Using the authority we have been given

Introduction

There is a growing power encounter between the Kingdom of God and the power of the evil one – Satan. Some power encounters are held in public view where the power of God overwhelms the power and destroys the work of the enemy. God's name is glorified and people are drawn to the Lord Jesus. There are number of examples in the Bible:

- Moses and the magicians representing the gods of Egypt (Ex. 8:16-19)
- God versus Baal (1 Kings 18)
- The Lord Jesus driving the demons out of people's lives and healing the sick

In Scripture there is no formula for ministering healing to the sick. God is sovereign and heals in many and diverse ways. But knowing this doesn't relieve us of the responsibility to study the Scriptures – especially the Gospels and Acts – and seek to understand the principles or patterns by which the Lord Jesus and the early disciples ministered to the sick. If we can understand and master these principles as a foundation, then the Lord Jesus can make us more effective in using the authority we have been given according to whatever specific leading He gives us. But note that the context of this healing ministry is **the preaching of the Gospel**.

In getting to grips with this topic certain concepts may be over-emphasised and all Biblical truth needs to be held in balance. But the Biblical principle is clear; the Lord Jesus has given to believers a measure of authority over disease and demonic forces to **confirm** the Gospel to **unbelievers**. We are to speak directly to these demonic forces and diseases and command them to go in the name of the Lord Jesus. The basis of both healing and deliverance from satanic oppression is the victory of the Lord Jesus on the Cross – His atonement for sin and His disarming of the principalities and powers.

We also know that Middle Easterners of all sorts need miraculous signs. In John 4:46-53 the Lord Jesus was again in Cana and a royal official came from Capernaum and begged Him to come and heal his son who was close to death. The Lord Jesus told him, ***"Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe."*** Then there was the amazing declaration by the Lord Jesus, ***"You may go; your son will live."*** As a result the son was healed and, ***"All his household believed"***.

"For the Jews demand signs and the Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles, but to those who are called … Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor. 1:22-23)

"And when I came to you brothers, I did not come proclaiming to you the testimony about God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling. My speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2:1-5)

When the Lord Jesus came, the world was shrouded in darkness. (Jn. 1:1-11) His purpose was to bring the liberating Kingdom of God to those who lived in darkness. Our context is much the same. When the sick and the demonised came to the Lord Jesus, He immediately recognised the problem as the work of Satan and healed the sick and cast out the demons. This was the warfare motive then. He saw the works of the enemy – sin, sickness and demonic oppression and He destroyed them without mercy. In so doing He advanced the Kingdom of God.

The Basis of Healing and how the Lord Jesus healed

" … many who were demon-possessed were brought to Him and He drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah, 'He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases' ". (Mt. 8:16-17)

"Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows …." (Is. 53:4)

So according to Isaiah and Matthew, in some way the atonement for our sin includes physical healing since, in an ultimate sense, the **ultimate** cause of sickness is sin. Where sin is forgiven, sickness can be healed. So when the atoning death of the Lord Jesus is preached to the lost, physical healing may accompany it.

In Mark 1:23-25 the Lord Jesus was in the synagogue in Capernaum on the Sabbath and He was teaching and, ***"There was in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit and he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God.' But Jesus rebuked him saying, 'Be silent and come out of him'. And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him"***.

In Mark 1:40-42 ***"A leper came to Him, imploring Him and kneeling, he said to Him, 'If you will, you can make me clean.' Moved with compassion, He stretched out His hand and touched him and said to him, 'I will; be clean'. Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured."***

The Lord Jesus didn't pray for the man's healing nor did He politely ask the demon to leave the man alone. In fact He sternly **commanded** the demon to "shut up" and "come out". If our model is the Lord Jesus, and it must be, we need to speak to disease and demons in the same manner – sternly without civility. Again with the leper, the Lord Jesus commanded the leper to "be clean" and he was healed.

In 1 John 3:8 we read, ***"… The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil"***.
By preaching/teaching the Gospel to sinful people, healing their sick and driving out demonic control of their lives, the Lord Jesus was destroying the devil's work in people's lives. He came to declare war and destruction on Satan's kingdom. By definition war is violent.

In Mark 3:1-6, ***"Again He entered the synagogue and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus to see whether He would heal him on the Sabbath so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man with the withered hand, 'Come here'. And He said to them, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?' But they were silent. And He looked around at them in anger, grieved at their hardness of heart. He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand'. He stretched it out and his hand was restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus."***

The Lord Jesus healed the man's hand by commanding it to be healed! It was an application of authority.

The question is: do we have any authority like that of the Lord Jesus?

"He called the Twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases and He sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal. … and they departed and went through the villages, preaching the Gospel and healing everywhere." (Lk. 9:1, 2, 6)

Clearly the Twelve were given authority over disease and demonic forces. What about us?

Let's look at Luke 10, ***"After this the Lord appointed seventy two others and sent them ahead of Him, two by two, into every town and place where He was about to go.*** (v. 1) ***… Heal the sick and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near you'.*** (v. 9) ***The seventy two returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name!' "*** (v. 17)

So clearly, the 'seventy two' were also given this authority. It appears this wasn't a special "gift of healing", but what you could call the simple, standard equipment for those sent to advance the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus. Note that in v. 9 they were told to heal the sick **before** they proclaimed the Kingdom of God.

<u>A very shocking incident – a warning</u>

"And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to Him and kneeling before Him said, 'Lord have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and he suffers terribly. Often he falls into the fire and often into water. I brought him to your disciples and they couldn't heal him.' And Jesus answered, 'O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to Me.' And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him and the boy was healed instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, 'Why couldn't we cast it out?' He said to them, 'Because of your little faith. Truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain move from here to there and it will move and nothing will be impossible to you.' " (Mt. 17:14-21)

What is the nature of the "mountain-moving faith" that they lacked? In Mark 11:14 we read:

"And He said to it (a fig tree) ***'May no one ever eat fruit from you again.' And His disciples heard it."***

"As they went along (the disciples and the Lord Jesus), ***they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. And Peter remembered and said to Him, 'Rabbi, look! The fig tree that You cursed has withered.' And Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea', and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore, I tell you whatever you ask in prayer believe that you have received it and it will be yours."*** (Mk. 11:20-24)

This is the faith that the disciples lacked as they tried to cast out the demon. They wavered; they were not at all confident that the demon would obey the command given in the name of the Lord Jesus. We must have the "faith of God" if we are going to heal the sick and cast out demons for the advancement of the Kingdom of God and for people to receive the Gospel.

This "faith of God" is based on the **Word of God** that tells us the Lord Jesus has given us a measure of authority for the sake of the advance of the Gospel. This isn't faith in my own faith. We have authority over all powers that oppress people **because Scripture says we have been given that authority**.

Mark 11:23-24 teaches 2 key points:

- asking with believing
- commanding without doubt

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." (Heb. 11:1)

So when the Lord Jesus spoke commands, He spoke with "faith in God". He was completely certain that what He commanded would be obeyed. This faith was based on His knowledge of the authority the Father had given Him.

"For by the grace given to me, I say to every one of you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to <u>the measure of faith</u> that God has assigned …." (Rom. 12:3)

So along with this measure of faith, each believer has a corresponding measure of authority. So there are two directions to our faith:

- **Faith <u>in</u> God** – this is saving faith. This is the foundation of our faith as believers. It is present in our lives at all times.
- **Faith <u>of</u> God** – mountain-moving faith for speaking out with authority – God's will and God's power working out through us to accomplish His purposes – such as healing the sick and casting out demons. This appears **not** to be present at all times.

" … and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing." (1 Cor. 13:2)

We ought to have mountain-moving faith, but if we do, without any love, we are nothing in God's sight. Of course, this doesn't mean there is no use for mountain-moving faith. It is **this faith** that, with love, can enable us to move in supernatural power for the sake of the Gospel.

This is not the Gift of Healing

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever <u>believes in Me</u> will also do the works that I do and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father." (Jn. 14:12)

We don't need the "gift of healing" to do "greater works" than those the Lord Jesus did. We only need to have the same **all-consuming mission that He had – to advance the Kingdom of God**. So when we preach about the Lord Jesus, His atoning death and His mighty resurrection and ascension back to the Father **and** we command with authority, then miracles will follow.

So what is the gift of healing?

We read in 1 Cor. 12, ***"There are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit*** (v. 4) ***…. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit, for the common good."*** (v. 7)

In the context, the gifts of the Spirit are given for the common good of the body – the Church. So I think the gift of healing has been given to deliver **believers** from disease and to alleviate their pain.

It is in 1 Cor. 12:30 that Paul asks the question, ***"Do all have gifts of healing?"*** Clearly the answer is "No". But our focus is not on ministering to believers who are sick, but on ministering healing as a sign to confirm the truth of the Gospel. There may be different motivations to command healing or demonic forces including alleviating pain and suffering, but the main motivation is always to draw men and women to faith in the Lord Jesus and to extend His Kingdom.

Please read how Peter and John did this in Acts 3:1-26. Read how Peter healed Aeneas in Acts 9:32-35 and note the result. Read about Paul in Lystra (Acts 14:8-10). Note in all these cases that Peter, Paul and John didn't pray for the lame. They simply commanded them to get up.

But when Peter was called to Joppa to heal a disciple called Tabitha/Dorcas, she died before he arrived. (Acts 9:40)

But Peter put them (the other believers) ***all outside and knelt down and prayed … he said, 'Tabitha arise' …. and he presented her to them*** (the believers) ***alive."***

In Acts 28:7-8 Paul is in Malta. He is being entertained by Publius (the chief official of the island) whose father ***"Was sick in bed suffering from fever and dysentery."*** Paul visited him and prayed for him. He put his hands on him and healed him.

So in these cases the miracle took place after prayer – first speaking to our Heavenly Father and then secondly commanding the disease (a work of the enemy) to leave.

This isn't a formula, but it is a pattern given in Scripture. So we shouldn't confuse "commanding" and "praying".

There is a third factor – persistence

"They came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to Him a blind man and begged Him to touch him. And He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village. And when He had spat on his eyes and laid His hands on him, He asked him, 'Do you see anything?' And he looked and said, "I see men, but they look like trees walking'. Then Jesus laid His hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored and he saw everything clearly." (Mk. 8:22-25)

So at first, the man's eyesight was only partially healed. In this instance the Lord Jesus didn't accept this outcome as the Father's will! Why? I don't know, but I think it was to teach **us** patience. A second time the Lord Jesus touched him and his eyes were completely healed. When we share the Gospel with unbelievers, they rarely accept it straight away. So what do we do? We persist in our witness until the person becomes a believer or until the Holy Spirit leads us to stop.

Finally, we are to be gentle with unbelievers, but we **must** exercise authority over their diseases and the demons that possess them with a strong, stern expression of force. We need to be "angry" with demon possession. Always remember, we have **relative** freedom to exercise faith in the context of evangelism, especially in the situation of intense spiritual warfare, but we are always completely dependent on the Lord. And the Lord, in His wisdom, has graciously given us a measure of power and authority as we preach the good news of the Kingdom of God.

In Acts 8:5-7 we read, ***"Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed Christ there. When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many and many paralysed people and cripples were healed."***

A Continuum of Kinds of Healing

1. **Sometimes it is God's will to heal absolutely quite apart from any person's faith or works.**

   You can see **this unconditional will** to heal in Luke 7:11-17 when the Lord Jesus raises a widow's son to life. What was His motive? It was probably compassion for a poor widow who had lost her husband (her breadwinner) and now her only son had died. She was in a very sad situation.

   Again in John 5:1-9 we see the same thing with the healing of the man in Jerusalem by the pool of Bethesda. He had no faith, but the Lord Jesus healed him. He simply said, ***"Take up your bed and walk"*** and immediately there was power to enable him to do so.

2. **God wills to heal, but some faith is required.**

   An example of this is given in John 9:1. The man was blind from birth. He didn't ask to be healed, but the Lord Jesus unilaterally made some mud and anointed his eyes with the mud. Then the blind man was told to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. He went and washed and he began to see.

   So with mud over his eyes, he had to go to the pool and this required some faith. Read John 9.

3. **God's will is neutral. It is *"according to your faith"*.**

   On His way to heal Jairus' daughter, in the midst of a great crowd, ***"A woman who had a discharge of blood"*** touched the clothes of the Lord Jesus and she was healed of her disease. Jesus knew something had happened and asked who had touched Him. She confessed she had touched Him. She told him the whole truth and the Lord Jesus said to her, ***"Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your disease."*** (Mk. 5:21-34)

   Matthew 9:27-30 is where the Lord Jesus heals two blind men who were following Him. ***"He touched their eyes saying, 'According to your faith be it done to you.' And their sight was restored."***

   Luke 7: 1-10 is the story of the healing of a centurion's servant. The servant was sick to the point of death. His master sent some elders of the Jews to Jesus to ask Him to heal the servant. Jesus went with them but as He got close to the house, the centurion sent word to say that He had no need to come. Just to say the word would be sufficient. Since he knew that the Lord Jesus was a person of such great authority, just a word from Him would heal the servant. Jesus responded, ***"I have not found such great faith even in Israel!"*** On arrival at the house the men found the servant well.

   The authority to heal lies to a certain extent in the area of ***"according to your faith"***. Phrases such as: ***"You may ask me for anything….."*** and ***"Ask, seek, knock"*** come into this category as well as the parable of the persistent widow and the corrupt judge. (Lk. 18:1-8)

4. **God wills not to heal, but His will is 'negotiable'.**

   There is a story in 2 Kings 20:1-11. King Hezekiah becomes sick and is at the point of death. Isaiah is sent to tell the king to set his house in order for he is about to die. But Hezekiah prays fervently and bargains with God for another 15 years of life. Isaiah returns to the king and heals the boil.

5. **Sometimes it is absolutely God's will <u>not</u> to heal** regardless of the faith present because He wants the person to come "home" to be with Him or for some other reason.

   An example is Paul's ***"thorn in the flesh"*** (2 Cor. 12:7-10). Three times Paul pleaded for the ***"thorn"*** to be removed, but God said, "No!" He gives Paul the reason. It is to keep him from becoming conceited because of the surpassingly great revelations he has had. ***"But He said to me*** (Paul), ***'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weakness, so that Christ's power may rest on me."***

   Another example is Moses pleading with God to be allowed to enter Canaan (Deut. 3:23-27). In Deuteronomy 32:48-52 God spoke to Moses and told him why he was not allowed to enter into the Promised Land. God said, ***"There on the mountain*** (Mount Nebo) ***that you have climbed, you will die and be gathered to your people. … this is because … you broke faith with Me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh … and because you did not uphold My holiness among the Israelites …."***

   Of course, later he was allowed to go to the Mount of Transfiguration with Elijah and see and talk with the transfigured Lord Jesus.

If it had been me, I would have chosen to be with the Lord Jesus in the Promised Land. God always knows best! ***"Your will be done, not mine."*** So we are to pray according to God's will and we will learn God's will as we wait on the Lord.

But we need to echo the prayer of the disciples in Luke 17: 5, **"*The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith'. And the Lord said, 'If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea' and <u>it would obey you</u>'."*** If we want our faith to increase, we should expect disease and demons to obey us in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Let us look at some examples

- **How God did it!**

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light' and there was light." (Gen. 1:1-3)

The Holy Spirit was available to create and form, but there was no action until the Trinity **spoke**. Only then did light appear.

- **How did Moses do it?**

Read Exodus 14: 10-15. The People of God were escaping from Egypt and they soon recognised that the Egyptian army was behind them and was rapidly catching up with them. They were terrified and cried out to the Lord. They told Moses they would prefer slaving for the Egyptians to dying in the desert. Moses told them that they would see God's deliverance that day. ***"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Why are you crying out to Me? Tell the Israelites to move on. Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the waters so the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground'."***

Clearly there is a time to **pray** and there is a time to **act**. There is a time **to be still** and a time **to move**. For Moses it wasn't a time to be still, but a time to move. The rod/staff had been given to Moses by God and it symbolised the authority God had given him. It was only when Moses raised the staff that the waters divided.

There is an increasing emphasis on prayer in the church we attend and in the city in which we live – and rightly so. But prayer is never simply for the sake of prayer. What is the purpose of prayer? It is power to proclaim the presence of the Kingdom of God. It is power for community transformation. It is power to complete the Great Commission (Mt. 24:14) so the Lord Jesus can return.

- **How did Ezekiel do it?**

"Then He said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord! This is what the Sovereign Lord says to these bones: I will make breath enter you and you will come to life. I will attach tendons to you and make flesh come upon you and cover you with skin. I will put breath in you and you will come to life, then you will know that I am the Lord.' So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I was prophesying, there was a noise, a rattling sound, and the bones came together bone to bone. I looked, and tendons and flesh appeared on them and skin covered them, but there was no breath in them." (Ezekiel 37:4-8)

Ezekiel was then told to prophesy to the wind, ***"Thus says the Lord God, 'Come from the four winds…and breathe on these slain, that they may live'. So I prophesied as He commanded me and the breath came into them and they lived and stood on their feet – an exceeding great army!"*** [Read down to verse 14.]

In the same way, God commands us, His witnesses, to speak in the name of the Lord Jesus. We are to speak with authority as we proclaim the Gospel. We are to command disease and demons to leave in the name of the Lord Jesus. Only then will the Lord save men, women and children, heal the sick and release people from demonic oppression.

- **How did Elisha do it?**

In 2 Kings 4:8-37 there is the lovely story of Elisha and the woman of Shunem. This woman recognised Elisha as a holy man of God – how? Essentially, Elisha asked her what he could do for her. He found out that she had no son, so he called on her and told her, ***"About this time next year you will hold a son in your arms."*** Such was the prophetic authority of Elisha that what he spoke came to pass.

Some years later this son dies (v. 18) and Elisha, through prayer and identification, raises this son to life.

We are created in the image of God, but this image has been severely distorted by sin. Man was originally given authority over the earth, but now, because of our sinful nature, we want to create and control things apart from God. How can we return to our original purpose? It is only by surrendering our lives completely to God and then exercising the authority given to us over demonic forces and to win men, women and children into the Kingdom of God. We proclaim the Kingdom of God and not our own kingdom.

What is the result of doubt?

"Have faith in God. …. I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go and throw yourself into the sea' and doesn't <u>doubt</u> in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him." (Mk. 11:22-23)

In Mt. 14:22-31 we read an account of the twelve disciples being in a boat on the lake of Galilee. ***"During the 4th watch of the night, Jesus went out to them walking on the lake. When the disciples saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified. 'It is a ghost' they said and cried out in fear, but Jesus said to them: 'Take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid.' 'Lord, if it is you', Peter replied 'Tell me to come to you on the water.' 'Come', He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came towards Jesus. When he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord save me'. Immediately Jesus reached out His hand and caught him. 'You of little faith', He said, 'Why did you doubt?' "***

What did Peter doubt? He doubted that he could keep walking on the water after seeing the strength of the wind and he began to sink.

The Lord Jesus commands us to heal the sick as we preach the Gospel. (Lk. 10:9) So what happens when we waver as we think about ministering to the sick? Usually the sick are not healed. The Lord Jesus may heal them directly despite our unbelief, but this isn't His preferred way. To doubt means to waver. **There is no authority in wavering!**

Should we touch the sick person?

We have looked at the occasion in Mark 5: 24-34 where a woman who had been sick with a bleeding disorder for twelve years approached the Lord Jesus quietly, just making an effort to touch His cloak and believing that if she could do so she would be healed. The healing took place when the woman made physical contact with the Lord Jesus. The power to heal was resident in the Lord Jesus. **Now** the Lord Jesus lives in us through His indwelling Holy Spirit. His power is now at work **<u>in us</u>** – Eph. 3:20.

In Mk. 7: 32-35 we read, ***"Some people brought to the Lord Jesus a man who was deaf and who could hardly talk and they begged Him to place His hands on the man. The Lord Jesus took him aside away from the crowd and put His fingers into the man's ears. Then He spat and touched the man's tongue and said, 'Be opened'. At this, the man ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he could hear and speak clearly."*** So the power to heal was transmitted from the Lord Jesus' fingers into the man's ears.

As disciples of the Lord Jesus, we have a measure of the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. (Acts 1:8)
1 Cor. 6:19 says, ***" … your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you …."*** So as believers, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit with all His power.

So when there is an opportunity to minister to the sick we have a comforting thought: 'Well, it's really up to the Lord'. But often this is just an excuse for anticipated failure. Yes, it truly is 'up to the Lord' and He has chosen to give us a measure of authority to heal the sick. So it is really up to us. The Lord Jesus has given us a measure of relative freedom to heal the sick. It is up to us! Only when the severity of the disease exceeds our authority to heal, is it up to the Lord as to whether it is His will to release power which is beyond our faith. He can do this if it is His will.

A Military Concept of Authority

In Luke 7:2-10 there is an account of the Lord Jesus healing a centurion's servant. ***"Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to Him elders of the Jews, asking Him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they***

pleaded with Him earnestly saying, 'He is worthy to have you do this for him for he loves our nation and he is the one who built us our synagogue.' And Jesus went with them. When He was not far off from the house, the centurion sent friends saying to Him, 'Lord do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have You come under my roof. Therefore I did not presume to come to You. For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me, and I say to one, 'Go' and he goes and to another 'Come' and he comes and to my servant, 'Do this' and he does it '. When Jesus heard these things, He marvelled at him and turning to the crowd that followed Him, He said 'I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith'. And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well."

The centurion, being a military man, understood very well the nature of **authority**. If a command is given by one having authority, it will be obeyed regardless of the distance between the superior and the subordinate. So the Lord Jesus could command healing from a distance and the person would be instantly healed. The Lord Jesus, our great Commander-in-Chief, has given to us a measure of this authority to heal the sick for the sake of advancing the Gospel. So we have the authority to command disease and demons **unless we are overruled by our commander**. He can and sometimes does overrule us to suit His purposes.

Faith to remove demonic blocking of people on the way to being saved

In Acts 13: 9 we have an example of Paul, ***"Filled with the Holy Spirit, he looked straight at Elymas and said, 'You are a child of a devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind and for a time you will be unable to see the light of the sun.' Immediately mist and darkness came over him and he groped about seeking someone to lead him by the hand. When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord."***

The Lord Jesus wanted to stop Elymas from blocking the way that was leading to the proconsul's salvation. The Holy Spirit led Paul to pronounce blindness on Elymas for a while. So Paul spoke to Elymas with 'mountain-moving' faith. This example is very useful when in the context of doing public evangelism.

The Healing of Sick Believers

"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them <u>pray over</u> him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. … Pray for one another that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." (James 5:14-16)

The only verse in the New Testament where the phrase **'pray over'** is found is in verse 14 of this passage. Elsewhere we read 'pray for'. **'Pray for'** refers to intercession on behalf of a sick believer asking the Father to heal him. This is the prayer of faith in the name of the Lord Jesus. In the case of believers, they must repent of all known sin. But unbelievers, sinners are not required to repent before the Lord Jesus heals them. Some of them after they were healed, repented and received the Lord Jesus as their Messiah. The Lord Jesus didn't see all who were healed come to faith in Him as Lord and Saviour – at least there is no report that He did. So I don't think we should expect all believers to be healed every time we pray. God is sovereign.

I am told that the preposition "over" in Greek is almost always to be found describing the physical position between two objects. So "praying over", implies laying hands on the sick person (anointing him/her with oil). We find several instances of believers laying hands on the sick and commanding their healing in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Look again at Mark 11:23-24, ***"I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea' and doesn't doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours."***

Dealing with Demonically caused Diseases

Some diseases, though not all, are caused by evil spirits. ***"Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath and there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for 18 years. She was bent over and couldn't fully straighten herself. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, 'Woman, you are freed from your disability'. He laid His hands on her and immediately she was made straight and she glorified God."*** (Lk. 13:10-13)

So the Lord Jesus laid His hands on this woman and it appears that the spirit of infirmity left. Also it is clearly not unscriptural to lay our hands on the person while we are casting out demons.

"Jesus was driving out a demon that made the man mute. When the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke and the people marvelled." (Lk. 11:14)

Clearly the demon caused the muteness in the man. So such demons must generally be driven out before the condition can be reversed.

"And when Jesus saw the crowd running to the scene, He rebuked the unclean spirit saying to it. 'You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.' " (Mk. 9:25)

So this particular evil spirit made the child both deaf and unable to speak.

"Then they brought to Jesus a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute and He healed him so that the man spoke and saw." (Mt. 12:22)

So this demon made the man both blind and deaf. Once the demon had left, the man was healed.

So don't be afraid to drive out demons. Do your preparation in prayer and then don't be afraid to lay hands on people when you sense that the cause is demonic.

"The seventy two returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name!' And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions and <u>over all the power of the enemy</u> and nothing shall hurt you.' " (Lk. 10: 17-18)

Can a believer be demon-possessed? No! See 2 Cor. 6:14-17. As believers, we have been purchased by the blood of Christ and we are His possession. But we are warned against being yoked to unbelievers. This implies great spiritual danger to us if we are influenced by demonic forces in this way. So believers can be oppressed by circumstances beyond their control (such as being abused as children). If they deliberately sin either in their thoughts or their behaviour, this may open the door for demonic forces to afflict them. We are warned that Satan comes to kill, to steal and to destroy us. But the Lord Jesus has made provision for us to be set completely free and clean through repentance and in extreme cases through the ministry of other believers who exercise the authority of the name of the Lord Jesus.

We are warned to maintain our Spiritual Health

"When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and doesn't find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. Then it goes and brings seven other spirits more wicked than itself and they go in and live there and the final condition of that man is worse than the first." (Lk. 11:24-26)

So it is of really great importance to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We need to renounce any conscious sin and live a life of obedience. We need to fill our "house" with the presence of the Holy Spirit. James 4:7 teaches us to, ***"Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*** This is obviously not a one-time act. It is an attitude of complete submission to God and constant vigilance concerning the devil.

In regard to sin, Rom. 8:13 teaches us, ***"If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die, but if, by the Spirit, you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."***

So we are to resist the devil and by the power of the Holy Spirit continue to put to death our sins. Ultimately all sin and sickness is linked to the work of the devil and he must be resisted and refused in the name of the Lord Jesus. We have the authority to do this because of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

To keep yourself safe, remember Luke 10:20, ***"However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."***

It is dangerous to become enamoured with our authority. To be safe we should always focus our joy on the salvation so freely given to us by the Lord Jesus. This will keep us humble and teachable. Always remember Gal. 5:22, ***"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law."***

So faith **<u>in</u>** God is more important than the faith **<u>of</u>** God. Prayer to the Lord must always come before commanding demons in the name of the Lord. As an outward evidence of our salvation, the **fruit** of the Spirit is more important than the **gifts** of the Spirit. So a spiritually mature believer is made up of several very important "ingredients". One of these is authority over disease and demonic forces. But remember, it is just one of them.

Healing in the presence of unbelievers

"And when He returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that He was at home. And many people were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. He was preaching the Word to them and they came bringing to Him a paralysed man carried by four men. When they couldn't get near Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him and when they had made an opening they let down the bed on which the paralysed man lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralysed man, 'My son your sins are forgiven.' Now some of the scribes were sitting there questioning in their hearts, 'Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?' Immediately Jesus, perceiving in His spirit that they were questioning within themselves, said to them, 'Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralysed man, 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk?

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins'. He said to the paralysed man, 'I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.' And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all so they were all amazed and glorified God saying, 'We never saw anything like this!' " (Mk. 2:1-12)

For us too, it is easier to say to someone who is paralysed, "Your sins are forgiven" in an evangelistic context than to say, "Get up and walk" for we dread the embarrassment of failure if the man is unable to get up. Healing miracles demonstrate that the Lord Jesus has the authority to perform the greatest miracle which is to forgive us our sin! Each time the Lord Jesus did/does a healing miracle (through a believer) He is demonstrating that He has the authority to forgive sin and that He is God. So in some way, we need to convey that miraculous healing is embedded within the preaching of the atonement that the Lord Jesus achieved for us on the Cross. Miracles confirm the message of the atonement.

As a believer learning how to heal the sick

Every believer needs to learn how to lead unbelievers to faith in the Lord Jesus for their salvation and to start on some of the basic disciplines of being a disciple. Without any argument, the salvation of people is the greatest miracle of all. In the same way, believers can be taught from Scripture how to heal the sick and cast out demons, which are, in effect, "lesser" miracles. So we can learn to catch fish – as fishers of men – and we can learn to heal sick people and release those who are demonised. How do we learn? We learn by seeing and understanding how the Lord Jesus and His disciples healed the sick and then doing it just as they did. We can be trained to minister to the sick boldly and without doubt in the name of the Lord Jesus as confirmation to unbelievers of the truth of the Gospel.

"And He called the Twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases and He sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God and to heal." (Lk. 9:1-2)

So the purpose of empowering the Twelve to drive out demons and heal the sick was to save men and women through the preaching of the Gospel. Was this authority given exclusively to the Twelve? No!

"After this, the Lord appointed seventy two others and sent them on ahead of Him, two by two, into every town and place where He Himself was about to go. And He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Pray earnestly to the Lord of the Harvest to send out labourers into His harvest. (v. 9) ***Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The Kingdom of God is near you.***' (v. 17) ***The seventy two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name.' "***

So in addition to the Twelve, now there were seventy two believers who were given authority to heal the sick and cast out demons. The purpose of this authority was to reap the "harvest". Is this authority given to us today?

"Truly, truly I say to you, whoever believes in Me will do the works that I do and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father." (Jn. 14:12)

So all those who believe can do what the Lord Jesus did. This promise is not just for the Twelve or the seventy two. It is for disciples of every age. I believe God wants to accelerate the pace of world mission in order that the Lord Jesus may return without further delay. So what is the purpose of miracles? The purpose is to confirm and testify to the message of the Gospel.

"Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord and it was attested to us by those who heard, while God <u>also</u> bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will." (Heb. 2:1-4)

"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole of creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved …. And these signs will accompany those who believe. In My name they will cast out demons …. They will lay their hands on the sick and they will recover.' " (Mk. 16:15-18).

Sadly, we rarely follow this mandate. Usually, when faced with a person who is demonised, we pray to the Lord and ask Him to do the casting out. But, as we have seen, this doesn't quite follow what Scripture teaches. It is far more effective to cast out the demons ourselves in the name of the Lord Jesus for He has already given us the authority to do so in His name.

"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with His stripes <u>we are healed</u>". (Is. 53:4-5)

By the death of our Lord Jesus on the Cross every aspect of our need, including healing as well as moral and spiritual wrong together with the guilt that has separated us from God, has been met. Isaiah uses the word "healing" in its total sense – the healing of the total person, restoring us to fullness and completeness. And this is the mark of the

Messiah's presence. [See Is. 19:22 and 30:26.] Isaiah 19:22 refers to the healing of Egypt, Isaiah 30:26, ***"… in the day when the Lord binds up the brokenness of His people and heals the wounds He inflicted."*** – i.e. His punishment for the people's sin.

The Bible shows that when the Lord Jesus died on the Cross, in addition to the forgiveness of our sins by atonement, He also purchased for us physical healing and deliverance from demonic powers as well as the greatest of all benefits – peace with God – reconciliation. But it is all one "package". God is perfecting the priesthood of all believers. He is restoring us to the image of His Son the Lord Jesus – not only in His power and authority, but also in terms of God's holy character and **all this is to make us effective in preaching the Gospel.**

Should believers heal and deliver in the way the Lord Jesus did it?

In the Gospels the Lord Jesus frequently healed people and He also healed people in the Book of Acts. The majority of these healing miracles take place as the Lord Jesus commands the sick to be healed or the disciples use the authority given to them and command healing in the name of the Lord Jesus. In the Gospels, the sick asked the Lord Jesus to heal them and He did – the healing took place. The Lord Jesus generally didn't pray to the Father to heal them. He healed them by His command. In Acts many miracles were done by the disciples. In general, the disciples didn't pray for healing, but commanded healing in the name of the Lord Jesus.

- ***"Then Peter said, 'Silver and gold I don'[t have, but what I have, I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.' "*** (Acts 3:6)
- ***" 'Aeneas', Peter said to him. 'Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and take care of your mat.' Immediately Aeneas got up."*** (Acts 9:34)
- ***"In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked. He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw he had faith to be healed and called out, 'Stand up on your feet!' The man jumped up and began to walk."*** (Acts 14:8-10)
- ***"She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned round and said to the spirit, 'In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her.' At that moment the spirit left her."*** (Acts 16:18)

In Acts there are two recorded examples of prayer involved in healing:

- Peter understandably prayed in Acts 9: 40, ***"Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning to the dead woman, he said, 'Tabitha, get up.' She opened her eyes and seeing Peter she sat up."***
- Acts 28:8, ***"His*** (Publius') ***father was sick in bed suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him and after prayer placed his hands on him and healed him."***

So we need to understand how to use the authority we have been given by the Lord Jesus as believers to command healing in His name. It is alright to pray to the Father that He would heal the sick person and then to command the healing out loud in the name of Jesus. This seems to me to be the Scriptural and effective way to minister to the sick.

James 5: 15 says, ***"The prayer of faith will save the one who is sick and the Lord will raise him up."***

What is ***"the prayer of faith"*** ? I suggest that faith enables us to command with authority and full assurance that the person will be healed. In an evangelistic context we can command the healing with confidence because we know that God wants to open the hearts of people to the Gospel.

<u>It bothers the Lord Jesus when believers can't heal the sick!</u>

"When they came to the crowd, a man came up to Him and kneeling before Him said, 'Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers terribly for he often falls into the fire and into the water. I brought into your disciples and they couldn't heal him'. Jesus answered. 'O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to Me.' And Jesus rebuked him and the demon came out of him and the boy was healed instantly. Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said 'Why couldn't we cast it out?' He said to them, 'Because of your little faith! Truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there and it will move and nothing will be impossible for you.' " (Mt. 17:14-20)

If you compare this version with Luke's account (Lk. 9:37-45) you see the context of this incident is that the Lord Jesus had just given His disciples power to cast out demons. So they have the authority to cast out the demon, but inspite of the authority, they had no faith (!) – not even faith like a mustard seed.

What does mountain-moving faith look like? In Mark 11:12-14; 20-24 the Lord Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. He is hungry and is looking for a fig on a fig tree. He found none and he said to the tree, ***"May no one ever eat fruit from you again."*** The tree withered and Peter wondered how the Lord Jesus did it! The Lord Jesus said to him,

"Have faith in God. I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him."

So the key to healing is to have faith in God. We read in Heb. 11:1, ***"Now faith is being <u>sure</u> of what we hope for and <u>certain</u> of what we don't see."*** When God spoke (Gen. 1:3), He said, ***"Let there be light, and there was light."*** It is impossible to think that God said it and was then very surprised that there was light! No, He knew it would happen. So when the Lord Jesus commanded healing or demons to leave a person, He spoke with full assurance and certainly never with any doubt that what He said would happen.

So we must act with mountain-moving faith in God. For only this releases the power and authority that is already ours as believers in the Lord Jesus.

Perhaps there are two kinds of faith:

- ✓ 'Mustard seed faith' – perhaps the most important, for without it we can never enter the Kingdom of God. We need this sort of faith continually and persistently every day.
- ✓ 'Mountain-moving faith' – for healing the sick, casting out demons and doing miracles in the name of the Lord Jesus for the glory of the Father.

In prayer, in our "quiet times" and as we study God's Word, we exercise our faith. We build it up. When we are out in public, we no longer pray, rather we wage war against the destroying works of Satan by proclaiming the Kingdom of God, healing the sick and casting out demons from people. As we speak with great authority and boldness, without any doubt in our minds, then miracles will happen.

In Luke 17:5-7 the Lord Jesus taught His disciples how to increase this kind of 'mountain-moving faith'.

"The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith'. And the Lord said, 'If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and be planted in the sea' and it will obey you. Suppose one of you had a servant ploughing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.' "

The point of the parable is that the master **fully expects** the servant to obey him and of course he doesn't thank the servant for doing what he was commanded to do. In the same way, we must **learn to expect** that the sick will be healed and the demons will leave when we **command** them in the name of the Lord Jesus. Nor do we "thank" sickness and demons for obeying when we command them in the name of the Lord Jesus.

In John 20:21 we read, ***"Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you. And with that He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'. "***

As the Father sent the Lord Jesus, with **<u>full</u>** and **<u>complete</u>** authority, so the Lord Jesus has sent us with a limited measure of authority. His authority is resident in the power of the Holy Spirit who will always be with us in this commission. To demonstrate this authority we must speak and command with mountain-moving faith.

This is the faith that is needed in casting out demons and healing the sick in the context of preaching the Gospel to the lost – as we have seen in the Gospels and Acts. Prayer is vital in getting our hearts right and in tune with God, but by itself it doesn't bring about healing. We need to follow the example of the Lord Jesus and the early disciples.

If we don't do it, it might not get done.

We believe we must preach the Gospel, otherwise people will never know that they can't be saved without placing their faith in the Lord Jesus. It is the same with casting out demons and in many parts of the Muslim World the poor can't afford to get good medical treatment. God **is** working unilaterally and saving Muslims through dreams and angelic visits, but this is an exception. Often angels or dreams point people to where there are believers so they can hear the Gospel.

We need love for people. Without love we are nothing. But we also need this mountain-moving faith. The enemy can't kill us spiritually, so he tries to make us spiritually weak and not as fruitful as we would like to be for the Great Commission. But both healing and commanding demons to leave require faith if we are to do what the Lord Jesus taught us to do. Scripture promises that when we preach the Gospel, the Lord will testify to the truth of His Word with miraculous signs. When we boldly act on His Word, He will do miracles. Miracles don't guarantee the salvation of the hearers, but they help to open their minds to the reality of the presence and the power of the Lord Jesus.

"Then He (the Lord Jesus) ***began to denounce the cities where most of His mighty works had been done because they didn't repent. 'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethesda! For if the mighty works done in you had been***

done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the Day of Judgement for Tyre and Sidon than for you." (Mt. 11:20-24)

As you boldly do what you see the Lord Jesus doing in the Gospels, you will see God's power in action. When you have an opportunity to pray for a sick person, do so for the sake of the Gospel. After you have ministered to a person in the name of the Lord Jesus, it is important to ask him/her if he/she is healed. When the Lord Jesus healed people, there was always a testimony to glorify God. If the person is not yet healed or just feels somewhat better, but is not yet completely healed, minister again to him/her in the same way. Why? In Mk 8:22-26 a blind man was not completely healed until Jesus ministered to him twice. ***"The Lord Jesus touched the blind man's eyes and then asked, 'Do you see anything?' He replied, 'I see people like trees walking around.' So once more the Lord Jesus put His hands on the man's eyes. <u>Then his eyes were opened</u>, his sight was restored and he saw everything clearly."***

So we must persist. Continue to minister until the person is healed. **Expect** a miracle. Ask the person who is healed by the Lord Jesus to testify and use the experience to lead the person to the Lord Jesus.

A summary of what to do in healing the sick

Step 1: You must pray to the Father first. Pray with confidence and boldness and ask Him to heal the sick or release the demonised person in the name of the Lord Jesus. ***"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."***

Step 2: Lay your hands on the person – if possible on the part of the body where the infirmity is localised.
If possible men should minister to men and women to women.

Step 3: With the utmost authority in your voice and spirit, command the spirit of infirmity (if any) to come out in the name of the Lord Jesus and go to the abyss and never return. Remember you are speaking to an intelligent being over whom you have authority. That being has no choice but to obey your command. Speak with complete assurance.

Step 4: Command the disease and the pain to go in the name of the Lord Jesus – again with the utmost authority and confidence.

Step 5: Ask the person if they feel better. For example, if they had pain in their knees when walking, tell them to get up and walk. If they have a back problem, tell them to test their back by moving it.

Step 6: If there is no improvement repeat steps 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Step 7: If there is improvement, but not complete healing, repeat steps 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Step 8: Persevere. You may have to minister to the person several times or on successive days.

Remember, this isn't a 'formula', but a foundation. God is always Sovereign and He can heal in many and diverse ways.