all over the country. Alison tells many stories of healing in her books *The Wild Gospel*, *The Word on the Wind*, and *Doing what Jesus Did*.**