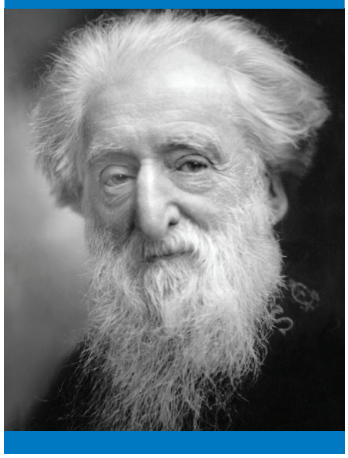
24/7 PRAYER RESOURCES



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The Salvation Army and Physical Healing

Written by

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The subject of Faith Healing, or Divine Healing as it is sometimes called, has of late obtained some prominence, and certain views have been put forward with regard to it which are contrary to our Orders and Regulations and opposed to the teaching of Scripture, and which, if received amongst us, would be calculated to create controversy, and thereby interfere with the peace, power, and progress of the Army.

The following are the main propositions contained in our Orders and Regulations for Field Officers on the subject. (Part 1. Chap. 4. Sec. 2):

(a) By Faith Healing, or Divine Healing, is to be understood the recovery of persons afflicted with serious diseases, by the power of God, in answer to faith and prayer, without the use of ordinary means, such as doctors, medicines and the like.

(b) That God should heal the sick after this fashion is in perfect harmony with the views and experience of The Salvation Army from the beginning. Nothing to the contrary has ever been taught by our authority, and numerous instances of Faith Healing have occurred throughout its history.

(c) The teaching of the Bible is in favour of this method of healing. The following passage, taken alone, proves this:

'Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him' (James 5:14,15).

If there were no other, this passage alone would be sufficient; but there are numerous texts in the Book to the same effect.

(d) The healing of the sick directly by the power of God has from the beginning been associated with the office of prophets, priests, teachers, apostles and, indeed of all those, known by whatever name, who have been the agents of God on the earth.

(e) When Jesus Christ sent forth His apostles, He gave them power not only to preach, but to heal the sick.

(f) Nevertheless, from the beginning there can be no question that God has also been pleased to heal sickness and disease by the use of appropriate means. He has, it is true, in some instances, chosen to preserve health without food, but, as a rule, if men want to keep health, they must use suitable means. Just so with restoration of health, when it is lost.

From the foregoing, it will be seen that we have never discouraged officers, or soldiers, or any other persons, from seeking the intervention of God by believing prayer on behalf either of the healing of their bodies or the removals of any other afflictions which they may have been called upon to suffer. The very opposite has been the case.

With all our hearts we hold that God is the answer to Believing Prayer. When men cast themselves upon His promises, and comply with the conditions connected with them, He responds to their faith to-day, as in the years gone by, by pardoning their sins, by purifying their hearts, by comforting them in their sorrows, by delivering them out of the various distresses which fall to their lot; and, when He sees it will be for their good and His glory, we believe that He answers the prayer of faith by healing them when they are sick.

In illustration of God's goodness to us in this respect the history of the Army is full of

Notes

remarkable answers to what is called the prayer of faith, and I am full of confidence that we shall see far more remarkable things done by His almighty arm in this direction in the future. The columns of our different *War Crys* have recorded, from time to time, hundreds, nay, thousands of instances, showing that God has been graciously pleased, in answer to Believing Prayer, to go out of His usual way in order to work marvels on behalf of our people. Some of these occurrences have been so striking, and so unmistakably of the Divine operation, that entire communities have wondered at them. Amongst other remarkable things of this character have been:

(a) The conscious forgiveness of men and women who have lived long years in the practice of the basest kinds of sins. Has not this been the wonderful work of God? For who can forgive sins but God only?

(b) Deliverance from the bondage of the most degrading evil habits, such as: The curse of drunkenness, which has reduced men lower than the level of the beasts; The power of the unclean lusts and passions, which has brought them lower still; The cruel mastery of opiates and other unlawful appetites, which has made them slaves without a ray of hope; The power of hatred and revenge, which has gone near to make them in outward acts what they already were in heart, murderers on earth and ready to be fiends in hell; And many other equally blighting and deadly sins.

(c) These have been diseases that no human power could modify or cure. Magistrates, prisons, doctors, human sympathy, love, the strongest resolutions, and, indeed every other form of earthly remedy known to man, all combined have failed, but God has succeeded in effecting the desired cure.

(d) Deliverance out of temporal distresses, such as poverty, persecution and other like afflictions. I question very much whether there has been a people since the Israelites of old who have been more favoured with marvellous manifestations of God's power in the rescue of comrades from difficulty of one kind and another in temporal affairs than we have been privileged to witness. In matters relating to family troubles, in dark perplexities concerning our future path, in crushing burdens of poverty and want, in the fiery trials of slander, in the furnace of awful temptation and persecution, when every door has been closed and every human help cut off, we have seen our people again and again gloriously delivered by the hand of God, in answer to the prayer of faith.

(e) I do not believe that there can be a corps of The Salvation Army, at home or abroad, in which such signs and wonders have not been wrought.

(f) And then, have not marvellous cures of various dire diseases been wrought amongst us also?

(g) Have we not seen men and women and little children raised up from the borders of the grave, and restored to health and vigour, in answer to the prayer of faith? **Have we not seen cures effected in a moment when every human means has been tried, but tried and failed?** When kindred and friends have been in absolute despair, and when the sufferers themselves had concluded that there was no healing for them in this life, has not God appeared to them, and have they not been raised up, to go in and out amongst us again praising Him, and are not some of them with us to-day, have not some of them since passed away, glorifying the prayer-answering God on triumphant dying beds?

If all this had not been our experience as an Army, if we did not believe in the power of prayer, and see the proofs of it, how could we say that we are in the lines of the Apostles? How could we believe that we are true followers of Jesus Christ? How could we have claimed to have received the Holy Spirit? Blessed be God, it is true, and we are of those who can affirm, in the face of an unbelieving world and a doubting church, that our God is the hearer and the answerer of prayer.

And here let me remark in passing that I strongly desire that these instances of Divine interposition should greatly increase and multiply amongst us. The first, the main object, for which the Army exists is the bringing of lost sinners to God, training them in holiness of heart and life, teaching them to fight for Him, and leading them

Notes

onward in the great conflict with earth and hell, until they are called to join in the host of the redeemed.

That, I say, is the object for which the Army exists, but alas, the world, absorbed with its vain pleasures and pursuits, cares for none of these things, and **the performance of such miracles of faith as those to which I have referred is a powerful means of arresting attention to the claims of Jehovah and the realities of religion.**

Men and women who have been the subjects of these remarkable manifestations of Divine power are sometimes spoken of by us as 'Trophies of Grace.' They are to be found, as I have said, in almost every corps throughout the world, where they not only command the attention of the multitudes who are without God, but compel a measure of faith in Him and in eternal things.

Therefore, oh! my comrades, I want you to labour mightily for their multiplication. To this end, I beg of you to urge upon each other the duty of believing prayer, the danger of this age lies in the direction of scepticism rather than fanaticism, terrible as the latter folly, and deplorable as are the consequences suffered by the community where it holds its frenzied sway. Believing too little, rather than too much, is the evil we have most cause to dread. Oh, Lord, increase our faith! See to it then, my comrades, that you consider the necessity for more faith, and strive night and day, both in public and in private, to cast yourselves more fully on God than you have ever done before in all the exercises of your Salvation work—indeed, in all you think, and speak and do—for a richer supply of this urgent need:

(a) Bring more faith into your praying. Do not be content with merely telling God about your wants or expressing your desires, or even in reminding yourself of His ability and willingness to supply your needs, but take hold of His word, and believe that He does, there and then, if it be His blessed Will, give you the things for which you ask.

(b) Bring more faith into your singing. Follow the rule I have given you for prayer. Oh, what a help our precious songs ought to be to the exercise of faith. Sound the chorus over and over again; not for the mere pleasurable excitement caused by the repetition of the music, or for stirring up your hearts with holy desire, but because it helps you to forget all the impossibilities of unbelief, and assist you in the task of climbing up into the exercise of all-conquering faith.

(c) Bring more faith into your testimonies. **Hunt up the miracles wrought in your life, past and present, describe the confidence you are reposing in God for the future,** and tell all out for the glory of God and the encouragement of your comrades.

(d) Bring more faith into your talking. **Describe the miracles of the Bible in every-day language; search for the miracles of yesterday, and the day before, wrought amongst you; show what God has done, and what He is doing, which none but God can do for just such people, in just such circumstances, and with just such temptations and discouragements, as those who hear you.** Glory in the God of power and pity, Who has promised to save them with the same great Salvation if they will trust Him. From the platform and in the open-air, push men and women—Soldiers, Saints and sinners—up to faith in God.

WE BELIEVE:

- That God hears and answers His people's believing prayer.
- That in answer to prayer He does for them what is beyond the power of human skill. **He pardons sins, changes hearts, delivers from trouble and temptation, and heals disease.**
- That at times, specially when help is beyond all human skill or means, **He works these wonders** for His people and **by no other means save prayer and faith.**
- That where He has promised, in His word, to bestow the blessing we desire, we must believe without further evidence than that word affords.

Notes

- That though by His death Christ did not procure for man healing of the body in the same way that he obtained Salvation for the soul, yet He did die to bring him into relations with the Father that all the true needs of obedient and believing saints will be supplied.
- That we ought to take all our sicknesses to God, and pray in faith for their removal, but always with perfect submission to the Divine Will.
- That when the sick have the conviction wrought in their hearts by the Spirit/ that God is willing to heal them, they are justified in believing that the work will be done for them. And when that conviction is wrought in God's people on behalf of others who are sick, **faith in Him for their healing is both justified and commanded.**
- That **this conviction may, when it is not opposed to the Will of God, be attained by fasting and prayer.** He will teach us what to ask for. As the Apostle says, 'We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but … He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for Saints according to the will of God.'
- That, **where the gift of healing the sick may have been imparted, it should be exercised to the glory of God,** and not to the exalting of man, and in entire subordination to the more important work of healing and sanctifying the soul.
- That we ought always to sympathise with the sick, pray in faith for their recovery, and, **at the same time, use all available and lawful means to check disease, relieve suffering, and prolong life.**
- That, in cases where God is not pleased to answer the prayer of faith, and to restore the sick person for whom intercession has been made, without the use of means, there ought to be a return to the use of the means that, in the providence of God, are usual and convenient in such sickness.
- That we ought to strive to look through the means thus used to God, recognising that if there be any virtue in a medicine, it is by the power of God, and if there be any skill in a surgeon, it is given him by God, to be employed for others. 'For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to Whom be glory for ever.'
- **That when sickness, suffering, affliction, or death seems to be in the order of God's providence for us, or for those we love, and when having besought the Lord in submission and faith that these visitations may pass away, and He is not pleased to remove them or spare us from them, we ought to be resigned to His will, prove that His grace is sufficient for us, and thus, whether we live or die, glorify God.**
- That none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.