

# No More Pain?

Untangling Common Misunderstandings

about Christ's Atonement and Physical Healing

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As most Christians agree that God heals, it may appear unnecessary – even irrelevant – to attempt a theology for healing. Why not just pray and trust God with the “results?”[1] Simple answers rarely satisfy such complex and emotionally charged issues, and the pastoral implications for people who remain sick after prayer are significant. Smedes echoes the experience of many, illustrating the need to carefully evaluate some common distortions of the truth that God heals.

Trite explanations of why she was not healed bristled with problems. For one thing they were hard on her. Absence of faith or presence of sin as pat reasons for chronic illness or physical limitation only lay heavier loads on already overburdened people. Blame bordering on rejection is no comfort to those whose sense of worth is already worn paper thin by the chaffing cords of pain and inadequacy... Setting fixed terms which decide whether he performs healing or not nudges us across the border that separates providence from magic and trespasses on God's right to be Lord. It preempts his authority to decide when and how to manifest his power. It makes our conformity to certain conditions rather than his sovereignty the ultimate ground of how he works... God becomes servant of our needs and not master of our destiny.[2]

Theology matters not because results depend on it, people are healed despite all sorts of theologies, and Jesus said that miracles will be done by “false Christs and false prophets” (Mt 24:24). What matters is rarely the presenting thought or idea, but it's logical or theological conclusions; as Coombs' notes, “what is hidden in the roots will be revealed in the shoots.”[3]

Another potentially frustrating factor is that evangelicals don't all agree on a theology for physical healing. Some say, “God rarely heals,”[4] others that “He always heals,” many don't know what to think, much less to preach. Again the pastoral implications are significant. Should we tell sick people, “have more faith!” “God wants you sick,” or “try some prayer, doctors and herbs?” Each theological camp boasts proof-texts, champion authors, speakers and amazing stories to bolster their position – each one claiming to present the right answer from the Bible.

This paper will attempt to untangle the relationship between healing and Christ's atoning death on the cross. Below I'll argue that “healing in the atonement” is an idiom needing careful definition; it contains several theo-

logically-loaded terms that define a doctrine, and is a phrase that means different things to different people.[5] I hope to build faith, relieve disappointment and elevate God's Sovereignty and compassion by examining the Biblical passages and concepts and asserting that healing is a sign of the Kingdom of God - inaugurated by the cross – and though presently “now and not yet,” to be fulfilled completely at Christ's second coming.[6] The motive for this paper is my belief that God heals today, and a desire to see more hurting people healed.

Before analyzing “healing in the atonement” theology, we must review its tenets, and recognize that shades of understanding that exist within the healing in the atonement (hereafter referred to as HITA) camp. The common belief is essentially that healing should be now, most – if not all – of the time. The oft quoted AB Simpson called healing the Christian's “great redemption right,”[7] denounced medicine as “works mingled with justifying faith,”[8] and asserted that Christians “must venture on Him wholly.”[9] Simpson wrote in his famous *The Gospel of Healing*, “God has not prescribed medicine... he has prescribed another way in the Name of Jesus, and provided for it in the atonement.”[10] Gloria Copeland affirms Simpson and represents many of this persuasion, “Forgiveness of sin belongs to you now. Healing of your body belongs to you now. Freedom from mental torment belongs to you now.”[11] Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho writes, “Jesus carried away both our sins and our sicknesses.”[12] Another leading advocate, Kenneth Hagin, teaches,

Healing is in God's redemptive plan; it belongs to you... All believers should thoroughly understand that their healing was consummated in Christ. When they come to know that in their spirits – just as they know it in their heads – that will be the end of sickness and disease in their bodies.[13]

Rarely acknowledging that the notion of “spirit knowledge” is a half-step from Gnosticism,[14] believers of “healing in the atonement” usually mean that Christ's death paid for our sins and sicknesses similarly, so that the two belong in the same category; it therefore follows that Christians should expect physical healing in the same way they do forgiveness, upon request and presumably without much delay.

The nub of my difficulty with this position is with the assumption that sin and sickness belong in the same category. If healing and forgiveness are en par, one who asks for, but does not receive healing surely has good reason to question his salvation.[15] In short, this theology stems from a distorted view of Biblical atonement, which was always for sin, never for sickness.

The Old Testament concept of atonement foreshadows Christ's death as the New Covenant Atonement “once and for all” (Heb 7:27; 9:12, 26, 10:1-12). But what was atonement? Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary defines it as,

To stand as an equivalent; to make reparation, amends or satisfaction for an offense or a crime, by which reconciliation is procured between the offended and offending parties... to make compensation or amends.[16]

Both Strong and Brown-Driver-Briggs' dictionaries define as “to cover, to expiate or condone, to placate or cancel;”[17] Bromley explains further that “atonement is the covering over of sin so that relationship with God can be maintained/restored;”[18] all definitions see atonement placating a moral – not physical – deficiency, and scripture reaffirms: in the Old Testament, atonement was made for guilt and sin, never for sickness (Exod 29:36-37, Exod 30:10, 15; Exod 32:30; Lev 4:20; Lev 4:26; Lev 4:31; Lev 4:35; Lev 5:6; Lev 5:10; Lev 5:13; Lev 5:16; Lev 5:18; Lev 6:7; Lev 6:30; Lev 7:7; Lev 9:7; Lev 10:17; Lev 14:19; Lev 16:6; Lev 16:11; Lev 16:15-16; Lev 16:30; Lev 16:34; Lev 19:22; Num 5:8; Num 6:11; Num 15:25; Num 15:28; Num 28:22; Num 28:30; Num 29:11; Deut 21:8; 2 Chr 29:24; Neh 10:33; Ezek 16:63; Ezek 45:20; Dan 9:24; Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17).[19]

Though dozens of texts could be cited, to illustrate with a few,

On this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins. (Lev 16:30)

“This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites.” And it was done, as the LORD commanded Moses. (Lev 16:34)

The priest is to make atonement before the LORD for the one who erred by sinning unintentionally, and when atonement has been made for him, he will be forgiven. (Num 15:28)

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished. (Rom 3:25)

For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. (Heb 2:17)

Notice the New Testament reaffirms the sin-emphasis of atonement established in the Old Testament; for example, Christ's death is described as sacrificial, “That he might make atonement for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:19). The New Testament is clear that Christ died for our sin (Mt 1:21, Jn 1:29, Rom 1:16, 1 Cor 15:1-3, Eph 1:7, Col 1:14, Heb 9, 1 Jn 3:5); Paul writes to the Corinthians,

that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation... God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor 5:19-21)

Sin is the issue separating humanity from God; it is the offence necessitating an atonement; which is why Christ became sin (not sickness) for us, and “gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil” (Gal 1:4). There can be no forgiveness of sickness, because sickness does not offend God, sin does (1 Jn 2:12);[20] as John Stott clarifies, “it is an error in logic to speak of making atonement for sickness, for sickness has no penalty; sickness may itself be a penalty for sin in some instances, but to speak of Christ atoning for our sickness is to mix categories.”[21] Mayhue agrees, “The Bible does not teach anywhere that sickness needs atonement, but it does teach everywhere that sinners require atonement for forgiveness of their sins.”[22] And John Wesley, for whom the atonement was “the burning focus of faith”[23] makes no mention of physical healing, but repeatedly of sin in his collection of sermons on the atonement. The Jews of the Old Testament knew atonement as a sin-issue, never a sickness one.

This Hebrew understanding of atonement precedes Isaiah's prophesy of a suffering servant who atones for

Israel; welcome news for the down-trodden and oppressed nation, aware of their need for deliverance from captivity and all it entailed.

Beginning in the first chapter and continuing throughout his prophesy, Isaiah employs poetic imagery to describe the “sickness” of sin and God’s wrath and eagerness to “heal” Israel.

Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the LORD; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him. Why should you be beaten anymore? Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness-- only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil. (Isa 1:4-6)

Isaiah’s use of injury and affliction is metaphoric, addressing Israel’s anticipation of “a Messiah who would save his people (Zech 14:3), facilitate cleansing (Zech 13:1), and complete an all-encompassing healing (Mal 4:2).”[24]

Five more times Isaiah uses “heal,” the Hebrew rapha meaning, “to mend... to cure, heal, ...repair, thoroughly, make whole;”[25] but to dismiss physical healing as irrelevant to Isaiah’s prophecy is to overstate the metaphor and underestimate Isaiah’s understanding of healing,

There was no anthropological dualism (body and soul distinction) in Hebrew thought. All-encompassing health was a blessing that stemmed from faithfulness to the Covenant, and God was the Physician of His people (Exod 15:26).[26]

Yahweh’s healing is holistic and complete. God would not just forgive sin and leave Israel wallowing in misery, He would forgive and save, putting right every wrong and remedying every curse; this prompted King David to write “he forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases” (Ps 103:3) and “He answered me by setting me free!” (Ps 118:5). The Jews saw health as holistic – shalom - not fractured or compartmentalized. Thus to acknowledge Isaiah’s uses of “healing” as metaphoric is not entirely wrong; though Yahweh’s healing was not just figurative or “spiritual.” Brown clarifies,

...some Christian commentators... have sought to read it in exclusive terms of either spiritual redemption or physical redemption, but not both. Actually, however, this either-or tendency is ancient ...these divisions are completely unscriptural.[27]

Doubtless, Israel’s – and our - “sickness” is sin, inherent with a plethora of maladies and symptoms; Isaiah prophesies the good news of a Healer who addresses both the root (Sin) and the fruit (fallenness with all it’s consequences). “Israel’s spiritual disease with all of it’s physical, social and national implications, required a comprehensive ‘healing’.”[28]

In chapter six Israel’s heart is “calloused” (v10) and they do not perceive, see or understand Yahweh’s invitation, “Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed” (6:10). The problem is not physical but spiritual blindness and deafness; thus “with their hearts” they must turn and receive healing. And when Isaiah realizes his own contamination by association with un-

clean people, he is reassured upon penitence and the touch of a “live coal,” “...your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for” (v7), thus sin is the focus of Isaiah’s healing.

In chapter nineteen the Egyptians receive God’s healing after crying “out to the LORD because of their oppressors” (v20) and pleading for removal of a plague sent by God (v22).[29] Consequently, they worship the LORD and receive His blessing, which brings political and spiritual unity between age-old enemies, “The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together”(v23). Nothing is untouched when Yahweh is Lord, He puts everything in order, forgiving sin, relieving oppression, cleansing plagues, and bringing political harmony between irreconcilable opponents! Why do we often settle for less?

Chapter thirty promises deliverance from a variety of afflictions sent by God if Zion repents and forsakes her idols. Her rebellion incites unpleasant consequences, “bread of adversity and the water of affliction” (v20); lack of direction and knowledge through an absence of teachers, (v20-21); famine and agricultural scarcity (implied by the inverse blessing in v23-24); but “healing” is promised with repentance:

the moon will shine like the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven full days, when the LORD binds up the bruises of his people and heals the wounds he inflicted (v26).

The contrast is stunning: misery transformed to joy, even the moon and sun are brighter (poetic images of the world being “better”) when Zion returns to the Lord! Isaiah verifies that “the way of the unfaithful is hard” but also that God makes the “way of the righteous smooth” (Prov 13:15, Isa 26:7).[30] It is also interesting to note in chapters nineteen and thirty that healing is of troubles brought about by Yahweh to stimulate repentance, not fall-wrought physical difficulties or imperfections.

Chapter 53 probably contains Isaiah’s most famous healing reference; by now the Deliverer is in focus, the suffering servant who bears the brunt of God’s punishment that the nations justly deserve.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (v5-6).

Contextual evidence is slim for this passage to address physical healing:

- But he was pierced for our transgressions, (v5)
- he was crushed for our iniquities; (v5)
- the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, (v5)
- We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; (v6)
- and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (v6)
- for the transgression of my people he was stricken. (v8)
- “the LORD makes his life a guilt offering” (v10).
- “by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities” (v11).

· “he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (v12).[31]

Ten sin words appear in the chapter while “infirmities” (meaning “malady, anxiety, calamity, disease, grief”[32]) and “sorrows” (meaning “physical or mental pain or affliction”[33]), both sick words, appear just twice each.[34] Further difficulties arise when we examine the use of both words in verses three and four:

He was despised and rejected by men,  
a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.

Like one from whom men hide their faces  
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he took up our infirmities  
and carried our sorrows (53:3-4)

Both uses of “sorrows” employ the same word, while the NIV’s “suffering” and “infirmities” pair another word’s use. Both words can mean physical sickness, but does it follow that Jesus was a “man of sickness, and familiar with sickness?” - a legitimate alternate translation! Clearly not, and such syntactical implications cannot be ignored. One might say Jesus was vicariously familiar with our suffering and sickness, but the verb tense also suggests that this does not mean he took it upon himself on the cross,

...Isaiah did not put the verb [“took”] in an emphatic position; it seems that what is really important is what the suffering servant has taken, not how he has taken it... The emphasis is on what the suffering servant has carried rather than on how he has carried it.[35]

Also of significance is that the LXX renders 53:4 as interpretive, not literal:[36] Brenton’s English translation reads, “Acquainted with the bearing of sickness... He bears our sins, and is pained for us... by his bruises we were healed.” (Isa 53:3-5)

Thus, Isaiah 53 teaches that the Servant takes or lifts our sicknesses, but bears our sin. This conclusion is the only one I can find that agrees with six influencing factors:

- i) other uses of “healing” in Isaiah
- ii) the sin emphasis of this chapter
- iii) the LXX non-literal rendering of the sickness phrases
- iv) Hebrew verb tense emphasizing that Jesus will heal, not how He will heal
- v) the assumption that the chapter foresees the atonement, which was for sin, not sickness

vi) the syntactical implications of a literal interpretation of “infirmities” and “sorrows” suggesting that Jesus was personally familiar with sickness.

Finally, Isaiah prophesies in chapter 57 that God will heal the man punished for his “sinful greed” who “kept on in his willful ways” (v17).

I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him, and hid my face in anger, yet he kept on in his willful ways. I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him, creating praise on the lips of the mourners in Israel. Peace, peace, to those far and near,” says the LORD. “And I will heal them.” But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest, whose waves cast up mire and mud.

“There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked.” (Isa 57:17-21)

Here healing restores comfort, creates praise, and brings peace; it is again holistic, but “sinful greed” and “willful ways” bring God’s “anger” and “punishment.” God is not angry with our sickness but with our sin (a truth with significant pastoral implications). This sin-sick problem explains why there is “no peace... for the wicked” (v21).

Having examined Isaiah’s use of “sickness” and “healing” words, we conclude that he metaphorically describes the sin-sickness of Israel, atoned for by the Suffering Servant who brings ultimate healing to all of life and society. “No one living in Zion will say, ‘I am ill;’ and the sins of those who dwell there will be forgiven” (Isa 33:24). And a sin-metaphor interpretation aligns with the language of other Biblical prophets, as Ryken notes;

Jeremiah often uses pictures of disease and healing to describe the destruction and subsequent restoration of Jerusalem (e.g., Jer 10:19, 14:17, 15:18, 30:12-17, 33:1-9, also Mic 1:9). False prophets who proclaim an optimistic future are said to ‘dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious’ (Jer 6:14 NIV, also Lam 2:13-14). The prophet Nahum uses similar terms to describe the fate of the Assyrian capital, Nineveh (Nahum 3:18-19). Along the same lines the prophet Hosea uses pictures of sickness and sores to illustrate the effects of invading forces on the territories of Ephraim and Judah (Hos 5:8-15). Here again restoration is seen in terms of healing: ‘Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds’ (Hos 6:1 NIV).[37]

Renowned commentator Edward J Young summarizes, “What is all important, and what must never be lost from view, is the reason why He died... He died for my sins... and it is that which men should know and understand.”[38]

Naturally following this discussion is Matthew’s use of Isaiah 53 in reference to physical healing:

When Jesus came into Peter’s house, he saw Peter’s mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to wait on him. When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

“He took up our infirmities

and carried our diseases.” (Mt 8:14-17)

The background of Matthew shows that Jesus came to save people from sin (1:21), that the same authority[39] to heal also forgives sin (9:1-8), and that Christ's death inaugurates the new covenant that deals finally with sin (26:27-29).[40] The apparent connection between physical healing and the Isaiah quote deserves some careful examination, recognizing first that the quote does not even mention the atonement or Christ's sufferings. Probably the simplest, plain reading is best: that Jesus took sickness from suffering people and carried (or lifted) their diseases as part of his ministry. Matthew picks up the healing motif from Isaiah and uses healing stories to reinforce Jesus' Messianic credentials.[41] To suggest that Matthew sees healing "in the atonement" from these texts is an exegetical leap, verified by Matthew's changing Isaiah's words "took" and "carry."

The Greek words translated "took" and "carry" are different from the corresponding Greek words that are used in the Greek translation (the Septuagint) of Isaiah 53. The translators used two Greek words to translate Isaiah 53:4. However, Matthew used two other Greek words in 8:17 that the Old Testament translators used in Isaiah 53:4. There is a good reason for the change.

The words in Matthew 8 mean "to take away from," not "to bear." That difference helps us to understand what Matthew was teaching. The words used to translate Isaiah 53:4 mean "to sacrificially bear"; thus, the idea that "He took our sins upon Him."

However, Matthew is saying here that Christ took away their sicknesses. Christ did not bear in a substitutionary sense the sickness of Peter's mother-in-law. He didn't say, "Move fever from her into Me." He just touched her and it was gone. Neither did He bear the afflictions of those who were ill nor the spirits of those who were possessed (8:16). Later He would bear sin on Calvary, but at this point He had only taken away their sicknesses.[42]

Gordon Fee agrees,

Matthew's use of Isaiah 53:4 does not even refer to the cross; rather he clearly sees the text as being fulfilled in Jesus' earthly ministry. And this is made certain both by the context and by his choice of Greek verbs in his own unique translation over the Hebrew.[43]

Many fairly assert that Matthew eight alludes to the atonement without mentioning it, and we should not divorce physical healing from the cross; Douglas Moo explains their relationship:

Matthew considers Christ's bearing of diseases to have reference to the cross. This being the case, we are justified in concluding that Matthew 8:17 implies that Jesus' death is the basis for his healing of physical disease. But we should probably refrain from speaking of healing "in" the atonement... atonement has to do with the cancellation of guilt, and should be directly applied only to sins. We would prefer, then, to say that physical healing is one effect of the atoning death of Christ.[44]

Also of interest is that Matthew often quotes the Old Testament out of its original context.[45] For example, in 2:15 he cites Hosea 11:1, “out of Egypt I called my son,” although Hosea in the same verse identifies the “son” as Israel (LXX, “my children”), Matthew applies it to Christ! In his commentary on Matthew, DA Carson writes,

...Matthew is saying that Jesus’ healing ministry, not his atoning death, is the way he “took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.” This has prompted not a few scholars to suggest that Matthew here quotes Isaiah rather out of context.[46]

Obviously, we must be wary of proof-texting Matthew’s citations to suit our own biases; but whichever interpretive suspicion is correct will be reaffirmed by the rest of scripture. Undoubtedly, this is the trickiest text in the discussion, and if Matthew’s quote of Isaiah strengthens physical healing “in the atonement,” the rest of Scripture will broadly agree; if not, evidence will be scarce. Let us now examine the remaining New Testament texts.

Luke’s reference to Isaiah 53 in Acts 8 leaves no room for a physical healing interpretation; Mayhue succinctly summarizes that Luke and Philip agree on the sin nature of the text,

Isaiah 53 is not without its New Testament witness. Philip encountered the Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah 53 (Acts 8:28, 32-33). When the eunuch asked Philip for an explanation, he preached Jesus to him (Acts 8:35). Apparently, the eunuch invited Christ to be his personal Savior and Lord because he next asked about baptism. The point we should note is this: both Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch understood Isaiah 53 to be dealing with sin, not sickness.[47]

Another NT quote of Isaiah 53 is 1 Peter 2:24, “by His wounds you have been healed,” often used to assert HITA. Peter’s change of verb tense - have been replaces are – and is interpreted to mean that Christians were in fact healed at the cross, so that they should appropriate or claim the healing already purchased for them by Christ.[48] While those teaching HITA from this text mean well and hope to raise people’s faith, their theological underpinnings are unfortunately misguided, and implications for those not healed can be devastating and perplexing. “I’m trying to have faith, I’m trying to believe more. Why isn’t it working?”

Because [faith healers or those believing in HITA) imply that Christians ought always to be healthy, {they} insinuate that the sick are to blame for their illness, even if there is not identifiable reason to hold them responsible for their suffering. This is a serious concern since to imply to bewildered victims that their diseases are the product of their own failings can be devastating. (*italics mine*)[49]

As Griffith rightly points out, Peter is addressing Christian slaves, called to trust God despite harsh mistreatment from unsympathetic masters. Peter holds Christ up as the ultimate example, remind them that his enduring the cross brought “healing” (of sin) to many. Griffith writes, “This word ‘example’ refers to the way in which a teacher would leave a pattern on a piece of paper that the student would literally trace over thereby following the pattern or example set by the teacher.[50] Mayhue notes “that Peter is preparing his audience to endure more suffering, not to be relieved of it.”[51] Furthermore, his dissection of verses 24-25 the sin emphasis of the text:

1. The fact of salvation (2:24a)

“.. He himself bore our sins in His body on the cross...

2. The purpose of salvation (2:24b)

‘...that we might die to sin and live to righteousness;’

3. The means of salvation (2:24c)

“...for by His wounds you were healed.”

4. The need for salvation (2:25a)

“For you were continually straying like sheep...”

5. The result of salvation (2:25b)

“...but now you have returned to the Shepherd and guardian of your souls.”[52]

Isaiah’s healing images metaphorically speak of sin; though extend to a holistic healing that flows from sin’s removal. Matthew associates Jesus’ healing with his ministry and sees miracles as Messianic proofs, foreshadowing the ultimate victory of God through the cross. Peter encourages slaves to take heart despite increased hardship from cruel masters by reminding them that Christ’s endurance secured salvation for many!

Proponents of HITA assert[53] that these arguments “explain away” what is plainly written; but taking a so-called “plainly written” approach – with little or no examination of context – can render dangerous results. We might equally argue for transubstantiation as the plain reading – four times repeated - is “this is my body...” (Mt 26:26, Mk 14:22, Lk 22:19, 1 Cor 11:24). Similarly one might argue (heretically) that there is no salvation apart from baptism as Mark plainly writes, “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” (16:16). Such a hermeneutic inevitably causes trouble wherever it is embraced, and several other examples could be used.

If the atonement is the fulcrum for healing, it should be mentioned in at least some of the healing texts or stories, but it isn’t; we might see Jesus or the gospel writers point to the cross for healing, but they don’t (with the possible exception of Matthew); if the apostles and early church knew that healing was in the atonement, the concept should be woven throughout the miracles of Acts, but we find not one single mention. On the contrary, Luke opens Acts by stating that his Gospel letter told what Jesus began to do,[54] implying continuation, not completion of “doing.” Peter tells the crippled Aeneas not that Christ healed or purchased healing for him, but “Jesus Christ heals you,” present tense. I cannot find one example of Paul connecting healing and the atonement, though he ministered many healings (Acts 14:8-10, 16:16-18, 19:13-20, 20:6-12, 28:3-6; 1 Cor 16:8-9). And when Paul writes of sickness, he not once employs language similar to today’s HITA proponents; he is rather compassionate, patient, faith-filled and grateful for deliverance. Instead of claiming healing as a “great redemptive right,” Paul writes of Epaphroditus that, “he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow” (Phil 2:27). Paul sees healing as an expression of God’s mercy, and makes no mention of Christ’s death. There is no atonement rhetoric when Trophimus is left sick in Miletus (2 Tim 4:20); and Paul told Timothy - under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit - to “use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses” (1 Tim 5:23). Have we ever heard a sermon on this verse?

Furthermore, Paul himself seemed familiar with illness. He preached in Galatia because of his sickness (Gal 4:12-15), said his own body was “weak or sickly” (2 Cor 10:10), and presumably suffered with some eye ailment as he recalls that the Galatians would have “torn out your eyes and given them to me (sic)” (Gal 4:15). An eye ailment might also explain his mention of such “large letters” that distinguished his unique handwriting (Gal 6:11, 2 Thess 3:17). Speculation leaves Paul’s notorious “thorn in the flesh” open to interpretation, but whatever it the case, it was in the flesh, which many scholars (including Fee) interpret it to be a physical malady.[55] Fee astutely notes that in all the above situations, “there is no hint ...that he or God ‘failed’.”[56]

Sickness, therefore, is not some unique part of the fall, deference from which is ours on demand; it is simply a part of the whole of fallenness. We are promised healing; but there’s also a place in the present age for “a little wine” for one’s ailments.[57]

The Old Testament also permits sickness and medicine in the lives of Godly saints. In Exodus God says, “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?” (4:11). The motif continues in Deuteronomy 32:39, “It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal;” and in 1 Samuel 2:6, “The LORD kills and makes alive.” God creates calamity (Isa 45:7) and is the source of good and ill (Lam 3:38).[58] “The Lord made Bathsheba’s baby deathly ill” (2 Sam 13:15, NLT) and God declared Job blameless and upright (1:8), yet allowed Satan to attack him with physical sickness and to kill his loved ones (who apparently did nothing to deserve it); yet “Job did not sin with his lips” when he said, “Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?” (2:10). The prophet Elisha – a man of great faith and power – “became sick with the illness of which he was to die” (2 Kings 13:14), and we read nothing of God’s disapproval or of Elisha’s displeasing response; on the contrary, his bones emanated God’s presence years later when a corpse touched them and was shockingly resurrected (2 Kings 13:21)! And Isaiah unapologetically employs prayer and medicine as healing measures for King Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:7, Isa 38:4, 21).

Are we so consumed with our own comfort (“getting better”) that we neglect the broader sweep of Scripture? Paul tells the Corinthians that unchecked irreverence at the Lord’s Supper “is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 11:30); and later writes that our sufferings[59] present opportunity for God to comfort us, which in turn gives us the ability to comfort others. Is this not true of sickness? Who better to comfort than one who knows the pain of cancer, surgery, or a colicky baby? Reinhard Bonnke writes,

Healing and cross-bearing go together.. [those desiring to see people healed] may even suffer sickness [as]... firsthand experience generates sympathy with the afflicted ...Perhaps you want a healing ministry? ...those who minister His grace best will have something of Christ’s inner heart.[60]

Michael Brown offers five sources of sickness, “When disobedience is not a factor, sickness comes as a result of natural causes, the fallen state of man, demonic attack, or a larger scheme in the plan of God.”[61] Brown acknowledges that God allows sickness as part of His “larger scheme,” presumably for our maturity or humility. And DA Carson wisely comments, “Illness ought to serve as an occasion for the thoughtful person to engage in a little quiet self-examination.”[62] Perhaps when sickness strikes we should take Carson’s advice and recall that King Asa was rebuked for not seeking God in his disease (2 Chron 16:12), too often the same rebuke may be rightly leveled at us.

So what should be our framework for understanding and expecting healing? Can we have faith and expect heal-

ings, or is it “luck of the draw?” Fee quips that many North American Christians “would probably fall over in a dead faint if God actually answered their prayer.”[63] What should our posture be?

Fortunately, a Scriptural framework for physical healing does exist: The theological locus for healing is the Kingdom of God, inaugurated by Jesus’ earthly ministry, culminated at the cross, and awaiting consummation at the end of time. Too often we forget that the Kingdom is both now and not yet. Christ’s death conquered sin thereby setting emancipation in motion, but full freedom is not promised this side of eternity.

The word Kingdom appears 153 times in the New Testament; it was the subject of Jesus’ preaching ministry and the topic of numerous parables,[64] he was constantly announcing that “the Kingdom of God is near” or “among you” and it was the touchstone for his healing ministry.

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. (Mt 4:23)

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. (Mt 9:35)

He sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (Lk 9:2)

He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing. (Lk 9:11)

Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’ (Lk 10:9)

After the resurrection, Jesus “spoke about the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3); Philip preached “the good news of the kingdom of God” (Acts 8:12); Paul argued “persuasively about the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8) and summarized his ministry as “preaching the kingdom” (Acts 20:25, 28:23). The good news was that God’s Kingdom had arrived in Christ, that Jews and Gentiles were equally called, and that despite current tensions, the Kingdom would be firmly established for those who persevered by Christ’s immanent return. In the meantime we live in “the time between the times,”[65] where the Kingdom “forcefully advances” (Mt 11:12) yet still battles Satan’s evil powers and the lingering curse of sin (Eph 6:12). Michael Brown writes,

This gospel of the kingdom (which included healing) was proclaimed by the early church... suggesting that there would be a continuing pattern of miracles integrally associated with the message, since the battle for the final establishment of the kingdom of God raged (and rages) on (*italics mine*).[66]

Griffith clarifies, “It’s an over-realized eschatology that says the end has come... Rather, the Kingdom has been

inaugurated, Jesus comes and announces it, it will be consummated at the end of time, but we live between the times.”[67] This tension of what Ladd calls “now and not yet”[68] gives us permission to expect healings, and to understand sickness. Evangelist Reinhard Bonnke - who ministers arguably one of the most dramatic and documented healing ministries today - graciously admits, “[Jesus] himself delivered some, but passed by others, and He does the same now through His church.”[69] DL Moody’s teaching partner, RA Torrey, alive at the birth of the HITA movement, commented similarly:

Many say every believer has a right to claim physical healing for all their physical sicknesses and infirmities right now, just as much as a right to claim immediate pardon for all their sins on the ground of the atoning death of Jesus Christ. But that does not follow. It is very poor logic. For the question arises, when do we get what Jesus Christ secured for us by his atoning sacrifice? The Bible answer is, when Jesus Christ comes again. We get the first fruits of the atoning work of Christ, the first fruits of salvation in the life that now is, but we get the full fruits only when Jesus Christ comes again... The atoning death of Jesus Christ secured for us not only physical healing, but the resurrection and perfecting and glorifying of our bodies. Can we therefore have the resurrection of our bodies right now? And have we a right to claim that now, because it was secured by the atonement, just as we claim forgiveness of all our sins now? ...No, we do not get that full measure of what Jesus secured for us by His atoning death on the Cross in the present life, but as His coming again. It is at the coming of our Lord that “our spirit and soul and body” are to “be preserved entire” (1 Thess 5:23).[70]

Only at the End are we promised, “there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev 21:4), which is why Paul writes to the Romans that we wait “eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (Rom 8:23); and to Titus of a “blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13); and to the Corinthians,

that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 15:50-57)

Healings are gracious tokens of the future invading the present. Reinhard Bonnke agrees and summarizes,

The universal problem of suffering will eventually be completely solved according to Revelation 21:4: “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”

We are not living in the millennium yet, not an ideal world, for that is the great end toward which God is working out His purposes. Meanwhile, the whole creation groans together waiting for that age to come, as we read in Romans 8.

Bursts of glory from that coming day light up the sky like lightning. The Holy Spirit is working with

the church as He once worked with Jesus. Each healing is like a laser beam cutting through the darkness of this world until the day dawns and Christ reigns. Until then – what? We fight the good fight of faith, aided by the mercy of God and the gift of the gifts of healings.[71]

John Wimber saw healing in this light too, “We receive this final, comprehensive healing at our resurrection from the dead. So too, as a sign and seal of this promise, God often sends healing today.”[72] In the meantime, we are not immune from the fall, battle against our sinful nature, we live and die in a world tormented by fallenness. DA Carson writes, “the ultimate undoing of sin will result in the abolition of illness; in the consummated kingdom... [healings] are the anticipation of the consummated kingdom still awaited, so also are they the fruit of the cross-work of Jesus”[73]

It therefore stands that in one sense healing is in the atonement – “they are the fruit of the cross-work of Christ - but only as a consequence of the curse being conquered; healing is one effect[74] of Christ’s atoning death. Fee clarifies,

The Bible, therefore, does not explicitly teach that healing is provided for in the atonement. However, the New Testament does see the cross as the focus of God’s redemptive activity. In this sense (and in the sense that sickness is ultimately a result of the fall), we can perhaps argue that healing also finds its focal point in the atonement. [Therefore], in a circuitous way it is it really possible to argue for bodily healing in the atonement.[75]

And Carson concludes,

We must inevitably conclude (to use the modern jargon) that “there is healing in the atonement.” But this clause has been much abused. One party insists that, because there is healing in the atonement, therefore Christians must expect to be healed today. The atonement has already provided this benefit, as it were; so if Christians are not healed, it cannot be the fault of Jesus or of his atonement, but of our unbelief. The opposing party, struggling to avoid this unsettling conclusion, argues therefore that there is no healing in the atonement: that is something that is provided for only at the consummation. But in fact, both sides have set the categories wrongly. The truth of the matter is that there is healing in the atonement; but the atonement provides God’s people with all benefits that ultimately come to them. In that sense, there is also a resurrection body in the atonement; but no one uses that point to argue that all believers should today be sporting resurrection bodies, and failure to do so betrays a formidable lack of faith. The question is not whether or not the atonement stands as the basis for all blessings that come to God’s children, but which of those benefits are applied now, and which of them can be counted on only later. Healing, judging by some of the passages already briefly adduced, is one of those benefits that has been secured by the cross, occasionally applied now, and promised for the new heaven and the new earth. If in God’s mercy he grants healing now, whether by “normal” or “miraculous” means, we must be grateful; but we have no right to claim the benefit now simply because it has been secured by the work of the cross.[76]

Having established the misguidedness of what is commonly meant by “healing in the atonement,” some question how to respond to those whom God uses yet espouse this position! Are Kenneth and Gloria Copeland heretics? Has God not used Dr. Paul Yonggi Cho to impact Korea and inspire pastors worldwide? Were not many healed through Wigglesworth, Kuhlmann, Brenham and Simpson, and did these ministers not (albeit imperfectly, like the rest of us) preach salvation by grace through faith in Jesus? It is tempting to embrace the doctrine of successful practitioners with the hope that we will see their results in our ministries. To this question, I offer the following comments.

First, I'm thankful that God honours faith despite doctrine. No church gets everything right, no individual sees the whole truth, and fortunately, God graciously blesses those who pursue Him, in spite of our imperfect understanding of His Word. As for those mentioned above, perhaps we would do well to "imitate their faith" (Heb 6:12, 13:7) while watching our "life and doctrine closely" (1 Tim 4:16, Titus 2:1). The fervour and tenacity of many of these teachers and evangelists to pray for the sick is admirable, and we might see more "results" if we followed their lead in persevering in prayer. We cannot completely discredit Simpson because of his extreme theological positions, the opening chapter of *The Gospel of Healing* is a faith-building Scriptural review of healings in the Bible, and he undoubtedly experienced the Spirit's healing power in his own life: when sick and burnt out at just thirty-eight, he was told he would soon die but dramatically recovered following "a transforming encounter with God"[77] where he "saw healing in the atonement" and "vowed that as long as he lived he would accept and preach the truth of divine healing;" he subsequently enjoyed thirty-five years of extraordinary health and powerful ministry.[78] The Scripture counsels to "imitate their faith," and "watch our doctrine," not to imitate their doctrine.[79] Theology is never validated (tempting though it may be) by results; McConnell illustrates from William Branham's life:

An example of the fallacy that signs and miracles validate one's teaching is William Branham, one of the original and greatest evangelists of the post-World War II healing revival. Branham worked astounding miracles of healing in his crusades. To this day his gifts of supernatural knowledge of those to whom he ministered remains unparalleled, even among modern healing evangelists. Despite all of his gifts, however, Branham's doctrine was always marginal at best, and towards the end of his ministry, it became outright heretical. He denied the doctrine of the Trinity, teaching instead the "Jesus only" doctrine. He taught that he was the prophet Elijah, whose ministry would result in the return of Jesus. There were pockets of his followers who believed that he was not just a prophet, but also the incarnation of Jesus himself. Although Branham's is an extreme example, it illustrates that a ministry of miracles and healing in no way proves soundness of doctrine.[80]

Our theology must be rooted in Scripture, not with successful or charismatic[81] teachers. "Even the most well authenticated signs do not necessarily prove their divine origin (Mt 9:32-33, 12:22-24)."[82]

In conclusion, I submit a posture of response for readers aiming to see people healed in their own churches or ministries. Although healing is clearly God's doing, there are things we can do to increase the likelihood of His healing activity. Right theology – though not guided by – should cause practical results, and with this in mind, I attempt the following steps of application.

Setting an environment of faith and expectancy for healing (within the Biblical framework) would certainly benefit all involved. First, we must preach that Christ heals, as when people are unaware of this, they are less likely to expect him to do so. Do we do this? Have we ever spoken from the texts of His miracles or the stories of countless healings in scripture? Or are we practically cessationists (though we would not admit it theologically), afraid to "get people's hopes up" for fear that they might be disappointed or "let down." We must present the whole counsel of scripture, without reacting to the faith healers with an opposite extreme of (all but) silence about God's healing power.

Second, having preached that Christ heals, we should pray for the sick and celebrate verifiable healings. It is relatively easy to confirm that Jean's headache is gone or Jake's flu is better, but let us be wisely cautious about declaring healing from cancer or depression until a doctor has proven our notion. God is powerful by Himself, and has no need of our cheer-leading to help Him win the game. When people get healed, they'll be healed; and triumphalistic optimism - while well meaning - may actually discredit the name and reputation of Christ. But when a healing is verified, we should celebrate God's grace, give opportunity for testimony, ideally

with doctor's evidence, and use the healing as an opportunity to build faith and worship in people.

About eighteen months ago, a baby named Nathan who belongs to our church family wasn't sitting up properly. His parents took him to doctors who verified that he had spina-bifida, would probably never walk, and might become mentally retarded. But Nathan's sister, three-and-a-half-year-old Cammy, began to pray, and inspired others to join her, every day asking God to heal her baby brother. One Sunday we all prayed for Nathan, many of us despite our doubts and the gravity of the situation; spina-bifida is degenerative and never heals itself, Nathan's healing would be God or not at all. We heard nothing. People prayed here and there, but it wasn't a major focus of the church; many of us felt sorry for the family more than anything. But Nathan's sister Cammy didn't give up. Then one Sunday Nathan's parents reported that the doctors had perplexingly admitted that Nathan no longer had the disease, and no medical cause could explain it, yet he was healed. Further tests verified this, and Nathan received the official "all clear." We saw the doctors' report with conflicting verdicts (it's now framed, displayed in the family's living room) and the whole church was encouraged and praised God (see Mt 9:8). Nathan's story brought faith and encouragement to the church, and has since prompted many to pray more fervently in subsequent situations. Three-and-a-half-year-old Cammy taught and inspired many about what God can do if we ask Him.

Third, having preached that Christ heals and shared testimonies of healings, we must persist in doing so. It is easy to tire when nothing seems to happen, but as John Wimber noted, "Don't make any judgments until you've prayed for a thousand people!" Being reminded of the persistent widow (Lk 18:1-8), we should pray – in this case for the sick - and not give up. Let us set our hearts to pursue God for healing - and every other effect of the cross - and never give up, rather "straining toward what is ahead" (Phil 3:13) so that God's kingdom "comes" on earth as it is in Heaven (Mt 6:10). In light of these encouragements, here are several reasons to pray with faith, persistence and expectation.

First, we should pray for the sick because God calls himself a healer (Ex 15:26). "Yahweh Rophe;" but this is no subtle nuance, it is a covenant name, one of just seven appearing in the Old Testament. In naming Himself this way, God does not intend a mere label for our reference, but describes His character and personality. Rophe meaning "to heal" enjoins the covenant name Yahweh, and the covenant name is born. As Wagner notes, "[these covenant names] serve as promises to His people as a whole and without discrimination." [83] Old Testament names frequently described those who bore them, and God's naming Himself is no exception. Three truths entwine each other to increase faith for healing: that God's name is healer, that this name describes His character, and that God cannot lie. It is not out of character for God to heal physical illness, and He does not deliberately misguide us by calling Himself a healer.

Second, we should pray for the sick because Jesus (who perfectly reflects the Father, Col 1:19, 2:9; Heb 1:3) healed people. In fact, one might wonder if Galileans less familiar with Jesus during might have heard of Him as a healer, as nearly one fifth of the gospels deal with Jesus' healings the discussions caused by them." [84] (see Mt 4:23-24, 8:13-16, 9:21-22, 35, 12:15, 22, 14:14, 35-36, 15:28-30, 17:18, 19:2, 21:14; Mk 1:34, 3:10, 6:5, 56, 10:52; Lk 4:40, 5:15-17, 6:18-19, 8:47, 9:11, 42, 14:4, 17:15, 22:51). But if this fact was merely historic, it bears much less significance for today; fortunately it is not as Hebrews 13:8 informs us that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." If He healed 2000 years ago, He still heals today! Luke encourages similarly that the stories of his gospel were about what Jesus began to do and teach (Acts 1:1). By God's grace, Jesus' ministry continues today by the power of the Holy Spirit through His church. One man in our congregation suffered from an irritable bowel condition, certain foods were troublesome to digest, he was frequently plagued with diarrhea, and typically received little warning before bowel movements. Then one summer evening while serving at a camp, he suddenly "felt" that he had been healed; and by God's grace he has not experienced any of the previous symptoms since. Jesus, who does not change like shifting shadows (Jas 1:17), healed people when he was on earth, and heals people today by the presence and power of His Holy Spirit who lives in every believer.

Third, we should pray for the sick to obey Scripture and Christ's great commissions,

These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: ...As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Matt 10:5, 7-8)

Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits... They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. (Mark 6:7, 12-13)

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation ...And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it. (Mark 16:15, 17-18, 20)

...and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (Luke 9:2)

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go... Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' (Luke 10:1, 9)

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matt 28:18-20)

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. (John 20:21-22)

Either by direct command ("heal the sick") or implication ("I am with you always"), Jesus' commission, which we inherit, involves a physical healing component. In light of this, we must obey the Bible's command and faithfully pray for sick people, trusting God with the results. Christ's presence is promised to be with us, though we can still choose to do nothing about it.

Fourth, we should pray for the sick because God is generous and answers prayer.

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! (Matt 7:7-11)

The Apostle Paul underscores, “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Rom 8:32) The simple fact that God loves us and answers prayer should motivate continued prayer for physical healing.

Fifth, we should pray for the sick because Christ’s death set in motion our freedom from sin and all it entails, including sickness. “By his stripes we are healed” addresses our sin, but extends to every part of life. The cross undid the fall, and though we still “wait for the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:23) and the fullness of our redemption, God graciously sends tokens that foreshadow the final Day. Jesus “disarmed the powers and authorities, [and] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (Col 2:15); God’s Kingdom “forcefully advances” by “forceful men [who] lay hold of it” (Mt 11:12), and this Kingdom involves healing and setting captives free (Isa 61).

Sixth and finally, we should pray for sick people because of the fame of Christ. Relief for the sufferer, testimony of God’s gracious activity, and created opportunities to share the gospel should encourage us to persist in praying for healing. Compassion was one of Jesus’ motives, (Mt 14:14) and can be ours too. Frequently people approached Jesus asking, “have mercy, Son of David!” (Mt 9:27, 15:22, 20:30; Mk 10:47-48; Lk 18:38-39). God’s displayed mercy, opportunities for evangelism and longing for worship are good motives to pray for sick people. I once met a family in India who were saved after their mother was raised from the dead! The Scriptures testify to this, as often people “praised God” after a miraculous healing (Mt 9:8, Mk 2:12; Lk 7:15-16, 13:13, 18:43, 23:47).[85] And after seeing evidence of God’s grace in the lives of my university peers, several of our unsaved friends were drawn by God into His family. Spreading the fame of Christ is surely a legitimate motive for asking God to graciously heal.

To conclude, healing is a gracious gift of God, not a right to be claimed by all believers.[86] While evangelicalism appears to gravitate toward extremes, we must rest in God’s Sovereignty and pray to see people healed. It seems we often settle for sickness and tolerate disease, yet the New Testament appears full of healing stories. Have we ruled out the gifts of healing mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12 (especially verses 9, 28, 30)? Are our church elders faithful to obey the instruction of James 5 to pray for the sick? Christians are not immune from the fall, but let us praise God for all He does for us. We should cultivate a church environment where healing is preached and expected, and where God’s gracious provision is celebrated. Let us shed all passivity and indifference and seek His Kingdom and all benefits of the cross to flood the lives of those who do not yet know Christ. And despite setbacks and disappointments, let us persevere in faithful prayer and look forward to the day when “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away” (Rev 21:4).

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[1] I find the word “results” – commonly used in healing discussions I’ve encountered – rather interesting and utilitarian. It seems to be an unhelpful term that probably stems from a Modern and mechanical worldview of rules, logic and bombproof theories. The post-moderns may teach us well, as their view of a holistic journey; their reluctance to embrace easy, catch-all answers; and their value of process is probably a more helpful posture in a discussion about God’s healing work in people’s lives.

[2] Lewis B. Smedes, ed. *Ministry and the Miraculous, A Case Study at Fuller Theological Seminary* (Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1987.), 11

[3] Barney Coombs’ *Roots & Shoots Teaching Series*, any back cover of pamphlets

[4] Warfield and Scofield are two proponents of this position

[5] W Kelly Bokovay, “The Relationship of Physical Healing to the Atonement” *Didaskalia* (April 1991): 26

[6] Although the term is now quite widely used, I believe it originates with George E Ladd.

[7] AB. Simpson, *The Gospel of Healing* (New York: The Christian Alliance Pub. Co, 1915.),35.

[8] *Ibid*, Simpson, 41

[9] *Ibid*, Simpson, 42

[10] *Ibid*, Simpson, AB, 69 though it must also be said that he ironically also wrote of “ample room for their employment” in some cases (*ibid* 70).

[11] W Kelly Bokovay, “The Relationship of Physical Healing to the Atonement” *Didaskalia* (April 1991): 24.

[12] Bob Dewaay, “Physical Healing And The Atonement” (Critical Issues Commentary, available at time of writing at [www.twincityfellowship.com/cic](http://www.twincityfellowship.com/cic)),1

[13] *Ibid*, DeWaay, 1

[14] Gnosticism is the idea that secret knowledge unlocks a deeper or more effective truth.

[15] W Kelly Bokovay, “The Relationship of Physical Healing to the Atonement” *Didaskalia* (April 1991): 30.

[16] Webster’s Dictionary, E-sword Bible software

[17] Strong’s Dictionary of Hebrew Words, E-Sword Bible software, and Brown-Driver-Briggs, same source.

[18] W Kelly Bokovay, “The Relationship of Physical Healing to the Atonement” *Didaskalia* (April 1991): 28.

[19] Possible exceptions occur when a woman was unclean from her menstrual period in Lev 12:7 and in Num 16 and 8:19 when atonement was made to divert a plague. However, the former instance had to do with cleanliness proscribed by a breach of Mosaic law; the latter dealt with a plague of judgment for disobedience, both indirectly sin issues.

[20] Mayhue, 47-48

[21] W Kelly Bokovay, “The Relationship of Physical Healing to the Atonement” *Didaskalia* (April 1991): 29.

[22] Richard Mayhue, *Divine Healing Today* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1983.),48-49.

[23] theology of Wesley, 75

[24] W Kelly Bokovay, “The Relationship of Physical Healing to the Atonement” *Didaskalia* (April 1991): 28.

[25] Strong’s 7495 *rapha*’

[26] W Kelly Bokovay, “The Relationship of Physical Healing to the Atonement” *Didaskalia* (April 1991): 26.

[27] Michael L. Brown, *Israel’s Divine Healer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.), 196-97.

[28] *Ibid*, Brown, 186

[29] it is debatable whether or not the oppressors and plague are synonymous, but either way, the sin-sickness causes more problems than merely a guilty conscience.

[30] Like any truth, this can be taken into unhealthy extremes, and notwithstanding the trials of Job – which brought him closer to God – it remains that God’s favour is more desirable than His judgment.

[31] All italics mine

[32] Strong’s 2483 in e-sword software

[33] Strong’s 4381, also Brown-Driver’s-Briggs Dictionary definition

[34] “oppression” “affliction” and “stricken” are neutral words and could be argued either way, appear frequently throughout the same seven verses.

[35] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994.),839-40.

[36] Richard Mayhue, “For What Did Christ Atone?” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 6/2 (Fall 1995): 127.

[37] Leland Ryken, and James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longan III. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery; An encyclopedic exploration of the images, symbols, motifs, metaphors, figures and literary patterns of the Bible* (Downers Grove: Inter-varsity Press, 1998.), 210.

[38] Edward J. Young, *Isaiah 53: A Devotional and Expository Study* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1957.)

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[39] Let us not confuse authority to heal / forgive with the mechanism of healing and forgiveness. The cross is the focal point of all redemptive work, though it is erroneous to speak of the cross as having secured our guaranteed healing in this life.

[40] DA Carson, *When Jesus Confronts the World, An Exposition of Matthew 8-10* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992.), 33.

[41] *Ibid*, Mayhue, “For What...” 133

[42] *Ibid*, Mayhue, *Divine Healing* 49-50

[43] Gordon Fee, *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospel...* (Vancouver: Frontline Publishing, A Regent College Reprint, 1996.), 19.

[44] Douglas Moo, quoted by Bokovay, 32-33.

[45] Lee explains, “What Matthew’s fulfillment citations often appear to do is often show points of resonance with well developed redemptive themes in the OT of which Christ is the consummation. If this is true, Matthew may show us how to interpret the OT by indicating that earlier scriptures have both projective and retrojective functions as they reiterate the theology of an earlier motif or prototype and yet anticipate complete realization in some future act of God.”

[46] *Ibid*, Carson, 31

[47] *Op cit*, Mayhue, *Divine Healing*, 49.

[48] I once heard traveling faith healer Ron Cohen teach this.

[49] Bruce Barron, *The Health and Wealth Gospel: What’s Going On Today In A Movement That Has Shaped The Faith of Millions?* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1987.), 87.

[50] Griffith points the reader to see E. Hiebert: *Following Christ’s example: An exposition of 1 Peter 2:21-25*, *Bibliotheca Sacra* vol 139, Jan-Mar 1982, pp32-45. Griffith, 3

[51] *Ibid*, Mayhue, “For What...” 136

[52] *Ibid*, Mayhue, 139

[53] noted from personal conversations

[54] Bonnke, *Christ the Healer* audio sermon available at [www.cfan.org](http://www.cfan.org) at time of research, February, 2004.

[55] *Ibid*, Fee, *Health & Wealth*, 24-28.

[56] *Ibid*, Fee, 28.

[57] *Ibid*, Fee, 28.

[58] This likely means that God is the source, though not necessarily the agent of ill; as in Job, God may permit Satan’s intrusion to test our character, but the Devil is always on a leash, with God in firm control at the other end, determining its length and tether.

[59] admittedly in context, not physical sickness, though I believe with Bonnke that personal experience with

sickness generates compassion for sick people

[60] Bonnke, *Mighty Manifestations* (Orlando: Creation House), 140-141.

[61] *Ibid*, Brown, 231

[62] *Ibid*, Carson, 32

[63] *Ibid*, Fee, *Health & Wealth...*, 22

[64] Strong's 932, βασιλεία (basileia) for a sampling, see Mat 13:24-30; Mat 13:38-43; Mar 4:26-29; Mat 13:31-32; Mar 4:30-31; Luk 13:18-19; Mat 13:33; Luk 13:21; Mat 13:44; Mat 13:45; Mat 13:47-50; Mat 18:23-35; Mat 20:1-16; Mat 22:2-14; Luk 14:16-24; Mat 25:1-13; Mat 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27; Joh 18:36; Mat 18:3; Mat 19:14; Mar 10:14; Luk 18:16; Mat 19:23-24; Mar 10:23-25; Luk 18:24-25; Luk 18:29-30; Mat 16:19; Luk 8:1; Luk 8:10

[65] Aled, Griffith, phone conversation

[66] *Ibid*, Brown, 217

[67] Griffith, Aled, phone conversation

[68] See Ladd's works in the Bibliography for reading on this topic.

[69] *Ibid*, Bonnke, *Mighty Manifestations*, 153

[70] Torrey, R.A. *Divine Healing, Does God Perform Miracles Today?* (New York: Flemming H. Revell Co, 1924), 44.

[71] *Ibid*, Bonnke, 159

[72] John Wimber, *Power Evangelism* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986.), 69.

[73] *Ibid*, Carson, 33-34

[74] *Ibid*, Bokovay, 32-33

[75] *Ibid*, Fee, *Health & Wealth*, 21, 19

[76] *Ibid*, Carson, 34-35

[77] *Ibid*, Barron, 41

[78] We should also mention that Simpson eventually became fatigued, suffered with bad eyesight, and had a stroke six months before dying *Ibid*, Barron, 41

[79] I recognize that in Hebrews, the men of faith being mentioned were not having their doctrine scrutinized, and would probably be exemplary if they were; but still the truth applies to us, and I don't see any tension in marrying these twin truths for this application.

[80] DR. McConnell, *A Different Gospel; A Historical and Biblical Analysis of the Modern Faith Movement* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrikson, 1988.), 166.

[81] I mean charismatic in the non-theological use of the word, as in charming or winsome.

[82] Joel B Green, and Scot McKnight, and I Howard Marshall. *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992.), 306.

[83] Wagner, C Peter. *Signs and Wonders Today* (Altamonte Springs, Florida: Creation House, 1987.), 57.

[84] *Ibid*, Fee, *Health & Wealth...* 35.

[85] We might recognize too, that others still hardened their hearts (Jn 10:38).

[86] for a study of the gift-right dichotomy, see Rob Barron's "Healing, a Gift or a Right?"