

ARTICLE 11

We believe divine healing is provided for all in the atonement.

In the light of the New Testament, the Cross is the basis for all the benefits believers receive in Christ. Among the benefits of the Cross are physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual healing. The message of the Cross is not just Good News for the soul but for the body as well. A prominent theme of the theology of those who believe in Spirit baptism is "the whole gospel for the whole person." God created the whole person and is interested in not just our spiritual welfare but in our whole existence.

1. The Relationship of the Cross to Healing

a. The reality that the risen Jesus provides physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual healing is one of the great truths for Spirit-empowered living today.

The teaching that Jesus still heals the sick today comes directly from the Bible:

(1) Matthew, as one of the first disciples to record the story of Jesus, saw a connection between the Cross and healing.

He applied the prophecy of Isaiah 53:4 to the healing ministry of Jesus: "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:17). In this verse, Matthew related the prophecy of Isaiah 53:4 to the healing of Peter's mother-in-law and others (8:14-16), making it obvious that he had a profound grasp of the connection between the healing ministry of Jesus and the Cross.

(2) Before His death, the Lord Jesus saved people, healed the sick, and cast out demons.

Indeed, Jesus was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). Therefore, saving and healing benefits of Jesus' death and Resurrection were experienced even before His death at Calvary. He could, and did, forgive sin and heal the sick before He went to the Cross. Whether before or after His death, Jesus' healing ministry flowed and continues to flow from the Cross.

Scripture references: Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:14-17; Acts 9:34; Revelation 13:8

2. Scriptural Reasons for Healings and Other Miracles

a. In New Testament times, healings were a direct expression of Christ's love and sympathy for suffering, sick, and afflicted people.

Jesus' compassion moved Him to minister to peoples' physical needs. Again and again we are told, "He was moved with compassion" (Matthew 9:36; 14:14; see also 20:34; Mark 1:41; 5:19; Luke 7:13; 10:33). In His compassion Christ brought physical healing to many people. Nowhere does Scripture say that Christ turned away a sick person. His ministry affirmed that each person was of great worth and that God has great love and compassion for those who suffer and are sick.

Scripture references: Matthew 9:36; 14:14; see also 20:34; Mark 1:41; 5:19; Luke 7:13; 10:33

b. Miraculous healings confirmed in a visible way that Jesus Christ did have the power to forgive individuals of their sins, to rescue them from eternal death, and to give them eternal life.

As Jesus' miracles confirmed the validity of His ministry on earth, the mighty miracles performed by His disciples also confirmed the message that they preached. On a number of occasions, healings and other miracles proved the proclamation of salvation that was instrumental in bringing people to faith in Christ.

Scripture references: Acts 3:1-26; 8:4-8; 9:32-43

c. Miraculous healings served as signs that when God raises believers from the dead during the Second Coming of Christ, they will be completely healed and will receive new bodies that are suitable for life in heaven.

God still heals sicknesses today; however, healing that we receive now is not our final and ultimate healing. Our final deliverance as believers in Christ will occur in the life to come. Still, healings today are a sign and foretaste of the future redemption of our bodies. At the time Christ returns, the world will be transformed, and we will be clothed with incorruptible bodies of glory (Romans 8:18-23; 1 Corinthians 15:35-55; Philippians 3:21). God saves from sin and heals the sick, but now these blessings are tokens and reminders of the future life of believers. Our redemption for now is partial, and sickness is a continuing reality. But when Christ comes again, suffering, disease, pain, and death will no longer be a reality for those who are followers of Christ.

Scripture references: Romans 8:18-23; 1 Corinthians 15:35-55; Philippians 3:21

3. God's Provision of Healing in Our Lives

a. Healing is a part of the total ministry of Christ's saving love and has been provided for everyone through His death on the Cross.

(1) God loves and heals the whole person.

The testimony of Scripture leaves no doubt that through the power of the Holy Spirit it is possible for all kinds of afflictions and diseases to be healed, whether they involve physical, emotional, mental, or spiritual ailments. God's healing involves all aspects of our being. Since He is our Creator and is all-knowing, He knows the causes of our problems. When healing, He often performs miracles in different areas of our lives. In some cases, His healing may even include miraculous deliverance from demon possession or oppression, which has caused great pain (Matthew 4:23; 8:14-17; Luke 5:17-26; Acts 10:38).

(2) God heals in many different ways.

As we come to God and trust Him for our health throughout our lives, He will continually perform divine healing miracles. These miracles can take many forms, including:

- instant or progressive healing,
- private or public healing,
- healing following one's personal prayers or other peoples' prayers,

- healing following treatment administered by a healthcare professional, or
- healing that occurs as a direct result of the Holy Spirit's leading one to make lifestyle changes.

Scripture references: Matthew 4:23; 8:14-17; 9:12; Luke 5:17; 10:34; Acts 3:1-10; 9:34-35; 19:11-12; James 5:13-16

b. God's provision of healing does not mean, however, that everyone will be healed this side of eternity.

(1) We live in a broken world where pain and suffering are a reality.

Neither Scripture nor experience support the claim that we will be healed in every situation. We live in a broken world, and daily we are subjected physically, emotionally, and spiritually to this brokenness (Genesis 3:1-19; Romans 5:12-21; 8:18-25). When we are not healed of particular difficulties, there most likely are many reasons why we remain in our current condition—reasons we may never understand in this life (Romans 11:33-36).

(2) Even in sickness, God works miracles in our lives, bringing good out of our suffering.

Although God never creates evil or sickness, He uses our difficulties, pain, and struggles to accomplish His eternal purpose:

- God may use events and processes that occur in our brokenness to accomplish His wise plan for our individual lives and for the universe (John 9:1-3).
- God may use our suffering to teach us more about faith and trust in Him, bringing us to a place of spiritual peace (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).
- God may use our illness to teach us about spiritual and physical priorities and personal discipline (2 Corinthians 1:3-11).

(3) We cannot completely understand the ways of God and why some people are healed this side of heaven and others are not.

In some cases, we can see that we are not healed because we need to make lifestyle changes. Other times the reasons why we are not completely healed are not so evident. Often our prayer is for quick healing, but God may want to lead us down another path, inspiring positive changes in our lives and teaching us new ways of living. On the other hand, He may have other plans that will not be evident to us until we are in heaven (2 Corinthians 4:7-18).

(4) God works according to His time in healing.

What should our attitude be toward our or others healing? Above all, we want to avoid jumping to the conclusion that when individuals are not healed according to our expectations, it is because they do not have enough faith, have not prayed hard enough, or are not good enough Christians (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). We want to have confidence that God is in control and that He always does what is best for our future wellbeing.

Deeply mysterious are the ways of God—Now He heals some, others He does not. But the sick, the afflicted, and the tormented—indeed all of God's children—are all loved by God and through the benefits of Christ's Atonement will be made whole in heaven.

Scripture references:

Living in a broken world—Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12-21; 8:18-25, 35-39

God's bringing good from suffering—John 9:1-3

Mystery of God's ways—2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Romans 11:33-36

Our judgment of God's timing—1 Corinthians 4:5; compare Titus 1:3

c. When we are confronted with illness, we want to pray in obedience to God, believing that He wants us to be well and whole.

What should believers do when confronted with illness? How should we pray? Since we are servants of God, not the Master, we cannot command God. We can know, however, that nothing is impossible with Him and that He has great compassion towards those who suffer.

(1) We are to continue to trust and hope in God, even in our pain.

Visible answers to our prayers may take weeks, months, or even years, requiring patience and persistence. Even if God does not heal, we are to continue to trust in Him (2 Corinthians 4:7-15). We should not give up hope. In Christ, there is always hope: hope for healing in this life, hope for peace and spiritual growth in our difficulties, hope for God to use our difficulties to bring healing to others, and hope for complete healing in heaven.

(2) God gives us strength to pray in our suffering.

God hears all of our prayers, no matter how big or small. When we have prayed and believed, if we are not immediately healed the need may not be for more faith. The Bible says that great miracles are possible through faith as tiny as a mustard seed.

- During severe pain and illness, it may be impossible for us to pray our usual prayers, and our prayers may simply consist of an internal cry to God for help. He hears such desperate prayers and considers them prayers of great faith (Psalm 6:1-10; 30:1-12; 88:1-12).
- We may be so injured or ill that we cannot think clearly enough to speak or even to think a short prayer. It's during these times when we cannot pray in our own strength, that God sends His Holy Spirit to pray for us, keeping us in communication with Him. These prayers through the Holy Spirit are prayers of great faith (Romans 8:26-27; compare John 14:16-17).
- We may have a condition in which we suffer emotionally and cannot feel the hope, trust, faith, or peace we think we should. We may feel many strong, negative feelings that we don't want to have. During these times, God understands. He knows our hearts—He embraces us as His precious children. He sends His Holy Spirit to comfort our spirits deep within us and to walk with us in our pain. On this journey when we no longer have the strength to walk as we normally do, we allow God to carry us. This is a walk of great faith (2 Corinthians 5:1-9).

(3) God gives us hope for complete healing one day.

God's love in suffering—During suffering, we, as followers of Christ, can be assured that God is loving us, healing our spirits, and bringing us closer to Him regardless of how much pain we are in or how difficult our current circumstances look to us and others. Why we are not made whole in this life is a mystery.

Our confidence in God's promises—Because God's grace is always sufficient through nights of discomfort and pain, we can have an inner peace deep within our souls. Through our illness we can arrive at a place of greater thankfulness for God's blessings and have increasing confidence in Him. The biblical teaching that healing is provided for all in the Atonement gives us hope of deliverance from present infirmities. But regardless of our

current circumstances, we continue to have confidence in our sovereign Lord and full assurance that the benefits of Calvary will make us completely whole in heaven.

Scripture references:

Trust in suffering—2 Corinthians 4:7-15; Romans 8:18-30; 1 Corinthians 15:12-28, 35-58
Prayer in suffering—Psalm 6:1-10; 30:1-12; 88:1-12; 102:17; Luke 18:1-8; Philippians 4:6;
Romans 8:26-27; compare John 14:16-17; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9
Hope for complete healing—1 Corinthians 15:50-58; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Peter 1:3-9

Discussion

Relationship of the Cross to Healing

- 1) Explain the relationship of the Cross to healing.

Scriptural Reasons for Healings and Other Miracles

- 2) Discuss some Scriptures that support the belief in divine healing.
- 3) Of what do healing miracles serve as a sign?

God's Provision of Healing in Our Lives

- 4) What is the source of our healing?
- 5) Name some ways in which God heals.
- 6) Does Scripture support the claim that we will be healed in every situation? Explain your answer.
- 7) Discuss some ways God may work miracles in our lives, bringing good out of our suffering.
- 8) What should believers do when confronted with illness? How should we pray?
- 9) Discuss situations in which God may give us special strength to pray in our suffering.
- 10) How can we have hope during our suffering?

Prayer

Great God of Heaven, how generous is Your grace. When we look at the Cross, again and again we see Your great compassion and love for us.

What You did through the Cross is indeed amazing. Your Son died there for our sins and sicknesses, providing for our redemption and the healing of our whole persons.

Today because of the power of the Cross to heal, we pray for sound minds and sound bodies; and in hope, we anticipate the resurrection of our bodies when we will be rid of disease and death.

Precious are You, Lord, forgiving our sins and healing our infirmities.

Amen.

Resources for Additional Study

Arrington, French L. *Christian Doctrine: A Pentecostal Perspective*, Vol. 2. Cleveland, Tenn.: Pathway, 1992; pp. 253-269.

Cross, Terry L. "The Doctrine of Healing" in *Transforming Power: Dimensions of the Gospel*. Cleveland, Tenn.: Pathway, 2001; pp. 177-231.

Thomas, John Christopher. *The Devil, Disease and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought*. Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.