

OpenTheo

Gifts-Word of Wisdom, Word of Knowledge, Etc



Charisma and Character - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the various gifts of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the Bible, including the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the biblical definitions of these gifts, rather than relying on personal interpretations. Gregg also addresses the controversial doctrine of healing and highlights the need for caution when interpreting passages related to this topic. Ultimately, he encourages listeners to rely on God's word and not solely on personal experience or external sources.

Transcript

Well, again, and we are going through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and the two major lists, I should say the two longest lists in the Bible of the gifts of the Spirit are in 1 Corinthians 12 and in Romans 12. There are other lists that are shorter, and in some respects different in terms of the character of what they list. But the longest list to get through is that in 1 Corinthians 12.

Now, there are nine gifts there, and we've looked at tongues, we've talked about tongues, and in conjunction with that, we've mentioned the interpretation of tongues. We've talked about the gift of prophecy, and in conjunction with that, the gift of discerning of spirits, which I took perhaps the more unconventional view that discerning of spirits is a corollary to prophecy. That the gift of discerning of spirits is, in fact, a gift of being able to discern whether a prophecy is genuine or not.

And that is not the general view of charismatics, I think, but it is nonetheless a view that I believe has much to commend it, and which I personally believe is the correct view. And as such, we have covered four of the gifts, four of the nine gifts that are listed in 1 Corinthians 12. Now, as you can do the simple math, that leaves five more, and you might say, boy, we're going to be here forever going through these, and that is not true.

We're going to be here tonight going through the remaining five in this list. Now, that will not end our exploration of the gifts. There will be one more lecture that we will have on this, and we'll go through the gifts that are found in Romans 12, because they're

different.

It's a different list, very different in its character. And so, we will, after tonight, have yet one more study on the gifts of the Spirit, and we'll be looking at Romans 12 in the list there. And then we'll have some other things that this series will be looking at, the fruit of the Spirit later on.

In 1 Corinthians 12, there are actually three lists of gifts. Only one of them has nine gifts, and the others are a bit shorter. But let's look at them so we can get Paul's thoughts about this, his understanding of this truth.

We've seen this already, but we'll look at it again. It's short enough. It will not belabor it, I think.

In 1 Corinthians 12, beginning at verse 7, But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. Those last four in the list we have covered in previous talks.

So, the first five in the list remain to be looked at. But let's look a little later in the same chapter. We'll find a second listing.

It's not really so much in the form of just a list, but we do find a grouping of gifts in verse 28, where Paul says, And God has appointed these in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Now, as you can see, some of those in that list in verse 28 are in the list we just read earlier in the chapter. There's reference here to prophets, miracles, gifts of healings, and tongues.

However, in this list in verse 28, there's also certain things mentioned that are not in the earlier list in the chapter. There are here apostles in verse 28, teachers, which were not mentioned earlier. Then there's helps and administrations.

These are different gifts than those which are found in the earlier list. However, these gifts, with the exception of apostles, are found in the Romans 12 list. And so we will not look at them in detail now because we are saving those for next time.

But you will find, I believe in Romans 12, that the gift of helps, which is mentioned here, is probably the same as the gift of ministry, which is service in Romans 12. And that the gift of administrations that he mentions here is no doubt the same as the gift of ruling. Which is mentioned in Romans 12.

The reason I say that is because here in verse 28, the word administrations is a Greek word that is found only once in the entire New Testament. And it is found in other Greek literature, however, and it means the helmsman of a ship. It's strange that it's translated administrations, but that is the literal meaning of the Greek word is the helmsman of a ship, obviously the person who steers the ship.

And the person who steers the body of Christ, apart from the Holy Spirit himself, is the person who has the gift of guiding or leading or ruling as Paul calls it in 1 Corinthians 12. So we'll talk about that next time. So we find here Paul mixes up the lists in verse 28.

Some of the gifts from the earlier list in 1 Corinthians 12 and some of the gifts from Romans 12 are mixed together here. Then we have a third list and it follows immediately afterward. It's found in verses 29 and 30, and it mostly resembles the list in verse 28, but not it's shorter.

It says in verse 29, are all apostles, are all prophets, are all teachers, are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? Now, here we have a slightly different listing than that in verse 28, but nothing new is introduced. That was not in one of the other two lists. One thing we notice when he goes into are all apostles, are all prophets and so forth, is he does not list any gifts in verses 29 and 30 that are not found in the earliest list in this chapter, except apostles.

And that is found in the verse 28 also. Apostles and prophets, which are mentioned here in verse 28 and also in verse 29, are found in another entirely different list in Ephesians four, where Paul says in Ephesians 4:11 that God gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers. Now, there's another some more stuff added here.

We've got apostles and prophets and teachers in Ephesians. But and those are here also in verse 28 and 29. But Paul also mentions in that place, evangelists and pastors.

Some would link the pastors and teachers as one gift, and that may be legitimate to do, but it's not certain pastors could be another gift altogether. And so we have really a wide range of gifts. If you combine the various lists, they all overlap each other.

Now, we are going to, therefore, look only at those gifts in the first list this week that we have not covered before. They are in verses eight, nine and 10, the gift of the word of wisdom. We have the word of knowledge.

We have faith. We have gifts of healings. And we have the working of miracles.

Now, the word of wisdom and word of knowledge are mentioned together, and the gifts of healings and the working of miracles are mentioned together. And it's quite clear that there just seems to be some way that those belong together. It seems like healings and working of miracles are things that are kind of similar and belong together.

Word of wisdom and word of knowledge, whatever they may be, sound like they go pretty close together. At least the construction of the words is similar. In between these two couplets is the gift of faith.

Now, it doesn't actually use the term the gift of faith. It just says to one is given to another faith, to another is given faith by the same spirit. And this is an extremely hard thing to know exactly what Paul meant, because all Christians have faith, but not all Christians prophesy, not all work miracles, and not all do all the things in the list, but all Christians have faith, else they would not be Christians.

So it has been suggested that there is a gift of faith that is additional to the ordinary faith that Christians all have. But if this is true, it is not the easiest thing in the world to decide what the gift of faith is. Does this mean, as many would suggest, that certain people are given special faith for special tasks, sort of a momentary surge of additional faith that they would not naturally have, but at a time of crisis where special faith is required.

This is, as I recall, what I was taught in the early days of my charismatic experience, was that the gift of faith was just that, like occasional surges of special, a special degree of faith when a special degree of faith was needed. And for lack of a better definition, I always just accepted that definition. But I just want to say that I'm not sure I have a better definition now, but I want to acknowledge that that definition is not stated to be the correct meaning.

Paul simply says, to one is given faith by the same spirit. Perhaps he talks, maybe he has in mind certain people who live by faith at a higher level than many others. People like Hudson Taylor and George Mueller and Reese Howells immediately come to mind.

These men, they're calling, and many missionaries and many other people in ministry have a calling to live at a higher degree of dependency upon God and to exhibit faith at a higher level than the average person needs to. And this not in special surges and fits and starts, but as just a constant in their lives, that faith at a higher level is exercising their lives. And if this is the case, this would probably be because their calling requires a higher degree of faith.

There are people who live with certain risks and challenges because of their calling that you would be terrified to live with if you don't have their calling and if you don't have their gifting. And yet for them, it's not a struggle at all. It really is not.

I am, I don't, I wouldn't, I would not be prepared to say that I have the gift of faith because I don't know that this is the right definition of the gift of faith. But if this is what the gift of faith is, then I would have to say, I understand completely this phenomenon. Because, you know, we have chosen to live by faith for many, many years.

And it's not really a struggle. And a lot of people say, boy, I wish I had that kind of faith. And I think, well, then just do.

I mean, what's to wish about? Just do, you know, just have that kind of faith. But I realize that not everybody is called to a lifestyle that requires the same type of faith. Faith is something, is merely trusting God.

That's all that faith is in the Bible, is trusting God. And not all people have to trust God for the same number of things. Now, in one sense, we do.

We all have to trust God for every breath. Because each breath is a gift from God. And if he withholds it, then we don't have it.

We all have to trust God for our provision and for our health and so forth. We all do. But we don't all know that we do.

And that is because many people hold jobs and God provides for them. But he provides through a paycheck. Many times people are kept healthy through medications and medical interventions, which God keeps them healthy by providing those means.

And because of these things, these people, though they are dependent upon God as much as anybody else is, it's not as obvious that they are. And faith doesn't have to operate at quite the same level for those things. Whereas if God calls you off to some place where there is no medical intervention available, or where there is no income available, and yet God has called you to be there, you must trust God for things that you would not have to trust him for in another circumstance.

And God doesn't call everyone to the same circumstance. Perhaps when Paul talks about, to another is given faith. He might be speaking of a degree of faith or a lifestyle of faith that not all are called to be in.

That is possible. Some have felt that when Paul talks about the gift of faith, perhaps he means the gift of being able to inspire faith in others. There are certainly people who do that.

I do not agree with the word of faith teaching. And therefore, I do not agree with much of what Kenneth Hagan teaches, who is a famous word of faith teacher. But I will say this, as a youth, I read many of his books before I discovered there were some errors that I could not countenance in his thinking.

But I will say my faith in God was greatly bolstered by reading his books. I mean, he just took a hard line. If the Bible says it, you take your stand on what the Bible says.

His books were full of testimonies about how trusting God came through. That man had a ministry to me. He taught me.

I do not know if he taught me, but he encouraged me. I think I already knew this, but he certainly strengthened in me the resolve just to trust God and to take God at his word. And that has stuck with me.

And while I today commonly will publicly renounce his theological system, I have to admit that he has done me some good in my earlier years, just reading the testimonies and reading his confidence in God. And his preaching is all about faith. He inspired faith in me.

Now, I'm not saying I believe that's what the gift of faith is, the ability to inspire faith in others. But this is something that's been suggested by some. All I'm saying is we don't know exactly what Paul meant because he never spoke elsewhere about it.

And even here, he's so vague. To another, he's given faith. Well, faith is a gift then.

But is it possible even that Paul is just talking about ordinary faith that all Christians have? And all he's saying here is those who don't have one of these other gifts, all they have is the gift of faith, which all Christians have. But that's better than nothing. That's good enough.

Not everyone has a gift of prophecy. Not everyone is a word of knowledge or word of wisdom or healings or whatever or working in miracles, but all have faith. And some people, that might be all they have.

That might be that might be their gift. And it may not be any greater than the faith that every other Christian has. I suspect, though, that Paul has something more in mind.

I only can say that without more biblical information, we can't be sure what he has in mind. And therefore, believing any of the suggestions I made might turn out to be true or might turn out to be false. And I'm not sure what help it would be to ever know whether this view is true or not, because all the things I described are true phenomena.

We just don't know if that's what Paul was talking about. I mean, it is true. Some people are called to live at a higher degree of faith in general.

Some people are called or do have a ministry in inspiring faith than others. Some people do have surges and blasts of faith at times in a crisis that they don't have at other times. They find themselves rising to the occasion and an extreme measure of heroism comes into their, you know, some would just call it adrenaline.

But, you know, I mean, it does seem that there are times when people who are ordinarily not so strong in faith nonetheless have it. I remember reading when I was younger in Fox's book of martyrs, reading about many of the martyrs, that some of them were particularly noted to be, especially in the case of women who were martyrs. Many times, John Fox, who wrote the book, said that this woman, and would give an example, she

was known to be of particularly weak disposition.

And yet when she was tortured and her children were tortured and killed and before her eyes, she was heroic and she was strong and she encouraged her children to remain faithful to death and so forth. And she exhibited faith, as you would never expect from someone who had a reputation for being of weak disposition. But this might be a special gift of faith, or it might just be special grace given that any Christian can expect at the time of being called upon to lay down their life for their faith.

All I can say is that in the midst of this list, Paul mentions faith, but he does not explain what he means. And therefore, we cannot be sure what he means. It might mean any of those things.

And if you were taught one of those things first, it may be that you'll leave the room believing that thing that you were taught first. The Bible says, he that is first in his own cause seems right till his neighbor comes and examines him. And to tell you the truth, I haven't really examined.

I haven't tried to debunk any of those views. Any of those views may be correct conceivably or not. All I know is that Paul gives us no further information.

We must assume, I think, that the Corinthians understood better than we. And remember, what we often forget is that before Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians, he had spent 18 months among them, preaching every day among them. He established the church in Corinth and lived in the church of Corinth for 18 months, a year and a half.

And then he went away and wrote this letter. And there's a lot of things in this letter and in Paul's other letters that reflect the assumption that his readers know what he means. When he actually says something to an outsider like ourselves, it's not at all clear what he means.

But he didn't have to make it clear to us. He didn't know we'd be reading his mail. But I have to leave the gift of faith without any solid or firm knowledge of what is meant by it.

Now, let's talk about the gift of the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge. I'm going to have to take a similar approach to these, only not quite so agnostic. I feel like we can do a little better with these in determining what Paul means, but not completely.

As I said in one of our introductory lectures, Paul nowhere else, in fact, no biblical writer in the New Testament ever speaks of a gift of the word of knowledge or a gift of the word of wisdom. In fact, even here, Paul doesn't speak of a gift of a word of wisdom or a gift of word of knowledge. He just says to one is given a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge.

Maybe this isn't a resident gift in somebody that, oh, I have the gift of the word of

wisdom. It may be that just as we sit here, someone will be given a word of wisdom. And that's what Paul's talking about.

They may never have one again. It may not be their gift that they carry around with them all the time. Just as to one person is given a word of wisdom in any given meeting of Christians.

God might give a word of wisdom to someone or a word of knowledge to someone now in charismatic circles, which is the circles I'm I'm most conversant in the last 25 years. We have always had a pretty strong opinion about what is meant by the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge. And I've already brought this up in previous lectures, so I won't dwell on it now.

But let me just say this, that a word of wisdom has typically been explained to mean a revealed bit of good sense and good judgment and wisdom that helps resolve a crisis similar to perhaps what Solomon did on a regular basis. And in a few notable cases that are given, like when two prostitutes came fighting over the same baby and they both said it was theirs and one was lying and the other was telling the truth. But Solomon and everyone else didn't know who was telling the truth.

So what did he do? He said, well, this is an easy solution. Let's just cut the baby in two and give each a half. And the wife, excuse me, the woman who was the mother said, no, no, don't kill the baby.

Just give it to the give it to this other lady. Whereas the woman who was lying said, no, good solution. Let's cut that baby in two.

I don't know if Solomon was so especially wiser if that woman was just plain dumb and fell into his trap. I'm not sure how any woman could have made such a suggestion and felt she could convince anyone that she was the real mother. But in any case, Solomon was wiser than she was.

And it says in I think it's first Kings chapter four, where it tells that story that Solomon's reputation went out far and wide worldwide for this wisdom. Well, it would be a hard call. I mean, if I mean, Solomon got this insight.

Hey, this will tell. And sure enough, it worked. That's like where wisdom was needed.

He didn't get what we usually call a word of knowledge. What most people would call a word of knowledge would be if he almost got a prophetic insight and said, she's lying, she's telling the truth. You rolled over on her baby in the night, killed it.

In my mind, I can see it. You took her baby and threw yours in the trash can and said that this was yours. You know, and I mean, that would be what most people understand to be a word of knowledge.

Not so much wisdom. Solomon came up with a brilliant solution. But he didn't know by revelation what the answer was, but he found out because what he came up with was a plan that would infallibly solve the problem.

Now, I have I have certainly been places where I've seen a word of wisdom. If this is what Paul means by word of wisdom, I've seen this. I can remember many times being in elders meetings where some gnarly, naughty kind of problem was being discussed, and it was just really tangled.

And, you know, everyone on the eldership was a wise man, but no one seemed to have the wisdom to solve the problem. We'd say, how about this? No, that doesn't sound right. How about this? No.

As soon as you'd suggest a solution, immediately the faultiness of the solution was evident just almost before you'd finish speaking it. You know, I mean, it was just nothing would work. Nothing was the right solution.

And then one guy said, well, we should do this. And it's like everyone suddenly realized that's the Lord. You know, that's the Lord's answer.

I mean, and the guy didn't say, thus sayeth the Lord. In fact, I'm not sure whether he knew that he was giving the Lord's answer or not. But it was evident.

Everyone in the room thought that's the wisdom of God right there. God has just given us the answer. And I have always believed, and I guess I still do, that that is probably what is meant by word of wisdom.

Now, notice Paul doesn't use the expression the gift of the word of wisdom, though he could have, but he didn't. He just says to one is given a word of wisdom. Okay.

And to another is given a word of knowledge. Now, a word of knowledge, as I think I made plain several times previously, is thought to be a revealed fact, a revealed bit of truth about something or someone that the person receiving the revelation has no natural way of knowing. An example of this is when Jesus told the woman at the well that she had had five husbands and was living with a man who was not her husband.

Jesus had never laid eyes on her before. He didn't know the woman. He may not have even known her name.

But suddenly, as he talked to her, he knew it was revealed to him. And she knew that it revealed to him because she knew that he couldn't have otherwise known when Peter knew that Ananias and Sapphira were lying about the price they were bringing and the price they'd sold their land for. He instantly knew.

This, I presume, is a word of knowledge, or at least is what it is a phenomenon that

charismatics have typically called the word of knowledge and believe that Paul is referring to when he uses this expression. Now, what I've suggested in some of our earlier lectures is I believe in that phenomenon. However, I'm not so sure that that's what Paul was talking about when he used the expression word of knowledge.

It may be. But in the scripture, those phenomena are associated with the prophetic gift. Even the woman of the well, when Jesus revealed her past, she said, Sir, I see your prophet.

I mean, she associated that with the prophetic gift. Now, it's entirely possible that prophets operated in the word of knowledge, and therefore, the word of knowledge is what that is. It's just that prophets used that had that gift as well as the gift of prophecy.

I could not deny this or affirm it. We just don't know. It is also possible that the word of knowledge does not mean a revealed thing like a prophetic knowledge.

It could simply be that God has entrusted certain people with more knowledge. But I don't I don't know that this is the case. I say that because the language word of knowledge, its closest parallel in the Bible is in Proverbs.

And there's a couple of Proverbs that have a similar sounding. Phrase. I'm not saying that they're necessarily talking about the same thing, but I always try to find biblical parallels to help me out if I can to understand what an unusual expression may mean in Proverbs 19 and verse 27.

It says cease listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge. Now, that's the new King James. I think the King James says something like cease my son to hear the words that cause you to stray from the word of words of knowledge.

But words of knowledge certainly doesn't sound like something that's specially revealed here, but it has to do with more like knowledgeable or wise conduct. Good advice. The words of knowledge, if you listen to instruction that cause you to stray from the words of knowledge, or if you cease listening to instruction, you will stray from the words of knowledge.

It sounds like the words of knowledge are instruction. They are teaching. If Paul is taking his language when he talks about a word of knowledge from the biblical precedent in Proverbs, he might have teaching in mind because he does later speak of a gift of teaching are all teachers.

And he does speak of gift of teaching in Romans 12. It may be that when he talks about a word of knowledge, he may be maybe not talking about anything other than what he elsewhere calls the gift of teaching. But I'm not all that sure in Proverbs 23, 12, it says, apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge.

Now, notice instruction here again is parallel in the Hebrew poetry, which where there's parallelism and and equality of meaning of the two phrases. Instruction and words of knowledge are the same thing. Now, I believe that if you search and look, you will find in Scripture, no other places in the Bible that use the expression word of knowledge or words of knowledge.

You have only those two Proverbs where words of knowledge are essentially synonymous with instruction, and then you have Paul's unexplained and undefined use of the term to one is given a word of knowledge. And therefore, he may not be referring by that term to what we commonly think of as a word of knowledge. And if you had described to him what we usually call a word of knowledge, he might say, oh, that's the gift of prophecy.

That's the prophetic gift. No word of knowledge is something else. And it's very possible that the word of knowledge is, in fact, instruction.

Which would mean that if somebody is able to to give you knowledge of something that you're ignorant of, something you need to know and to do so in such a way as to implant that knowledge fruitfully in your in your spirit. That that is a gift. Now, when we talk about the gift of teaching, I'll have more to say about that particular phenomenon, and that'll be next time that I when we go into Romans chapter 12.

But suffice it to say that the first three gifts listed, word of wisdom, word of knowledge and faith are very, very difficult to define if we're going to use the Bible to define its own terms. If we use tradition, there is Pentecostal tradition and charismatic tradition that already has assigned definitions for these things. But if those definitions did not arise out of the Bible, they're not infallible.

We can't be certain that they are right. I can say that a word of wisdom and a word of knowledge certainly are treated as something that is given by the spirit. So even if the knowledge has to do with like information, like instruction, it does not follow that a person has a word of knowledge just because they study and just because they go through college and they and they got a lot of facts in their mind.

That would not be the same thing, because he talks about something that's given by the same spirit, knowledge, wisdom. These are things that are needed in the Christian life and in the church's guidance. It needs to have those who can minister through the spirit, the wisdom of God and the knowledge of God.

And this is done through words and the Holy Spirit gives words. Let me show you something that Paul said earlier in first Corinthians. This would be a little closer to the parallel of the word of wisdom, but it's not perhaps the same thing.

It's in first Corinthians two. First Corinthians two. This is, of course, the same epistle that

we're looking at a later chapter in about the gifts, though I'm not suggesting he's here talking about the gifts.

But in first Corinthians two, when he says, I, brethren, when I came to you did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I was with you in weakness and fear and in trembling.

And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom. Words of wisdom. But not words of human wisdom, but in the demonstration of the spirit and power that your face should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

However, we do speak wisdom among those who are mature. Now, Paul does sometimes speak wisdom, but this is not, he says, the wisdom of this age nor of the rulers of this age. But verse seven, we speak the wisdom of God.

And in verse 13, he says, and these things, we also speak not in words, which man's wisdom teaches, but by the Holy, which the Holy Spirit teaches words, which the Holy Spirit teaches. We teach the wisdom of God, the mysterious wisdom of God. And we do so in words, which the Holy Spirit gives.

Are these perhaps words of wisdom by the same spirit to one is given a word of wisdom by the spirit? Maybe. If so, then wisdom and knowledge. You might say, well, what's the, does this just mean anyone then who, who, who's got common sense and can make good decisions that they've got a gift of the word of wisdom and, and that anyone who's got a lot of information in their head that they've got a gift of word knowledge? No, I think not.

And this will come out. I have more occasion to talk about this when we talk about the gift of teaching, but I believe there's a very distinct difference between the gift of teaching and just a good communicator who has a lot of information because there are non-Christians who are excellent communicators and have a lot of good information on their subject. You know, it wouldn't be very authoritative to speak about God if they're not Christians, but on certain subjects, some people are just naturally good researchers.

They remember well, they can communicate well, they can formulate their thoughts better than And even if they're not Christians, they seem gifted in this way. Is this a gift of the Holy Spirit? I don't know, but I would say this, that a lot of these people, if they become Christians and rely upon their natural native giftings might be as fruitless as anyone else when it comes to teaching the word of God, because the gift of teaching requires the anointing. You see, a person in order to have a spiritual gift of teaching has to not only know how to communicate information, but has to have the anointing of the Spirit to allow that information to take root spiritually in the soul, in the spirit, and to become part of the spiritual furniture inside of the persons who hear it.

I've heard many people who are not excellent communicators, but who have ministered truth to me in a dynamic and anointed way that hung in my spirit and never was able to get out again. And it changed my whole thinking and perspective and understanding of things, even though they may not have been in the natural great communicators or highly knowledgeable. Other people who are extremely knowledgeable in the natural and extremely articulate in the natural, often listening to them preach is very impressive and you feel all charged up, but you got nothing spiritually out of it and you're not spiritually closer to the Lord than when you started, even if it was a sermon they gave, because there's apparently not the gift.

And Paul's talking about that which is done through the Spirit. So even if a word of wisdom and a word of knowledge have something to do with communicating, teaching, or exhortation to the church, it wouldn't be through natural ability alone. It would be through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, so that which is done is done effectually by the Spirit through the person, rather than just a person's native aptitudes.

Now, I wanted to get fairly quickly through those early ones, faith, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, so we could spend the rest of our time talking about the ones that probably in the list interest most people the most, and that is gifts of healings and the working of miracles. Now, once again, I'm going to suggest something a little out of line here. I mean, I'm not sure about this, but it's something that I think is more biblical than what a lot of people think.

What are the gifts of healings? Of all the listings of the gifts in this chapter or any other place, it's the only one that is in the plural. Gifts of healings, plural. Now, the explanation of why Paul says this in the plural has been often given, at least in places I've heard, people say, well, maybe what he means here is that some people have a gift.

There's a gift of physical healing, and there's gifts of inner healing, you know, or spiritual healing. That some people need to be spiritually healed or psychologically healed, and that's different than physical healing, but it still requires a gift of the Holy Spirit. And so, you have a gift in the area of physical healing, and a different person, perhaps, has a different gift, but it's in the area of spiritual healing or inner healing or something like that.

And, in fact, this is one of the few ways that people can get anything from the Bible to support the notion of a ministry and inner healing, is by suggesting, well, when Paul talked about gifts of healings, he's talking about different kinds of healings and different kinds of gifts. Well, all I can say to that is that we find many examples in Scripture of people being healed of physical sicknesses through the ministry of anointed miracle workers and so forth, like the apostles or the prophets in the Old Testament. People got healed a lot of physical sicknesses.

We don't find any biblical examples of people getting what is called a spiritual healing or

inner healing unless we are talking about exorcisms. The casting out of demons is, in fact, sometimes called a healing in the Bible. In Matthew 12, there is a man who has a deaf spirit and a dumb spirit, and Jesus healed him, cast out the demon and healed him.

The exorcism was itself a healing of a physical condition and probably a spiritual condition too. But we don't read in the Bible something called inner healing. We know that there is such thing as physical healing and there's something called exorcism too.

The Bible doesn't use the term exorcism of it, but we call it deliverance or casting out demons. Now, the problem here with equating that with the gifts of healings, if the gifts of healings is the ability to heal people's physical sicknesses and cast out demons, then why does Paul separately mention the gift of the working of miracles? Now, there's a serious problem here. If gifts of healings means the ability of a person to perform healings, then what is the gift of the working of miracles? The word miracles here is the Greek word *dunamis*, which is, you might recognize it, it's the word for power.

It is a very common word for miracles in the Bible. They are works of power. When he talks of the gift of the working of miracles, literally, it's the working of powers, God's power operating through miraculous means.

Well, this same word is used in a number of other places in the New Testament, and it refers to healing and casting out demons. Now, what I'm saying is if, well, let me show you that this is the case, so you won't just have to trust me on that. God forbid that anyone would trust me.

Look at Mark chapter 9. In Mark chapter 9, verses 38 and 39, Mark 9, 38 and 39, it says, Now John answered him, saying, Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us. But Jesus said, Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in my name can soon afterwards speak evil of me. This word miracle is the same word *dunamis* that is used of the working of miracles.

No one who works a miracle. Paul speaks of the gift of the working of miracles. Okay, what is referred to by Jesus here as a working of miracle? In this instance, it's the casting out of a demon.

We saw someone casting out demon in your name. Well, they're working a miracle in my name. They're not going to quickly speak evil of us.

Casting out demons is here referred to by Jesus as working a miracle. Look at Acts chapter 8. In Acts chapter 8, verse 6 and 7, it says, And the multitudes, with one accord, he did the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did, for unclean spirits crying with a loud voice came out of many who were possessed, and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. Now notice it says in verse 6, Many

were impressed and converted because of the miracles they saw.

Well, what kind of miracles? Verse 7 tells us unclean spirits came out of people and people were healed. This is a working of miracles, healing people's sicknesses and casting out demons. Now let me just clarify something because if you have the New King James, it may not be all that clear.

You're not reading the Greek version. The word miracles in verse 6 is not the same word *dunamis*. It is another common word in the New Testament for miracles, *semeion*, which means signs.

However, if you look down at verse 13, Acts 8, 13, it says, Simon the sorcerer himself also believed, and he was baptized and continued with Philip and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done. Miracles here is *dunamis*, the same one that Paul uses, working in miracles. Signs and miracles are basically synonymous.

And the miracles here are casting out demons and healing the sick. Look at one other place with me in Acts 19. Acts 19 verses 11 and 12.

Verse 11 says, Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul. The word miracles here is *dunamis*, the same word that Paul used when he talked with the gift of working of miracles. Well, God worked miracles by the hands of Paul.

Read on verse 12. So that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them. We begin to see a pattern here.

The Bible talks about miracles and again and again when it specifies what is meant by miracles, it is what? Healing sicknesses and casting out demons. Now look at Paul's list in 1 Corinthians 12 again. In verse 9, the second part, it says, To another gifts of healings by the same spirit.

In verse 10, To another the working of miracles. Now it seems like Paul's being redundant then. If gifts of healings refers to the ability to heal sick people and to cast out demons, then why do we need another mention of the gift of the working of miracles, which is throughout the rest of scripture, the same thing, healing sicknesses and casting out demons.

I want to suggest to you a very different alternative to understand what the gifts of healings is or are because it's plural. I'd like to suggest to you that each healing is a special gift to the person who receives the healing. It's a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Now this will seem very strange to you, I'm sure, as an interpretation of this, but I will defend it and I'm sure you expected that I would. That the gifts of healings are both plural because there's as many healings as there are the gifts. Each healing being a gift

to the recipient, to the sick person.

Now, before I defend this view, let me just say this. If that is true, then gifts of healings and the working of miracles are in a sense two sides of the same coin. One person works a miracle, that's his gift.

Another person receives a healing, that's his gift. Is that he gets healed. It's a different kind of gift.

It's not an ability. Well, it may well be if he was lame before and now he's not lame or he's got plenty of ability he didn't have before. But the point is, the receiving of a healing, I believe, is very probably what Paul is referring to here as a gift of a healing and to others are given or to another are given gifts of healings.

Now, there are problems with this interpretation, but I don't think there are as many things against it as there are for it. We see that immediately afterwards, he links the gift of prophecy with the gift of discerning of spirits and the gift of tongues with the gift of discerning of interpreting tongues. It would not be surprising, therefore, if there are gifts that are mirror relational, related to each other.

You know, gift of prophecy and the gift of judging prophecy, the gift of speaking in tongues, the gift of interpreting tongues, the gift of working miracles, the gift of receiving a miracle from one who works it. That is not unlike Paul in this list to list them in pairs like this. So that's one maybe small thing in favor of this interpretation.

Another thing in its favor comes when you look over at 2nd Corinthians, chapter one, verses 10 and 11, 2nd Corinthians 10 and 11. Paul is talking about some trials and dangers he faced when he was in Asia, and he wants his readers to be aware of this. I could actually read from verse eight, maybe I will.

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened beyond measure above strength so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves that we might not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death and does deliver us in whom we also trust that he will deliver us still. You also helping together in prayer for us that thanks may be given by many persons on behalf of the gift granted to us through many.

Now in the context, Paul's sentence is sometimes a bit involved, but if you look at it carefully, the gift that is granted to us by the prayers of many is his deliverance out of whatever the troubles were. He does not specify what the troubles were, but they were life-threatening. He was in a life-threatening situation.

I do not suggest that it was a sickness. I think it was probably persecution or something like that in this case, but whatever it was, his deliverance out of it, the specific relief he

received from it is called a gift. And in this case, the word gift is charisma.

Now, the reason I bring this up is simply to show that Paul's use of the word charisma doesn't always have to refer to a special ability. The deliverance he received from God from a life-threatening situation was a charisma from God, a gift from God to him, a gift of grace. And if deliverance from a life-threatening outward situation could be called by Paul a charisma, could not deliverance from a life-threatening sickness be called a charisma also? I got healed.

That was a gift from God, a healing. I have been healed myself of actually life-threatening things. It would appear, I mean, we don't have enough doctors.

We didn't get enough opinions to know for sure, but when I was two years old, I was diagnosed by the physicians as having cystic fibrosis, which is incurable. I should have died. My parents prayed for me, and I didn't have cystic fibrosis anymore.

Now, there's more than one explanation of that, because later tests showed that I had celiac, which is not a deadly condition and can be controlled by diet. And my parents gave me the right diet, and as far as I know, it went away. But celiac has some of the same symptoms as cystic fibrosis, so there's a way out of this for the person who doesn't believe in healings.

They can say, well, you never had cystic fibrosis. It was a misdiagnosis in the first place. It was always celiac.

Or it could be that it was cystic fibrosis, and through the prayers of my parents, who were not charismatics, but they were Christians, God gave me a lighter sentence. You know, gave some relief. In any case, I'm not dead, and I do not have cystic fibrosis today, as far as I know.

But I believe in healing. I believe that that is a gift from God, if God gives you another chance, gives you another lease on life. And therefore, it is not unlike Paul.

It is not unheard of for him to use the word charisma, gift, to refer to a particular blessing that God gives you, especially if it tends to extend your life, or in other ways make you more, you know, enhance your life and your ministry. And so, if Paul speaks of his deliverance out of a dangerous situation as a charisma from God, as he does in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, then he might refer to a healing from a sickness as a gift or a charisma from God, too. And that is what I'm suggesting perhaps he does.

Now, I have some reasons for suggesting this, in addition to those that I've given you. One of them is, I've always wondered how it is that no one seems to have a gift of healing. Now, is that a doll that's crying or something? What is that? Is there a... Okay, it's a rooster crowing, an electronic rooster in somebody's purse here.

Well, okay, well, at least it's not as loud as a real one. It'll stop crowing in a minute. And that'll be a wonderful gift to us all.

When it comes to having a gift of healing, the problem with believing that some people have just a gift of always being able to heal people is that no one does. No one does. Even the most reputed healers in the Pentecostal and Charismatic circles today do not have the ability to heal everybody.

Furthermore, the Bible makes it plain that persons might be instrumental in healing who don't have a special gift in healing. In James chapter 5, remember what James says there about sick people, what they should do? You know what it says. It's a well-known passage.

James chapter 5, verse 14, is anyone among you sick? Look for someone with the gift of healing. Well, it doesn't say that. It just says, let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Now, these people are not necessarily said to have a gift of healing just because they're elders, but the person may yet receive a healing through their prayers. And I certainly know that I don't have a resident gift of healing in me. And I've prayed for the sick many times, and sometimes they've gotten healed and sometimes they haven't gotten healed.

But then on the other hand, that they sometimes don't isn't too surprising. I don't claim to have a gift of healing, but let's look at people who do. There are many people out there who hold healing meetings who are called healing evangelists.

And I, for example, had opportunity before Catherine Kuhlman died to go to a few of her meetings. Now, Catherine Kuhlman was one of the best known healing evangelists in her day, in the early 70s. Most of the other healing evangelists from her generation had died off already, and she had not yet died.

She did die in the late 70s, I think it was, or early 80s, but it must have been late 70s. But I was in a meeting of Catherine Kuhlman's, and she's a well-respected healing evangelist. And there was a whole wheelchair section of people there, and she didn't heal all the people in those wheelchairs.

In fact, she didn't heal any of them. There were people who came up on the platform who had not been in wheelchairs who testified to being healed of something or another. And frankly, I believe many of them probably were genuinely healed.

I'm not doubting that healings take place. But I thought it interesting that there were a great number of people in wheelchairs that she did not heal, and yet she was a healing evangelist. Now, it seems to me that if a person has a gift in healing, they should have the ability to heal more people than I could heal by my prayers, and I don't have a gift of healing.

Now, when I pray for the sick, sometimes they get better, sometimes they don't. Apparently, when Catherine Kuhlman prayed for the sick, sometimes they got better, sometimes they didn't. What's the difference? I mean, maybe she didn't have the gift of healing, but if she didn't, who does? Well, what about Reinhard Bonnke? He's a mighty miracle-working evangelist over in Germany.

I mean, he's a German, but he's in Africa, does most of his work in Africa, has the largest tent in the world. I think 30,000 people, about twice the population of McMinnville can fit under his tent. And he usually fills it up with a bunch of people, and a bunch of them come forward at the altar calls, a bunch of them fall over when he lifts his hands up.

I mean, whole rows of them fall over backward, and a whole bunch of people get healed, and demons go out of people. I mean, there's mighty, mighty works being done through that man. I personally believe that Reinhard Bonnke has a gift of the working of miracles.

But what then is the gift of healing? Well, you know what? Though he heals the sick, and though he casts out demons and does those things, he doesn't heal all the sick. I have a friend who's a minister in his same denomination, Reinhard Bonnke's denomination, a German pastor, who had looked into this because he's a Pentecostal himself, and very interested in these things. And he said he'd done some research and said that there's never yet been a healing evangelist who had more than a 10% success rate in healing the sick.

In praying for everybody, about 10% get better. And we don't know how many of those might have gotten better without being prayed for by a healing evangelist. Maybe if their mother had prayed for them, or their child had prayed for them, or if they'd prayed for themselves, maybe they would have gotten better.

It's hard to say. Now, in more recent times, one of the most well-known, well-publicized men who has been touted as having a gift of healings, and I would say he has a gift of miracles, is John Wimber. Founder, well, he's not the founder of the Vineyard Movement, but he's the most visible and most well-known leader in the Vineyard Movement.

Now, John Wimber has a tremendous gift in miracles. If all the stories are true that I've heard, and I don't doubt them, there have been dead raised, there have been demons cast out, there have been marvelous healings, I think blind eyes open, and so forth, through the man. And I don't doubt this.

However, I believe somebody did some special research on John Wimber's ministry and got a statistical conclusion as to how successful he was in healing the sick. And he did a lot better than what my German friend said. He had about a 30% success rate.

John Wimber, I believe, is said to be the most successful healing evangelist on record. And about 30% of the people he prays for get better. That's good.

I wish 30% of the people I pray for got better. That's good. But if still the majority of people that you pray for don't get better, how can this be called a gift in healings? And how would that differ from a gift in miracles? Now, what I would understand a gift in miracles to be is not so much that you can do a miracle anytime you want one, but God does choose to work miracles through certain people.

Now, the people that God chose to work miracles through mostly were the apostles. This is evident in the book of Acts. As you read the book of Acts, you'll find that although you read about a lot of miracles, you don't read about a lot of people doing miracles.

You read of the apostles doing miracles, and in addition to them, you read only of Philip and Stephen, who were not apostles doing miracles. Philip was an evangelist. Stephen was... we don't know what he would have been called if he'd lived long enough to get a label.

We call him a martyr. I don't know if all martyrs work miracles, or all evangelists for that matter. But Philip and Stephen did.

But apart from them, we have no record of miracles being worked by anyone other than apostles. Now, I personally believe that miracles were principally an apostolic kind of sign, but I don't believe that they were restricted to that. I mean, obviously, if Stephen and Philip could work miracles, then it must not be restricted to apostles alone.

Evangelists can also work miracles. Philip did, and he was called an evangelist, not an apostle. But it would seem that miracles were more a trademark of apostles.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 12, when Paul is contesting against persons who are doubting his apostleship and seeking to re-establish the Corinthians' confidence in him as a genuine apostle, he gives many arguments for their believing in his apostleship, one of which is in verses 11 and 12. 2 Corinthians 12, verses 11 and 12, he says, I have become a fool in boasting. You have compelled me, for I ought to have been commended by you.

For in nothing was I behind the most eminent apostles, though I am nothing. Truly, the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance in signs and wonders and mighty deeds. Now, these signs and wonders and mighty deeds, miracles, in other words, and we know that Paul's ministry was full of these miracles from the book of Acts also, he calls these the signs of an apostle.

Now, while miracles and mighty deeds cannot be an infallible sign of a person's apostleship, since after all, the man of sin will come with signs and lying wonders also, he's no apostle. And there are a few people in the book of Acts who have other mysteries other than apostolic who have signs and wonders, yet these must be very exceptional. It would appear that miracles, signs and wonders are ordinary marks of apostleship.

And outside of an apostle, you would not as commonly find such gifts of miracles

happening. Now, I don't know if I've ever read anywhere of Paul praying for a sick person and not being healed or commanding a demon to leave and the demon not going. On the other hand, he didn't heal everyone he met who is sick.

There are people we don't know if he prayed for them. We don't know what he did. Paul says, I left trophimus sick.

I think in second Timothy chapter four, he says, I left trophimus sick and malignum. Why did he do that? Why didn't he just heal him before he left? Or when Timothy had stomach problems and often infirmities, why didn't Paul just heal him instead of say, take a little wine for your stomach sick? Or when Paul had what he called his infirmity, his thorn in the flesh. Now, not all agree that this was a sickness, but he does talk in Galatians about having a sickness.

He says, in great bodily sickness, I was among you and ministered among you. And you would have plucked out your eyes if God wasn't giving them to me. It sounds like he had problems with his eyes.

Why didn't you just heal himself? Physician, heal thyself. Or what about Epaphras, who in Philippians chapter two, he says, my friend Epaphras, he almost died. He came near death's door, but God had mercy on him and healed him.

Doesn't sound like Paul was in command of that situation. It looks like he was despairing for his friend's life, but God mercifully healed the man. It doesn't sound like Paul, though he had a mighty apostolic gift and miracles, had the ability to heal everyone he wanted to.

But he was able to do miracles when God wanted a miracle done. Now, this, of course, raises questions, very serious questions about the whole theology of healing in the Bible, because there are many who feel that healing is a guarantee that God has essentially purchased a healing of your sicknesses at the same time that he purchased the forgiveness of your sins. This doctrine basically is that healing of sickness is a provision of the atonement, that when Jesus died, he paid the price for two things, your sins and your sicknesses.

This doctrine is based largely on two verses in Isaiah 53. These verses I have dealt with in greater length and in fact, excruciating detail in my set of tapes on the Word of Faith doctrine and also in my teachings through Isaiah, both of which are available on tape. Let me just real quickly look at those verses now without going into the same degree of detail in Isaiah 53, and we'll see the basis for people saying that healing is a provision of the atonement and everyone can have it.

By the way, I've never quite understood how the people who say that also believe that some people have a special gift in healing, because why do you need someone with the

gift of healing if anyone can be healed simply by being atoned for? But anyway, I guess someone could say, well, what do you need an evangelist for if people could just be saved without being evangelized? I guess that would be an argument that could be brought up to what I just said. But in Isaiah 53, verses 4 and 5, it says, Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. Now, the Hebrew words for griefs and sorrows can be translated sicknesses and pains, respectively.

In fact, the margin of the New King James Bible points that out. And when this verse is quoted in the New Testament, it is actually translated as sicknesses and pains or infirmities and pains or something like that. So this verse actually is he has borne our griefs or our sicknesses and carried our pains.

Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted, but he was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon him and with his stripes or by his stripes we are healed.

Now, there's two ways that these verses are said to teach that healing for all Christians is providing the atonement. First of all, he bore our sicknesses and carried our pains. The argument goes like this.

Well, if Jesus bore them, presumably meaning on the cross, because we know that he bore our sins on the cross. It says that very specifically later in this chapter. And it also says it in first Peter that he himself bore our our sins in his own body in the tree.

So if he bore our sins on the tree, it means that he bore them instead of us. We don't have to bear our sins. But if he also bore our sicknesses, as it says, and I say 53, four, it would fall.

We don't have to bear them either. If he took my sins, I don't have to live with them. If he took my sicknesses, I don't have to live with them either.

Or as Kenneth Hagan, who teaches this doctrine, puts it, he tells of a woman who was in England during World War II when the Germans were bombing London and her section of town had to be evacuated. All the people went off into a bomb shelter. And when the people got there, they said, oh, where's Mrs. So-and-so, this old lady? And they said, oh, no, maybe she didn't get away.

Maybe she's, no one has seen her. She's not here in the bomb shelter. Maybe she was hit by bombs.

Maybe she's killed. And when the bombing was over, the people all went back to their homes. And there she was sitting on her rocking chair, calm as could be, on her front porch.

And they said, where were you during the bombing? She said, I was right here in my

rocking chair. Well, where'd you sleep? I slept in my bed. Well, how, you know, wasn't the bombing horrendous? Oh, it was very loud, very hard to sleep.

They said, well, how in the world did you manage to sleep through such danger and such terror? They said, well, in my Bible, it says, the Lord, he who keeps Israel, neither slumbers nor sleeps. And I figured there's no sense both of us staying awake. And Kenneth Hagin tells that story, like many other stories, very good illustration.

He's got great sermon illustrations, very impressive. But his point is, well, it's that way with our sicknesses. If Jesus bore our sicknesses, no sense in both of us being sick.

If Jesus took my sins, no sense in both of us having the problem of sin. Now, that sounds very convincing. The only problem is, that's not what this verse means.

This verse does not mean that Jesus took our sicknesses on the cross. It does indeed say he bore our sicknesses. But the word bore and carried, the literal Hebrew word means to lift.

He lifted sickness. He relieved people of the burden of sickness. But it does not necessarily mean he did it on the cross.

In fact, I can prove that it doesn't mean that. If you look at the only place in the New Testament this verse is quoted, which is in Matthew 8, 17, we'll find that it is applied to something other than the atonement and something other than what happened on the cross or on the whipping post, for that matter. In Matthew 8, verse 17, we ought to read verse 16 also, 16 and 17, it says, when evening had come, they brought to him many who were demon possessed, and he cast out the spirits with the word and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, he himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.

Now it's quoting Isaiah 53, 4 there, and it says it was fulfilled in Capernaum on that night and probably other similar occasions. Jesus in his entire ministry fulfilled this prophecy of relieving people of their sicknesses, lifting, bearing their sicknesses off their shoulders, healing them in other words. Bearing sicknesses is not a reference to anything he did on the cross, because this prophecy is said to have been fulfilled long before Jesus went to the cross.

He was actively in ministry when he fulfilled this prophecy. The prophecy is not a reference to what happened at the whipping post or on the cross. It's a reference to Jesus lifting the burden of sickness off individuals in individual cases, which he still does today, by the way.

But it is not a reference to him accomplishing some once and for all purchase so that we could have healing on a contractual basis, just on demand, as some people think. That's not what it says. Now the other verse in Isaiah 53 says, by his stripes we are healed.

Now it is presumed, I think correctly, that his stripes refer to his wounds that he received at the hands of the Romans when he was being, when he had been condemned, he was about to be crucified, he was whipped, he received 39 lashes with a cat of nine tails, he received other abuse, and eventually was crucified. And he went to the cross with stripes on his back. And when the Bible says, with his stripes we are healed, many people say, well that proves that when Jesus had the lash upon his back, he was bearing our sicknesses for us, he purchased our healing for us, just as he purchased our forgiveness of sins on the cross.

And therefore, our healing is provided for in what Jesus did at the cross and at the whipping post. Sounds like a very nice thing, and if it were true, I'd be very delighted to believe it. But that is not what this means.

How do I know that? Because I've read Isaiah, and because I've read the New Testament, and both of them tell us otherwise. I will not go into the detail here that I do elsewhere, but one may, if he wishes, go through Isaiah and look at all the references to sickness and healing. There are many of them.

The first is found in Isaiah chapter 1, where the nation of Israel is described as a sick man. From the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, it's all sick. The nation is sick and full of putrefying sores, Isaiah says, and no one has bound them up or mollified them with ointment.

No one has healed them. Later on in Isaiah, I think it's chapter 3, it says a time will come when the situation in the nation will be so bad that everyone will be turning to his brother and saying, you be our ruler, bail us out of this situation. And they'll say, I won't be your healer.

I can't heal your wounds. I can't heal your woes. Isaiah 61 has Jesus saying, the Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to, among other things, to bind up or heal.

The New King James says to heal the broken hearted. That's a spiritual condition. The nation is sick.

The nation is spiritually sick. Isaiah, from beginning to end, describes the national condition as a sick condition, but he's not talking about individuals who have organic sicknesses. And in Isaiah 53, where it says, with his stripes we are healed, he's saying, thou the solution has come through the Messiah dying for us and receiving our lashes.

This sickness, of which Isaiah has been speaking of throughout his entire book, finds its remedy. But the sickness throughout the book is a spiritual sickness. And it is a spiritual sickness that was remedied at the cross.

There's further evidence of this from the very structure of the verse, Isaiah 53, 5. In

Hebrew poetry, which this is, there is parallelism. And two lines will say the same thing. As we see, for example, in verse 5, he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.

Wounded and bruised are parallel thoughts. Transgressions and iniquities are parallel thoughts. If he was bruised for our iniquities and wounded for our transgressions, that's two ways of saying the same thing.

It's not two different things, it's the same thing. Well, look at the third line. The chastisement for our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

These are parallel also. What is parallel to stripes? Chastisement. Chastisement was when a disobedient slave or child would receive a beating with a rod, they'd receive stripes.

It's chastisement. What then is healed parallel to? Our peace with God. The chastisement for our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.

What is healed is our relationship with God. Our peace with God is restored. There's further evidence of this.

All one needs to do is read Isaiah all the way through, Jeremiah all the way through, Hosea all the way through. Because all of these books talk about the need for Israel to have their backslidings healed. In other words, their broken relationship with God is like a spiritual malady that needs healing.

And that is what all the prophets used the term healed to mean. If you'd simply read the prophets more than most Christians take the time to do, one would find this is the common way in which they speak. In Hosea chapter 11 verses 1-3 it says, When Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

This is the Exodus. It's a foreshadowing of Jesus as a child coming out of Egypt, but it's the Exodus here. As they called them, so they went from them.

They sacrificed to bales, and they burned incense and carved images. I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. I drew them with gentle cords, with bands of love, and I was to them as those who take the yoke from their neck.

I stooped and fed them. God's deliverance of his people was healing them. They didn't realize it was I who healed them.

In Jeremiah, repeatedly, Jeremiah refers to healing, God healing backslidings. I'll give you just one of the references, but it stands as a sample of many in Jeremiah. In Jeremiah 3 verse 22, Return you backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding.

What is a backsliding but a broken relationship with God? God will heal this broken relationship. Now is this what Isaiah is talking about when he says, By Christ's stripes we are healed? It is indeed, because that verse is quoted in the New Testament also. Where? In 1 Peter chapter 2. 1 Peter chapter 2, this verse in Isaiah is quoted and applied, and we can see how the Apostle Peter understood it here.

It says of Jesus in 1 Peter 2 verses 24 and 25, Who himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, he doesn't mention bearing our sicknesses there, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness, by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you've returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. Look at this.

By his stripes you've been healed, for you were going astray, but you're not anymore. You've now returned to God. You've been healed.

You were like wandering sheep backsliding Israel, but that's not the case anymore. You've now returned. You've been healed.

It's interesting, since he mentions healed here, that if Peter believed that the healing spoken of here was a physical healing of physical sicknesses, then it would have been a great opportunity for him to say, He himself bore our sins and our sicknesses on the tree, but he only mentions the sins there. And when he says by his stripes you were healed, for, and then he explains what he means by you were healed, you were wandering astray, but you've come back. That's your healing.

By his stripes our relationship with God, our peace with God has been restored. The chastisement for our peace was upon him. His stripes brought our healing of our relationship with God.

Now, I want to say that those two verses in Isaiah are the basis for the belief that Jesus purchased our healing from physical sicknesses at the cross. I've tried to demonstrate that Isaiah was saying something else and that the New Testament writers quoted both of those verses and applied them differently than that. Now, furthermore, the doctrine does not hold water in scripture or experience.

The Bible does not teach that a person can have a healing whenever he wants one on the same basis that he can have his salvation whenever he chooses to repent. Do you know that a sinner, if he would choose to repent, and I don't believe sinners are always equally able to repent. Their hearts may be hard.

If the Holy Spirit's not drawing them, they can't come. But if they do come, if they respond, if they exercise faith, they are guaranteed forgiveness of sins. Why? Because it's in the atonement.

Well, if healing is in the atonement, then there should be an equal guarantee of their

healing on the same basis. If Christ has atoned for us and purchased our forgiveness and our healing in one act, and we avail ourselves of the benefits by faith, then the same faith that gets me forgiven of sins should be able to equally and as easily get me healed of sickness. Now, everybody knows from experience that even if you've prayed to be healed and even if you've been a Word of Faith person and confessed that you are healed, you probably have had times when you didn't get healed.

I was a Word of Faith teacher for six months when I was a teenager. Unfortunately, I outgrew it. But I outgrew it by reading my Bible and studying the scriptures in context and saying, wait a minute, that doesn't say that.

But during that six months that I believed in Word of Faith, I had my typical allergy problems. I was sneezing and snorting just like I do now. But I wouldn't admit it because you're not allowed to admit it.

The Word of Faith teaching actually teaches you that you're not allowed to tell the truth. You're supposed to lie. If you are sick, you're supposed to say you're not sick.

Now, in the Bible, Paul said, I left Trophim as sick. He didn't say, I left him healed but not knowing he was healed or healed not appropriating his healing or healed but still experiencing symptoms. He said, I left him sick.

Paul did not confess the man was healed. He confessed that he was sick. And that's biblical to do.

If you're sick, you might as well say you're sick. The Bible nowhere tells you to lie about this. It's a false doctrine that tells you you must lie in order to be biblical.

If I am sick, it makes no sense for me to deny the truth. Now, I denied the truth because I was told that the Bible requires me to deny it. So I would sniffle and snort, I'm healed.

By his stripes, I'm healed. I'm healed. No, I'm not sick.

I'm feeling great. Glory to God. Well, I mean, I'm sure God looked on with pity and said, oh, he thinks he's doing the right thing.

And I'm sure God looks that way. And a lot of people who do the same thing, they mean well. I'm sure God doesn't hold it against them, but I'm sure he's eager for them to get over it.

But you know what? No one could have ever changed my mind about that. My parents said, well, you're still sniffing and snorting. You've used four boxes of Kleenex just this day.

How is it you say you're not sick? How do you say you don't have an allergy? How do you say you're well? I say, well, that's the deception of the enemy. All those hankies there, all

those Kleenexes, that's the deception of the devil. Because I was told that's what I'm supposed to say.

You don't go by sense knowledge. You go by revelation knowledge. And the Bible says you're healed.

And therefore, you are healed. And if all your senses tell you otherwise, you're not, then believe God and don't believe your senses. Well, see, that's where I told you Kenneth Hagan did me a lot of good.

He taught me to believe God over sense knowledge. And I still hope that I do that. I still hope that I will always believe the word of God.

That was a good thing he taught me. And I hope I never lose that. I hope I will always believe God rather than man.

Let God be true in every man a liar. But I was mistaken about what God has said. That's the problem.

My symptoms told me I still have my problem. I thought that God's words that I don't. And that's why I was wrong.

God's word didn't say and does not say that I don't. Someone had fed me a misinterpretation and made me think it. So I dutifully said, well, let God be true.

Let God be true. And I said, everyone said, you're a fool, man. You've got symptoms galore.

Hey, well, God's true. Let every God be true. Every man a liar.

Then it's the devil has given me the symptoms. And this is really the line. If you talk to a word of faith person who really believes these doctrines and they're sick as a dog, but they're saying, I'm well, you say, well, what about these symptoms? They'll always say what they're supposed to say, unless they're not very good word of faith people.

I was good. I've always been good at whatever I was. And you could have never convinced me by my symptoms that I wasn't healed.

You'd have to convince me from scripture. And that's how I later became convinced from scripture, not from my experience. But they will.

They'll say, listen, the Bible says I was healed at Calvary. The Bible is true. Therefore, I was healed.

The devil wants me to doubt God. Therefore, the devil is putting these symptoms on me. But I am nonetheless healed, even if I have to live in a protracted period of time with

these symptoms.

And, of course, what I was too young to have thought through thoroughly in response to that is a couple of things. One is where in the Bible do you ever find anyone who got healed, but still had their symptoms? In fact, the Bible indicates the reason they knew they were healed is because their symptoms went away. The woman had an issue of blood when she touched the hem of Jesus.

She knew she felt in herself that the bleeding stopped. And she knew she was healed. You know that you're healed because you don't have symptoms anymore.

Secondly, and by the way, there's no exception in the Bible. There's no case in the Bible where someone was healed, but still had their symptoms. Secondly, what's the use of being healed if you've got to have your symptoms anyway? I can think of nothing undesirable about sickness except the symptoms.

And if Jesus purchased my healing, but requires that I have the symptoms so that my faith will be tested, hey, keep the healing, thanks. I don't need a healing like that. It doesn't do me any good to be healed if I live with all the same symptoms.

I'm not trying to be irreverent. It's just a fact. What is there about being sick that you would wish to be relieved of except the symptoms? If you're going to live with the symptoms anyway, who needs the healing? Now, if I had thought for a moment that God's Word said that we were automatically healed by faith or whatever by confessing it today, I would not say what I just said because that would seem to me irreverent.

But I'm saying that when you get the Bible wrong on something, then you have to come up with all kinds of absurdities to try to patch up why what you think it says doesn't fit with reality. Now, it's true. We should believe the Word of God over sense knowledge if there's a conflict.

But I have very seldom found anything like a conflict between the Bible and other sources of information. The Bible is true. Other sources of information also can be true.

And the Bible agrees with it. The Bible nowhere tells me I'm well when I have symptoms. The Bible describes a person with symptoms as a sick person.

And Jesus healed people and still does. And when he does, their symptoms go away because they're not sick anymore. But it is not on a contractual basis.

Now, here's a very important point. I'm running out of time here. I've got to bring it down.

And I am confessing my healing. I am told to do, but I don't get any better. What does that tell me about my forgiveness of sins? I mean, if I am counting on an unseen reality,

namely that my faith has acquired me the forgiveness of sins, but my doctrine is the same faith is supposed to also get rid of my sickness, and it doesn't, then maybe it didn't get rid of my forgiveness of sins.

Maybe I'm living in a fool's paradise. Maybe I've just convinced myself. Maybe I don't have faith.

If I don't have enough faith to be healed and healing to the atonement, then I don't have enough faith to get any benefit from the atonement. Maybe I'm fooling myself to believe I've been forgiven my sins. You see, the Word of Faith people try to avoid this.

They say, well, just because you didn't get healed doesn't mean you're not saved. But that's not sensical. I mean, they have to say that to placate people who aren't getting healed but are still saved.

But it just doesn't make sense. If healing and forgiveness are equally provided in the atonement by the same kind of faith, then if I don't have the faith for healing, I've got no reason to believe I have faith for salvation either. And therefore, my healing becomes the evidence of my salvation.

And my failure to be healed is the evidence of my non-salvation. So that being saved or unsaved boils down to simply this. Are you well? Or are you sick? And that, of course, puts it on an entirely different basis than anything you'll even find dreaming of in the Scripture.

I mean, you'll just never find the slightest hint in the Scripture that a person's spiritual state with God is in any way reflected by their physical state. Paul said, Though our outward man is perishing, the inward man is renewed day by day. While we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen.

For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4, verses 17 and 18. So, Paul says, My outer man can be falling apart, but my inner man is renewed day by day.

My spiritual condition cannot be judged by my physical condition. But if the word of faith teaching is true, then it can be. And should be.

Even though that is not a corollary that they like to admit. It is a necessary corollary of the doctrine. Let me say this.

It says in 1 John 1.9, If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Has that ever struck you as strange? Why does it say God is just to forgive me? Shouldn't it say He's merciful to forgive me? Isn't it God's mercy that forgives me rather than His justice? Well, if Jesus had never died, yes. When God forgave people's sins before Jesus died, it was strictly mercy.

But Jesus purchased my forgiveness of sins. The ransom has been paid. It would be unjust for God to withhold it.

Do you realize that? If I'm in jail and my parents come and pay my bail and the sheriff takes the money but doesn't let me out, that's an injustice. The payment has been received, but the product has not been delivered. If Jesus paid for my forgiveness of sins and it is withheld from me when it's been paid for on my account, on my behalf, then that is an injustice.

For God to forgive me when I come to Him in terms of what He has provided through Christ, of the eternal atonement, is a matter of God's justice, of His keeping the bargain, of His doing what is just and required of His justice to do. But if healing is in the atonement, then it would be equally a matter of God's justice and He must heal me when I confess it. If Christ has purchased my healing and my forgiveness of sins, then being forgiven and being healed are both matters of God's justice.

It's paid for. How could it be withheld? It cannot without an injustice. However, the Bible does not indicate that healing is a matter of God's justice, but it is a matter of God's mercy.

It's not owed. It's not owed because it hasn't been paid for. It's not something that's in the contract.

It says this in Philippians chapter 2. Here Paul is talking about his friend Epaphroditus who was sick for a long time. And it says in verse 27, Philippians 2.27, He doesn't say God kept His agreement. It says God had mercy.

The difference between mercy and justice is that justice cannot be withheld without injustice. Mercy is not owed and therefore can be withheld without an injustice. Paul indicates that the healing of Epaphroditus was God's mercy, but God forgiving me when I confess my sins in the name of Jesus is God's justice.

Why? Because my forgiveness has been purchased. My healing has not been purchased. I do believe in healing day, but I believe in it on the same basis that the Bible teaches it.

If God wants to heal me, He's got the power to heal me. And if He's merciful in that way toward me, I will rejoice in it. And I have been healed.

I've seen others healed. I believe that every sickness can be healed. But it certainly is not healed on the basis of someone confessing that they're healed.

In fact, one of the most notable cases that proved that to me, see the Word of Faith people say, you will have what you say. And that means if you confess positive, you'll have what you say. If you confess negative, you'll have that.

I had a lady that we were trying to minister two years ago. She was dying of cancer. The doctors had given her over.

She was in bed, had two small children. She was leaving behind a husband. She was as cheerful as could be.

And she said, don't pray for my healing. God has shown me I'm going to die. She even told us what day.

It was April something or another. I forget the date. But she said, on this day, God has shown me I'm going to die.

Don't bother to pray for me. I'm not going to be healed. And we prayed for her anyway, but she confessed continuously, I'm not going to be healed.

God's not going to heal me. I'm going to die. You know what happened? The day came that she said she was going to die.

She went to the hospital. There was not one trace of cancer in her body. She's lived many years since then.

She and her husband are in the ministry ever since then. This was back in 1978 that this happened. And she's still going strong today.

The day she was confessing she died is the day she got healed. Now, I don't know why God did it that way, if not just to prove that the word of faith is wrong. You don't get what you confess.

You get what God wants you to get. God is the one who's sovereign, not you. God is the one who determines your health or lack thereof, not you.

You are not the sovereign of the universe. God is the sovereign of the universe. And that's the difference between Christianity and witchcraft.

Christianity lets God decide. Witchcraft puts it in the hands of the manipulator to do the spell, do the motion, do the right thing, say the right spell, the right incantation. Then you get what you want.

No, that's not Christianity. Christianity is I submit to God. If there's someone who has a gift of miracles, God may use that person to work a miracle of healing or casting out demons.

But if I receive healing, I think that's a special gift from God. And many people receive gifts of healings. But that is not, to my mind, to be confused with the same thing as working healings.

That is included in the gift of working of miracles. And so that is at least how I understand Paul's teaching here. And so I've been full of surprises.

I mean, charismatics say, oh, he's a charismatic teacher. He probably agrees with me. I probably haven't agreed with the heart of anything.

But that's just because I'm a Bible teacher and I'm not a parrot. I feel like we have to go to the Word of God and see if the Bible teaches what we're saying. If not, it's just another tradition.

And charismatic traditions are no more to be committed than Catholic traditions or Baptist traditions or Episcopal traditions. Traditions of men are traditions of men. And so I'm not saying that what I've said is the certain, absolute, correct interpretation.

I'm just saying that this is the best I can do in comparing Scripture to Scripture and trying to understand the thought of the New Testament and of Paul and his use of language and so forth. This is the best I can do to understand these meanings. And this is, therefore, what I think it means.

And we'll close with that. Are there any questions?