

CHAPTER 4

BENNY HINN AND HEALING

Unquestionably it is the gift of physical healing for which Benny Hinn is best known. Billed by his own publications as “one of the great healing evangelists of our time,”¹⁷⁰ Benny Hinn has become one of the world’s most recognized religious figures. His monthly “Miracle Crusades” draw tens of thousands each performance and many hopeful attendees must be turned away for lack of space. Inside a Miracle Crusade one can expect to see a highly orchestrated performance choreographed so that Hinn emerges from a covered tunnel dressed in gleaming white just as the massive choir reaches the crescendo of “How Great Thou Art.”¹⁷¹ During the course of the show, Hinn will speak to a select few on stage¹⁷² who claim to have been healed of various maladies. He will then “slay” them in the spirit either by blowing on them, throwing his coat, or yelling “Fire on you!”¹⁷³ At times he will “slay” hundreds of people at once. Hinn’s

¹⁷⁰ Hinn, *He Touched Me*, back cover.

¹⁷¹ To the best of this writer’s knowledge, this is the pattern at each of Hinn’s crusades.

¹⁷² Hinn rarely if ever lays hands on those who are in need of healing. Only those claiming to have *been* healed are allowed on stage. There are always a number of empty wheelchairs that suddenly appear on stage as the healing portion of the crusade begins. Tapes of Hinn’s crusades from just a few years ago reveal that the wheelchairs were almost all standard hospital-issue chairs. People that spend their waking hours in a wheelchair do not use them because they are so uncomfortable. As if cued by an astute observer, almost overnight the wheelchairs became more elaborate. The reader is encouraged to draw his own conclusions.

¹⁷³ Unfortunately space does not permit for a critique of the practice of “slaying in the Spirit.” The text most often cited in its support is Acts 9:4 where Paul encountered the risen Christ on the road to Damascus. Sadly, at least one person has died and many injured at Hinn’s Miracle Crusades as a result of “slain” people falling on top of others. Source: *Let Us Reason* website; accessed 15 September 2002; available from <http://www.letusreason.org/Wf1con.html> and John Camp, *The Miracles and the Money* (CNN/Time Impact, 1997, 16 March).

stage theatrics are well known in both the church and secular arenas. In a surprisingly candid admission to *Charisma* magazine, Hinn says of his unusual antics, "There is pressure to produce when you're up there on that platform - especially in the healing ministry. People don't just come to hear you preach; they want to see something. And that can be distracting."¹⁷⁴ There was even a major motion picture whose main character was based on the famed evangelist.¹⁷⁵

Hinn claims a thousand people "or more" testify of being healed at each crusade.¹⁷⁶ There can be no doubt that if it were not for his "ministry" of healing, Hinn would not enjoy nearly the fame and fortune that he currently does. Incredibly, the same man that has taught under divine revelation a nine-member Godhead and that women were intended to give birth out of their sides¹⁷⁷ is able to convince tens of millions that what he teaches on divine healing is biblical truth. His books sell by the millions and people the world over flock to his performances. What follows is a fair and accurate representation of the major tenets of Hinn's theology of healing. Though it may be safely argued that other aspects of his theology are more *heretical*, there is little doubt that what he teaches on healing is, in a pastoral and practical sense, the most harmful.

Healing: It is *Always* God's Will

It is a matter of indisputable fact that the cornerstone of Hinn's loosely framed doctrine of divine physical healing is that it is *always* God's will for the believer to walk in perfect, divine health. Hinn's position on this has not changed over the entire course of his nearly three decades of ministry. In his book, *Lord, I Need a Miracle*, Hinn states, "If you are looking for a book to

¹⁷⁴ Strang, "Benny Hinn Speaks Out," 29.

¹⁷⁵ Camp, *The Miracles and the Money*. Steve Martin starring in "Leap of Faith" played a fake faith healer that came into a small midwestern town to con its residents out of their money.

¹⁷⁶ Strang, "Benny Hinn Speaks Out," 28.

¹⁷⁷ Frame, "Same Old Benny Hinn, Critics Say," 53. According to Hinn, this teaching was given him personally by the Holy Spirit.

help you rationalize and justify your infirmities, this volume is not for you. I am not one who prays, 'If it be your will, Lord, grant healing to this person.'"¹⁷⁸ In a Miracle Crusade in March of 2002, Hinn said to the audience that "It is His will to heal you" and told those standing in the front to "go back to your seats and expect the Lord to heal you."¹⁷⁹ Very often on his weekday television show, Hinn can be heard praying, "Lord, heal every single person watching right now." Hinn believes that divine health is to be preferred over all other spiritual blessings: "And we read in III John that it is God's highest desire for you - God's greatest desire for the church of Jesus Christ - is that we be in total and perfect health."¹⁸⁰ Lest there be any confusion as to his position Hinn emphatically states in his book, *Rise and Be Healed*,

He promises to heal all - every one, any, any whatsoever, everything - all our diseases! That means not even a headache, sinus problem, not even a toothache - nothing! No sickness should come your way. God heals all your diseases.¹⁸¹

It would seem that even if what Hinn says were true, there would come a point for everyone that God would not heal the sickness that will eventually end one's life, barring that it is not taken by a non-natural means. Hinn even has an answer for that: "If Jesus should tarry, God's Word says that you will not die with some sickness. Remember, God does not kill His children."¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Hinn, *Lord I Need a Miracle*, 63.

¹⁷⁹ Hinn, Miracle Crusade. Birmingham, AL, 2002, 28 March.

¹⁸⁰ Benny Hinn, *Rise and Be Healed* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991), 65.

¹⁸¹ Hinn, *Rise and Be Healed*, 32.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 25. Hinn cites Job 5:26 as proof for his assertion. Hinn here applies the same faulty hermeneutical method as he did with 3 John 2. This is a promise of long and vigorous life that one of Job's friends, Eliphaz, made to him and should not be taken as a promise efficacious for all believers. Interestingly, in his response Job (6:1-7:21) challenges Eliphaz's teaching; See John E. Hartley, *The Book of Job*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 128.

Healing and the Atonement

Hinn's belief that it is God's will for all Christians to walk in perfect divine health is largely based upon his erroneous view of the atonement of Jesus Christ. To atone is to "bring together in mutual agreement, with the added idea, in theology, of reconciliation through the vicarious suffering of one on behalf of another."¹⁸³ Hinn takes a few biblical passages, applies poor hermeneutical methodology, and argues that physical healing was part of Christ's atoning sacrifice. The first and most prominent passage Hinn uses as one of his proof texts is that of the Sufferer of Isaiah 53:4-5:

4. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. 5. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.

Hinn takes this passage as proof positive that Jesus bore not only humanity's sin on the cross but all its sicknesses as well. Hinn places particular emphasis on the last phrase "and by His scourging we are healed," though he normally substitutes the King James word of "stripes" for "scourging."

Hinn offers his readers the following commentary on the passage:

Do you know that the word "griefs" in the Hebrew which is *Kolae* means sickness, and the word "sorrows" which is *makob* means pain. So Isaiah 53:4 would read, "*Surely He hath borne our sickness and carried our pain.*" You shouldn't carry them today. Jesus of Nazareth carried them for you. Healing and health belong to you. Receive them.¹⁸⁴

Hinn's assertions here, rather uncharacteristically, are not so easily dismissed. Almost every major translation¹⁸⁵ renders these words as "griefs" and "sorrows" but like many Hebrew words, they have multiple possible translations. The word חלינו may be accurately translated as

¹⁸³ Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1:352.

¹⁸⁴ Hinn, *Rise and Be Healed*, 40-41. Emphasis is this writer's.

¹⁸⁵ The words in question, חלינו, and מכאוב, are rendered by "griefs" and "sorrows" respectively by the KJV, NASB, ASV, and RSV. Only the more paraphrastic NIV renders חלינו as "infirmities," or, as Hinn states, "sickness;" the NIV's rendering of מכאוב is "sorrows," as with the other translations.

“sickness,” or used as a metaphor for “distress of land.”¹⁸⁶ and מְכָאֵב is accurately translated as “pain” but may be used in either the physical or mental contexts.¹⁸⁷ In cases where multiple renderings are possible, proper hermeneutical method dictates that the choice be made not by lexicography, but by context.¹⁸⁸ The context of this passage is the Babylonian exile of the Israelites. The subject is the Sufferer.

This passage is set in the rule of King Darius who reissued the decree of his predecessor, Cyrus, to allow the Jews to rebuild the Temple.¹⁸⁹ A lower-ranking governor, however, apparently did not know of Darius’ policy and, rather than punishing the entire community for the work being done to rebuild the Temple, executed a single man to make an example of him.¹⁹⁰ Darius received a complaint that an innocent man had been executed. Desirous to have his region stable in lieu of a possible military engagement with the Egyptians, Darius listened to the complaint.¹⁹¹

The exact identity of the Sufferer cannot be known with absolute certainty.¹⁹² However, he is clearly understood to be an historical figure¹⁹³ who was made, in effect, a scape-goat for his

¹⁸⁶ Brown, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 318.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 456.

¹⁸⁸ William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, a Division of Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1993), 183–85.

¹⁸⁹ Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1:868.

¹⁹⁰ Watts, John D. W., *Isaiah 34-66*, 231.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 222.

¹⁹² The scholarly works written on the Sufferer of Isaiah 50:4-9 and 53 are voluminous, reflecting the interest in the subject and the differing interpretations as to his identity and the modern application of his story.

¹⁹³ The historicity of the Sufferer should in no way be seen as diminutive to the traditional Messianic interpretation of the passage. To the contrary, the account of the Sufferer shows

people. He died not for his own sins, but for the sins of the many. The Sufferer's death made possible the peace and healing of the community. Upon consideration of the entire chapter, it is readily apparent that it is the removal of sin, not disease, which is the purpose of the Sufferer's punishment. His ministry was redemption.¹⁹⁴ The words translated as "transgressions," "sins," and "iniquities" occur in verses 5, 6, 8, 11, and 12. This fact argues strongly that the idea of spiritual healing, not physical, is in view.¹⁹⁵ Hinn's position is certainly within lexicographical parameters, but the overall force of the passage does not support it.¹⁹⁶

Further evidence against Hinn's position is the fact that the exact same word translated as "sickness" in verse 4, חָלִי, is also used in verse 3, "A man of *sorrows*," Following Hinn's hermeneutic, then, the verse would read, "A man of *sickness*,"¹⁹⁷ If this verse is directly applied to Jesus, as Hinn clearly does, then Jesus would have been a man full of *sickness*; an unthinkable condition for the sinless Son of God.

Isaiah 53:4a is quoted word for word by Matthew in 8:17 of his gospel: "in order that what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, 'He Himself took our infirmities, and carried our diseases.'" The quotation comes at the conclusion of his account of Jesus' healing of Peter's mother-in-law. Matthew is clearly interpreting this miracle in light of the

God's willingness to appoint an innocent person to die and thereby secure the redemption of the many. The model that the Sufferer provides is ultimately fulfilled in the death of Christ; See Watts, 228.

¹⁹⁴ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 407.

¹⁹⁵ John Wilkinson, "Physical Healing and the Atonement," *The Evangelical Quarterly* 63:2 (1991): 156-57.

¹⁹⁶ In fact, in the introduction to all of his shows until the year 2000, a clip is shown of Hinn yelling from stage, "And by His stripes *we are healed!*" This phrase is found at the end of verse 5 which is clearly dealing with iniquities. The healing of verse 5 refers to the healing of the community's problems, not diseases; See Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 231.

¹⁹⁷ Emphasis is this writer's.

Sufferer of Isaiah. Upon first consideration, it would seem that this would argue persuasively that physical healing is indeed a component of the atonement. However, there is an important distinction to be made between the work of the Sufferer and that of Christ's atonement. Isaiah 53:4 says that the Sufferer bore "our griefs" and carried "our sorrows." There is no intimation that Jesus literally bore the diseases of those whom He healed in such a way that He suffered physically himself. In addition, all of Christ's miracles of healing were done *before* His atoning death on the cross.¹⁹⁸ This seems to indicate that Christ's power to heal was resultant not of His atonement, but of His position as the Creator (Col. 1:16).¹⁹⁹

The Matthean passage has much more to say about the authority of Christ than it does about physical healing in and of itself. Hagner, in his work on this passage, rightly holds that it is essentially christological in character. The healings performed by Christ were not ends unto themselves, but rather signs that the kingdom of God, as prophesied by the Old Testament, had been inaugurated by Christ and thus made a present reality.²⁰⁰ The position that this passage is indicative of the availability of universal divine healing via the atonement misses the passage's overall force and is simply untenable. This having been said, there *is* a connection between Christ's atonement and the promise of divine healing in the eschaton.

That there exists a connection between sickness and sin is beyond dispute. It was through sin that death entered the world (Rom. 5:12-17) and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Both man's painful labor in tilling the ground and the woman's pain experienced in childbearing

¹⁹⁸ Wilkinson, "Physical Healing and the Atonement," 159.

¹⁹⁹ A clear example that it was the *power* of Christ that healed rather than His atonement is that of the woman with the issue of blood as recorded in Mk. 5:25-34. When the woman touched His garment, Jesus perceived that "the *power* proceeding from Him had gone forth."

²⁰⁰ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1993), 211.

were resultant from their sin (Gen 3:16-19).²⁰¹ Just as the Sufferer did for his community, Jesus in His atoning death paid the penalty of sin, one component of which is sickness and disease.²⁰² Through faith in the atoning death and subsequent resurrection of Jesus Christ, a person is promised forgiveness of sins and thereby, whether in this life or the next, certainly *will* be healed of any and all disease. Turner, in his book *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts Then and Now*, rightly holds that all benefits of salvation are derived from the atonement. However, all benefits of salvation are not yet fully realized.²⁰³ It is the conclusion of this author, then, that the purpose of the atonement was first and foremost to deal with sin, for it is sin which separates man from God and is therefore mankind's most mortal enemy. One of the benefits of having the sin problem alleviated, however, is that its consequences, one of which is sickness and disease, will also be alleviated. While God can and does on occasion heal, healing is not *promised* to be fully realized until the eschaton.

Benny Hinn's "Proof Texts"

Benny Hinn appeals to a number of texts to argue that it is always God's will for believers to be healed. One of these is Ephesians 5:23, "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body." Of this verse Hinn offers the following exposition:

And now the Bible says in Ephesians 5:23 that Jesus Christ is the savior of the body. He is not only the savior of the soul, He is savior of the body. Ladies and gentlemen, you can cry out: '*You are the savior of my body, Lord Jesus, you are the savior of my soul.*' If Jesus Christ is the savior of the body, then your body ought to be made whole.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ The importance of the fact that not *all* pain and sickness is a direct result of one's personal sin cannot be overstated. The book of Job stands in monumental testimony to this. See also John 9:1-3.

²⁰² Bruce R. Reichenbach, "By His Stripes We Are Healed," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41/4, no. December (1998): 560.

²⁰³ Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts Then and Now*, 330.

²⁰⁴ Hinn, *Rise and Be Healed*, 64. Emphasis is in the original.

If Hinn's exegesis did not lead so many astray, it would be laughable. One need not be a Greek scholar to realize that this verse has absolutely nothing to do with Jesus being the savior of one's physical body. Even a casual reading in any English translation will quickly lead one to realize that the "body" of which Paul is speaking is the church.

One of Hinn's other proof texts is that of 3 John 2.²⁰⁵ "Beloved, I pray that in all you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers." Hinn believes that divine health is to be preferred over all other spiritual blessings: "And we read in III John that it is God's highest desire for you - God's greatest desire for the church of Jesus Christ - is that we be in total and perfect health."²⁰⁶ It is preposterous to suggest that God's highest desire for the church is for its members to be in perfect physical health. In His extended prayer for the disciples, Jesus prayed for their unity, "that they may be one even as We are" (Jn. 17:11). Furthermore, Hinn displays exceedingly poor hermeneutics by applying 3 John 2 as a blanket promise for all believers. This verse is simply a greeting by the author, John, to the letter's recipient, Gaius, expressing the former's prayer that the latter be in good health. This is not unlike someone today beginning a letter by stating 'I pray that this finds you doing well.' Such a greeting, as it is today, was common in letters of the first century.²⁰⁷ In fact, Smalley points out that the greeting itself may suggest that Gaius was in poor health upon receiving the letter which would be antithetical to Hinn's supposition.

The Biblical Record

The theological and textual evidences, of which but a few have been considered, are sufficiently compelling to refute Hinn's teaching. What may be most damaging to Hinn's case,

²⁰⁵ Hinn appealed to this verse on June 27, 2002 at his Dallas, TX Miracle Crusade to convince the audience that it was God's will for them to be healed.

²⁰⁶ Hinn, *Rise and Be Healed*, 65.

²⁰⁷ Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), 346.

though, is the fact that it is a matter of biblical record that not everyone who loved God and served Him faithfully walked in divine health. Of this there can be no question.

Epaphroditus, delegate of the Christian community at Philippi,²⁰⁸ of whom the Apostle Paul thought highly (Phil. 2:25), was sick “to the point of death” (vs. 27). Paul left his fellow believer and traveling companion Trophimus²⁰⁹ “sick at Miletus” (2 Tim. 4:20). Paul exhorted his young “true child in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2) Timothy to “use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments” (1 Tim. 5:23). God restored to Epaphroditus his health (Phil. 2:27), but the length of the illnesses of Trophimus and Timothy cannot be known with certainty. Hinn is on shaky ground indeed when he asserts that no believer should ever be sick.²¹⁰

One of the most famous, and mysterious, examples of suffering outside that of Jesus himself in the New Testament is the Apostle Paul’s enigmatic “thorn in the flesh.” Recorded in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, the exact nature of Paul’s thorn, σκόλοψ, has been debated for centuries.²¹¹ Chrysostom believed it to be symbolic of Paul’s enemies,²¹² whereas Tertullian held it to be an earache or recurring headache.²¹³ In general terms, the “thorn” must fall into one of two categories: human opponents or some type of physical ailment. Martin astutely points out that the

²⁰⁸ Gerald F. Hawthorne, *Philippians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 114–15.

²⁰⁹ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 599.

²¹⁰ Hinn cannot even agree as to whether or not he himself gets sick. On page 67-68 of *Lord, I Need a Miracle*, Hinn writes, “Do I enjoy complete and perfect health? No, I get sick, [sic] go to the Lord asking for His healing touch and He heals me.” He even claimed to have healed himself of a cold watching a tape of his own show, Larry King, *Larry King Live* (CNN, 1998, 23 April). In a sermon aired on TBN on July 1, 2001, however, Hinn claimed “I know some of you may not believe this, but believe me when I tell you I never get sick!”

²¹¹ Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, 568.

²¹² In favor of the first view is that in chapters 10-13 Paul makes frequent reference to his adversaries; See 11:13-15; 12:12.

²¹³ Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4:843.

most telling evidence that the thorn was indeed physical in nature comes not in verse 7 but in verse 8. Here the Apostle Paul writes, "Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me." Paul asks the Lord *three times* that the thorn might be removed. Martin notes that it would be out of character for Paul to ask so earnestly for God to remove persecution for it was during such times of persecution that Paul seemed to thrive the most.²¹⁴ It is doubtful that the exact identity of the thorn will be known this side of eternity but that it was some type of sickness or disability is the majority view.

With little doubt the biblical character most associated with suffering is Job. As with the Apostle Paul's thorn, even though Job's sufferings were from Satan, their severity did not exceed God's sovereignty (Job 1:12). Unlike the Apostle Paul, though, there appears to be no ready reason for the sufferings. Job did nothing to warrant punishment (1:1,8). Job, then, is a monumental problem for those who espouse a positive confession, "Health and Wealth" gospel. Hinn and others of his persuasion may, and often do, conveniently ignore relatively obscure biblical accounts of men such as Trophimus and Epaphroditus as suffering from illness. The Apostle Paul's thorn presents difficulties but they may be, superficially at least, explained away. Job, however, is different. Here the reader is presented with an entire book that centers around one man's undeserved, miserable suffering and the way in which God uses such unimaginable suffering²¹⁵ for His own glory and the long-term betterment of the sufferer. Says Hanegraaff, "In order for the Faith message to flourish, Job has to fall. And fall he does . . . he is tripped up by a smear campaign, a campaign in which Hinn recklessly caricatures Job as one of the great faith failures of all time."²¹⁶ Hanegraaff was referring to the following treatment of Job by the famed faith healer:

²¹⁴ Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 415.

²¹⁵ God allowed Satan to rob Job of his livestock, servants, and children (1:15-19) and then to struck him with boils (2:7).

²¹⁶ Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, 97.

You know what? We've said this a million times and it's not even scriptural, all because of Job: 'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord' [Job 1:21]. I have news for you: that is not Bible, that's not Bible. The Lord giveth and *never* taketh away. And just because he said, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord,' don't mean that he's right. When he said, 'Blessed be the name,' he was just being religious. And being religious don't mean your right.²¹⁷

The unmitigated gall of seeing fit not only to change but add to the Bible when it does not fit his own theological paradigm is stunning. Job is the proverbial elephant sitting in the theological living room of the Word of Faith movement that none of its leaders wish to honestly engage.²¹⁸

The Requirements for Healing

Though Benny Hinn teaches that it is always God's will for a believer to be healed, healing does not come until certain prerequisites are met. Hinn's teachings concerning this are not uniquely his; others in the Word of Faith camp espouse them as well. However, Hinn is the most visible proponent of healing and therefore must be engaged.

The Cost of a Miracle

Benny Hinn will at times give lip service to the truth that "you cannot buy a miracle from God"²¹⁹ but the overall force of his teachings certainly indicates otherwise.

This is what the Lord said to me: 'When there is a curse on human beings because they are not givers' - and the Bible does state that very clearly, we don't like to talk about it but

²¹⁷ Benny Hinn, "Benny Hinn" program on TBN (1990, 3 November).

²¹⁸ It was not until the publishing of Hanegraaff's book, three years after the biblical offense, that Hinn retracted his statement. On his Orlando Christian Center broadcast aired by TBN on June 13, 1993, Hinn said, "Now let me tell you something else I said once that I so regret I said. Poor Job, I hope he's still my friend in heaven. ...I made a statement one day, I said, uh, something about Job; 'The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away,' that he was in unbelief." Had the book not been published, Hinn would likely not have offered even this timid apology.

²¹⁹ Benny Hinn. *Praise-A-Thon*, aired on TBN April 1, 2002. This author was present at the taping. Just a few minutes after making the statement, however, Hinn received a vision of a bald, fat man with a heart problem wearing a yellow shirt watching by television. Hinn saw the man walking away from the TV having talked himself out of making a pledge. Hinn spoke to the man through the camera and told him, "Come back. If you will come back and make that pledge, God will heal your heart tonight."

it's in the Word - You know what it means to be cursed? It means you can't get healed, you can't be delivered. You can pray for someone to get healed and they'll stay sick.²²⁰

As used in the New Testament, the term "curse," κατάρα, sees its most frequent use in the Pauline corpus occurring once in Romans (12:14) and thrice in Galatians (3:10, and twice in 3:13). The Apostle Paul uses the term "curse" primarily in his handling of the cross.²²¹ In light of the cross, those who continue to seek salvation by "works of the Law are under a curse" (Gal. 3:10) because "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law" (3:13). Nowhere in the New Testament is κατάρα connected to a lack of giving.²²²

Hinn can even combine his powers of "revelation knowledge" with those of divine healing:

I believe that God is healing people while they're making a pledge tonight. There are people getting healed making a pledge. . . . No, no, you are not paying for that healing and you know that. But God is honoring you for your obedience and [He is] touching your body. . . . God is healing people while they're making that pledge I feel the anointing here.²²³

On his show *This is Your Day*, Hinn was asking his audience and television viewers to send in their prayer requests along with their "seed of faith," spiritual sounding Word of Faith terminology for money. Says Hinn,

In your prayer requests be specific and then send a gift. Here's why: the Word of God says 'give.' . . . The Word says sow and then you shall reap. You can't expect a harvest until you sow a seed. . . . So send that seed today. Whatever amount, and really it depends on your need. . . . The Word of God says if we sow sparingly we'll reap sparingly. If we sow bountifully we'll reap bountifully. . . . Someone came to me in church recently and said, 'Well, pastor, how much should I give to God?' I said, 'Well, what kind of harvest are you looking for?'²²⁴

Those with crippling arthritis who struggle just to rise from bed, or those who have spreading

²²⁰ Benny Hinn, sermon delivered at the Orlando Christian Center (1990). Exact date is not known but this writer is in possession of the tape.

²²¹ Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 1:449-50.

²²² *Ibid.*, 448-51.

²²³ Benny Hinn, "Praise-A-Thon" program on TBN (2000, 2 April).

²²⁴ Benny Hinn, "This Is Your Day" program on TBN (1996, 15 August).

malignant cancer, or those parents who must watch helplessly as their terminally ill children slowly succumb to their disease had best dig deeply.

Such quotations as the above are part and parcel not only for Benny Hinn but most if not all others in the Faith movement.²²⁵ One need not watch Hinn, or TBN in general, for long before hearing that very kind of ploy for money. Giving to the Lord's work is an important facet of any Christian's life. It is indeed a commandment (Mal. 3:8-10; Mat. 22:21). However, a "give to get," "seed faith" theology as taught by various "healing evangelists" is a self-serving perversion of the scriptures.

It is unconscionable that a man claiming to be a minister of the gospel would so unabashedly connect healing to money. It is no doubt easy for Hinn to ask for it. Money is a concern for him only in its acquisition.²²⁶ A 1997 CNN/*Time* documentary investigated Hinn's finances and found that he lives a most opulent lifestyle.²²⁷ This lifestyle is in no small part built upon the hopes for miracles of many hurting Christians.

²²⁵ Note in particular the "hundredfold return" teachings based on Mk. 10:30 as espoused by Kenneth and Gloria Copeland dealt with by McConnell, *A Different Gospel*, pgs. 170-72 and John Avanzini dealt with by Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, pp. 199-201.

²²⁶ The Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability is an organization which helps maintain financial integrity for evangelists which join it. It is a type of Christian Better Business Bureau, one of whose members is Billy Graham. Benny Hinn has refused to join. Source: Matt Curry, "Faith Healer Attracts Followers, Critics," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, no. Sunday (2002, 14 April): B1.

²²⁷ Among their findings were the following: Hinn and his personal bodyguards (with two of whom this author spoke and requested an interview with Hinn but was denied) often stay in lavish Presidential Suites costing as much as \$2,200 *per night*. When traveling to Europe Hinn and his entourage often fly the supersonic Concorde at nearly \$9,000 *per ticket* - roughly twice the cost of a first class ticket - just to save 4 hours flying time. Hinn paid one of his former bodyguards over \$100,000 hush money after he threatened to make public some of the former's extravagant spending. As of this writing Hinn has not revealed his salary. However, it is estimated at one million dollars per year. This does not include book royalties and gifts.

A "Right Heart" and Perseverance

One of the other requirements for healing, according to Benny Hinn is for one's heart to be right. This is what he told the multiple hundreds of sick at a Miracle Crusade in March of 2002: "You cannot receive healing unless your heart is right with God. . . .Healing is easily attained when your walk with God is right."²²⁸ This is problematic for two reasons.

Firstly, it is unbiblical. Healing is not always contingent upon the purity of one's walk with God. The Gerasene man possessed of a demon obviously did not have a heart right with God (Mk. 5:1-20), and the man born blind as recorded in John 9 was healed though he had little if any idea of who Jesus even was (vs. 25). Secondly, the assertion that "Healing is easily attained when your walk with God is right" is exceedingly reckless. The vast majority (and one might safely argue *all*) of those who enter a Benny Hinn Miracle Crusade in a wheelchair leave in their wheelchair. Are they then to conclude that their walk with God is deficient given that healing is so easily attained? Undoubtedly many do.

Hinn also maintains that perseverance is a key to physical healing. In his 1998 book *The Miracle of Healing* he writes:

I remember a lady who went to Kathryn Kuhlman's meetings eleven times before she was healed. Eleven times! I asked one day, 'Why did you keep going back?' She said, 'Because I knew. I knew my day was coming, and I was going to go back until God healed me. I was not giving up.' The reason many do not get healed is because they give up so quickly.²²⁹

The Bible enjoins Christians to persevere in good works (1 Cor. 15:57-58) and teaches that perseverance builds character and hope (Rom 5:3-4) but there is no record of anyone making repeated trips to visit a faith healer hoping for a miracle. Hinn retold the above story at his Miracle Crusade in Dallas, TX on June 27, 2002. Whether Hinn's story is true or not cannot be known. However, this author spoke with a woman who apparently took his story, or at least the

²²⁸ Hinn, Miracle Crusade. Birmingham, AL, 2002 , 28 March.

²²⁹ Benny Hinn, *The Miracle of Healing* (Nashville, TN: J. Countyman, a division of Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1998), 53.

teaching on which it is based, seriously. Emma Hastings²³⁰ was in attendance with her thirty four year old wheelchair-bound son Chris. Chris was not only confined to his wheelchair but was severely mentally retarded having, according to his mother, "the mind of an infant." Chris wore a bib to keep his shirt from being soaked with his drool. In response to the question, "How many times have you taken Chris to see Benny Hinn?" Mrs. Hastings replied, "Oh, gosh, I've lost count." Asked where she was from, she replied, "New Hampshire." Mrs. Hastings said that she follows Hinn all over the country. She had driven 1,589 miles for this visit.²³¹

Reasons Why Healing Does Not Come

One thing that is common among faith healers is that it is never their fault when people are not healed. Benny Hinn has little to say directly about why some are not healed. He does, however give hints.

Lack of Faith

That the person did not have enough faith is a favorite excuse among faith healers as to why he or she was not healed. Said Hinn to his audience in a Dallas, TX Miracle Crusade just as the healing portion was about to begin, "It's impossible to claim something you're not sure of."²³² In this oft repeated statement, Hinn is indicating that a person desirous of healing must believe that God *will* heal them. In *Rise and Be Healed*, Hinn states,

²³⁰ Names have been changed for privacy purposes but this writer is in possession of all verification (i.e., names, phone numbers, and places of residence) of this and the two stories which will follow.

²³¹ Based upon mileage reported in WalMart, *Rand McNally Road Atlas* (Rand McNally and Company, 2000), A6, A8. This author attended two Miracle Crusades: Birmingham, AL in March and Dallas, TX in June of 2002. Some of the very same crippled people seen in Alabama were present three months later in Texas. There are sick and afflicted people that quite literally follow Benny Hinn all over the country.

²³² Hinn, Miracle Crusade in Birmingham, AL (2002, 28 March).

Never, ever, ever go to the Lord and say, 'If it be thy will.' Don't allow such faith-destroying words to be spoken from your mouth. When you pray 'if it be your will, Lord,' faith will be destroyed.²³³

Hinn is teaching that for one to receive healing, that person must believe that it *is* God's will and that He *will* do it.

Against this is the fact that Jesus at times healed when there was no faith at all exhibited by the one being healed. Two examples, the Gerasene demoniac and the man blind from birth have already been mentioned. Also noteworthy is the passage in James 5:14-15 which indicates that it is not the faith of the one sick that helps to facilitate healing, but that of the elders' which have been called to pray *for* the sick.²³⁴ To be sure there are biblical examples that indicate the importance of faith on the part of the recipients (Mark 6:5-6; 10:52; Acts 14:9). However, even from these it is not at all clear that it was required that the recipients believed that Jesus, or in the latter case Paul, *would* heal them. There are at least two notable cases which indicate that it was more important for the recipients of healing to have faith that Christ was *able* to heal. In Luke 5:12 a man "full of leprosy" said to Christ, "Lord, *if* You are willing, You *can* make me clean."²³⁵ In the following verse Jesus told him, "I am willing; be cleansed." An even more striking example is that of two blind men who cried out for Jesus to have mercy on them as recorded in Matthew 9:27-29. Noteworthy is that Jesus did not heal these men immediately. Unlike the paralytic in 9:1-7, Jesus here took the time to directly inquire about their faith.²³⁶ The question He asks of them is, "Do you believe that I am *able* [δύναμαι] to do this?"²³⁷ This passage demonstrates that

²³³ Hinn, *Rise and Be Healed*, 47.

²³⁴ Bowman Jr., *Understanding the Health and Wealth Gospel*, 216.

²³⁵ Emphasis is this writer's.

²³⁶ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 254.

²³⁷ Emphasis is this writer's.

it is reckless and without strong biblical support to preach that one must believe it is *always* God's will to heal and that He *will* do the same.

If Hinn's logic is followed, as it is with untold millions, if one is sick then that person's healing is contingent upon his or her own faith. If healing does not come, the person is left with the unavoidable conclusion that it is his fault. His walk with God is not pure enough, his faith is not strong enough. Though Hinn says that he is "not going to make harsh statements that put guilt on people and leave them thinking that they are to blame if they are not healed,"²³⁸ that is *exactly* what he is doing.

Not Saved

As if it were not loathsome enough to insinuate to the sick that they are so because of their own deficient faith, Benny Hinn in unambiguous terms says that they may be sick because they are not even saved.

When Israel came out of Egypt, God performed an incredible miracle, and that is when He healed all of Israel. . . . The Israelites were all healed when they ate the Passover. When people are saved they ought to be healed at the same time. . . . The Bible says, 'When He brought them out.' . . . The reason so many are not healed, they're not out yet.²³⁹

Statements such as this from Hinn are, sadly, far from isolated. This is what he told his audience at a Las Vegas, Nevada Miracle Crusade:

Now ladies and gentlemen, hear this very clearly please and never forget it. It's as easy to get healed as it is to get forgiven. It's as easy to receive physical healing as it is forgiveness of sin. . . . Healing is as easy as salvation. Do not complicate what is simple. *Healing should never be separate from salvation.*²⁴⁰

²³⁸ Strang, "Benny Hinn Speaks Out," 29.

²³⁹ Benny Hinn, "Praise the Lord" show on TBN (1994, 6 December).

²⁴⁰ Benny Hinn, Miracle Crusade at the Thomas and Mack Center, Las Vegas, NV (aired on 2001, 22 March 22). Emphasis is this writer's.

The sick person hearing this message who leaves the crusade sick has but one conclusion upon which to arrive: He must not be saved.²⁴¹ The callousness and cruelty exhibited by Hinn in remarks such as this are unimaginable. When the show is over, having absolved himself of all responsibility, Hinn departs to his palatial home and fancy cars. He does not see, as this author has seen, the dozens upon dozens of crippled, diseased, and dying people leaving the crusade in the same condition in which they arrived. In the same condition save that they are now not only poorer (after having sown their “seed of faith”) but also are questioning their faith if not their very salvation. Hinn does not see the parents of tiny, crippled, deformed, and sometimes vegetative children leaving the coliseum, child cradled in their arms, tears streaming down their faces. This is *not* exaggeration. It happens.

The Healings

Acknowledging all of Hinn’s aberrant and heretical theology, one may still legitimately wonder about the thousands of healings which he claims have occurred at his monthly Miracle Crusades. Are they real? If so, do the miracles legitimize his ministry despite his continual lies, egregious heresy and patently unbiblical theology and teachings? The question of their reality will be examined first.

According to the staff at the Trinity Foundation, they have yet to discover one single air-tight documented case of a healing miracle that had no explanation other than a divine act. Hank Hanegraaff, in preparation for his then up-coming book, *Christianity in Crisis*, asked the Hinn organization for documented cases of healings. After long delays, Hinn’s staff finally submitted three examples all of which were found to be fatally flawed by CRI’s hired medical consultant, Dr. Preston Simpson.²⁴² A 1997 *CNN/Time* documentary on Hinn entitled “The Miracles and the Money” carried the heartbreaking story of Laura Twilley. Mrs. Twilley suffered from cancer and

²⁴¹ According to Hinn’s logic, then it must be also be concluded that Timothy, Epaphroditus, Trophimus, and indeed the Apostle Paul were all lost in their sin.

²⁴² Hanegraaff, *Christianity in Crisis*, 340–41.

had been undergoing chemotherapy. At the time of the crusade, her doctors had given her only weeks to live. At the crusade, she said that she had been healed. By her own admission she had been unable to walk for weeks. But there she was, walking around the floor of the coliseum. So fervently did she believe she had been healed, she did not go back to see her doctor. Four weeks later, she was dead. She left behind her husband and three little girls.²⁴³

How, then, was Mrs. Twilley walking? Very simply, it was the power of suggestion and peer pressure combined with the influence of group dynamics.²⁴⁴ At a Hinn crusade, there are anywhere between fifteen and thirty thousand people singing, praying, and speaking in tongues in a closed area. The lights are dimmed with rhythmic music playing. A charismatic (no pun intended) leader then appears on stage dressed in gleaming white and promises miracles. The excitement is palpable. The atmosphere is electric. The sick, convinced that 'this is their day' begin to believe themselves healed. Adrenalin is coursing through their bodies and they begin to do things they could not do before. This author was a first hand witness to just such an occurrence.

Sitting in her wheelchair parked to this writer's immediate left, Mrs. Ethel Brown in the March, 2002, Birmingham, Alabama, crusade had been suffering from emphysema for years. Now in her late 70's, Mrs. Brown had been unable to take a single step without her oxygen tubes for two years. Her portable oxygen tank went everywhere she did. During the healing portion of the show, she began to feel markedly improved. She began to cry out, "I'm healed, I'm healed!" Benny Hinn staffers nearby rushed over to her and began inquiring of her condition. She took the oxygen tube from her nostrils and began to walk unaided. Her daughter began to cry. Asked by

²⁴³ Camp, *The Miracles and the Money*.

²⁴⁴ For a better understanding of the tactics of "faith healers" in general see James Randi, *The Faith Healers* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1989). Though himself not a Christian, Randi, a professional magician, exposes many of the "supernatural" powers employed by healing evangelists as simple but convincing hoaxes. Hinn is not dealt with specifically but his tactics are. Randi also treats the power of suggestion and group dynamics.

Hinn's staffers if she wanted to go on stage, she said, "yes." Less than five minutes later, however, she began to tire. Within minutes she was back in her wheelchair with her oxygen tube back up her nose. Emotion had succumbed to physical reality.

Emilio Garcia is a young man from Oklahoma and was in attendance at Hinn's Youth Crusade in Dallas, TX on Sept. 9, 2002. Hinn had called all pastors' kids up on stage and had begun to "slay" them "in the Spirit." Hinn turned to see Emilio standing there with his mother. Hinn spoke to him but Emilio did not respond. What Hinn did not know was that Emilio is *mostly* deaf. When Emilio's mother told Hinn of her son's condition, Hinn replied, "You mean he can't hear?" In a booming voice Hinn then said, "God, heal this young man tonight!" After repeatedly slaying him, Hinn stood before Emilio and clapped his hands. Hinn shook his head as if to say, 'You can't hear that?' Emilio shook his head "no." Hinn slew him again, had him picked up, and then placed his hands on the young man's ears. Once again, Emilio hit the floor. After Emilio stood back up, Hinn went behind him and clapped his hands right behind his ears twice. Emilio followed suit and the entire arena erupted in shouts of praise. Hinn clapped his hands again, this time four times. Emilio followed exactly. Hinn shouted, "Give the Lord a big hand clap of praise!" and declared Emilio healed. This author watched the two leave the stage, and after an interview they had with Hinn staffers, followed them to their seats. They were kind enough to provide their names and phone number. It was readily apparent, though, that despite Hinn's proclamation, Emilio was still deaf. In a phone conversation with his sister ten days later, it was discovered that Emilio may be "a little better" but that he still uses his hearing aids.²⁴⁵

Premiering on Easter Sunday 2001, the cable network HBO's investigative report entitled "A Question of Miracles" further proves that Hinn's proof of alleged miracles is dubious at best. The report noted that Hinn performed seventy six miracles on stage. The filmmakers requested

²⁴⁵ That his hearing was "a little better" is highly subjective. Emilio had not been back to his doctor. Sadly, his sister indicated that for reasons unknown Emilio had become "really combative" with his family. Asked when that behavior began, his sister said, "right after the crusade."

the names of those healed for independent verification. Thirteen weeks later, the ministry produced five. *None* of the five, presumably the most convincing of the seventy six, checked out. One of those supposedly healed was ten year-old Ashnil Prakash who suffered from two brain tumors. Despite his parents pledging thousands of dollars to Hinn's ministry, Ashnil died seven weeks later.²⁴⁶

The proof of Hinn's purported healings is conspicuous by its absence. Even if documented miracles *were* common in Hinn's ministry, they would not in and of themselves legitimize it (Matt. 7:22-23). It seems that nearly all of those on stage claiming to have been healed suffer from maladies that are not readily visible, such as stomach ulcers, cancer, or bad backs. If God is truly healing people through Benny Hinn, where are the amputees, the blind, the imbecilic, the maimed, and the crippled? They are sitting, or sometimes lying, on the back of the floor area safely away from the watchful eyes of the numerous television cameras. If some do venture forward, they are ushered away just as was this author.

This is not to say that God does not heal. The Bible clearly teaches that He has in the past. There is no reason to suppose that He does not do so today. He may even on occasion heal someone at a Benny Hinn crusade. There are hundreds of sincere Christians at each crusade who are asking God to heal them. It would be surprising if God did *not* grant healing to some. However, the evidence does not support Hinn's wild and exaggerated claims.

Conclusion

Benny Hinn is a false prophet in every sense of the word. He is a pathological liar seemingly incapable of telling the truth even about major events in his own life history. His prophecies not only edify himself more than the body of Christ, but have been proven untrue and were, therefore, *not* from God. He attempts to usurp biblical authority by that of his own "divine

²⁴⁶ Home Box Office (HBO), *A Question of Miracles* (2001).

revelation” teachings and he teaches doctrines that are patently false and often in direct violation of scripture.

To his credit, he does preach, at least beginning in the past few years, salvation messages at most if not all of his crusades. However, in each one is almost always interspersed the heresy that “The sinless Messiah not only took it [sin] He became your sin”²⁴⁷ the messages normally²⁴⁸ have enough of the gospel in them for people to come to Christ.²⁴⁹ If Hinn did not preach at least some orthodoxy, his following would not be nearly what it is.

Hinn’s occasional forays into orthodoxy do not, in the opinion of this writer, legitimize his ministry. He does not fit the biblical ministerial mandates of being “above reproach” (1 Tim. 3:2) and “free from the love of money” (3:3) and certainly does not have “a good reputation with those outside the church” (3:7). Hinn’s presentation of Christianity to the outside world is nothing short of embarrassing. His miracle crusades resemble rock concerts cloaked in Christian language. Though he claims otherwise, he continues to espouse a “give-to-get” theology.

Benny Hinn shows an unending propensity to divorce verses of Scripture from their context and therefore from their intended meanings and twist them to fit his own theology. He does so to buttress his own spirituality at the expense of innocent, often hurting and desperate followers. He mangles God’s Word so that instead of providing comfort and encouragement to afflicted believers, it stands over them in judgement for their lack of faith. If one believes Hinn’s teaching that it is always God’s will to be healed and healing does not come, then the unavoidable

²⁴⁷ Hinn, Miracle Crusade in Birmingham, AL (2002, 28 March).

²⁴⁸ This author noted, however, that at his Youth Crusade on Sept. 9, 2002 in Dallas, TX though several thousand young people were in attendance, Hinn never once presented the plan of salvation. He thought that his time would be better spent “slaying” them “in the Spirit.”

²⁴⁹ It has been noted by others, however, that many of those who come forward in crusades are wearing Christian t-shirts and some are even Benny Hinn partners that have reserved seats near the front. They write, “So the majority [of those who come forward] are not new commitments but it looks great for TV, which is what it is all used for.” Source: *Deception in the Church* website; accessed 25 September 2002; available from <http://www.deceptioninthechurch.com/hinn1-10-02.html>.

conclusion is that it must be his or her own fault. Says Hinn, "If you do not receive your miracle, it's not God's fault. You say, 'well whose fault is it?' You figure that one out yourself."²⁵⁰ Exactly.

This thesis is indeed highly critical of Benny Hinn. In a larger sense, though, it is also intended as a warning about the Word of Faith movement and 'Health and Wealth' gospel as a whole. Any perversion of the Bible will inevitably lead to harm, both to individual believers and to the cause of Christ. Believers are being harmed in a most sinister way. They are promised miracles, swindled out of their money, and then when the miracles do not come they are led to believe that they have no one but themselves to blame. Worst of all, Hinn and others of his persuasion use the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to do it.

This thesis is *not* a polemic against Pentecostals or the charismatic movement. One of the most able biblical scholars today is Dr. Gordon D. Fee, himself an ordained minister of the Assemblies of God. He is also one of the fiercest critics of the Health and Wealth gospel. Some have lumped together all charismatics and the Word of Faith movement. This is an unfortunate mistake. It is a discredit to sincere, clear-thinking charismatics and gives the Word of Faith movement more legitimacy than it deserves.

In conclusion, the sick believer is encouraged to pray for God to heal him of his affliction. If he feels so led, he may even want to follow the directives of James 5:14-15. If healing does not come, however, the Christian should know that it is not because he lacks sufficient faith. If one has enough faith to be saved, one certainly has enough faith to be healed; the former is by far the greater miracle. If God chooses not to remove the affliction, the Christian should rest in the assurance that God has His reasons. Those reasons may never be known this side of eternity. However, it is in the presence of pain that God's presence of peace is often most real. God will often use affliction to bring a believer into a deeper understanding of Him. The great preacher and theologian Charles Spurgeon is quoted as saying, "I am certain that I never grew in grace

²⁵⁰ Benny Hinn, sermon delivered at Jimmy Swaggart's Family Center (1989).

one-half so much anywhere as I have upon the bed of pain.”²⁵¹ Human weakness is often the avenue God uses to grow the believer and glorify Himself. The Apostle Paul came to know this precious truth through the agent of the “thorn:”

Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He [Jesus] has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Cor. 12:8-10)

It is this writer’s prayer that one finding himself or herself in the midst of pain, whatever form it may take, will rest assured that God is ever present. God does not promise healing this side of heaven. He does, however, promise sufficient grace. The Savior’s strength can be made perfect in His children’s weaknesses.

²⁵¹ Tom Carter, ed., *The Best of Spurgeon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 190.