

# Mark 16:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

## Analysis

**They shall take up serpents** (ὅφεις ἀροῦσιν, opheis arousin)—likely refers to Acts 28:3-5 where Paul survived a viper bite. **If they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them** (καν θανάσιμον τι πίωσιν οὐ μὴ αὐτοὺς βλάψῃ)—not permission to test God by deliberately handling snakes or drinking poison, but promise of divine protection in unavoidable danger during kingdom mission.

**They shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover** (ἐπὶ ἀρρώστους χεῖρας ἐπιθήσουσιν καὶ καλῶς ἔξουσιν)—apostolic healing ministry confirmed the gospel (Acts 3:1-10, 5:12-16, 28:8). Hand-laying symbolizes impartation of blessing, not magical ritual. James 5:14-15 continues this practice with elders praying over the sick. Healing serves God's redemptive purposes, not human demands—Paul himself left Trophimus sick (2 Timothy 4:20).

## Historical Context

Snake-handling cults wrongly use this verse to justify deliberate risk-taking. The verse promises protection in kingdom service, not immunity when tempting God (Matthew 4:7). Early Christians faced poisoning attempts by opponents. The Didache and early church fathers record prayers for healing. Medieval confusion mixed biblical healing with superstition; Reformation recovered biblical practices.

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. How do you distinguish between faith-filled obedience in danger versus presumptuous testing of God?
2. What does biblical healing ministry look like—should churches today expect the same apostolic signs?
3. How do you reconcile promised healing with unanswered prayers and persistent illness among believers?

## Interlinear Text

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ὄφεις ἀροῦσιν καὶ θανάσιμόν τι πίωσιν οὐ μὴ  
serpents They shall take up and if deadly any they drink G3756 G3361  
G3789 G142 G2579 G2286 G5100 G4095

αὐτοὺς βλάψει, ἐπὶ ἀρρώστους χεῖρας ἐπιθήσουσιν καὶ  
them hurt on the sick hands they shall lay and  
G846 G984 G1909 G732 G5495 G2007 G2532

καλῶς ἔξουσιν.  
recover they shall  
G2573 G2192

## Additional Cross-References

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**Luke 10:19** (Parallel theme): Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

**Acts 19:12** (Parallel theme): So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.

**Acts 4:30** (Parallel theme): By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

**Acts 3:16** (Parallel theme): And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

**Acts 9:34** (Parallel theme): And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately.

**Mark 5:23** (Parallel theme): And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live.

**Acts 3:12** (Parallel theme): And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?

**Psalms 91:13** (Parallel theme): Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

**Romans 16:20** (Parallel theme): And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

**Acts 4:10** (Parallel theme): Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.