

Is Healing in the Atonement?

By Pastor Kelly Sensenig

Is healing in the atonement? This has been a question asked by multitudes of Christians down through the years. Many Christians have personally asked me this question as a preacher. It must be understood that when people speak of the atonement they are using this word in a general sense as referring to the death of Jesus Christ upon the cross. We might just as well ask if there is healing through the death of Jesus Christ? The question can be asked in these ways: Did Jesus die upon the cross bearing our physical infirmities and diseases so that we might experience physical healing and health in our daily lives? Did Jesus die upon the cross in order to bear our diseases away and promise perfect physical health for our lives today? Is the promise of healing secured through the death of Jesus Christ? Did Jesus die for disease?

This basic question can be easily answered. Jesus did not die upon the cross for disease. He did not die to promise physical healing in our lives. Of course, if one answers this question in the negative, that there is no healing in the atonement, it's assumed that this person does not believe in a God who heals. But nothing could be further from the truth. Let me state the Biblical position. ***There is no Biblical promise of healing in the atonement. However, the Bible still assures us that we can believe in divine healing of the body by the power of God.*** God is able to heal our bodies from disease and illness. Nothing is impossible with the Almighty (Gen. 18:14). God is not only able to heal the body but He is able to heal whenever it is His sovereign will (Isa. 46:10). The question is not, "Does God heal?" The issue is not, "Can God heal?" Of course He can, and He does. **Healing does not have to exist in the atonement in order for God to be able to heal today.** We should not keep God bound to the atonement in order to expect healing from Him. Did not God heal in the Old Testament era before the atonement took place? The issue is not can God heal. The real issue is this. Does the death of Christ (atonement) guarantee the complete and present deliverance from all physical infirmities as it does the complete and present forgiveness and deliverance from the penalty of sin for those who receive it?

Does the Christian have the right to claim physical healing in the same way as he does salvation? Is bodily healing in the atonement in the same manner as the forgiveness of our sins? These are the main questions we must answer as we engage in this study.

Sometimes we will hear the so-called faith healers claim that it is never God's will that a person should suffer because there is healing for the body in the atonement. They will then *misinterpret* and *misapply* certain Scriptures to support their claims. The unscriptural conclusions are still being made today that believers can by faith appropriate their own cure for bodily sickness when claiming their healing through the atonement. The popular reasoning goes like this. Since Jesus died for all sickness and disease, it's assumed that the only thing that stands between sickness and healing is a person's faith. It is said that each believer must learn to appropriate what Christ has done upon the cross, to their own lives, so that they might experience bodily healing.

Divine healers make bold and dogmatic claims that it is always God's will to heal. Of course, the basis for these statements springs from another error, which concludes that physical healing was provided for in the death of Christ. If Christ died for our sicknesses and if healing for the body is as sure as healing for the soul, then of course it is God's will to always heal our bodies. But this whole premise is false. It is based upon a faulty interpretation and misapplication of Scripture. Jesus Christ did not die to give us present freedom from sicknesses. Therefore, it is not always God's will to heal the bodies of all His children. This can be born out by many Scriptures as we witness men of faith not experiencing healing for their bodies.

2 Corinthians 12:8-9

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Paul, who was used by God to give us many of the New Testament epistles, does not claim that healing was in the atonement. Where do we find Paul appropriating the death of Jesus Christ to his life so that he might receive healing in his body in the same way he received the

forgiveness of sins? It's an absurdity to conclude that Paul was not healed because he failed to apply the death of Jesus to his life. Dear Christian friend, we must think clearly on this matter today. There is no basis for concluding that healing is in the atonement. Paul knew that there was no promise of healing in the atonement. If he really believed that there was healing in the atonement he would have never sought the Lord three times in order to be healed. He could have simply claimed his healing in the atonement and been healed.

Philippians 2:25-30

"Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me."

Epaphroditus was near death because of his involvement and labor in the work of the Lord. He was physically drained and nearing his death. Paul called this man his brother, companion and fellow soldier. Surely he was a man of faith, which God blessed and was using. And yet we do not find Epaphroditus trying to appropriate the death of Jesus to his life so that he might experience bodily healing. If Epaphroditus would have believed that healing were in the atonement, then he would have appropriated the death of Jesus Christ to his physical sickness and been healed.

1 Timothy 5:23

"Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities."

Paul did not instruct Timothy to appropriate the death of Jesus Christ to his life so that his stomach problems could be healed. Rather, he gave some practical down to earth medicinal advice for healing

stomach ailments. If Timothy had believed that healing was in the atonement we would find him claiming his healing instead of suffering sickness.

2 Timothy 4:20

“Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick.”

Paul did not tell Trophimus to appropriate the death of Jesus Christ to his life so that he could be healed? In fact, Paul had to leave this beloved Christian worker behind because of his sickness! If Trophimus could have appropriated the death of Jesus Christ and received healing through the atonement, then there would be no reason for Paul to have left this man behind. The fact is this. Since there was no healing in the atonement this man could not claim his healing and continue on in his work and ministry with Paul. The fact of the matter is this. It's not always God's will to heal us! Paul was not healed and multitudes of other Christian servants were not healed. God used their sickness or ailment to teach them valuable lessons.

One theologian said we should pray something like this: "Lord, if it will be to Your glory, heal suddenly. If it will glorify You more, heal gradually; if it will glorify You even more, may your servant remain sick awhile; and if it will glorify Your name still more, take him to Yourself in heaven."

If it is always God's will to heal and healing was in the atonement then why have millions of God's children, who have prayed in faith, died? Why do even the so-called faith healers die? It is not always God's will to heal and healing is not in the atonement. It is certain that it is not always God's will to heal. To insist that it is always God's will to heal is an insult against the sovereignty of God.

Robert P. Lightner has said:

“The Bible simply does not teach that God is bound by His divine decrees to bring physical deliverance to all men in this life.”

If healing is in the atonement, in the sense that the so-called faith healers claim, then we should never use any form of medical aid to relieve physical suffering. We should never have to go to doctors for medical help. ***To do so would be to accept deliverance on a***

different principle and plan than our deliverance from sin, which is simply by faith alone. This is an important point to stress in our study. If you want to argue for healing in the atonement then you are forced to take the whole principle of complete forgiveness and eternal spiritual life, through faith alone in the death of Christ, and apply this same principle to your bodily healing. Through your faith in Christ's atonement, you should also receive complete and total healing and never die physically. If one is true in the spiritual realm, through a single act of faith, the other should be true in the physical realm, through a single act of faith.

Think of the logical line of reasoning connected with the position that says healing is in the atonement. If physical healing shares in the atonement, as does spiritual healing, then we should not lose our physical health. ***If Jesus died upon the cross and gives us total forgiveness of sin on the basis of faith alone, without any works or human assistance (Eph. 2:8-9), then it is equally true that we must also receive healing on the basis of faith alone without any outside assistance or help (medicine or doctors), if healing is truly in the atonement.*** We know that our faith, which is placed in Christ's death for salvation (Acts 16:31), gives us immediate and total forgiveness (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; 1 John 2:12) and complete justification before God's presence (Rom. 5:8). The believer will never face his sins in judgment because he has been granted total forgiveness and justification before God (Rom. 8:1). Likewise, if healing were in the atonement, it should be expected that we would have immediate and total freedom from all sickness and disease and never experience disease again. ***The same principle of complete forgiveness without human aid, which applies to the salvation of the soul, must also apply to healing of the body, if healing truly is in the atonement.*** Of course, every sensible Christian living will attest to the fact that healing cannot be in the atonement or else we would never die.

Think of this. The believer, who is saved by the grace of God, will never die spiritually (John 10:28-29). The Bible teaches that a person who is truly saved cannot lose the free gift of eternal life (John 5:24, 6:47; Phil. 1:6). How can you lose something that is eternal? Since this is true, the believer who teaches that healing is in the atonement must come to the similar conclusion that he will never die physically,

if total healing is promised though the death of Jesus. If we were promised physical healing on the same basis we were promised spiritual forgiveness for sins (complete and total forgiveness), then there would be no more sickness that could enter our bodies and we would never die physically. ***The only logical conclusion is this. If physical healing were part of the atonement then we would never lose our physical health and die.***

I have discovered that those who believe in healing in the atonement will many times not believe in the doctrine of eternal security. I often have wondered why there was a connection between these two belief systems. During this study it dawned on me that those who pray by faith for healing but fail to receive it have no logical right to expect Jesus to give them eternal life. The two are bound together in their thinking. If we can claim eternal life on the basis of faith in the death of Christ then we should also be able to claim healing on the basis of the death of Christ. But if we fail to receive a healing when we pray in faith and God does not decide to improve our health, then we will not only lose assurance of the physical, but also tend to lose our assurance of eternal spiritual life. This is because the two acts of faith in the death of Christ are inextricably bound together. If God cannot promise the one (complete physical healing) He may not promise the other (complete spiritual healing). Such is the conclusion of many Christians who struggle with this issue.

Scripture also verifies that we have no assurance of life beyond our next breath.

James 4:13-15

“Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.”

Proverbs 27:1

“Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.”

These verses tell us that we cannot follow the theology that teaches healing in the atonement. There is no basis to make these claims since none of us know about tomorrow. God is in control of all our tomorrows and future. We have no claim on a clean bill of health. We have no right to claim bodily healing let alone the fact that we will be alive tomorrow. We must take each tomorrow in the hands of God and trust in the Lord with all of our hearts (Prov. 3:5-6).

So what about healing in the atonement? Many avidly support the notion that their healing is based upon the death of Jesus Christ. They claim that God promises to them a clean bill of health in this life. Are these conclusions true? It makes very little difference what men are saying today. The question is, What does the Word of God teach? What saith the Scriptures? We will look at four main points in this study – *the purpose of Christ's death, the promise of healing in the resurrection, the problematic passages* and then finally there will be a *plea for discernment*.

The Purpose of Christ's Death

The purpose of Christ's death can be easily ascertained by a casual reading of Scripture. Jesus Christ died upon the cross for the spiritual malady of sin – not for physical disease. The Scriptures clearly reveal this to every sincere believer who wants to know the truth. When Jesus died upon the cross he died bearing the sins of the world.

Take for instance the teaching concerning the atonement sacrifices during the Old Testament era. These sacrifices of old were said to be for the sins of the people – not their diseases.

Leviticus 16:3

“Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a **sin** offering, and a ram for a burnt offering.”

The Old Testament high priest would enter the Holy Place with a bull for an offering. Please note that this was a sin offering and not a sick offering. The atonement offering of the Old Testament revolved around the subject matter of sin – not disease.

Leviticus 16:5-6

“And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the **sin** offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house”

Leviticus 16:16

“And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their **sins**: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness.”

Leviticus 16:21

“And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their **sins**, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness.”

Leviticus 16:34

“And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their **sins** once a year. And he did as the Lord commanded Moses.”

There is no mention of disease in all of these references to the atonement sacrifice. This is because the Old Testament atoning sacrifice did not cover the people's diseases for another year. They covered the people's sins. We must also understand that the picture of sacrifice by death was given to Moses and was typology that was fulfilled in Jesus Christ who died for our sins - not our sicknesses. This is clearly brought out in the New Testament.

The book of Hebrews is the Leviticus of the New Testament. This is because Hebrews highlights the Old Testament book of Leviticus and reminds us of the incompleteness of the Old Testament sacrifices. In this epistle Jesus Christ is seen as the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices. Jesus died as both the high priest and the final sacrifice for sin. In other words, Jesus Christ was the fulfillment of the atonement sacrifices.

Hebrews 7:27 also states:

“Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.”

Hebrews 9:11-12

“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.”

The redemption that Jesus obtained for us was the redemption of our soul from the bondage and ultimate judgment of sin. He bore the sins of the world upon Himself and became the final delivering sacrifice that could actually *take away* our sin forever and give us eternal redemption from judgment. In this way Jesus fulfills the Old Testament typology. All the Old Testament sacrifices, under the Old Covenant, pointed to Jesus Christ. They were merely a temporary provision and could not make the people right before God. It would take the coming of Jesus Christ to make the Old Testament worshippers secure in the merits of God's saving provision (Heb. 10:1-4). Today the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ gives present day believers perfect salvation and sanctification before God's presence (Heb. 10:12, 14).

Both Leviticus and Hebrews demonstrate that in the mind of God the atonement dealt with sin, not sickness. Christ's death dealt with our sin problem and the redemption that we needed from sin's penalty so that we might stand accepted before a holy God. A study of the passages in the epistle of Hebrews, which fulfill the Old Testament typology, teach us that Jesus Christ died upon the cross in direct fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices, and give to us the promise that all of our sins (not diseases) would finally be taken away.

Hebrews 1:3

“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our **sins**, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

Hebrews 2:17 also states:

“Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the **sins** of the people.”

Hebrews 5:1

“For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for **sins**.”

Hebrews 5:3

“And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for **sins**.”

Hebrews 8:12

“For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their **sins** and their iniquities will I remember no more.”

Hebrews 9:26

“For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away **sin** by the sacrifice of himself.”

Hebrews 10:12

“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for **sins** for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.”

Hebrews 10:17 also states:

“And their **sins** and iniquities will I remember no more.”

Hebrews 10:26

“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for **sins**.”

How much clearer could God and the Bible make it? Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament sacrifice, which pointed to a sacrificial death for sin – not disease. ***The Old Testament and the New Testament agree with one hundred percent accuracy. God is concerned with the sin question in the death of Jesus Christ – not the disease question.***

The entirety of the New Testament speaks of Christ's sacrifice for sins – not diseases or sicknesses. No mention is made of disease in connection with the actual death or dying of Jesus Christ upon the cross. The evidence is overwhelming that supports the proposition that Jesus only died as a substitutionary sacrifice for sin.

Jesus said in Matthew 26:28:

“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of **sins** (not healing of diseases).”

Christ's precious blood was shed in a special saving way for all those who place their faith in Christ for salvation. The saving significance of Christ's blood can only be applied to those who believe on Him. Christ's blood was *sufficient* to provide forgiveness for all (John 3:16). But here it was shed for “many” in that it was only *effective* in removing the sins of those who actually believe.

Jesus said in Luke 24:47:

“And that repentance and remission of **sins** (not healing of diseases) should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

As the disciples launched out in obedience to the Great Commission they were told to preach repentance and the remission of sins – not healing from diseases and sickness through the atonement. The emphasis was upon the forgiveness of sins - not healing of the human body.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:3:

“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our **sins** (not diseases) according to the scriptures.”

The Gospel is the good news about our sin problem – not our sicknesses.

Galatians 1:4

“Who gave himself for our **sins** (not diseases), that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.”

1 Peter 2:24 also says:

“Who his own self bare our **sins** (not diseases) in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”

We will comment on this passage in more detail when dissecting the disputed passages that are used to promote healing in the atonement. For now, let us see that Peter has in mind the subject of “sins” and not disease. The fact that “sins” are connected with the word “healing” in this context suggests that spiritual healing of man’s lost and separated spirit is in view. This text has nothing to do with healing of the physical body. What we need is *spiritual healing* of our inner spirit, which is spiritually dead and separated from God because of unforgiven sins (Eph. 2:1-2). This will be born out in our study of Isaiah 53. The substitutionary death of Jesus has to do with sins and spiritual healing. There is no physical healing promised in the atonement or cross. Peter clearly says that we “were healed” and considers it a finished matter. He does not say that through Christ’s stripes (wounds) we will continually be healed of all our physical ailments.

1 Peter 3:18

“For Christ also hath once suffered for **sins** (not diseases), the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”

1 John 2:2

“And he is the propitiation for our **sins** (not diseases): and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

1 John 3:5

“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our **sins** (not diseases); and in him is no sin.”

All of these verses speak of substitution in the area of “sins” and not for diseases or sicknesses. Jesus died to take away our sins – not our diseases. This is why Christians still die and why the undertaker is still in business. It’s because Jesus did not die for disease. Jesus died for sins. He was the substitutionary sacrifice for the sin of the

whole world (see John 1:29). Nothing could be made clearer than this in the New Testament.

2 Corinthians 5:21

“For he hath made him to be **sin** (not disease) for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Jesus became the substitutionary sacrifice for sin – not disease. When our Lord hung upon the cross He became the sin bearer of the world. The sin of lost humanity was placed upon His account – not the world’s disease and suffering. Jesus was not a diseased sacrifice upon the cross. He became our sacrifice for sin in that He bore our sin and the judgment connected with that sin.

Ephesians 1:7

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of **sins**, according to the riches of his grace.”

Colossians 1:14

“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of **sins**.”

Revelation 1:5

“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our **sins** in his own blood.”

These verses teach that believers have been forgiven of all their sins (past, present and future). After all, when Jesus died upon the cross all of our sins were future. And the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ took all these sins upon Himself and offers complete forgiveness for all of our sins. This is the marvel of grace. It will be the wonder of the ages. The Bible teaches that when we place faith in Jesus Christ for salvation that all of our sins, before God’s holy presence, are forgiven forever. We stand acquitted in God’s presence forever. But you will note that the emphasis is upon “sins” instead of diseases. There is no mention about disease and sickness as being part of the atonement or death of Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:14

“Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all **iniquity** (not diseases), and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

Robert P. Lightner concludes:

“The Scriptures bear abundant testimony to the fact of Christ’s death as a substitution for man’s sin, not for his sickness. Death and disease are a part of this life and will be until the curse is lifted.”

I was talking with a preacher who believed that there was healing in the atonement. He was a very sincere and nice man and was sure that God was going to heal a certain brother. He based his faith and the healing of this brother on the alleged promise that Jesus died for all our diseases. To his surprise, the brother died. I saw his face when I told him how this particular brother had died and gone home to be with the Lord. His face expressed great disappointment. He was absolutely stunned when first hearing the news. What had caused the disappointment of this preacher who seemed to be so sincere and full of faith? He had obviously claimed a promise that was not found in the Scripture. His faith rested on a faulty premise. And dear brother and sister, if you want to live by faith you must plant your faith on the sure promises of the Scripture (Rom. 10:17). If your faith rests upon faulty interpretation of Scripture you will be shaken in life and become disappointed and distraught.

2 Timothy 2:15 says:

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

The term “rightly dividing” means to literally “cut it straight.” Paul was obviously drawing an illustration from his everyday work life. As a tentmaker by trade, Paul would use certain patterns. In Paul’s day tents were made from the skins of animals in a patchwork design. Every piece would have to be cut and fit together properly. If you would not cut the pieces correctly the whole tent would not fit together properly. The same is true with handling the Scriptures. In our study of the Scriptures we must learn to be precise and accurate. The whole reason why so many arrive at faulty conclusions about healing in the atonement is because they do not cut the Word of God straight.

They are not willing to make a straight pattern. The end result is that the Bible does not accurately fit together. The ladies know that when their pattern does not accurately fit together there is stress, frustration and disappointment. The same is true in regards to misinterpreting and misapplying the Scriptures. Great frustration, disappointment and unscriptural beliefs can set into our minds because of our failure to accurately cut the Scriptures straight.

The Promise of Healing in the Resurrection

It's true that in the future we will receive a new body without any pain or suffering because we were saved through the death of Jesus Christ. Because of this some have concluded that the promise of ultimate healing of the body stems from the atonement. But in reality, the promise of a new body is not based upon the death of Jesus Christ. Rather, it is based upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said in John 14:19:

“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.”

Our Lord promised that we would one day receive a new body that would no longer suffer any more pain, sickness and disease. Each believer would one day live again with an immortal body that would never be subject to disease and death. And all of this was based upon the promise of Christ's own resurrection (1 Cor. 15:23). Because of Christ's own physical resurrection believers are given the promise of physical resurrection. In the resurrection there is the guarantee of no more sickness, sorrow, pain, suffering or death.

1 Corinthians 15:42-43 says:

“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power.”

The same way that Jesus was made alive from the dead is the same way that each believer will be made alive in the future resurrection. Jesus was made alive to never die again or experience any physical or bodily harm.

Romans 6:9

“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.”

The same will be true for each believer in the resurrection. Death by disease and sickness will have no part of the believer’s resurrected body. ***Dear friend, may I suggest to you that healing is not in the atonement. Healing is actually promised in the resurrection of the human body and is based upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ – not His death.*** There is coming a day when our bodies will be released from all disease and death. What a day that will be!

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 states:

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

What a glorious prospect and promise this is as we contemplate the future. Jesus Christ will return and the bodies of those believers who have died will be resurrected to immortality. Furthermore, the remaining believers on earth at Christ’s coming will be instantaneously changed. *The promise of an eternal body that will never experience disease, discomfort and death is based upon the resurrection of Christ and will only be realized at the coming of Christ when believers will be resurrected and transformed in the twinkling of an eye.*

Philippians 3:20-21

“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

Today our body is termed as being “vile” or full of humiliation and lowliness because it is subject to age, wrinkles, suffering, sickness, disease and finally death. Our body limits us and cramps us. Someday Christ is going to change the outward form of our bodies and every child of God will be made like the Son of God (1 John 3:2). This means that in the coming day every Christian will receive a

glorified body like Jesus Christ. No more will we have the limitations we now experience in our “lowly” bodies, which are humbled by disease, sickness and sin. The resurrected bodies of God’s people will be like Christ’s, and their sanctification will be completed.

The Bible teaches that during our present earthly existence believers suffer, groan and are waiting for the day of their complete bodily deliverance from all sin, disease and death. Our present bodies are corruptible and in these mortal bodies we are still plagued by the effects of the Fall. But someday all of this will be removed. When the believer experiences the resurrection and redemption of His body there will be no more Genesis curse hanging over his head.

Romans 8:21-23 gives us the thrilling promise and prospect: “Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **waiting** for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”

The Bible teaches that we are still “waiting” for the redemption of our body. We cannot claim the redemption of our body today. Our bodies are slowly dying. Someone said, “The wood of the cradle rubs up tightly against the marble of the tomb.” We are still living in a body that is affected by the Fall. This is because of the Genesis curse, which God has placed upon mankind (Gen. 3:19). God has not reversed the Genesis curse! We still live in a body affected by the Fall. There is an underlying moral dimension to all of our disease and sickness today. Man became morally corrupt in the garden and this resulted in the curse, disease, sickness and ultimately death. We are still subject to sickness and infirmities. Genesis 2:17 literally reads, “dying (spiritually) thou shalt die (physically).” Our body has not yet been redeemed from the Genesis curse. As a result of the Fall man still experiences the process of decay and death. All of us have the signs of death in our bodies because of the consequences of sin in the human race (Rom. 5:12). That’s why we experience baldness, nearsightedness, sagging muscles, wrinkles, false teeth, gray hair, germs and genetic defects. We know that the soul of the believer has been redeemed (1 Peter 1:18-19) but not the body of the believer.

The Bible never promises redemption for the body through the death of Jesus Christ. Redemption for the body awaits the coming of Christ and our subsequent promise of resurrection. Redemption from disease is associated with the return of Jesus Christ – not His death.

Today the *condemnation* of sin is removed from the believer's life at the moment of faith in Christ (John 3:18). However, the *consequences* of sin, which involve physical suffering, disease and death have not been removed (Heb. 9:27) and will not be removed until the believer's body is transformed and glorified. It is Biblical to conclude that healing is in the resurrection and the eternal estate.

Revelation 21:4 states:

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

Until we receive the resurrection of our human bodies and enter into the eternal state both disease and death will be part of man's personal existence and a normal experience upon planet earth. No faith healer or theology, which teaches healing in the atonement, will ever change what the Bible says.

The Problematic Passages

A few Scriptures seem to be problematic when first reading them because they appear to teach that healing is in the atonement and that Jesus died for disease even when all other Scriptural revelation teaches otherwise. But we must remember that the Scriptures are marvelously unified and will not contradict themselves. Every honest exegete of Scripture will verify this. If the Scriptures repeatedly verify that Jesus died for sin and not disease, then those passages, which seemingly teach otherwise, must be examined in their context. God does not contradict Himself. If healing is only promised in the future resurrection then those passages, which are used to promote healing in the atonement, must be misinterpreted. Those passages which are used to teach healing in the atonement and which are said to offer people a complete bill of health for their present day lives are obviously *misinterpreted* and *misapplied*. Improper interpretation of Scripture, in regards to healing in the atonement, has not only led to

theological confusion among God's people, but has created a faulty basis for faith and resulted in many false hopes and empty promises being offered to God's dear people. Incorrect interpretation has resulted in the broken hearts of many dear saints who have earnestly tried to claim something that God has not intended for them to have at the present time. Scriptural contradiction, broken hearts, shattered hopes, empty promises and the shattered lives of God's own people should all be indicator signs that God has not promised healing in the atonement.

Matthew's Sicknesses

Matthew 8:16-17

"When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."

This passage is many times mistaken to teach that healing is in the atonement. Jesus quoted Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 53:4) and was claiming that His healing ministry was done on the basis of what the prophecy of Isaiah promised He would accomplish as the Messiah.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted."

The closing words of this verse in Matthew 8:17 are particularly important to faith healers and are said to teach that Jesus provided healing in the atonement ("took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses"). When linked to the Isaiah passage it is assumed that Jesus bore our diseases upon the cross and was offering healing to the people on the basis of His death. This conclusion might sound very good on the surface. But when we look at Matthew's words in their context we can determine that Jesus was not teaching about His death upon the cross in this verse but His earthly healing ministry among the children of Israel. The previous verses speak to us about the earthly healing ministry of Jesus.

Matthew 8:14-16

“And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them. When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick.”

When did Jesus fulfill Isaiah's' prophecy? It was not upon the cross! How could it be? Christ's body was not yet offered upon the cross, His blood was not yet shed. What is recorded in Matthew eight takes place prior to His death on the cross. Therefore, Isaiah 53:4 could not have been fulfilled in Christ's death.

J. Sidlow Baxter observes:

“ ... as already noted, Matthew 8:16-17 states something which was occurring between two and three years, *prior*, to our Lord's atoning death on Calvary. Whatever it may or may not connote, it was a 'taking' and 'bearing' *distinct* from His substitutionary sin-bearing for us later on the Cross. Both time and place separate it from Calvary.”

Richard Mayhue also confirms:

“What Christ did at Calvary occurred several years after His healing ministry at Capernaum as reported in Matthew 8. There is absolutely no effectual relationship between what Christ did in Capernaum and His atonement on the cross at Calvary.”

Clear Scripture revelation teaches that Jesus fulfilled His healing ministry to His own people, national Israel, while He was here upon earth. Isaiah 53:4 is actually a direct reference to the healing ministry that Jesus would have toward His own people during the days of His public ministry upon earth. Jesus verifies this by saying that Isaiah 53:4 was fulfilled while He healed His people upon the earth during His earthly messianic ministry. Nothing could be clearer. Why is there so much confusion on what Jesus said? When did Jesus fulfill Isaiah's prophecy? The answer is clearly given: “When Jesus was come into Peter's house” (vs. 14) and “when even was come” (vs. 16). In other words, it was during His earthly ministry that the portion of Isaiah 53:4 was fulfilled. Jesus is saying that His healing ministry upon earth was prophesied about in Isaiah 53:4 and was now being

fulfilled while He was upon earth performing miracles to prove He was the Messiah.

The gospel records primarily cover the earthly ministry of Jesus to His own nation people of Israel (see Matt. 10:5-6). Chapters eight and nine in Matthew inform us that Jesus was presenting Himself to His own people, national Israel, and the miracles of healing He performed became credential signs to the nation that He was the Messiah (John 20:30-31). Jesus performed all of His miracles out of loving sacrifice and help for His earthly people (“took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses”) but the real reason behind these credential signs was to prove that He was the true Messiah.

It all fits. Isaiah 53:4 was a prophecy about the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ and how He would come into this world to heal His own people and present Himself, as the long awaited Messiah, to His beloved people of Israel. And Jesus verifies this by saying in Matthew 8:17, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.” Where did Jesus take upon Himself the people’s infirmities and bare the people’s sicknesses? Was it in His crucifixion? No! It was during His earthly ministry to Israel that He would bare their infirmities and sicknesses by healing them and curing them of their earthly diseases and pains. It was *not* upon the cross that Jesus bore their sicknesses and carried their pains. It had been, the Lord Jesus would have never said in Matthew 8:17, “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah ...” This is because Isaiah 53:4 was referring to the earthly ministry of Christ. Furthermore, when Christ was healing on earth the cross was yet future and had no connection with Christ’s miracles of casting out demons and healing the people of their diseases. *The text itself says that Christ healed “with his word” (vs. 16) and not by His sacrificial death upon the cross.* Jesus bore the infirmities of the people in a caring and loving way as He sacrificially gave Himself for the people during His earthly ministry. ***In other words, Jesus bore the peoples’ sicknesses and infirmities in a sacrificial and sympathetic way, as their servant, while He was here upon earth. He also took their physical diseases away by actually removing them and healing or curing His people from all kinds of sickness***

and demonic possession. Once again, all these gracious acts of the “man of sorrows” were accomplished during His earthly ministry.

Richard De Haan concurs with this when saying:

“The gospel writer’s statement that Christ Himself ‘took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses’ had nothing to do with the cross. It referred to the miraculous works of Christ during His earthly life, not the sacrificial work of Christ through His death. The Lord Jesus fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy in His healing ministry before He ever went to Calvary.”

Most Christians know what Isaiah prophesied about concerning the death of Jesus upon the cross but they do not understand how Isaiah also prophesied about Christ’s earthly ministry. Let’s take a closer look at the passage that is many times lumped together and distorted.

Isaiah 53:2-5

“For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

The first part of the Isaiah passage (vs. 2-4) speaks of Christ’s earthly ministry. We know this to be true because it was during His earthly ministry that Jesus grew up as a small tender shoot springing forth from David’s lineage that would not possess the outward splendor or magnificence of a king, which the people associated with the coming Messiah (vs. 2). Jesus would appear on this earthly scene as a very small or insignificant person. He would be born in a stall and under humiliating circumstance of peasant parentage and poverty. He would grow up as a normal boy. He would surround Himself with common people like fisherman and be a friend of sinners. The people did not look at Him as a magnificent person and yet He was the most important person in the world! For the most part, Jesus was despised

and rejected by His own people when presenting Himself as the Messiah (Isa. 53:3; John 1:11). And yet He was called “a man of sorrows” who was “acquainted with grief” – the grief of His own Jewish brethren (vs. 3). This statement recalls how Jesus, during His earthly life as a tender shoot, was willing to identify with the sufferings of the people. He would be concerned with their sorrows that were caused by their own sin, sickness and death. This is why Jesus healed people during His earthly ministry and even raised them from the dead! He was the sympathizing Jesus! Jesus was a man of sorrows. Philip P. Bliss wrote: “Man of Sorrows, what a name, For the Son of God who came!”

On one occasion Jesus expressed His sympathy in a sigh before He healed the deaf and the dumb (Mark 7:32-36). The Bible says, “Jesus wept” (John 11:35). He was indeed the man of sorrows who was fully acquainted with the grief of the people. He loved the masses and healed the masses (Matt. 14:14; Mark 3:10).

Jesus was sacrificially concerned with the sorrows of His people and He was also “acquainted with grief” which refers to the grief that the people were passing through during their earthly dwelling. The word “grief” can refer to both physical and mental pain or anguish that people pass through in life. His own people were possessed with physical and the mental grief of sickness and demon possession. Jesus was certainly concerned about His people’s sorrows and Israel’s grief during His earthly ministry as a tender root. This is when Jesus could sympathize with the people and heal them as their Messiah. It was during His earthly ministry among them. It was not upon the cross when He was dying for them.

Isaiah 53:4 goes on to explain more detail about Christ’s earthly ministry. “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” The flow of the context demands that this is still referring to the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. It was actually during Christ’s earthly ministry that He took upon Himself the people’s “griefs” (both physical and mental) and carried their “sorrows.” Jesus did all of this for His people and yet the majority of the nation believed that when Jesus died upon the cross that God was actually smiting Jesus for His own sins. They believed that Jesus was actually being “afflicted” or looked down

upon by God and judged by Jehovah when He was hanging on the cross. However, the text is very clear. Jesus bore the griefs of the people and carried their sorrows *during His earthly ministry* among them. This is the same thing that Matthew attests to in his New Testament Scripture.

Matthew 8:16-17 reads:

“When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.”

Matthew is confirming what Isaiah prophesied about almost 750 years before his writing. Jesus would take away the infirmities and sicknesses of His earthly people Israel, while He was performing His healing ministry among the nation, in order to officially present Himself as the Messiah of Old Testament revelation. Jesus went about as the “man of sorrows” and “was “acquainted with grief” – the grief of His own national people. And the man of sorrows healed His own earthly people of diseases and cast out demons. Jesus performed both physical and mental healing in respect to those infirmities caused by both sickness and demons. ***In a very real sense Jesus did sacrificially take upon Himself the diseases of the people and bore them away during his earthly ministry. Jesus took away their diseases and healed their bodies from physical and mental anguish during His earthly career and ministry as the Messiah.*** Jesus sacrificed His life for His people and loved them enough to heal them and provide relief for those who were oppressed by sickness and possessed by the devil. Of course, this was all accomplished during His earthly ministry.

Paul Van Gorder concludes:

“Certainly there is a sense in which Christ bore their infirmities and sicknesses, but it was not in making atonement for them. It took place through His healing ministry at the time, and was fulfilled during His earthly ministry prior to the cross.”

How could Jesus bear sorrows upon the cross? This makes no sense. Jesus actually was the man of sorrows as He went about

doing good through healing His earthly people and entering into their personal lives. The man of sorrows is seen taking the diseases and sicknesses of Israel upon Himself in that He was sacrificially sympathetic about the people's condition and went about healing Israel of their physical diseases. Jesus would "bare away" the physical sicknesses of the people as He went about doing good and healing all those who were trodden down with sickness and possessed by demons. There can be no doubt about what Matthew and Isaiah are referring to in their corresponding texts. They were both referencing the physical healing of the people during the time when the tender root out of dry ground would make His way among His oppressed people and bring physical healing into their lives.

When Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law (Matt. 8:14-15) He didn't say that He would actually take the fever and place it upon Himself in the same manner that sin was placed upon Himself on the cross. Jesus did not say "Move the fever from her into Me." In other words, the way Jesus bore the peoples' diseases upon Himself and took them away during His earthly ministry, through acts of healing, was much different than the way He bore the sins of the whole world upon Himself on the cross. Jesus became an actual sin offering for us upon the cross (2 Cor. 5:21). But He did not become a disease offering to bear away our diseases.

Many will reason today that since Jesus bore our sin and since sickness is the *result* of sin, then He must have automatically born our diseases and sicknesses upon the cross. But once again this is man's reasoning and not God's reasoning. The Bible teaches that Jesus only bore the sins of the world upon the cross and not diseases – the effects of sin.

Baxter once again states:

"... our Lord simply could not have borne our infirmities and sicknesses in the way He bore our race's sin. Sickness is indeed a transmitted result of original sin, or hereditary and racial sin-infection; but sickness itself is not sin. It has much suffering attached to it but no guilt and, therefore, no legal penalty. It called for pity and cure but not for punishment."

If Jesus bore the *indirect results* of sin such as disease, then it also makes good sense to conclude that He would also bear the other *indirect results* attached to sin which stem from the Genesis curse, and which have affected the human race down through the years. These are things such as painful labor in childbirth, the cursed ground and the hard labor or work that man must do because of sin (see Gen. 3:16-19). We must ask some rather pointed questions: Did Jesus die to free women from pain in childbirth? Did Jesus die upon the cross to purify the ground from thorns and thistles and give man freedom from hard work? Did Jesus die to save the earth? I think not. This old world is going to be blown up someday in spite of Christ's death (2 Pet. 3:10-11). ***Jesus did not die upon the cross bearing the indirect results of the Genesis curse which had no penalty attached to them. Jesus never died to bear the indirect results of sin. Only sin had a direct penalty attached to it (death and judgment) that needed to be carried by Christ upon the cross.*** The reasoning that Jesus died for disease is faulty and does not agree with what Scripture says about Christ's death upon the cross. Jesus did not bear the diseases of the human race upon Himself or any indirect results of the Genesis curse when He died at Calvary. *However, Jesus bore the nations diseases and carried the infirmities of the people on Himself in a sympathetic and sacrificial way during His earthly ministry and took these diseases away by His spoken word of healing – not His death.*

The text of Matthew 8:16-17 states it clearly:

“When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits **with his word**, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.”

The text speaks for itself. Jesus healed “with His word” and not His death. *Christ's word of healing brought great relief to His people during His earthly ministry and in this way Jesus would bear the infirmities and sicknesses of the people away. Jesus was an earthly servant who would sacrifice His own life for His beloved people in going around and healing their diseases and maladies with the power of His word.* Matthew could not make it any clearer than He did. He confirms what Isaiah said and comes to the exact same conclusion.

Only a would-be faith healer with an axe to grind could miss this clear point. Jesus carried the people's diseases away while He performed His miraculous healings upon earth and gave official certification that He was the Messiah (John 20:30-31). A final note by Baxter clarifies this to us and reassures us that Christ's healing ministry was independent of His work on Calvary.

Baxter concludes by saying:

"... our Lord's healing ministry was something which He was doing continuously whereas His death on the Cross, as Romans 5:18 emphasizes, was '*one act* of righteousness' and, according to Romans 6:10; Heb 7:27; 10:10, was solitarily 'once for all' (Greek, *ephapax*)"

Isaiah's Stripes

But what does Isaiah mean when he speaks about being healed with His stripes? This brings us to our next misinterpreted verse found in Isaiah.

Isaiah 53:5 declares:

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

Set in its prophetic context, national Israel will one day look back upon her past and fully realize that she was responsible for killing the Messiah and that her sins were put upon Him. It was not God who was punishing Jesus for His own sins. Instead, they will one day realize at His return in power and great glory that "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." Think of it! Someday national Israel will repent of her past rejection of the Messiah and receive Him as Savior. What a day this will be!

Please notice the transition from verse four to verse five. In verse four we see how God's repentant people (Israel) will one day recall how Jesus had loved them in the past and "borne" their diseases during His earthly ministry of healing and how in the end, when He was

nailed upon the cross, they actually believed that God was punishing Jesus for His own sin. But in the coming day His repentant people will see things from God's perspective and realize how in the past record of history that "he was wounded for their transgressions" and "was bruised for their iniquities." What a day of national mourning and repentance this will be (Zech. 12:10-12). Recollection will take place from Christ's earthly days of ministry, when He graciously healed the people (Isa. 53:2-4), to His death upon the cross (Isa. 53:5). God's people, national Israel, will confess that they missed the Messiah!

We must observe how Isaiah makes the transition from physical healing, which took place in Christ's earthly ministry, to spiritual healing, which took place upon the cross. After describing how the people believed that God was judging Christ upon the cross (vs. 4), Isaiah immediately shifts his attention to the cross (vs. 5). And it's upon the cross that Isaiah says that Jesus was sacrificially wounded for the "transgressions" and "iniquities" of the people. Please notice the emphasis placed upon sin in this verse, which clearly deals with the substitutionary death of Christ upon the cross. There is no reference to atonement for our sicknesses. ***Scripture is its own best interpreter!*** What is this verse saying? It's saying that the purpose for Christ's actual death upon the cross was not for diseases but for sins. All the New Testament passages substantiate this as we have seen in an earlier point (1 Cor. 15:3).

So what about the healing that we receive from the "stripes" (wounds or bruises) of Christ? Is it physical healing? Absolutely not! It can only be spiritual healing of the sin-sick soul. *It refers to healing from the disease of sin.* Through the Servant's death His people could experience the forgiveness of sins, receive spiritual life and be healed from their lost spiritual condition before God. The death of the Messiah would release them from the consequences of their sins and bring regenerating life into their spirits. What a lost world needs today even before physical healing is spiritual healing! The Bible teaches that man is separated from God (Eph. 2:1-2) and that his sins will bring judgment upon his eternal spirit. So what man needs is spiritual healing, where he receives the complete forgiveness of sins and is given new birth or life in his inner spirit (John 3:3-7). Jesus did not tell Nicodemus that he needed to be physically healed again. He said that he needed to be born again.

It's very clear that Isaiah is referencing spiritual healing since He is speaking only of "transgressions" and "iniquities" which are but different descriptions of sins. *What the nation of Israel and all lost humanity needs today is spiritual healing from the disease called sin.* Jesus bore the nations sins upon Himself as He hung upon the cross in order to provide deliverance from the condemnation of sin.

Matthew 1:21 clearly tells us this when saying:
"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins."

Jesus would save his people from their sins – not their diseases. And someday in the future a repentant, brokenhearted and believing remnant of Jews will be able to look into the face of the Messiah when He returns and say, "... and with his stripes we are healed." The prophetic anticipation of this verse cannot be missed. National Israel will one day look back upon the very One whom they have pierced and recognize the wounds in His hands (Zech. 13:6) and be saved. Upon believing on Christ the redeemed house of Israel will say, "and by his stripes we are healed." Can you say this today? Can you honestly say that you have placed your faith and trust in Jesus Christ to save you and allowed His sacrificial and saving death to erase all of your sins away and give you acceptance before God? The "stripes" or wounds of our blessed Lord have reference to His sacrificial death upon the cross when Jesus bore the weight of our sins and judgment upon Himself. Therefore, the healing can only be spiritual healing which promises the complete forgiveness of sins and new birth or spiritual life.

It's interesting that both Philip and the eunuch understood Isaiah 53 to be dealing with sin, not sickness. They understood the stripes or wounds that Jesus bore as resulting in healing of man's spiritual malady of sin and separation from God (see Acts 8:28 - 37). To read divine healing in the Isaiah passages is a severe case of eisegesis or reading into a passage what a person wants to see so that they might support their own errant teaching.

Dear friend, we need to be healed from the disease called sin. Sin has separated us from God. Sin has wrecked our lives. Sin has brought the sentence of God's judgment upon us (John 3:36). All the

sins that we will ever commit are being piled up against us for the Day of Judgment (Rom. 2:5-6). Our problem is far greater than physical sickness. Our problem is spiritual sickness. We are infected with the spiritual virus of sin. Dear friend, I'd rather be sick and finally go to Heaven than be healed of every disease and ailment in this life and go to hell! Jesus is the Lamb of Isaiah 53 who gave Himself upon the cross for our sins. What a proclamation of salvation this is. Jesus is our only Savior and only hope of salvation. He gives us the healing that we need – the spiritual healing from sin and eternal judgment.

Thomas O. Chisholm

“He was wounded for our transgressions,
He bore our sins in His body on the tree;
For our guilt He gave us peace,
From our bondage gave release,
And with His stripes, and with His stripes,
And with His stripes our souls are healed.

He was numbered among transgressors,
We did esteem Him forsaken by His God;
As our sacrifice He died,
That the law be satisfied,
And all our sin, and all our sin,
And all our sin was laid on Him.

We had wandered, we all had wandered,
Far from the fold of “the Shepherd of the sheep;
But He sought us where we were,
On the mountains bleak and bare,
And brought us home, and brought us home,
And brought us safely home to God.”

Peter's Healing

1 Peter 2:24

“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”

Multitudes of people interpret this verse as supporting bodily healing through Christ's death or atonement. Charismatic believers insist that there is healing in the atonement or the death of Christ on the cross. They claim that Jesus bore all of our diseases and sicknesses upon Himself as He hung there on the cross. As a result, we can be sure of healing today since Jesus took all of our infirmities upon Himself. Since He bore them, we don't have to bear them upon ourselves. They claim Christ became, not only a substitute for our sin, but also a substitute for our sickness. This is indeed a gross error and misrepresentation of what the Bible says. I Peter 2:24 has been wrongly interpreted so that people might seek Biblical precedence to experience good health. What is the meaning of "healed" in the context of I Peter 2:24? There is no mention of physical healing in this verse or in the verses immediately surrounding it. Sin is mentioned several times, so we would expect that the healing here would be spiritual healing. The meaning fits perfectly with the flow of thought. The text says Christ bore our sins (not diseases). Christ's death also made it possible for believers to be free from the power of sin, and "live unto righteousness" — not unto health. This is also an important distinction.

In Isaiah 53:5-6, we see that the whole setting is pointing to the spiritual healing of the sin-sick soul. The words "transgressions," "iniquities," and "iniquity," all point to this fact. Jesus bore the nations' sin in His suffering death on Calvary's cross, so that they might be healed spiritually from their sinful and separated condition before God. As we have noted, the passage of Isaiah in its context spoke about Christ being wounded upon the cross for "transgressions" and "iniquities." The passage dealt with spiritual healing from the malady of sin and not physical healing. What a lost human race needs is spiritual healing from the disease of sin. When realizing the context and teaching of Isaiah's passage one has no problem coming to Peter's quotation of Isaiah's passage and understanding his interpretation of what Isaiah said. Peter was referring to spiritual healing and not physical healing.

Richard Mayhue said:

"The Bible does not teach anywhere that sickness needs atonement, but it does teach everywhere that sinners require atonement for forgiveness of sins."

Peter verifies in his own text that Jesus “bare our sins” (not diseases) upon the cross. How much clearer could he make it? Jesus bore in a substitutionary way all of our sins upon the cross so that we might experience what Peter refers to as “being dead to sins.” This points to our victorious position in Christ (Rom. 6:2, 6, 13). The sacrificial death of Christ makes it possible for believers to be free from both the penalty and the power of sin so that we might be able to live for Him (“should live unto righteousness”). And then Peter makes a general statement about salvation (“by whose stripes ye were healed”). As mentioned already, Peter is referring to healing from the disease of sin, which has inflicted the lost human race. Jesus bore our “sins” upon the cross so that we might be healed from the spiritual malady of sin through receiving forgiveness of all our sins (past, present and future). This is a repeated theme of New Testament Scripture (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; 2:13; 1 John 2:12).

Peter’s text says that by Christ’s stripes we were healed. This reference to “stripes” (literally – “wound”) points to the suffering of Christ and His ultimate death on the cross. Peter literally says, “by whose wound ye were healed.” This refers to a specific wound or stripe left by a lash and obviously refers to Jesus’ scourging and suffering on our behalf. Peter is saying that through Christ’s death, which involved intense suffering, we were healed. The healing mentioned here is definitely spiritual healing. It refers to the healing of the sinner and unrighteous person who is separated from God.

Jesus said in Mark 2:17:

“... They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

It’s here that Jesus deals with the spiritual sickness of a person’s life that is separated from God. He uses a common understanding and expression about physical disease to describe a deeper spiritual disease that inflicts people. These people have a spiritual malady that needs to be healed through Jesus Christ. Jesus clearly says that there is a spiritual sickness that needs to be cured in the lives of lost humanity. In a similar way the Bible indicates that Israel was diseased with sin.

Isaiah 1:4-6

“Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.”

In various Scriptures, such as Isaiah 1:4-6; 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24 and Mark 2:17, physical maladies are attributed to people in order to actually describe the spiritual nature of their lives. The condition in the lives of people is seen as a spiritual sickness even though it's described in physical terms. And this is what Peter is referring to in his text of Scripture (1 Pet. 2:24). People who are spiritually sick in their sins need to be spiritually healed of their sinful condition before God through receiving forgiveness for their sins. Christ bore their sins so they could be healed of their sin-sickness and be saved from the judgment of their sins. A person is healed spiritually when their sins are forgiven and they are given salvation through Christ.

In this verse Peter quotes the believer's spiritual healing from sin as something which is in the past tense (“were healed”). The teaching is obviously clear. Peter is looking back to the cross, where Jesus bore our sins. Jesus bore our sins, in order that we could be forever healed spiritually of their sinful condition before God. This speaks of a completed transaction and not an on-going healing process of our physical ailments! Peter says that we have experienced this spiritual healing from all sins and the judgment for those sins through Christ's sacrifice upon the cross. We were healed through the death of Christ by receiving the forgiveness of all our sins and being taken out of the realm of spiritual death and placed into spiritual life. The great transaction is done! Jesus died upon the cross and granted to me complete forgiveness of sins. On the cross Jesus provided salvation for every individual and this provision is given to everyone who trusts in Jesus Christ as Savior (Acts 16:31). And the healing of salvation, which comes through the forgiveness of sins, is applied to every person who believes on Christ so that they can say with Peter, “by whose stripes ye were healed.” What a marvelous healing salvation

brings into our lives! Salvation gives to every believer the complete forgiveness of sins and rescues them from judgment, which is the penalty for those sins. The transaction is done!

Here is a little summary of the two passages in Isaiah and Peter that has been helpful to me.

*Isaiah 53:3-4 ties in with Matthew 8:16-17 = physical healing which Christ performed during His earthly ministry.
*Isaiah 53:5-6 ties in with I Peter 2:24-25 = spiritual healing which Christ provided on the cross.

Christ's Curse

Some actually teach that Jesus bore the curse of the law, which was related to disease and the Genesis curse, when He hung upon the cross. They base their findings upon such a verse as Galatians 3:13 which says:

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

It's assumed that the curse of the law refers to disease and that on Calvary's cross Christ bore this curse and removed it from every believer. Thus, it's taught that Jesus died upon the cross, freeing us from the curse of the law, which related to physical suffering. It's assumed that Jesus in some sense bore the Genesis curse upon Himself, which related to disease, when He died upon the cross. It's then taught that Jesus will free us from all disease which was originally associated with the curse.

My immediate response to such reasoning is this. Why would Christians physically die if Jesus took away the Genesis curse upon our lives? Why do the very faith healers who teach these things die? This view is so erroneous that no further comment should be necessary. This is a horrible misinterpretation and misrepresentation of this passage of Scripture. When one starts to link together verses in the Bible that should not be linked together endless confusion will

persist. The clear and unadulterated teaching of this text is that Jesus freed us from the curse, not the curse of disease, but the curse that related to judgment for our sin. It was a curse of condemnation that hung over the heads of every poor lost soul without salvation (John 3:36; Rom. 5:18).

The New Testament clearly unfolds to us the truth that the broken law is a curse that hangs over our head. The law judges us as sinners so that we cannot open our mouth (Rom. 3:19). We stand condemned to die the sinner's death in hell (2 Cor. 3:6-9). What a curse. What a condemnation. We have no room to speak and no place to hide. We are cursed to everlasting judgment. We are lost and going to hell and we deserve it as sinners who have broken God's holy law. But the wonderful truth is that Jesus died upon the tree to take the curse of the broken law upon Himself so that we might not experience this dreadful curse of judgment for our sins. The curse has nothing to do with disease. It has everything to do with our state of judgment before God because of a broken law.

Many will move back into the Old Testament in order to try and prove that the curse that Jesus bore was related to disease. In a fanciful work of exegetical gymnastics it's explained that the curse of the law related to disease as well as sin.

Deuteronomy 28:22 promises:

"The Lord shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish."

Deuteronomy 28:27 also makes the statement:

"The Lord will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed."

Many teach that the law promised cursing in the form of disease for disobedience. But Jesus on the cross bore this curse and freed us from the law's curse of disease, which was over our lives as Galatians 3:13 declares. It's assumed that the promise of Galatians

3:13 teaches that Christ's atonement provides complete deliverance from disease for believers today.

What we must understand today is that this is a *conditional promise* given to Israel under the Mosaic Law. Attached to the promise were many curses, which God would inflict upon His people. They ranged from disease to failure in crop production (Deuteronomy 28:15-68). Any student of the Bible must realize that promises given to Israel under the law and even the curses of the law are not to be applied to the church today since we are not under the dispensation of the law any longer (Romans 6:14; Galatians 4:5).

To claim that Jesus bore the disease curses related to Old Testament law when He died upon the cross, would also mean that He would have to bear the other curses mentioned in this same Old Testament text. May I reverently ask you, "Did Jesus die to free us from bad crop production? Did Jesus die to relieve us from drought conditions and pestilence? Did Jesus die to free us from low cattle production? Did Jesus die to free us from our enemies who desire to bring harm against us? All these curses and many more were placed upon the people of Israel for not obeying the Lord. If Jesus bore the curse of disease then He must out of necessity also bear the other curses mentioned under the Mosaic Law. This is preposterous. It is simply erroneous to take one form of the Mosaic curses and claim that Jesus bore that one curse upon the cross while ignoring all the rest. This is textual foul play.

No person should ever take Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 13 and strictly apply these passages to church life today. God was dealing with Israel in a different way than He is dealing with the church today. To use this Old Testament passage to extrapolate the teaching that there is healing in the atonement, and a supposed healing covenant that we can claim for our physical well being today, defies all dispensational teaching concerning Israel and the church and practical common sense.

Dr. Paul Van Gorder states it succinctly:

"This covenant of healing was made with Israel, and was given to Israel alone. You will search the Bible in vain to find where their covenant is intended for the church ... Israel, in obedience to God's

commands, could claim the covenant of healing, for He promised it to them. But no such promise is given to the church.”

Many will read Deuteronomy 28 and claim that sickness is the actual curse of the law, as demonstrated in the Old Testament, and then verify that Christ has set us free from this curse of sickness according to Galatians 3:13. This creates what I call a “Pentecostal paradox” for modern day Pentecostal believers. If the curse of the law in Galatians 3:13 relates to sickness, then in order for our sickness to be removed, Christ would have to bear that sickness upon Himself. But Scripture nowhere indicates that He did die for disease and Christians do die today from disease. The burden of proof rests upon their shoulders to prove that the curse of the law, which was placed upon Jesus when He died upon the cross, relates to disease. ***It’s clear from a Scriptural standpoint that the “curse of the law” that was placed upon Christ, as described in the New Testament, relates to the dreadful wrath of God, which was required to be meted out on every lawbreaker.***

God demands judgment upon those who break His holy law and this was demonstrated in Old Testament times when people lived under God’s jurisdiction and condemnation of law. Under the law’s condemnation criminals were physically judged and hanged upon a tree (Deuteronomy 21:23). The typology cannot be overlooked. Jesus was crucified upon a tree and condemned in the place of sinners (1 Pet. 2:24; Rom. 5:8). The New Testament counterpart to the law’s physical condemnation (judgment) is spiritual condemnation (judgment). According to the New Testament the ultimate curse or condemnation of the law is the judgment related to spiritual death or separation from God, which is eternal punishment in hell (Romans 6:23; 8:2; II Corinthians 3:6-8). And this is the curse that Jesus bore when He died upon the cross. He bore our own judgment and hell when He died upon the cross. *Jesus was judicially and legally separated from the Father and judged in our place.* The curse was placed upon Him. It was not a curse of disease but a curse related to God’s righteous judgment because of sin, which should have been our own judgment. We should have been crucified! We should have suffered and died! But Jesus bore our own curse of judgment upon Himself when He died upon the tree. This was typically demonstrated by the serpent of brass upon the pole.

Jesus said in John 3:14:

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.”

The typology of the snake is easy to see. The pole obviously represents the cross. The serpent of brass, which symbolizes God’s judgment for sin, represents Christ. Christ had to bear the people’s sin and judgment, which was represented in the form of biting serpents. Yes, Someone has taken the judgment for the people. It was Jesus!

In John 3:14-16 Jesus takes the picture of the snake on the pole, which brought physical results of healing to His Old Testament covenant people, and turns the entire scene into a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and His spiritual healing that He brings into our lives through His New Covenant work. Jesus was represented upon the cross as the serpent of God’s own judgment. *Jesus actually bore the judgment, which God intended to bring upon the people.* This of course teaches in a very clear fashion that Jesus actually took the form of God’s judgment upon Himself which was intended for the people. Jesus is our substitute because he bore the sins and judgment for our sins upon Himself when He hung upon the cross. This is what the snake on the pole pictures. *It pictures the judgment of God being placed upon another, the judgment that the people actually deserved and faced in their lives.* Jesus was condemned in our place so that we no longer must be condemned in God’s presence as a lawbreaker (Rom. 8:34). Oh the wonder of it all!

The Bible does not teach that Christ set us free from the curse of disease which was stated in Genesis 3:19 and then restated in the Mosaic law in the form of a curse. Rather, Christ has set us free from the curse of the law. This is a curse that relates to the New Testament teaching concerning eternal punishment for my own guilty, law-breaking deeds (Galatians 3:10). The whole context of Galatians 3:10 demands that the curse which Jesus bore upon the cross relates to God’s wrath and judgment - not sickness. The fact is clearly seen that we are all dying and still under the Genesis curse of disease (Genesis 2:17; 3:19). Therefore, Jesus could not have taken the curse of disease away. The curse of law that Jesus bore upon the cross was our own curse of judgment, which every lost sinner

deserved. Jesus bore your curse of condemnation and judgment upon Himself. He was judged in your place.

“Alone alone, He bore it all alone.
He suffered, bled and died, alone, alone.”

A Plea for Discernment

The claim that healing resides in the atonement finds no support in the Bible. If healing was in the atonement then it stands to reason that Christians would never die physically in the same way Christians will never die spiritually because of Christ's finished work upon the cross (John 3:16). When Jesus was hanging upon the cross He cried, "It is finished" (John 19:30). Jesus was not saying that disease or sickness is finished but that sin's penalty had been paid and the work related to salvation had been completed. Jesus was saying that nothing else needed to be paid to God in order to satisfy His wrath against sin and appease His justice and holiness. *Disease did not separate God from man. Sin separated God from man.* When Jesus died upon the cross the total payment for sins and the work of salvation was completed through Christ's sacrifice. Jesus suffered for us upon the cross and was judged for our sins (1 Pet. 3:18). He paid the curse of judgment (Gal. 3:13), which was connected with humanity's sins, as He hung upon the cross and provided complete salvation for every lost sinner. Our actual spiritual deliverance from sin's judgment is completed through Christ's work. He saves His people from sin's consequences through His finished work upon the cross (Matt. 1:21).

The fact that disease, sickness and death are still in the world today and that faithful and dedicated Christians still die from disease related illnesses, informs us that Jesus did not finish the malady related to physical sickness and disease, when He died upon the cross. What Jesus finished was salvation's work as it relates to the malady of sin and sin's penalty. After all, it is our sins that separate us from God (Hab. 1:13). Sin is seen in the Scriptures as a spiritual disease inflicted upon man that requires spiritual healing (Mark 2:17; Isa. 53:5; 1 Pet. 2:24). The Balm of Gilead prefigured this spiritual healing (Jer. 8:22). The New Testament healing balm is the blood of Jesus

Christ, which cleanses us from all our sin and gives us a perfect standing before God (1 John 1:7).

Facts are stubborn things! All Christians eventually die! Even faith healers die! Those who claim that healing is in the atonement die! I've had their funerals! There is a fly in this theological ointment. God never promised a perfect bill of health in this life. Ask people like Job, Paul, Timothy and Epahroditus. Ask Trophimus. None of these men and multitudes more ever claimed that healing was in the atonement. Jesus never said that healing was in the atonement. God never promised that we would be here tomorrow. The Scriptures are very clear about this matter (Prov. 27:1). We may be inflicted with some illness, disease or heart problem and die tomorrow (James 4:14).

In addition, we must remember that Christ was made "sin" for us, not sickness, when He hung upon the cross (II Corinthians 5:21). This means that Jesus became the substitutionary sacrifice for our sin when He died upon the cross. Because of His saving work Christ promises to forgive us of our sins (I John 2:12) and heal us from our spiritual malady with sin (1 Pet. 2:24). God never gives the promise that we can have our sicknesses taken away in this life. Only our sin inherited from Adam can be taken away (Heb. 9:26; John 1:29) and all of our other sins, which we have committed and ever will commit in life, can be taken away (1 John 3:5) through Christ's death. This is because the Scriptures repeatedly verify that Christ only gave Himself for our sins (Galatians 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:3). He never did die to take away our diseases. This is the only sane and sensible conclusion to this whole matter. Any other conclusion would be a case of not rightly dividing the truth of God's Word (1 Tim. 2:15). What utter nonsense would be made of such virtues as long-suffering, patience, and endurance if we were always to be well (Gal. 5:22-23)? **How foolish for God to decree that all of must die but none of us can ever get sick (2 Cor. 5:16; James 4:14; Heb. 9:27).**

It is also cruel to make Christians believe that those who cannot get well do not have enough faith in the death of Jesus Christ to make them well. This gives many saints a "guilt syndrome" that is based upon misinterpretation of Scripture and a total distortion of Biblical passages. There are many who handle the Word of God deceitfully in this present hour (2 Cor. 4:2). The teaching that healing is in the

atonement defies clear Scriptural revelation and common sense. It also de-emphasizes the blessed hope of the believer and the glorious future prospect of the redemption of our body from all disease and death at Christ's return (Rom. 8:22-23; Phil. 3:20-21).

Fake faith healers, with their false teaching concerning healing in the atonement, coupled with their empty promises and vain hopes about perfect health, have hurt many of God's people. There will always be those Hollywood healing stories, which are promoted in the spotlight of TV by certain televangelists, as they attempt to justify this type of false teaching concerning healing in the atonement. But no one ever hears about the multitudes of people who have been hurt and confused through this erratic teaching about the human body. The stories of those dear saints whose hearts are crushed and who become confused by such false teaching are usually silenced.

In closing, I want you to read the testimony of an individual believer whose life was shattered by the false teaching concerning healing in the atonement. This is not the final story of those who have been misled and confused by the present day faith healing epidemic, which promises false hopes to God's people. There will be many other chapters written in this book. This is what one person said.

"Someone told me just after I became a Christian that God would heal me. This seemed too good to be true, and I didn't know if I dared believe it, I began to hope, and then to believe. But my faith was shaky, and when Christians came along and said, 'God doesn't heal everyone,' or 'Affliction is a cross we must bear,' my faith would waver. Then last fall it just seemed to die. I gave up believing God would heal me.

"At that point in my life I knew I couldn't face spending the rest of my life in the wheelchair. Knowing that God had the power to heal me but wouldn't (or so I thought) made me very bitter. I would read Isaiah 53, and I Peter 2:24, and accuse God of holding the promise of healing before me like a piece of meat before a starving dog. He tempted me by showing the potential but never quite allowing me to reach it. This, in turn, produced deep guilt feelings because from the Bible I knew God was a loving God and answerable to no man. I had such a

conflict in me that my mental state was precarious and I thought of suicide many times.

“I began to take tranquilizers just to get through the day as my guilt and resentment built a higher and higher wall between God and me. About this time I began having headaches and problems with my eyes. An ophthalmologist could find no physical reason.

“I was still praying because I knew God was alive, but I usually ended up crying and railing out at God. I’m afraid I experienced a lot of self-pity, which was very destructive. And over and over I asked God why He wouldn’t heal me when it so plainly says that healing is a part of the redemption plan.”

It’s a cruel thing to give people false hopes for healing that the Bible does not give!!!

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