

1 Peter 2:21-25, Part F

1Pe 2:21 (NKJV) **For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:** ²² *"Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth";* ²³ **who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously;** ²⁴ **who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.** ²⁵ **For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

In this portion of our study we want to look at what traditionally has been a theological battleground relative to the subject of healing. The issue that is constantly debated is whether or not there is healing in the Atonement. What is quoted here in [1 Peter 2:24](#) - “**by whose stripes you were healed**” - is a nearly direct quote out of [Isaiah 53:5](#) that says,

Isa 53:5 (NKJV) **But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.**

Right at the beginning it is important to notice that the [Isaiah 53](#) passage is in the present tense – “**are healed**”, and the [1 Peter 2](#) passage is in the past tense “**were healed**” – aorist tense, indicative mood, passive voice. That really has some very important implications in how this passage is actually handled simply because it is pointing back to a past event. If full and complete healing was the topic of [Isaiah 53](#), then no believer would ever get sick after they were saved. The theological battleground centers on the word “**healing**” and how it is to be interpreted in the [Isaiah 53](#) passage and whether it is speaking of spiritual healing, physical healing, or both. As with any other passage, it is critical to understand that hermeneutically that we cannot divorce a verse or a word in a verse from its overall context. Our hermeneutical rule is that context is king. It plays a tremendous role in arriving at a correct interpretation of any passage in the Bible. In the entire [Isaiah 53](#) passage, the only reference to “healing” is the word “**healed**”, so it is important to translate it properly. Obviously, the tone of the entire text is not that it is a dialogue of physical healing, but a direct reference to spiritual healing from sin.

Without overstating the problem that presents itself in this passage, there are two extremes relative to the issue of “healing”. The first extreme is that the “**gift of healings**” as mentioned in the New Testament is no longer operative. Those who hold to that position are called “cessasionists”. One of the most well-known cessasionists is John MacArthur. That is not to say that John MacArthur does not believe that God no longer heals. That would be a terrible and unwarranted indictment of his theology. I am sure that at his church that they pray for people who are in need of healing because they surely affirm that God still heals supernaturally as He sovereignly chooses. We are told to call the elders of the church and anoint people in oil in [James 5](#), and I am sure that John MacArthur’s church does that. Then, there is way too much undeniable evidence of actual supernatural healings that have been legitimately documented. The position that John MacArthur takes is that the gifts as mentioned in [1 Corinthians 12 and 14](#) are no longer active in the same sense that they were in the New Testament period during the life of Christ and the life of the apostles. I certainly do not have a problem with that assessment, but I am not in agreement with his overall proof text. His argument for that position comes from his interpretation of [1 Corinthians 13:10](#) which says,

1Co 13:10 (NKJV) **But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.**

He basically teaches that the canonization of Scripture is what set the time frame for “**that which is in part**”, or the New Testament sign gifts, to “**be done away**”.

The other extreme occurs primarily within the charismatic and Pentecostal movements which have a prolific number of so-called “healers”. In our more modern era, it began with Oral Roberts and has continued with others such as Aimee McPherson, A.A. Allen, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, Kathryn Kuhlman, T.L. Osborne, Todd Bentley, Robert Tilton, Benny Hinn, and many more. Then to make matters worse, since the development of what is now called “The Third Wave” or “The New Apostolic Reformation” which was created by Peter Wagener, we have a completely new wave of “healers” flying around the world on their personal jets fleecing large segments of Christianity of their money. They are promising people what they cannot give them. The scam is the promise of healing for money, and of course these so-called “healers” become the recipients of the cash donations. It is the primary cash cow on which all of the bogus network preachers and evangelists base their ministries. Each of them are bartering for the millions of dollars that their viewers are willing to give them for the alleged promises of miracles and blessing that will follow their giving. It is simply what we call the health and wealth gospel.

One problem that exists is the hermeneutical principle that “error begets error”. The error that has been prompted from an erroneous interpretation of the [Isaiah 53](#) passage and the [1 Peter 2](#) passage has simply given way to much greater error. So, it seems somewhat apparent that many very good theologians have developed very conservative positions relative to modern day healing as a defense against many of the outrageous and bogus “healers” that seem to dominate certain parts of the Christian landscape. At a personal level, I do believe in healing, but I do not believe in “healers”. In fact, the word “healers” is not used anywhere in either the Old Testament or the New Testament. I very much believe in the “**gift of healings**” as mentioned in [1 Corinthians 12:9](#) which is listed under the “**manifestations of the Spirit**”, as well as under [1 Corinthians 12:28 and 30](#), but as a caveat, I have to add that I do not see the operational activity of that gift to the same degree that it happened with Christ or with the apostles. What is often seen is an actual abuse of the gift for the purpose of extracting revenue from different segments of Christianity. I have stated it often that the church is filled with money changers in the temple and that Christianity is big business for many who are willing to exploit people for their personal financial empires.

Now, as we begin to evaluate this passage in both [Isaiah 53](#) and [1 Peter 2](#), the goal is to simply do a proper exegesis. I am not inclined at this point in the study to trace the charismatic error to its logical conclusion, but rather to simply to provide a solid exegetical study of these passages. I have to say up front that I believe in physical healing. I believe in supernatural physical healing. I have no desire whatsoever to try and limit what God can and may do. It should be apparent that often times God does provide healing and at other times that He chooses not to heal. There is utterly no explanation given in Scripture to as why He chooses to or chooses not to, so we will simply leave it to His sovereign choice. My part as a Christian is to believe not only that He can heal, but that He often does heal, and my role is to be in prayer for those opportunities.

As we begin, it is important to appreciate that sickness and suffering are the common denominator in a fallen world. Everyone gets sick, we all get older, and eventually everyone dies. All of the so-called faith healers are getting older and will eventually die. Just ask Oral Roberts. He actually suffered a heart attack just hours after supposedly having been healed of chest pains by Paul Crouch on TBN's live broadcast. There are no exceptions to disease and dying. So, just from a purely biblical perspective, to somehow take the position that God wants to heal everyone who is sick is an erroneous position that cannot be supported from Scripture. Unfortunately, the entire creation has been cursed, and that includes believers. Fred Price, one of the television gurus, states, "*We don't allow sickness in our home*", but his wife was stricken with cancer and underwent both radiation and chemotherapy. Kenneth Hagin, one of the main charismatic teachers, bragged about his health, but had multiple heart attacks.

One of the most mishandled Scriptures used by the word of faith healers comes from [Isaiah 53:5-6](#),

Isa 53:5 (NKJV) **But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.** ⁶ **All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**

Now, without doing a detailed teaching on these verses, expositionally it is **NOT** talking primarily about physical healing. The word for "**healed**" in this passage is the Hebrew word "*raphah*" and in this context clearly refers to spiritual healing from sin, not physical healing from disease. Based on the context, the word "*raphah*" can and often does refer to physical healing. However, Isaiah clearly has in mind spiritual healing from sin. Christ was "**wounded for our transgression**", He was "**bruised (or crushed) for our iniquities**", and "**the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all**". The words "**transgression, iniquity, iniquities**" all refer to sin, not the physical body. So the interpretation of this passage cannot be divorced from the context of spiritual healing. [1 Peter 2:24-25](#) builds on this when it says,

1Pe 2:24 (NKJV) **who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.** ²⁵ **For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.**

The passage clearly speaks of Christ bearing our sins. It is much more important that a person be healed of their sin problem versus a physical problem. [Jeremiah 3:22a](#) says,

Jer 3:22 (NKJV) **"Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal (*raphah*) your backslidings."**

Obviously, [Jeremiah 3](#) was not referring to physical healing, but to the "**backsliding**" of Israel. [Isaiah 53](#) is clearly a passage of Scripture on the "**atonement**" of Christ because of our sins. The focus of the passage is not physical healing, yet it is consistently used that way by charismatic faith healers.

Now, in order to be fair with the [Isaiah 53](#) passage, I want to clearly state that there is physical healing in the atonement of Christ. Obviously, the work of Christ on our behalf had multiple dimensions to it. The work of Christ on the cross is the foundational event for all that we as believers are able to enjoy and will enjoy. Everything that Christ did on our behalf was because of His work on the cross, because of His atoning work. Obviously He came to conquer sin and death, and disease and sickness are certainly a by-product of both sin and death. People get sick and die. Believers are no different than lost people in that our bodies grow old, get sick and worn down, and we eventually die. Just because we are believers

does not insulate us from illness and it does not guarantee us good health. Just because someone is a believer does not guarantee that they will not suffer any consequences from a hurricane or tornado that devastates where they live. I wish that was the case, but we simply live in a fallen world that itself is groaning for redemption.

In reality, disease and death cannot be permanently removed until sin is permanently removed, and that is why the supreme work of Christ was to conquer sin. So, by dealing with sin in the Atonement, Christ was at the same time dealing with death and sickness – both of which were a by-product of sin. However, all three are still with us – sin, death, and disease. What happened for us at the cross was that Jesus Christ paid for the penalty for our sin. He bore the punishment that should have been ours. He bore the punishment for our sin. He bore the penalty for our sin. One day we will be fully redeemed from both the presence of sin and the power of sin in our life, and we will be taken to a realm in which there is no death, no dying, and no disease.

So, the ultimate deliverance for the believer is **not now**, but future. Everything has been fully paid for, but it has not all yet been given to the believer. It awaits the believer. I still am housed in my “old” body, but am awaiting my “new” body. In the Atonement, Christ died for the sin of believers, but believers still sin. He died to conquer death, but believers still die. He died that we might be whole, but believers still suffer and become ill.¹ The full and ultimate deliverance from these things is **not now**. Paul clearly taught in [2 Corinthians 4:16-18](#) that “**our outward man is perishing...**” The Greek Interlinear translates it as “**decaying**”. It is a present tense, indicative mood, passive voice verb which means that it is a fact that our bodies are decaying all the time and that the decaying process is something that is being done to us. Zodhiates says that it means to be defiled, destroyed, and corrupted.²

The charismatic teaching is that Christians should never get sick because there is healing in the Atonement. However, if that is true, then by the same token they should also claim that Christians should never sin and that Christians should never die because Christ died for our sins and in His death He conquered death. Scripture does not allow us to just pick and choose what we want to preach and teach. The central message of the gospel is deliverance from sin, not physical healing. Christ was made to be sin, not disease, and He primarily died on the cross for sins, not for disease.³ However, physical healing should be viewed as part of the Atonement, but not something that is fully complete in our lives. If it was fully complete, then no one would get sick and no one would die. Think of it this way. If the effects of the atonement were fully complete and operative in our lives, then none of us would ever sin again. However, that certainly is not the case. The way that Peter addresses this is by stating that Christ “**bore our sins in His own body on the tree**” **SO THAT** we “**might live for righteousness**”, and not that we should be healed of some disease. Now, there are plenty of other passages that point to the fact that we can be healed, but expositionally [1 Peter 2:24](#) is not talking about physical healing as such. There is absolutely nothing in the context of the entire book of 1 Peter that would suggest that the issue Peter is addressing is healing. It is important that we think of the death of Christ as the means by which God is able to forgive sin.

The problem that surrounds us theologically is that we have those people who teach that we as believers

¹ MacArthur, 172-173.

² Zodhiates, 445.

³ MacArthur, 173.

have the authority to experience both healing, deliverance, and full recovery from every disease and sickness that we may experience. Then to make it worse, if someone does pray for healing and it does not happen, then the claim is that they did not have enough faith. The cross is not the place where God guaranteed believers physical healing in this life, but where He guaranteed all believers full forgiveness from sin. Many people who teach these false doctrines related to healing in the Atonement tell people that they are not to believe a medical diagnosis that they receive, and that if they actually confess that they are sick that that confession is contrary to God's will for their life. If they have cancer, they cannot say that they have cancer. I am not sure what they may call that, but to me it is delusional at best. Whatever they want to call it, it is not faith, but a kind of delusional unbelief in reality.

When Paul spoke to Timothy who was suffering from some kind of stomach problem, he did not tell him to claim his healing in the atonement and that God had promised deliverance from his sickness. What he told him to do was to use some wine, or what we might call medicine, for his "frequent infirmities" in [1 Timothy 5:23](#),

1Ti 5:23 (NKJV) No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities.

In [2 Timothy 4:20](#) he left a brother sick in Miletus.

2Ti 4:20 (NKJV) Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick.

It is important to understand that it simply is not a sin to be sick. Sickness is not sin. Just because someone has an illness like diabetes does not mean that they have been sinful, yet that is the bottom line of much charismatic teaching. Ultimately, sickness and disease in the world are a direct result and consequence of Adam's original sin. The Bible does not teach that you should repent if you have kidney stones. No one is found guilty because they got chicken pox or the measles. The point is that Christ did not die for our diseases simply because there is no guilt associated with sickness. The reason that Christ died was because we were sinners in need of salvation.⁴ However, is atoning work does provide a legitimate basis for God the Father to sovereignly intervene in our life if He so determines. That is why we pray for healing for those that we know and love.

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⁴ Storms, ep.