

Review: DP082

A SUMMARY CRITIQUE

A “MIRACLE”

a book review of
Lord, I Need a Miracle
by Benny Hinn
(Thomas Nelson, 1993)

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“Lord, I need a miracle!” How often have you heard those words? More to the point, how often have you uttered those words? Sooner or later as each of us journeys down the road of life, we will cry out to God for relief from the specter of sickness and suffering. Those cries are often intensified dramatically when we beseech the Lord to provide a miracle for a loved one, especially a child.

I shall never forget the desperation I felt when my son, David, suffered a critical eye injury. In one blinding instant my whole world seemed to fall apart. One moment there was excitement, the next excruciating pain. Instinctively, I cried out, Lord, David and I need a miracle!”

Benny Hinn’s latest book, *Lord, I Need a Miracle* (hereafter *Miracle*), appeals to multitudes who — like I did — face physical exigencies that threaten to overwhelm their lives. Tragically, those who purchase *Miracle* in desperation will inevitably discover that what it promises, it does not provide.

Hinn promises that the reader will “discover how to have victory over disease and live a life full of health and happiness” (jacket flap). But he bases this promise on a variety of biblical texts wrenched out of context.

Hinn is fond of citing Isaiah 53:5 (“by his stripes we are healed”) to justify his claim. The longer I study God’s Word, the more convinced I am that a Christian should not be sick” (pp. 67, 56, 82, 166). But Isaiah could not have made it more clear that he had spiritual healing in mind. In the very same verse Isaiah wrote, “He was wounded for our *transgressions*, He was bruised for our *iniquities*.”

As the reader may know, the Hebrew word *raphah* sometimes refers to spiritual rather than physical healing. When the prophet Jeremiah says, “Return, O faithless sons; I will heal [*raphah*] your faithlessness” (Jer. 3:22), he is obviously referring to being healed of spiritual backsliding, not physical backaches.

The apostle Peter builds on this understanding when he writes, “He himself bore our *sins* in his body on the tree, so that we might die to *sins* and live for *righteousness* by his wounds you have been healed” (1 Pet 2:24). Christ “bore our *sin*? — not our *sickness*.”

Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that Isaiah 53:5 *does* refer to physical healing which, as Hinn asserts, is accessed by faith. Immediately we are faced with an unwelcome corollary. If physical healing in the atonement is accessed by faith, it stands to reason that those who do not have enough faith to be healed also do not have enough faith to be saved.

Hinn's abuse of Scripture does not end with Isaiah 53:5. Incredibly, in an attempt to justify his claim that "it is not only God's will for you to be healed, but it is His will that you live in health until He calls you home" (p. 63) he references Job 5:26: "You will come to the grave in full vigor." This ignores the obvious: the statement was made by Eliphaz, who God rebuked with the words, "I am angry with you and your two friends, because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has" (Job 42:7). (Incidentally, one may recall that Eliphaz, like modern day counterparts in the Faith movement, was the "friend" who accused Job of harboring dark and secret sins rather than give credence to the possibility that Job's tragedies came from the hand of a sovereign God. Cf. Job 2:10.)

In Hinn's world view the sovereignty of man is clearly elevated over the sovereignty of God. As Hinn himself puts it, "You will never hear me pray such faith-destroying words as 'If it be your will, Lord, heal them.' God intends for you to rise and be healed. Today. Tomorrow. Always!" (p. 63). Jesus and the apostles contradict Hinn in the strongest of terms not only in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:10), but throughout the New Testament as well (Matt. 26:42; James 4:15; 1 John 5:14; Rom. 1:10, 15:32).

To make matters worse, Hinn heaps guilt upon the heads of those who are not healed or who lose their healing. In dogmatic prose throughout *Miracle*, he blames the believer for a lack of faith (pp. 61, 77, 80, 82, 85-86), for "wrong" thinking (pp. 79, 96), or for not consistently following his three principles (pp. 60-62), four laws of healing (pp. 72-73), or seven guidelines (pp. 99-102).

Miracle is not only replete with twisted texts and dogmatic declarations regarding sickness and suffering, it is also full of tantalizing testimonies camouflaged by a thin veneer of scientific substantiation. To wit, the foreword was written by a doctor who appears to provide medical "documentation." In reality, while medical terminology is utilized and examinations are referred to, virtually no primary documentation is presented.

According to Dr. Donald Colbert's foreword to *Miracle*, two of the cases were "extremely impressive" and "carefully documented." The first involves David Lane, who was allegedly healed of colon cancer. A careful examination of the medical records, however, indicates that the malignant tumor had apparently been removed surgically prior to an appendectomy rather than healed miraculously thereafter.

The other case concerns lupus patient Marsha Brantley, who Dr. Colbert claims experienced a "dramatic healing" which "can only be explained as a miraculous touch from God" (p. viii). This is difficult to verify in that lupus is well-known for going into spontaneous remission. What can be verified, however, are the effects of lupus — in this case, damage to the sacroiliac joint which was definitely *not* healed. This critical piece of information in the doctor's report was conveniently omitted from the partial quote given in the book (p. 130).

It is one thing to say that God *can* heal (which I believe) and to pray that He *will* heal (which I do), but quite another to cite the cases in *Miracle* as proof. The truth is that neither Hinn's doctrine nor his documentation stand up under careful scrutiny. If God is indeed healing through Benny Hinn, the evidence is conspicuous by its absence. Surely, with the "thousands" of healings Hinn claims (p. 163), someone, somewhere should be able to step forward and produce irrefutable evidence that an amputated limb, a missing eye, or a severed spinal cord were healed as a direct result of following the prescriptions provided by Hinn in *Miracle*.

Knowing that God is able to change a person's heart and mind, I remain hopeful that Hinn's most recent admission and repentance of teaching false doctrine will move him to withdraw this most unfortunate work from print. By so doing he will spare genuine believers who cry out "Lord, I need a miracle," from an experience with the counterfeit.

A thorough biblical response to Hinn's heretical teachings on sickness and suffering is provided in my book *Christianity in Crisis* (Harvest House Publishers).

— reviewed by Hank Hanegraaff