

## editor

Having experienced many mostly charismatic churches and practices, I read with interest Bernard Palmer's article *Praying for the Sick*.<sup>1</sup> Healing is something that we pray for a lot, but don't properly understand.

## who calls the shots

We understand from Scripture that God in Trinity loves us (Romans 8:38-39), wants the best for us (Jeremiah 29:11, Romans 8:28), encourages us to pray for anything (Mark 11:24), hears our prayers (1 John 5:15), and heals (Mark 16:18, James 5:14). I believe these facts are beyond dispute.

Ultimately, everyone who is in Christ will outlive every physical problem. Some are healed immediately, some in the following days, some by treatment, some by extraordinary supernatural intervention, and some have to wait until they reach eternity.

My concern with many apparent failures of healing ministries is that they limit God to healing within seconds of prayer, and limit faith to one adrenaline-rushed, goose-pimpling second.

## the miracle of longevity

We sometimes see miraculous healing only as a visible, instantaneous reversal of pathology, and ignore what happens over time. We recognise what God does in a moment, but reject what he does over the course of twelve months. The Bible does recount instantaneous healings, but also progressive healings in Job, Naaman (2 Kings 5) and the blind man (Mark 8:22-25). A non-healing example of Jesus working over time is the change in Simon - the fragile, crushable, short-tempered, fickle reed, into Peter - the rocky foundation of the Church of Christ; a miracle no less miraculous for not happening in an instant.

Faith is best illustrated by sustained sacrifice. Noah worked for 400 years on the Ark before rain started falling; Abraham didn't just go on holiday to Canaan but spent 100 years there; Hebrews 11 gives many more examples of faith tested over time.

## the miracle in front of us

The UK has less than 1% of the world's population, but is one of few countries that currently offers free healthcare for everyone. It's a miracle that we have a generous NHS that has stood firm, withstanding many challenges, under several governments and through recessions, as well as a well-equipped private sector. Not to use this healthcare surely neglects a gift from God. His healing through ten years of faithful adherence to drug therapy is still miraculous and still requires faith.

There seem to be more credible reports of supernatural healings in the developing world. One theory is that abundant resources in the West can mask the need for divine intervention here. In some places, extraordinary divine intervention seems the only option. One characteristic of God's power is that it usually (though not exclusively) comes when we've reached the end of ourselves.

We can all learn much about the way that God works, particularly in healing, but if we lower our expectations, lose faith or stop praying for healing, we will almost certainly not see the power of God fully displayed.

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1. Palmer B. Praying for the sick. *Nucleus*. Spring 2012. 24-29