

# Does God Heal Today?

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[several added comments by Mr. Dykes are in brackets.]

There are many of God's people today who are disturbed about the question of physical healing. They are confused by men who claim, to have the gift of healing, or who teach that the healing of the body is in the atoning work of Christ for us. I personally believe that God can heal, and does heal. I think each one of us who know Him can testify to the fact that He has manifested His healing power in our lives many times. I believe, too, that many times He does not heal. There are many of God's dearest saints who are frail and suffering. Let us consider the Scriptures concerning this, and I am sure we will find that which will bring peace and comfort and blessing, and will clarify the truth.

### **IS HEALING IN THE ATONEMENT?**

**First of all let us look into this doctrine of healing in the atonement. Those who teach this believe that Christ died for our illnesses as well as for our sins. On this basis they declare that every Christian should be healed.**

Now certainly it is true that all the blessings we receive are ours because of the atoning work of our Lord. Christ died for the whole man, body, soul, and spirit. We know that one day we will have redeemed bodies. We will stand before God conformed to the image of His Son because of His work at the cross. This is our glorious hope for the future.

In that day our bodies will be freed from the sentence of death by the Spirit of God who lives in us. We will have redeemed bodies free from sickness and pain and sorrow, but this will not be until our Lord returns. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; "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." Indeed, we read that the whole universe will be reconciled because of Calvary. "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

**And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled” (Col. 1:20-21).**

Today we are in weak, frail temples. “We have this treasure in earthen vessels,” but we look forward to the time when this corruptible shall put on incorruption (1 Cor. 15:54), when He shall change these bodies of our humiliation, and fashion them like unto His body of glory (Phil. 3:21). John wrote: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).

In Romans 8:11 we read: “If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” Many of those who teach healing use this verse, but they forget the verse preceding it. The tenth verse reads, “The body is dead because of sin.” That is, the body is under the sentence of death because of sin, “But the Spirit is life because of righteousness.” Then we have the verse, “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” These verses are not dealing with physical healing, but with deliverance of the body from death.

Isaiah 53:5 is sometimes used to indicate that we are healed by His stripes, but Peter gives the explanation of the meaning of this passage: “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. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (1 Peter 2:24-25). Very definitely it has to do with sin and not with physical healing. Nowhere do we find Scripture that would suggest that physical healing is provided in the atoning work of our Lord.

If healing for the body is in the atonement for us today, then all believers should be healed. May I ask some pertinent questions? If a Christian asks for healing, and is not healed, what assurance does he have that his sins are forgiven? I once heard a dear suffering saint who had been taught this, cry out, "O Lord, if You take care of my soul the way You take care of my body,

**then I'm a damned soul!" This woman, on the advice of a so-called healer, had given up her doctors and medicines, and died in great agony.**

If healing for the body is in the atonement, why did not Paul so instruct Timothy? In 1 Timothy 5:23 we read, "Use a little wine for thy stomach's sake and thine often infirmities." If physical healing is in the atonement, then Paul denied it when he wrote this to Timothy. Why did Paul say, "Trophimus have I left at Miletus sick" (2 Tim. 4:20)? Why didn't he heal him? And why didn't Paul heal Epaphroditus? Paul said of him, "For he was sick nigh unto death" (Phil. 2:27).

If healing for the body is in the atonement, why was Paul not healed of his thorn in the flesh? He besought the Lord three times for deliverance. May I suggest that it was God who sent the thorn even though Satan was the messenger used. In 2 Corinthians 12 we read: "I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago; such a one was caught up to the third heaven... and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter.... And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 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" (2 Cor. 12:2, 4, 7-9). How could he glory in this if he should have been healed? I would like to add that Paul had a physician who traveled with him and cared for him. Paul calls him "Luke, the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14). Doctors and medicines are gifts to us from God.

Some have said that these men have suffered these things because they were unbelieving or were not in the will of God. But these were all mighty men of God, commended by Him. in Philippians where Paul gave us the illustration of the mind of Christ operating, he said: "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all" (2:12). That same mind was manifested in him.

He gave Timothy as an example. "For I have no man like-minded." He also speaks of the mind of Christ manifested in Epaphroditus. These were

**not men walking out of the will of God or backslidden. They were men of God whom He permitted to be sick in body for a purpose.**

I would like to ask further, if healing is in the atonement why did God give to the early church the gift of healing? If healing is in the atonement why did James say, “Is there any sick among you?” If healing is in the atonement, why does God permit sickness as a chastisement?

### **THREE REASONS FOR SICKNESS**

**There are, I believe, three reasons why a child of God may be sick.**

**1. We may be sick because of our own folly. That is, we may not use wisdom in eating, or in caring for our bodies. If we eat what we know we should not eat, we deserve to be sick.**

**2. We may be sick under the chastening hand of God. We read in 1 Corinthians 11:30, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” For what cause are they sick? They did not discern the Lord’s body. Paul is dealing in 1 Corinthians 11 with the Lord’s table. He has just said in verse 28, “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.” It is possible for God to judge a whole assembly in this. “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you.”**

**If physical healing is in the atonement for us today, why would God so chastise? It would be a denial of the work of His Son.**

**3. We may be sick for the glory of God. I think again of Epaphroditus. In Philippians 2:30 it is said of him that “for the work of Christ he was high unto death.” In John, the ninth chapter, the disciples asked a question concerning the man who was born blind: “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:2-3).**

**There is such a thing as being sick for the glory of God. The fact is that today some of God’s most precious saints are suffering saints. Amy Carmichael of the Dohnavur Fellowship of India, who has brought untold blessing to many through her writings, was a constant sufferer for many**

**years. Isobel Kuhn wrote several challenging books during the time she suffered with cancer. She called them “the blessed cancer years.”**

**I think of Charles Goodenaugh, a man from our congregation who suffered for many years, yet radiated the glory of the Lord. I think he did more for God in his illness than when he was well and strong. He led more people to Christ in that sick room and brought more blessing in the lives of all who visited him than he could have done otherwise in a whole lifetime.**

**The outstanding example in Scripture is that of Job. Why was Job smitten with a loathesome disease? So that God might teach principalities and powers, and especially Satan, that men love God for Himself, and not because of His gifts. Satan challenged God. “Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face...” (Job 1:9-11).**

**In chapter one we have the story of the loss of his sons and daughters, and all of his material wealth. Yet Job’s testimony in all this was, “Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:21).**

**Satan came to God again and said, “But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face” (Job 2:5). So God allowed him to be smitten with a loathesome, horrible disease. In his suffering his wife said to him, “Curse God and die,” but “in all this did not Job sin with his lips” (Job 2:9-10). All that happened to Job was for the glory of God.**

**God honored Job. God knows His people. He knows whom He can trust with sickness for His glory. Job was the one chosen, an upright, godly man, that He might teach principalities and powers through his suffering. All these men and women, without doubt, were afflicted for the glory of God.**

## THREE REASONS FOR DEATH

**Just as there are three reasons for sickness, there are three reasons for death.**

**1. First of all, we can go home to glory because our work is finished.** In 2 Peter 1:14 Peter said, “Shortly I must put off this tabernacle even as the Lord revealed unto me.” Paul declares in 2 Timothy 4:6-7: “For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” His work was finished. In John 17 our Lord Himself said, “I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.” On the cross He could say, “It is finished.”

**2. We can also die for the glory of God.** I would suggest such passages as John 21, where our Lord said to Peter, “When thou art old they will take you where you don’t want to go... signifying by what death he should glorify God” (John 21:18-19). You will remember that Peter said, “If I’m going to die, what is John going to do?” The Lord answered, “Well, if it is My will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? You follow Me; that’s your responsibility. Accompany Me.” Believers can die for the glory of God.

**3. A Christian can die prematurely under the chastening hand of God.** It is possible for a Christian to die before his work is finished. It is a sad thing, but let me warn you about something. Please do not be the judge. It is possible for a believer to die under the chastening hand of God. 1 Corinthians 11:30 says, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” We have such an illustration in Acts, chapter 5, in the story of Ananias and Sapphira. This couple came under the judgment of God because of sin. Because they had lied to the Holy Spirit, they came under the chastening hand of God and died. In 1 Corinthians 5 we have death because of a moral issue. Paul said: “When ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

**Then there can be death because of a doctrinal issue.** In 1 Corinthians it is a moral issue, and in 1 Timothy there is death because of a doctrinal issue.

We read in chapter 1, verse 20, of Hymenaeus and Alexander, who were delivered unto Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme. We have the same thing in 2 Timothy 2:17-18: “And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.” We have another example in 1 John 5:16: “There is a sin unto death: I do not say that ye shall pray for it.” There is a sin unto death. He is dealing here with physical death. So physical death can come as a judgment from God, lest we be condemned with the world. I repeat it again, God does not ask you and me to be judges, nor does He put us on the jury. It is not for us to judge. [At least not in these types of situations! GSD]. Personally, I am of the persuasion that certain ones have been taken from this scene right out of the midst of an apparently fruitful ministry because of sin. I think there are times when God will do this under His judgment.

## HEALING IN THE SCRIPTURE

As we study diligently this question of healing, we will realize that there is little said in the Scripture concerning healing of the body. In the early part of our Lord’s ministry, He performed miracles. We read, for example, in The Gospel according to Matthew, chapters 8 and 9, that He performed miracles. These chapters are full of miracles. In chapter 10 He gave His credentials to His disciples. After chapters 11 and 12 of Matthew we find very few miracles. The only miracles which are performed after chapter 12 are in response to individual faith.

When we come to the Gospel of Mark, in the very first chapter our Lord came on the scene as the Servant of Jehovah, performing miracles. The disciples came to Him one day and said, “All men are looking for you.” And He said, “Let us go into the other towns also and preach the gospel; for therefore came I forth.”

In the Gospel of Luke we have many instances of Christ, as the Son of Man, ministering in healing, and in the casting out of demons, in the

**delivering of men from sin, and in the resurrection from the dead. As man, He manifested authority.**

In the Gospel of John there are seven miracles given to us for a distinct purpose. When John wrote his Gospel, it was written as a corrective. Matthew, Mark, and Luke give to us the historical facts of our Savior walking among men. John, toward the end of his life, wrote the Gospel of John and the Epistles of John as a corrective for what was taking place in the church. That corrective was concerning the Gnostic heresy which was the denying of the deity of our Savior. [In Dr. Mitchell's opinion, many would differ here]. So the miracles in John's Gospel are for one purpose – to reveal to men that He was God manifest in the flesh.

For example, in John, chapter 5, there was a great multitude of sick people around the pool of Bethesda. Why did not Jesus Christ heal all of them? He healed just one. He went out of His way to heal one. He healed him outside the pool. Why did He not heal the rest? He had the authority. He was the Son of God. He was God manifest in the flesh. Why did He not heal all of them? I think it was that this man was the only one who had given up any hope of ever getting into the pool. The rest were all hoping to get into that pool for healing, but the Lord healed him outside the pool.

It is interesting, too, to realize that at the beginning of the ministry of Peter and Paul miracles were performed. They even raised the dead. Peter raised the dead. Paul raised the dead. Yet at the end of their ministry, this was not the case.

I would like to say a word of caution here. Just because someone has a supernatural experience, or experiences same power, even in healing, does not necessarily mean that this is the power of God. God is not the only one who manifests supernatural power. You remember in 2 Corinthians 11 the Apostle Paul speaks of the fact that Satan is going to come as an angel of light, and will deceive the very elect. In 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2, Paul exhorts us especially that in the last days Satan is going to come performing miracles, doing wonders. What for? To deceive.

In Matthew 7:22-23 the Lord said: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast

**out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Because there is a manifestation of power does not necessarily mean that it is a manifestation of the power of God. There are movements in the world today that are not even Christian where we see supernatural things taking place. Let us be sure that we test all things by the Word of God.**

### **SCRIPTURES USED**

**Let us consider some of the Scriptures that are often used by those who make these claims. In Mark 16:17-18, we read, “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands an the sick, and they shall recover.”**

**I would like to suggest that He does not say, “These signs shall follow *him* that believeth.” All these have been manifested but not in every believer. They were true in the early church, but are not true or necessary today. Such authority is not given to us.**

**Let us look for a moment at Matthew 10:5-7. Here the early disciples were sent out, and authority was given them to heal the sick, to cast out demons, to raise the dead. But in this command Christ also said, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” But let us not stop here. “Provide neither gold nor silver nor brass in your purses; not scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, not yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat” (vv. 9-10).**

**What is the connection of this? All the miracles of Matthew, for the most part, except after chapter 16 where one or two miracles were performed in answer to the faith of individuals, are found in chapters 8, 9, and 10. In chapters 8 and 9 our Lord is presenting His credentials to Israel proving His prophetic right to the throne, that He is the Messiah of whom the prophets**

wrote. He cannot cover the cities of Israel in the brief time that He has, so He gave His credentials to His disciples, and sent them out two by two to cover the cities of Israel. These are the credentials of the Messiah! They were never given to you and me. He said, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” That’s definite. “And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.” These are the signs, the credentials of the King, my friend. They were not meant for us.

Another Scripture that is often mentioned is John 14:12. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth an me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” May I ask, do you do the works He did? What did He do? He cleansed the lepers, He cast out demons, He healed the sick, He opened the eyes of the blind. He made the lame to leap like a hart. He raised the dead. He stilled the storm. Can you do that? Now don’t pick out one thing and say, “This is what we are to do. Heal the sick.” If this applies to you, then everything He did you are to do. Do you do them? Do you know of anyone who does?

He goes even further than that and says, “Greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” Greater than raising the dead? Greater than cleansing the lepers? Greater than opening the eyes of the blind? Yes, when Jesus Christ walked among men He touched them. in their physical needs. He then ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and from there was, and is today, doing a greater work through His people.

We today have a message that will enlighten men as concerns eternal life. Man is under the sentence not only of physical death, but of eternal death. Jesus said to those of His day, “Don’t fear him that can kill the body, but fear him who can cast both body and soul into hell.” But we have a blessed message of deliverance for all who desire it. Jesus said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my Word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.” When our Lord raised Lazarus and others from the dead, death came again to them, but the new life He gives today is one over which

**death does not even cast a shadow. It is eternal life in His Son. This is our message. These are the greater works.**

I would also like to consider James 5:14-15. “Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.” To whom did James write? He wrote to the strangers, the twelve tribes scattered abroad, who had the background of Jewish culture and tradition. [to members of the Messianic church].

If we do apply this passage to the church today, let us remember that the question of healing here has to do with sin. I take it from the context that this sickness was because of sin, and possibly because of sin in the assembly, and confession of sin is coupled with healing.

Hebrews 13:8 is also often quoted as the basis for miracles being performed today. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.” They say that our Lord does not change, so He will do the same works today that He did when He was here on earth. But let us notice the preceding verse: “Remember them that had the rule over you, men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith” (Heb. 13:7, ASV). And what is the issue of their lives and their faith? In verse 8, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.”

It was Jesus Christ in His person and character who was the issue of their lives and the object of their faith. In His person and character He does not change, although the character of His work may change. He does not deal with us as He did with Adam, with Abraham, with Israel in the wilderness. He is not the same in His actions although He is the same in His relationships, in His character, in His power. He is the unchanging One.

#### **BASIS FOR HEALING TODAY**

**What, then, is the basis for healing today? I believe it is a family matter. We come as children to a loving Father and make this request as we do any other. We come because of our relationship with Him. In John 16:23-28, six**

times in six verses our Lord talks about the Father. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” “At that day ye shall ask in my name.” What day? The day when the Spirit of God indwells you. “I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.” He answers our requests on the ground of His love. In John 17:24 our Lord made a request and it was the only time He ever made a request for Himself. “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou, lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” Upon what ground did He expect an answer? “Because thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” And our Father loved us, too, before the foundation of the world. His love was so great that He spared not His only Son, but delivered Him up for us all so that He legally redeemed us and made us His own.

Now as His children we are in His love and care, in the care of the One who has all authority in heaven and earth. Yet He looks down today and finds many of His children in suffering and affliction. Why should this be true? He always has a purpose and He always permits it all because He loves us.

Once in a time of affliction George Mueller asked, “Lord, why am I afflicted like this?” And the word came to his heart, “My child, this is the best thing for you. If there was any better thing I would give it to you because I love you.”

In John 16 He tells us that our Father will answer our requests because He loves us. We come to Him on the ground of our relationship. We ask in Christ’s name. We stand before the Father in all the merit, in all the beauty, in all the righteousness of His Son. We make our request as if Christ Himself were making it, on the ground that He loves us. And our Father will answer according to His knowledge and love.

In Psalm 139, David tells us that He knows all about us. He knows all our motives, our words, even our thoughts are open before Him. He knows what

**we do, when we go out, and when we come in. He searches our path, and knows all our ways. There is nothing that is hidden from Him. How limited we are in our understanding, but He knew us from all eternity and knows all the future. He knew us before we were formed in the womb. When we were made in secret He knew us and loved us.**

**There is no place where we can get away from His loving presence. He surrounds us with His love, puts His hand an us, and His arms about us. What comfort and peace this brings. We, as His children, are the special objects of His love, and we can be sure that He is working out His divine plan in us. Being the objects of His love and care we can give Him praise and glory in whatever He does for us, and we can trust Him completely and in everything. So if we are ill, let us come to a loving Father, for heart-searching, for instruction, for His answer to our every need.**