

# OpenTheo

## Is Healing in the Atonement?



### **Word of Faith** - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the question of whether healing is included in the atonement in this thought-provoking presentation. He examines the arguments put forth by the Word of Faith teaching, which asserts that believers should never experience sickness. Gregg challenges this viewpoint, emphasizing the need for a balanced understanding of biblical teachings on healing. Drawing from Isaiah 53 and New Testament scriptures, he presents insightful interpretations and highlights the importance of considering context and literary devices in order to grasp the true meanings behind these verses.

### **Transcript**

According to the Word of Faith teaching, no believer needs ever to be sick. In fact, although they wouldn't necessarily say it this way, their doctrine is that no believer really ever is sick. They might even say it that way, but what they would mean by that is you may be sick to all appearances, but you are not sick, really, because the Word of God declares that you are healed.

And if the Word of God declares that you are healed, you must believe the Word and not believe senses. Don't believe the symptoms. Believe the Word of God.

And therefore, believers really never are sick, according to this view. And if you in any sense can be proven to be sick, I suppose, it would prove that you are not a believer. Now, Word of Faith people don't generally argue that if a person is sick, that is to say if they have symptoms, even if they die sick, that they're not saved.

Most Word of Faith people would not say this. Some would. But the doctrine of Word of Faith actually leads to this conclusion.

The only way to avoid this conclusion is to not take it to its logical end. And of course, one way that we know whether any proper sentence is true or false, is that if it is true, it remains true and unridiculous and unabsurd whenever it is extended to its logical conclusions. A thing might seem true until you begin to think of the ramifications and conclusions that come from a seamless logic reasoning from these conclusions.

And then if you get into weird and bizarre and foreign, heretical or absurd things, you'll realize that you've been reasoning maybe correctly, but from a wrong premise. There's two ways to reach wrong conclusions. One is to use faulty logic from a right premise, and the other is to use perfectly good logic from a faulty premise.

And in any case, if you carry a premise out to its logical conclusion, and if it is absurd, and if you have indeed not erred in logic, you have proven the premise itself is absurd. And while many people of the Word of Faith conviction would say that you are not an unbeliever in Christ if you die sick, yet they only can say that by not taking their own beliefs to the logical conclusion. If one takes the Word of Faith teaching on healing seriously and reasonably, if it is true, then it must be the case that any person who is sick can have no assurance whatsoever of salvation and may well take it as a proof they have no faith at all.

And of course, without faith, one cannot be saved. Now, let me discuss that a little bit. We're going to take two lectures to talk about the subject of healing.

We could certainly justify more than two, because the Bible lays heavy stress on healing. There are healings of a remarkable sort in the Old Testament, and there are healings of a remarkable sort in the New Testament. And especially when we come to the ministry of Jesus and the Acts of the Apostles, there's a great deal of data on healings.

There's not much, by the way, in terms of teaching on the subject of healings. Most of what we know about healings in the Bible is what we'd have to call anecdotal. It is based on incidences, just cases, case studies.

Here's a situation. A man was sick. He got healed in such and such a way by Jesus or by Paul or by Peter.

And that's all we know. We can begin to string together a large number of these anecdotal incidents and try to see what they have in common and see if we can put together some propositions about healing that will fit all of these anecdotes. And in doing so, we may very well reach good conclusions.

It is possible. But what I'm saying is there is very much a dearth of actual propositional didactic teaching on the subject of healing in the Bible. But there certainly are many things taught in the Bible that have some bearing on the subject of healing, simply not as many as some people think.

And we will take two sessions talking about healing. In our session following this one, I intend to address the question of whether or not the Bible teaches such a thing as healing on demand. That is to say, you are sick and you demand to be well.

You claim it and you are guaranteed to be well. Is there some kind of promise to the believer in Scripture of healing on demand? Certainly the Word of Faith doctrine would

teach that that is the case. You simply claim it.

You simply believe it. You simply confess it. And it must happen.

If it does not happen, it cannot be that God has failed to meet His promised conditions and so the fault must lie in you and therein lies the condemnation of those who remain sick because they must be doing something wrong. They must be very displeasing to God because they didn't make it work right. And certainly it can't be God that's to blame and therefore it must be me.

And so we will talk about that in our next session, whether the Bible actually teaches that healing is available on demand to be claimed. Is there any promise of this in the Bible? What does the Bible say? If it doesn't say that, what does it teach in its place? That is what we'll look forward to talking to you next time. This time I want to talk about something much more fundamental.

And by the way, the doctrine that I'm going to be discussing right now is the doctrine that teaches that healing of physical sickness is a provision that God has made for us in the atonement. And by the atonement we mean the beneficial effects, the package of what comes to us as a result of Jesus dying in our place. I think it's clear to all Christians who are truly Christians that Jesus, when He died, did something for us that had a positive effect with reference to our sin and forgiveness.

The Bible says that God laid on Him the iniquity of us all, that He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin should live unto righteousness, that He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. And many other statements like this make it clear. Jesus said, I came not to be served but to serve and to give my life as a ransom for my sin for many.

Clearly the death of Jesus accomplished something beneficial to the believer. That's why He died. It was not an accident or a tragedy of history.

It was a deliberate planned event from before the foundation of the world. And what He came to do, He accomplished by dying. And the benefits accrue to the believer.

But what are the benefits? What's in that benefit portfolio for us in the atonement? Now, all Christians believe that one of the benefits, most believe that the primary and sometimes sole benefit of the atonement is there is reconciliation. In fact, the very word atonement in the New Testament, the Greek word for atonement, simply means reconciliation. Reconciliation means that two parties are alienated and then there is some restoring of good relations between two hostile parties.

When you take a couple who believe they have irreconcilable differences and they're considering divorce and maybe even they separate but they decide to go to a marriage counselor or to a pastor and they work their problems out and they become friends again

and their marriage is back on track again, we call that reconciliation, being reconciled. And that is the literal meaning in the New Testament for the word atonement. It just means reconciliation.

The Old Testament word, the Hebrew word, actually has a different meaning. It comes from the Hebrew word that means to cover or a cover, a covering. Actually, in the Old Testament, it's the same word as that which is used of the mercy seat, which covered the Ark of the Covenant.

But in the Old Testament, when it's translated as atonement, it has reference to God covering sin. So it's obviously a little different concept in the Old Testament than in the New, but the point is atonement has to do principally, at least one of the things, if not the only thing that it has to do with, is reconciliation with God. And of course, reconciliation means that whatever offenses, whatever wall of separation has divided us from God must have now been dissolved or resolved in some way so that God no longer holds anything against us and we hold nothing against him, so we're friends with God again.

That is what the atonement is principally by definition. And therefore, Christian theology has always taught that the atonement of Christ had to do with the forgiveness of sin, the removal of the offense of sin by the blood of Jesus. It's sometimes used metaphorically, it is said in Scripture that we're washed or cleansed by the blood of Jesus or sprinkled by the blood of Jesus.

These are more metaphors based upon Old Testament ceremonial imagery, but they still communicate the idea that the sin problem has been resolved in the death of Jesus for us. Wonderful. Now there is then another doctrine or something that adds to that.

It does not subtract from it, and that is the doctrine which the Word of Faith doctrine holds concerning healing, being in the atonement, healing of physical sickness. Now, I want to clarify that the idea that healing is a benefit available because of the atonement of Christ is not a doctrine that is restricted to Word of Faith people. They depend heavily upon it, but other people besides Word of Faith people teach this.

The Assemblies of God, I believe, would teach as a basic doctrine that healing is a provision of the atonement. However, the Assemblies of God have officially come out renouncing the Word of Faith teachings as a whole. So what I'm trying to clarify here is that although this doctrine, that healing is in the atonement, is a key doctrine of the Word of Faith, it is not exclusive property of the Word of Faith.

There are those who are not of the Word of Faith persuasion but who do hold this doctrine, that Christ provided for our healing of sicknesses, that he didn't die just for our sins but for our sicknesses too, and that forgiveness of sins and healing of sicknesses are equally provided for us on the same basis because of what happened to Jesus at the

whipping post and on the cross. There are many persons who are not at all Word of Faith people. I'm trying to think of some names.

Some people who aren't even associated with Pentecostalism at all. Andrew Murray, I believe, taught the doctrine of atonement, including the provision of healing. And many other very ordinary, reputable, normal, orthodox Christian people have held this doctrine.

I would like to suggest, though, that if the doctrine is true, if healing of sickness is a provision of the atonement, then it must follow that the Word of Faith teachers are right. In other words, those who hold that healing is a provision of the atonement but do not go all the way with the Word of Faith teaching are not being consistent. If healing is in the atonement, then it follows that every person who is a believer who appropriates the benefits of the atonement will be healed, just as surely as they will be forgiven of their sins.

If forgiveness of sins and healing of sickness are equally purchased for us by Christ and equally accessible to us on the basis of faith alone, then it quite obviously follows that just as easily and just as readily and just as universally as forgiveness of sins can be had through faith in Christ's atonement, so as universally healing of sickness is available as a result of Christ's atonement. One of the most terrible upshots of this doctrine and its implications is that if I believe such a doctrine, and let me present a scenario that is not the case with me right now, but it could be easily, and it is with many people. Suppose I were a believer in Christ and I was counting on Christ for my salvation.

I had the assurance that if I died today, God has no hostility toward me nor I toward him because there has been forgiveness of sins and I am in good standing with him. I am counting on this fact. Then I get sick.

Somebody tells me that the Bible says that Christ, as well as purchasing my forgiveness of sins, has made equally accessible to me the healing of this disease and that I will obtain the healing of this disease just in the same way as I obtain the forgiveness of my sins, through belief, through faith in what Christ has done and my faith will make me well. And so I say, wonderful, that's wonderful good news. I will believe, I will believe this thing, that Christ has healed me, that Christ has purchased my healing and that I am healed.

Just as I say I am forgiven, I will say I am healed. But, as is the case with the vast majority of persons who make such confessions, what if my disease does not go away? What if it lingers? What if it gets worse? Well, perhaps people of faith would say, well, you know, hang on to your confession of faith. Do not give in to this.

This is the devil deceiving you, trying to deceive you with symptoms. Do not look at symptoms, look at the Word of God and you are healed. Keep professing that you are

healed, just like you keep professing that you are saved.

So, suppose I follow this advice and I keep professing that and then I am at death's door, deteriorating very fast and it is clear to me that I am in fact going to die and I do die. Now, as I see that death is going to result from my sickness, although I may be confessing all the way to the end that I am healed, the very fact that I clearly am not healed raises serious questions about whether I could believe I am really forgiven either. If I believe that the forgiveness of my sins is available to me on no other basis than healing of my sickness is available to me, and that it is as easily and readily obtainable, both of them are about equal, I mean they are exactly equally purchased from me and they are both obtained on the same basis, and it becomes clear that I do not have what it takes to get my healing, then what possible assurance could I ever have that I had what it takes to get the forgiveness of my sins? The healing is visible, the forgiveness of my sins is not a visible reality, I have to take that by faith alone, but if I am clearly not healed, then what that argues is that I have not had enough faith to receive the benefits of the atonement, of which healing is a part of that portfolio, and if I have enough faith to receive that benefit of the atonement, by what contortion of logic could I convince myself that I have had enough faith to receive any other benefit of the atonement? There would be no basis for assurance of salvation if I believed that the atonement has purchased both the forgiveness of my sins and the healing of my sickness, and yet I did not obtain, could not obtain my healing, as is the testimony of many, many godly people who I believe are in heaven today but died sick, hoping and praying and believing that God was going to heal them.

What's more, we who survived, the dead person who has died sick, we would have to say, well, I guess we have no assurance they were saved either. I always thought they were godly, they always seemed Christian to me, but they tried to get healed, they believed as best they could, but apparently they didn't believe good enough, and if they didn't believe good enough for that, I guess I don't have any reason to believe they believed good enough for anything else, including salvation, because, now unless we say, well, both are provided for in the atonement, but healing is a little harder to get than the other. Well, why would that be? Does anyone have any arguments that would explain why that would be? I've never heard that suggested at all, and there's good reason for that.

There's no argument that could possibly be made that if Jesus purchased both, and both are readily available, and all I have to do is believe to receive the forgiveness of my sins and the healing of my sickness, there's no argument imaginable. That could say that I could receive one without receiving the other. It may be a necessity of charity to say, well, I can believe that person got saved even though they couldn't get their healing, maybe charity toward that person may compel me to take such a generous position, but logic and biblical doctrine would forbid it if this doctrine is true.

Now this is not in any sense my reason for rejecting the doctrine that healing is in the atonement. The reason I reject it is because it simply is not biblical, and that's what I intend to show you in this lecture. But I'm trying to start out by saying there is much at stake here.

It's not just an academic point. It is the very assurance of salvation for every sick Christian hangs upon this, and if a person believes this doctrine and is sick and can't get well but still has assurance of salvation, they do so by deluding themselves or being like an ostrich sticking their head in the sand. If the doctrine is true, they have no reason to believe they are saved if they are sick.

And Word of Faith people usually try to shy away from saying such things, but there are some dyed-in-the-wool, hardcore Word of Faith people who realize that this is, of course, exactly where the doctrine must lead if it is taken to its logical conclusion. Well, what about this? Does the Bible teach that healing is in the atonement? I mean, the Bible says a lot of things about the atonement. It's not a lot of different variety of things, mostly the same thing every time it's discussed, but it is a major theme of the teaching of Scripture that Jesus died for our sins.

Does the Bible also say He died for our sicknesses? The Bible very clearly teaches that we can have, because of what Christ has done, the forgiveness of sins upon the simple confession of our faith in Christ and confession of our sins to Him. But does it say we can also have healing on the same basis as readily? Is there any such teaching in Scripture? There is not. But there are some Scriptures that are thought perhaps to teach such a thing.

I will, there are, almost the entire doctrine rests really upon one passage, though there are some passages that are thought to be corollaries of it. In Isaiah chapter 53, we have the key passage, and I would say the only passage that would speak directly and relevantly to it. Isaiah 53, and there are two verses that figure into the consideration.

Isaiah 53.3 and Isaiah 53.4, it says in verse 3, He is, I'm sorry that is not true, it's verses 4 and 5, not 3 and 4. Some of the words of verse 4 that are significant are also found in verse 3, but the actual verses are verses 4 and 5. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 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.

Now these two verses are, although they are two verses in sequence, they really argue two independent points. In verse 4, the word griefs, the Hebrew word griefs, surely also legitimately translated sicknesses. It's griefs, by the way, is also a legitimate translation, but one possible translation of this word is the word sicknesses.

Likewise, the word sorrows in the same verse, He carried our sorrows, that Hebrew word

can legitimately be translated pains. And by the way, this is not only a legitimate, but a preferred translation is seen in the fact that this verse is quoted in the New Testament by Matthew, and when he quotes it, of course he translates it into Greek, or he uses a Greek translation rather than this Hebrew, and the words in the Greek that Matthew uses actually mean sicknesses and pains. So it's clear from Matthew's inspired writing, his inspired translation of this Hebrew text into Greek, that he understands it, and therefore we should, as meaning He has borne our sicknesses and He's carried our sorrows, or pains, excuse me.

Now, the argument is simply like this. We know that Jesus carried and bore our sins on the cross. In His own body He bore our sins in the tree, it says in 1 Peter chapter 2, and that being so, does it not seem clear that He must likewise have borne our sicknesses and our pains in the same way, according to this verse? And if Jesus has borne our sicknesses and our pains, it has the same ramifications as if He has borne our sins.

I mean, if Jesus bore my sins, then there's no reason for me to bear them. On the day of judgment, God is not going to hold me accountable for my sins, if indeed Jesus has taken them and borne the penalty for them and endured what I should have endured in my place, then it's simply the case that God rather owes me. If I, I mean I hate to use that term, but that is, it's a matter of justice.

That if Jesus, as it were, carried all of my sicknesses and my pains in the same sense that He carried my sins, then it would be as unjust for God to lay sickness upon me as it would be for Him to lay my sins upon me. They've already been laid on my substitute, and they shouldn't have to be on me. Kenneth Hagen tells the story of a woman during World War II in England, I think she was in London, when the Germans were bombing London, and this happened of course quite often in World War II, and many times different neighborhoods had to be evacuated and sent to bomb shelters and so forth for their safety.

And there's one old woman, a Christian woman, who lived in a neighborhood and her neighborhood was evacuated and they went to the bomb shelters and as everyone was there, they looked around and someone got concerned about her, she wasn't there. And they said, uh oh, where's Mrs. Jones? You know, she's not here, I hope she wasn't killed in one of the attacks. And a few days later, the people came out and returned to their homes and there she was sitting on a front porch rocking in her rocking chair.

And they said, Mrs. Jones, where were you? We were afraid for you. Why weren't you at the bomb shelters? She said, I was right here, I was right at home. And they said, well with all the noise and all the danger, how in the world did you sleep at night? Where'd you sleep? She said, I slept right in my own bed.

They said, how could you possibly sleep? Weren't you terrified? And she says, no. Now I had no trouble sleeping, she said, because I read in the Bible that he that watches over



Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. And I figured there's no sense both of us staying awake.

That's one of the things winsome about Kenneth Higgins' writings. He comes up with a lot of little anecdotes like that and then he makes the point, well look, if God's going to stay awake, why should I have to stay awake? He's staying awake for me. Why should I lose sleep if he's losing sleep for me? And transfer that, why should I bear my sins if he bore my sins for me? Why should I bear sickness if he bore sickness for me? If my sicknesses were put on him, then how can they possibly be put on me as well? That's the argument.

And the next verse, verse 5, Isaiah 53, 5 says, 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.

Now it is pointed out by the word of faith teaching and by others who believe in the doctrine that healing is provided in atonement that when Jesus died on the cross, he paid there the penalty for our sins. But prior to his death on the cross, when he was whipped, when he received the 39 lashes, at that point he paid the price for our sicknesses. Why? Because it says by his stripes we are healed.

His stripes means the wounds on his back from the whip. And his stripes therefore procured our healing just as surely as his death later the same day on the cross procured our forgiveness of sins. Now this is a very seemingly convincing case based upon these scriptures.

And if this is so, then it follows that God in essence owes us our healing. Now again, I'm very, very cautious and uncomfortable even talking about God owing us anything. And of course, in saying that God owes us our healing, it's not so much that he owes it to us as he owes it to Jesus.

If Jesus died to pay for something and God doesn't deliver on it, then Jesus got cheated. In a sense, God owes it to Jesus to heal me and to forgive me. It says in 1 John 1 9, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just.

And if we confess our sins, he is to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Now as a youth, I read that verse many times, very often quoted verse obviously. But I always thought, well why didn't, that doesn't seem right.

It doesn't seem right to say that he's faithful and just to forgive us. It should say he's faithful and merciful to forgive us our sins. Isn't forgiveness an act of mercy, not of justice by definition? But the answer is clearly this.

If Jesus has in fact purchased my forgiveness of sins, then there is a sense which is owed. Not so much owed to me as it is owed to Jesus. He paid the price for it.

If a ransom is paid to get someone out of prison and that person is not released from prison, it's not really so much the person in prison who got cheated, it's the person who paid the ransom money that got cheated. And so also, if Jesus bought my forgiveness and healed me, then he's not justifying my sin. He's not justifying my sin.

He's forgiving my sins. And if I'm not forgiving my sins and God doesn't deliver on it, that is an injustice. But God of course is not unjust.

Therefore, because he is faithful and just, he does forgive my sins. Now I hope you understand that concept because that's going to figure significantly in our understanding of healing later on. Because if also healing is provided in atonement, just like our forgiveness of sins is provided in atonement and for the same reason, then it follows that it is a matter of justice for God to heal.

It's not a matter of mercy. He owes it to Jesus and secondarily to us because of Jesus. And therefore, if I do not receive a healing, it is God's injustice to Jesus.

Jesus bought it and God's not delivering what was paid for. So one of the questions we're going to have to ask later on, and we'll come to it later, not now, is whether the Bible says that healing is something that God grants as an act of his justice or whether it's something he grants as an act of mercy. If it is mercy, then it follows that it is not owed.

That's the difference in definition between justice and mercy. Mercy is a favor granted that is not owed. Now we know that forgiveness of sins, in a sense, is owed because of the price had been paid.

The question is, is healing owed? If the price had been paid for that too, then of course it's owed and therefore God's healing me is a matter of justice. His not healing me would be an evidence of injustice. But if healing is an act of mercy according to scripture, then it is not owed and therefore must not have been paid for.

It's benevolent. It's simply generosity. It's not something that God in any sense is obligated to do.

If there's an obligation on God's part to do it, then it is not mercy for him to do it. It's justice. If on the other hand there is no obligation on God's part to do it, which mercy would suggest if we think of healing as a mercy of God, then if there's no obligation on God's part, it must not have been bought.

It must not have been paid for. It must not be something that Jesus included in payment of. But as you know already, because I've tipped my hand earlier in this lecture, I don't believe that healing is in the atonement.

And I do believe the Bible teaches that God healing us is an act of mercy in each individual case. But what do we do then with these verses? These verses mean

something. We can't just say, well, because I have these other verses over here that convince me of another opinion, therefore we can just ignore these verses because I'm going to weigh these verses in the balance against these verses and just, I like these ones better, so I'll throw out these ones.

No, that's not, we can't do that. Unfortunately, word of faith people do that and almost everybody who has a heretical doctrine does just that. They accept the verses of scripture that seem to fit their point of view and they ignore as if they aren't there.

Equally inspired portions of scripture that contradict their point of view. No doctrinal position can be trusted if it must for its validity ignore a certain class of scriptures. And if I'm going to suggest to you that healing is not in the atonement, I need to not only just kind of downplay these two verses that sound like it is, I need to actually be able to present a proactive, positive teaching about what these verses are saying.

And that is not hard to do. Fortunately, because both of them are quoted in the New Testament in separate places. Isaiah 53, 4 is quoted in the New Testament by Matthew and Isaiah 53, 5 is quoted in the New Testament by Peter.

And we'll see in a moment what they said, but let me just say this. However the apostles quoted scripture is the right way. Remember this.

In Luke 24, I think it's verse 44 or 45, it says that after the resurrection Jesus met with the twelve in the upper room, or the eleven as there were survivors since Judas had died, and he opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures. And of course scriptures means Old Testament scriptures. There was no New Testament scriptures yet.

So in the upper room with the disciples after his resurrection, Jesus bestowed upon them an inspired awareness of what the scriptures mean. And it is in the epistles and gospels that these men later wrote that when they quote the scriptures, we find out what that inspired understanding is. It may be that we would have understood them differently and not surprisingly the scribes and Pharisees would have understood some of them differently, but the Holy Spirit revealed to the apostles what the correct understanding was.

And therefore we are much advantaged if we want to understand the meaning of an Old Testament text, if it happens to be one that the apostles quoted, gave a context to, and said this is a fulfillment of that. Because then we can look and say, oh so that's what the scripture means. In other words, if I'm going to debunk a particular interpretation of these verses that teaches that healing is providing the atonement, my argument is strengthened immeasurably if I can point out that my understanding of these verses agrees with the apostles' teaching on these verses.

Whatever Pharisees or anyone else may have thought about these verses, the apostles had their understanding open so that they might understand the scriptures properly. So when we look at what the apostles actually said on these verses, we will gain tremendous understanding of what they mean and what they don't mean. With reference to the first of these, Isaiah 53, verse 4, surely he has borne our sicknesses and carried our pains.

Does this mean that Jesus on the cross, or at the whipping post just prior to being crucified, that he somehow had mystically laid upon him our sicknesses and our pains in order that he would pay the price for them there? Just as he in a mystical sense had our sins laid upon him at the cross and he paid for them there. Is that what this is teaching? This is exactly what is thought to be taught here by those who believe that healing is in the atonement. That is not, however, what Matthew thought it was teaching, and he was an inspired apostle.

So we might as well just find out what the Holy Spirit revealed to him about this. In Matthew 8, verses 16 and 17, this is after Jesus had called the four fishermen and he had now gone into the house of Peter where Peter's mother-in-law had been sick and he healed her. And then, because it was the Sabbath and no one was allowed to heal on the Sabbath, people waited for the sun to go down and the Sabbath to end, and then all the people in town brought all their sick people to Jesus in the house of Peter and his mother-in-law.

In verse 16, Matthew 8, verse 16 says, When evening had come, they brought to him many who were demon possessed and he cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, He himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. Now, you'll recognize, of course, that that is a quotation of Isaiah 53, 4, one of the two important verses we're trying to understand. Now, remember, there is a fairly common understanding of that verse that suggests that what Isaiah was saying is that at the whipping post, just prior to his death, Jesus mystically took upon himself our sicknesses and pains as a substitute for us, a substitutionary, vicarious bearing of our sicknesses and pains, just as he on the cross vicariously bore by substitution our sins.

Is that what Matthew says? It is not what Matthew says. It's contrary to what Matthew says. Matthew says that at this point, very early in Jesus' ministry, when he was first called the forefisherman, it's like at least two years before his crucifixion, he had a healing meeting.

He didn't plan it, but the people of the city required it. He came, or they came and brought all the sick and he healed them all. And Matthew said this was a fulfillment of what Isaiah said, and he quotes the verse in Isaiah.

In other words, if we say, when did Jesus take our infirmities? When did he bear our

sicknesses? The word of faith, people say, well, he did that at the whipping post. Matthew says, no, he did that a lot earlier than that. He did that by actually healing people.

The actual healing ministry of Jesus was the fulfillment of that scripture, not some mystical, transcendent, vicarious thing that is thought to have happened at the whipping post. It did not happen there. It happened in the beginning of his healing ministry.

Well, then what does this mean? It must mean that the words took and bore, he bore our sicknesses, must not have exactly the same meaning as those verses that say he bore our sins. And that shouldn't surprise us too much. It might surprise us a little because the words are the same word, actually, in the Hebrew.

There are places that say, and in the Greek, that he bore our sins and that he bore our sicknesses. But the fact that it's the same word doesn't mean it's in the same meaning or the same application. The word bore in this particular case, in the Hebrew, literally means carried.

And the word, let me see here, I've got to get back to Isaiah. One moment. I lost track of it here.

Okay. The word that he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. To say he bore them means he lifted them.

The Hebrew word means he lifted them and carried them. Means something very similar. The words are very similar.

The idea is that he lifted the burden of sickness off of sick individuals by healing them. Those who are sick are bearing a burden in their bodies. He lifted that burden.

He carried it. Not in some absolute universal cosmic sense, but in an absolute personal, practical sense. Here's a person burdened with sickness.

He lifted that burden. He freed them from that burden. He bore it.

He lifted it. He carried it off. That is what Matthew says this verse means.

And I would rather argue with Kenneth Hagin than argue with Matthew. I'd rather argue with the whole Assemblies of God leadership than with Matthew. I'd rather argue even with Andrew Murray, although I love Andrew Murray very much.

I'd rather argue with him than argue with Matthew on this. But it's Matthew we know. Jesus opened his understanding, then you might understand the scriptures.

We don't know that about anyone who's lived since then, although it may be the case. Certainly, if so, they would not see it differently than the Holy Spirit showed it to

Matthew. So we have, in other words, a New Testament authority, thankfully, since this verse might readily be otherwise misunderstood.

We thankfully have been given by God a New Testament explanation and application of this verse so that we can decide the difficult question. Is Isaiah 53, 4 telling us that Jesus bore our sicknesses in precisely the same way as he bore our sins? And the answer is no, it's not saying that at all. It's simply talking about Jesus' active, personal, healing ministry, healing individuals.

Does Jesus still do this? Of course he does this. I believe in miraculous healing today. I mentioned yesterday I was healed miraculously, I believe, when I was two years old.

Cystic fibrosis was the diagnosis. And I'm not sick with that anymore. And it was because of prayers.

It was not because of any positive confessions. My parents were not positive confession people, but they prayed, they asked God. I'm not even sure they had a lot of faith.

It was their hopes against the doctor's decrees, but God came through anyway. I believe in miraculous healing, but I do not believe that Matthew is wrong. I do not believe Isaiah 53, 4 is talking about a blanket provision of healing based upon Jesus purchasing universal healing for all believers, as he has purchased forgiveness of sins and reconciliation for all believers.

Therefore, I do not believe that anyone can honestly say that this verse teaches that healing is in the atonement. But we have another verse to consider. And maybe that one teaches it.

In Isaiah 53, 5 it says, But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon him, and with his stripes, or by his stripes, we are healed. Now certainly, this mentions his stripes.

And if we're thinking literally of some event in the life of Jesus, when he received stripes, was at the whipping post, receiving 39 lashes just prior to his crucifixion. And therefore, it seems as if this verse is saying that Jesus, when he was whipped, healed us. Now a great deal of effort has been done by Word of Faith writers to prove that this word healed is the ordinary word for physical healing, not spiritual healing.

The Hebrew word here, healed, is an ordinary word that applies to physical healing in many contexts. However, there's even one medical doctor, Kenneth Hagin has published a book by a medical doctor who is of the Word of Faith persuasion, going through all contortions to show and to prove the unnecessary thing that he proved, and that is that this word healed is the ordinary word for physical healing. Well, I won't dispute that.

The question, though, is not whether the word is the ordinary word for healing. If I say I

have a frog in my throat, I'm using the ordinary word for frog, but I don't mean literally that I have a frog in my throat, I'm using it in an idiomatic sense. I'm using a figure of speech, and we do this all the time.

Every language has these. You learn more about the meaning of a use of a word by its regular usage than by its dictionary definition. Because if I say I have a frog in my throat, you say, I don't know what that means.

I'll look it up in the dictionary, frog. There's a hopping amphibian, you know. And, oh my goodness, it's amazing Steve can talk at all without croaking.

And yet you would totally misunderstand my meaning if you only went by dictionary definitions. It makes no sense to say, well, the dictionary definition of this word is. That's not the question.

The question is what does it mean in its context? Is it used idiomatically? Is there a figure of speech here, or is it used to be taken in its strictly lexical literal meaning? That's the question that needs to be decided. Now, fortunately, we have many ways of deciding that. We do have a New Testament citation of it, which is the ultimate proof.

But even the New Testament citation might be misunderstood if other considerations are not looked at. And there are several very important considerations. Not the least of which is the context.

And the context of every verse is its immediate context in addition to the whole context of the whole book. Now, if you have not read Isaiah very carefully, you might not have noticed that the book of Isaiah speaks frequently of sickness and healing. There are many references to sickness and healing, and it's used in a figurative sense.

It is used of the condition of the nation of Israel under God's judgment. It's like a beat up, wounded, festering, sore, filled body because God has been chastening them and they have gotten sick under his judgment. This is not only a use of the term that's found in Isaiah.

It's used throughout the prophets. Isaiah was perhaps the first, and the others may have picked up the metaphor from him. I don't know.

But in Isaiah chapter 1, you don't have to read very far into Isaiah to discover the context for this statement. Look at Isaiah chapter 1, verse 4 through 6. God says, Alas, sinful nation. He's talking to Judah, the nation of Judah.

A people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corruptors. They have forsaken the Lord. They have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel.

They have turned away backwards. You will revolt more and more. The whole head is

sick.

The whole heart faints from the sole of the foot, even to the head. There is no soundness in it but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. They have not been closed or bound up or soothed with ointment.

What is being described here? He's talking about a sinful nation laden with iniquity, being stricken by God. And the metaphor is that the nation is like a sick person, been beat up. Their sores have not been cared for.

They have not been soothed. They have not been bound up. And therefore infection has set in and great sickness.

They're in great crisis. It's described as if it was a health crisis of an individual man from the sole of the foot to the top of his head. He's sick.

But of course, that's not what he's talking about. He's not talking about a man. He's talking about the nation.

It's a figurative use. Now, I could go through, if we wanted to take the time and waste it, I could get out the Hebrew lexicon and show you that the word head here and the word foot and the word sick and the word bruises and the words putrefying sores, these are the ordinary words in the Hebrew language for head and foot and sick and bruised. They're ordinary words.

In many contexts they mean literally a head or a foot or a bruise. That would tell us nothing about the meaning of the passage because we would be missing the point. It is idiomatic.

It is figure of speech. He is, in fact, using the ordinary words just like I'm using them in English for a sick man. But we can use the ordinary words for a sick man, which in some context refer to a sick man, and we can apply them figuratively to something else that's like a sick man.

In this case, the nation, right at the outset of the prophet's message is that the nation is like a sick man desperately needing healing. No one has bound it up. Now their sickness is definitely of a spiritual sort.

It's interesting if you turn over to Isaiah chapter 3 that he's describing again how terrible the nation's plight will be under the judgment of God and trying to explain, trying to give some scenarios of how bad it will be and let them see what trouble they're in. And he says it will be, verse 6, Isaiah 3, 6, when a man takes hold of his brother in the house of his father saying, you have clothing, you be our ruler, and let these ruins be under your hand. In that, in other words, no one wants to take charge because the nation is in total disarray, sort of like ours is becoming rapidly.



In that day he will protest saying, I cannot cure your ills. In the King James, I will not be your healer, for in my house is neither food nor clothing. Do not make me a ruler of this people.

Now notice again, it's figurative. No one wants to take charge. No one wants to take responsibility.

The disaster is too widespread. It can't be fixed and no one wants that responsibility. And everyone will turn to his brother and say, well listen, you're better off than most of us.

You've got to change the clothing. Most of us are worse off than that. Why don't you be our ruler? He says, I'm not going to heal you.

I'm not your healer. What kind of healing is going on here? We're talking about needing the nation's woes healed. But no one wants to be the physician because they can't for one thing.

There's no one who can. Now if you look over at Isaiah 61, actually I could show you a lot more verses, but we would take more time than we really should on this if we did. But look at Isaiah 61.

We have a famous messianic passage. We know it's messianic for many reasons, but not the least of which is that Jesus quoted this passage in the synagogue of Nazareth and said it was fulfilled in his reading it. His very reading of it was a fulfillment of it.

In Isaiah 61, it says, The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news or good tidings to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of prison to those who are bound, etc. Now notice Jesus was sent, among other things, to heal the brokenhearted.

More literally, the word heal should be rendered bind up. Do you remember back in Isaiah chapter 1? The body was full of wounds and putrefying sores and no one had mollified them up with iron, no one had bound them up. No one in other words had played the role of the good Samaritan to bind up the wounds and to stop those bleeding and to inhibit infection.

No one had done that. And here Jesus finally comes, the Messiah comes. I've been sent to bind up.

I've been sent to do the binding up that no one has done for this people. But what does he bind up? Physical wounds? No, the brokenhearted. It's a spiritual condition.

It's a spiritual malady. No one was binding it up in chapter 1, but in Isaiah 61, which looks forward to the coming of Christ, he says, I have come to do that. I am the healer.

Your brother, your neighbor may not want to be your healer because he can't, but I can and I will. I've been anointed to bind him up. Now this is the context.

I could show you, if we had the time, several other passages in Isaiah which speak of either sickness or healing and they are talking about the national condition, not about individual sicknesses. In fact, I'm not really sure that I could find any passage that is using it in a literal sense. It wouldn't destroy this argument if we could find such a passage.

I'm just saying that I could show you many more in Isaiah and other prophets which make it clear that the prophets spoke of the nation figuratively as if it were an individual who was desperately sick and needing healing. Look at Jeremiah 3. This, by the way, is a frequently repeated line. This is just one of its occurrences, but it says, Return you backsliding children and I will heal your backsliding.

Do you know what that word heal is? It's the ordinary word in the Hebrew language for healing sicknesses. It's the same word for healing something that's a physical sickness, but is it talking about that? No, it's talking about healing backsliding, a spiritual condition. God says, If you return to me, I will heal your backsliding.

Jeremiah is literally full of this kind of language. Let's look over at Hosea. It's a shame that Christians don't read the prophets more.

They would make fewer mistakes when they read their favorite verses and don't understand what they mean because they don't understand how the prophets regularly spoke. It would help to understand a given statement in the prophets if one would read all the prophets and learn their language, as it were, learn their methods of communication. In Hosea 4, God says, I will heal their backsliding.

Again, Jeremiah says, I will heal your backsliding if you turn to me, you backsliders. Hosea says, I will heal their backsliding. Healing is the ordinary word for healing, but it is not talking about physical healing.

It is talking, as all the prophets frequently talk, about the nation sick with sin and afflicted with the judgment of God that has come upon them because of their sin and desperately needing somebody to heal them, but nobody but the Messiah can do so. Hosea 14.4? I'm sorry, what did I say? Four four? I'm sorry. Thanks for bringing that up.

Three hands went up. I still don't remember saying four four, but I must have said that. So that's fine.

It's 14.4. Okay. Now, having said that, let's look back at Isaiah 53, verse 5. We see then that in the prophets generally, and in Isaiah particularly, early on the motif is introduced of the nation under God's judgment, under God's displeasure, is like a sick, dying person in need of a healer, in need of a binder up of the wounds and so forth. And now we find

in Isaiah 53, it was he, the Messiah.

By his stripes we are healed. Now if we had no other arguments than just what we've considered, we might well conclude, by the way, we do have other arguments, but with only what we've considered so far, we might well conclude that healed here does not refer to individuals being healed of physical sicknesses, but rather the very healing about which Isaiah has spoken so frequently already. The needed healing.

That healing which no man can bring and no man is willing to bring, but then suddenly someone comes and by his stripes indeed, the healing comes. But what is the healing? It is restoration of God. It is the removal of the affliction of God's wrath and God's judgment upon them, which was their sickness, their beaten condition.

There's restoration. They're healed from their backsliding. This is at least a very likely meaning, even if we consider no more evidence than what we've just said.

But there's more that confirms that this is clearly the meaning. If you will look at the verse closely, you'll see that it is like so many of the passages in the Prophets, an example of Hebrew poetry. Almost all of the prophesying in the Old Testament was couched in the medium of poetry.

We usually think of Psalms and Job and Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon as the poetic books of the Old Testament, but actually the Old Testament prophets certainly belong in that category. There are some chapters in the Prophets that are not written in poetry. Usually they are narrative portions.

But when the prophets are giving oracles, they're almost invariably couched and cast in the form of Hebrew poetry. Now, that's important to know because we know some things about Hebrew poetry. We know it from reading the Psalms and from reading Proverbs and from reading other poetry.

It's very clear. Hebrew poetry, one of its principal dominant features is parallelism. English poetry depends more heavily on things like meter and rhyme and things like that to be recognizable as poetry, but not Hebrew poetry.

It doesn't have to rhyme. The principal feature of Hebrew poetry is parallelism, couplets and triplets of thought, repetition of the same thought in different words in sequence. We can see this verse is no exception.

This is very clearly the case. Look at the first two lines of Isaiah 53, 5. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities.

Is that not just a restatement of the same thing twice? Wounded and bruised? They're parallel thoughts. Our transgressions, our iniquities are likewise parallel thoughts. Once you say, he was wounded for our transgressions, you add no more information by saying

he was bruised for our iniquities.

You've just said the same thing in different words. That's typical of Hebrew poetry. The Psalms do it all the time, the Proverbs and so do the Prophets do it.

And this is extremely helpful because if you find a line in a poetic verse in the scripture that is difficult to know its meaning, you are greatly benefited if it happens to be a parallel to another line, which is a little easier to understand what it means. Because you can be usually fairly sure that the line that is in parallel to it will help you understand what the line in question means. If you didn't know what the word wounded or the word transgressions meant, you could learn by reading the next line, bruised for our iniquities.

Oh, that's what it means. Wounded for our transgressions means bruised for our iniquities. I get it.

If you had trouble understanding something like that, well, what about the next couplet? The chastisement for our peace was upon him and by his stripes we are healed. Can you see the parallelism there? What is chastisement? Chastisement in the Bible usually refers to strokes delivered to a disobedient servant or disobedient son with a rod, usually a rod, could be something else, but the rod of correction is chastisement. A disobedient servant or disobedient son in the scripture can anticipate strokes from a rod.

That's his chastisement. In other words, it's the same thing as stripes. The chastisement is the same thing as his stripes.

Well, what was the chastisement for? What says it was the chastisement for our peace? Therefore, we would expect that by his stripes we are healed. Healed has something to do with our peace, not with our comfort particularly, not with our health even, but rather with our peace with God. We have offended God.

Chastisement is due. There is judgment and wrath upon us and there must be one to absorb the punishment, the chastisement, so that our peace with God can be restored. And it tells us, fortunately, the chastisement for our peace was laid on him.

By his stripes we are healed. What is healed? Our relationship with God is healed. He has healed our backsliding.

It is clear there is not one line in this verse, except the last one, that says anything that could in any way be construed to talk about physical healing of physical sicknesses. The whole verse, which is indeed about the atonement, is about what God did for our sins, for our iniquities, for our transgressions, for our peace with God. If he throws in something about physical healing in the last line, he is certainly throwing a curved ball.

And it certainly is not likely that that is what he is saying, because A. Isaiah has been talking all through his book about a different kind of healing that is needed. And most

likely he is talking about that kind of healing when he says this, furthermore the parallelism of the two lines, the chastisement for our peace and the line, by his stripes we are healed, makes it very clear that our peace is the same thing as our healing, our peace with God. This is clear therefore from the whole context of Isaiah and the prophets.

It is also clear from the immediate context and structure of the verse. But there is more, if anything, even better information, more authoritative, and that is in the quotation of this verse by Simon Peter, an apostle who saw it right. In 1 Peter chapter 2, Peter is recommending that servants, even if they are beaten, even if they are abused by unkind masters, they should take it patiently.

And he says in verse 21, to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps, who committed no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth, who when he was reviled, did not revile in return, when he suffered he did not threaten, but he committed himself to him who judges righteously, who himself bore our sins in his own body, he does not agree that we having died to sins might live for righteousness by whose stripes you were healed, for you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls. I would like to make at least two important observations about this passage in Peter. One is, although he only quotes one line or one verse from Isaiah 53, and that is in verse 22, he is quoting there Isaiah 53, 9, who committed no sin, nor was guile found in his mouth, though that is the only actual quotation from Isaiah 53 in this passage, the passage is fraught with, full of allusions to Isaiah 53.

The very last line, you were like sheep going astray, is from Isaiah 53, 6, all we like sheep have gone astray. When it says in verse 23, who when he was reviled, he did not revile in return, when he suffered, he did not threaten, is like Isaiah 53, 7, which says he was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He was like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before he shears is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

Peter is alluding to that, he is practically paraphrasing it, he is just making the specific application to how Jesus fulfilled it. But you see the passage is full of Isaiah 53, just restated, at one point actually quoted, and very nearly quoted in most other places. In that context he says in verse 24, he himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we having died to sins might live unto righteousness, by whose stripes you were healed.

Now that is very clearly a paraphrase, not a very different one from the actual quote of Isaiah 53, 5, because Isaiah 53, 5 says by his stripes we are healed. Peter says by his stripes you were healed, looking back at something. Now what does Peter understand this to mean? Well interestingly it is the end of the sentence which earlier says that Jesus bore our sins in his body on the tree.

This would be a very good place for him to mention and our sicknesses too, especially if by his stripes we were healed, means physically healed of sicknesses. That would be the most logical thing for him to do and it would take only a few more pen strokes to get that thought in there. But it seems that Peter is not even thinking in this passage about sickness, it is not the problem he is addressing, he is addressing the problem of sin and of what that has done to our relationship with God.

And in that context he closes the sentence by his stripes we were healed. Now in case it is still ambiguous what he means, he says in verse 25, 4, that means because. You were like sheep going astray but you have now returned.

Now put that together, by whose stripes you were healed. You were going astray but now you are not going astray. Your backslidings have been healed.

You have wandered off from God like sheep but you have come back now. He has healed you. He has healed your backslidings.

Your broken relationship has been restored. Peter does not give any indication in this passage nor for that matter in the entire book of 1 Peter anywhere that he is considering physical sickness and physical healing as a topic of discussion. There is not a clue to this anywhere in his whole book.

Not even here. But the passage in which he quotes almost, Isaiah 53, 5, by whose stripes we were healed, he clearly is talking about something that has happened to us that has the result of Jesus bearing our sins in his body on the tree, not our sicknesses, and which is amplified by saying we were going astray like sheep but now we are back. All of this points in the same direction.

There is no evidence in the other direction. You have got two choices. Either Isaiah 53 and verse 5 is saying that Jesus purchased with his stripes our physical healing from individual personal diseases.

That is one reading of it and that is the one that holds that healing is in the atonement. Or else the healing that is spoken of in Isaiah 53, 5 is a healing of a broken relationship with God. What evidence is there for it being physical healing? None really except that the word itself is a word that means healed in other contexts in a physical sense.

But as we have seen that is hardly determinative of anything, context and citation by the apostles weighs much more heavily. What we find is the context, the structure of the verse itself and its parallelism with the previous line and the quotation in the context of Peter's statement all militate potently against the notion that Isaiah was suggesting that healing is to be found in the atonement. Now let me say this, we have looked, I think, proactively, we are not just looking to debunk something that is an unpleasant doctrine we are trying to find fault with.

We have proactively looked at these two verses in context. The way they are cited in the New Testament, what does this mean? It is answered for us. If you simply exegete the verses in the most responsible way like you would any other verse in the Bible, you reach the conclusion that neither of them is talking anything about physical healing from physical sicknesses being acquired for all believers at the whipping post.

It is true that one does speak of his stripes but it is not even clear whether this is to be understood literally of the stripes he received at the whipping post. There is a figure of speech here, he is being described as if he were a slave being beaten or a son being beaten by his father or by his master in place of someone else. The chastisement for our peace was upon him.

It certainly is the case that the literal stripes laid on Jesus' back could fall into this category, but I believe that it is saying that all the punishment Jesus received, like a slave being chastised, was for somebody else's benefit. The stripes he received in this imagery, not necessarily the literal stripes at the whipping post, but including those and other things, all the whipping, all the abuse that Jesus suffered was as if, in this imagery, that was the chastening, the stripes he received on our behalf. And the healing, if evidence means anything, has nothing to do here with physical healing of sicknesses.

Now, having said that, I don't want anyone to think that I don't believe in the physical healing of physical sicknesses, but I certainly don't want to believe something about the physical healing of sicknesses that is contrary to Scripture and the ramifications of which are horrendous. As I said earlier, if they were teaching such a thing, that every Christian who died sick would have to wonder whether they were ever really a Christian or whether they were just deluded, whether someone just told them their sins were forgiven, but there was no proof of it. You remember when Jesus saw the man paralyzed, lowered through the roof in Capernaum, probably at Peter's house, and he saw the faith of the four men who lowered him down, he said, Son, your sins are forgiven.

And there was some question as to whether that was really correct, because no one could see if that's true or not. It seemed like, I mean, anyone could claim it. Anyone could say your sins are forgiven.

It's an audacious thing to say, if not true, because, I mean, it's claiming that you have the prerogatives of God himself, who alone can forgive sins. And it offended the Pharisees, because although they heard the announcement, they could not see any evidence that it was true. And they thought he was blaspheming.

And Jesus said, well, so that you might know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. He said to the man who was paralyzed, Arise, take up your bed and walk. Before he said that, he said, what is easier? Or what is more difficult? To say your sins are forgiven, which a person could say whether it was true or not, and no one would know that he's wrong.

Or to say, take up your bed and walk, to a man, anyone could see if he had the power to do that or not, because the results would be evident. And he said, I will heal this man so that you'll know that I have the power to do what you cannot confirm with your eyesight, and that is that I also have the power to forgive. Now, this does not mean that Jesus was setting a precedent that everybody he forgave was also going to heal.

On this occasion, what he was saying is, I realize that you can't see, that you can't verify with your senses whether my announcement that he's forgiven is true or not. Therefore, I will give you something that you can see. In this case, he didn't do it every time, but he did it in this case.

When the woman taken in adultery was brought to him, and he said, I don't condemn you, go and sin no more. He was essentially saying, your sins are forgiven you. But he didn't give her some miraculous sign to prove it.

We can't say that, okay, Jesus did this to this paralyzed man, therefore we expect that every time a man is forgiven, he'll also be healed. Not necessarily, but what Jesus pointed out there is that if Jesus failed to heal on that occasion, when he said he was going to, when he said, arise and walk, if it didn't happen, that would prove that he didn't have the authority he claimed to forgive sins either. Fortunately for him and for us all, he did have the authority to heal and was able to prove.

But what if on some occasion he doesn't heal? Would that therefore prove that he has no power to forgive sins? Or more particularly, we all believe that he has the power to heal and the power to forgive sins. But let's make it individual. Suppose I don't have the faith to obtain the healing.

Does that not necessarily mean I don't have the faith to receive the benefits of the atonement of which healing is said to be a part? And if I don't have the faith to receive the benefits of the atonement, then on what conceivable basis could I claim to have assurance of my sins being forgiven? None at all. In fact, the argument would be very strong and unassailable that I am not forgiven of my sins, if I am supposed to be, and I'm also supposed to be healed. Well, I'm not healed, so maybe I should conclude I'm not forgiven either.

This is an unavoidable conclusion of this doctrine. And while I have some respect for other things that some people say who teach this doctrine, I simply cannot find it biblically. It is not taught in Scripture.

It is thought to be taught in the two verses in Isaiah that we looked at, but it is not taught there. Now, there are other verses that are sometimes brought in to bolster the argument, but they do not anywhere say that healing is in the atonement. They do talk about healing.



They say something about healing. And some of these verses we're going to look at closely and talk about the general teaching about healing in the New Testament in our next lecture. But let me show you a few scriptures.

If someone wants to prove to you that healing is in the atonement, in addition to these verses in Isaiah 53, they're likely to show you a few other verses, and I just want you to see them and see whether these verses teach such a thing. Acts chapter 14. In Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas are in the tail end of their first missionary journey.

They come to Lystra. And in Acts 14.8, we read, and the verses that follow, in Lystra, a certain man, without strength in his feet, was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man heard Paul speaking.

Paul observed him intently, and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand up straight on your feet. And he leaped and walked. Now, probably the most important line in this is that Paul saw that he had faith to be healed.

And yet, what had Paul been preaching that gave this man faith to be healed? Well, verse 7, which we didn't read, we could have, says, And they were preaching the gospel there. Okay? Here's how the argument goes. Paul was preaching the gospel.

There was a sick man. As Paul was preaching the gospel, this sick man had the faith to be healed of this physical crippled condition, and was healed. Does this not mean that the promise of healing was presented as part of the gospel? How could he then have faith to be healed from hearing merely the gospel, if there is no promise of healing in the gospel? So I think you can understand the force of the argument.

If Paul's preaching the gospel, a man hears the gospel, and upon hearing it, believes to be healed, and gets healed, well, then it seems obvious that Paul must have included some mention of healing as part of his presentation of the gospel. I will not deny this, but this is a long way from saying that Paul preached that healing is a provision of the atonement. If we already believe that, we might insert that in this passage, but it certainly is far from saying such a thing.

It seems to me that if Paul simply was telling the story of Jesus as part of his gospel presentation, which by the way he always did, whenever we read of Peter or Paul giving a specific content of their sermons, it is heavily weighted with historical information about Jesus and his ministry of doing good and healing people. We find it in Acts chapter 2, we find it in Acts chapter 10, we find it in Acts chapter 19, we have it, I mean this is basic stuff. When the gospel is preached in the New Testament, they tell about Jesus, his good deeds, his healings, his dying, his resurrecting.

In other words, they give sort of a summary of the life of Christ. Now, it is easy to see how a person believing this story, hearing it for the first time, would say, wow, Jesus

heals people. I believe he would heal me.

And Paul seeing that this man was eager to act upon that faith encouraged him to do so, and sure enough the man was healed. Fine, I have no problems with that whatsoever. I believe that in the presentation of the gospel today, if we present it the same way the apostles did, then sinners will hear of the healing power of Jesus Christ, as well as his saving power and his power to cast out demons, his power to do all kinds of things, and his wonderful care and love for people and his desire to alleviate suffering and so forth.

I mean, this is the character of Jesus who can deny this, not I. I have no interest in denying that. I wouldn't for a moment. I believe in that.

But that's not the same thing as saying that Jesus purchased my healing and therefore I can claim it. What it is saying is that the same Jesus who walked on the earth 2,000 years ago, who had the power to heal when it was the will of God for him to do so then, has the same power to heal today when it is the will of God for him to do so. And if you bear witness in your spirit, if the Holy Spirit is leading you to understand and puts faith in your heart that you are to be healed, by all means let me encourage you.

I believe in healing, but I do not believe that healing is made available to us on a contractual basis. I believe that each healing is an individual act of mercy from God. We'll establish this more fully in our next lecture on this subject.

We're running out of time and I don't want to go to all the scriptures now that make that point. But what I'm saying is I can acknowledge and I freely and gladly do so that Paul when he preached the gospel mentioned as part of his presentation the fact that Jesus healed many sick people. And this man upon hearing it had the faith that Jesus would heal him too.

And he was right. Jesus did. He was healed.

But that does not in any way tell us that part of the presentation of the gospel is that anyone who wants to at any time can claim his healing and it's given as a provision of the gospel. This verse simply doesn't teach that. You'd have to get it somewhere else and import it.

But the somewhere else where you'd have to get it would be Isaiah chapter 53 verses 4 and 5 and it isn't there. So I don't think it's here either. Max, I think it's a wonderful thing that Jesus heals and I praise God for that because I'm alive today because he does.

But that's not the same thing as saying that healing is a provision of the atonement. Another scripture is sometimes thought to prove that healing is in the atonement is found in Exodus chapter 15. Exodus chapter 15 and verse 26.

I'm picking up in the middle of a sentence because it's a long one and I don't want to

read both verses that have the whole sentence. Each verse is long in itself. But it says of God that he said in Exodus 15 26.

If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his sight, give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases on you which I've brought on the Egyptians for I am the Lord who heals you. Now that line I'm the Lord who heals you, the Lord who heals you is actually just two words Jehovah Rapha, the Lord your healer. Now it is thought that in view of this God has said that if his covenant is kept by the people then they will experience no disease because he will heal them in every case.

I would say first of all that this would be a good example of the promise of Jesus Christ. Now this is obviously much prior to that and the promise must be based on something other than Jesus' stripes. So even if we would allow and I'm not entirely unwilling to allow that he's here talking about the healing of physical diseases, though I really suspect the context teaches otherwise and I'll tell you why in a moment.

But while I'm willing to allow that God is talking about being the healer of physical sicknesses and of diseases, this in no way connects his healing with what Jesus did at the cross or at the whipping post. So again it would simply if applied to ordinary sickness it would simply be another passage about God healing. It would not be a passage about healing being a provision of the atonement.

It would not prove this particular point which is so important to prove for the Word of Faith teaching to be true but so important to be denied if we were to have any assurance of salvation. Now let me just suggest, I don't need to go into this because I've made my point, but I want to help you understand a little more what is meant when he says I will put none of these diseases on you which I put on the Egyptians for I'm Jehovah Rapha, the Lord your healer. Believe it or not, although I'm a firm believer in healing and I love the subject, I'd love to see more healings than we've seen and I'm not trying to go through the scripture and find all the statements about healing and spiritualize them and somehow remove any belief that God heals.

I'm not in that position. Yet the context itself convinces me that this is yet another case where healed is not used in the sense of what we usually mean by the healing of an individual's sickness. And I'll tell you why.

If you'll notice the context, it's not just something stated in a vacuum. It is an explanatory statement about something that has just happened in the story. It says in verse 23, Now when they came to Marah, this is of course the children of Israel when they'd only recently come out of Egypt.

They'd been slaves there and God had opened the Red Sea and they'd wandered three days in the wilderness. Now they come to a place where there's water Marah, but the

water is no good. It says the waters of Marah were bitter.

They couldn't drink in the waters of Marah because they're bitter. Therefore, the name of it was called Marah, which means bitter. And the people murmured against Moses saying, what shall we drink? So he cried out to Jehovah and Jehovah showed him a tree.

And when he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet instead of bitter. There he made a statute and an ordinance for them. And there he tested them and said, if you diligently heed the voice of the Lord, your God, and do what is right in his sight, give ear to his commandments and give, keep all his statutes.

I will put none of the diseases on you, which I brought on the Egyptians for I am the Lord who heals you. Now notice that statement, which we read earlier is in the context of God having purified or healed the bitter waters at Marah, which were undrinkable because they're so bitter, but they were made sweet by an act of Moses, a symbolic act, which probably, which brought a miracle, a miracle of transformation. Now, what is that story about? Well, with reference to God healing them, let me turn your attention back to Hosea 14 where we were a minute ago, but don't lose, don't keep your finger right there at Exodus 15.

We got to look at that passage more closely, but look at over at Hosea 14. You know what? It's not, it's not 14 either. It is actually verse chapter 11.

Forgive me. Hosea 11. Those of you who are writing in your Bibles, get angry and throw your pens at me.

You've got ink marks in there. Wrong, wrong reference. Hosea 11 verse one and following, when Israel was a child, I loved him.

Now him, of course, is a reference to Israel as a whole. It's personification of Israel as if it were a person. And out of Egypt, I called my son.

Israel was not only here considered like a person, but of God's son. You remember that Moses was to tell Pharaoh from God, God was, thus saith the Lord, Israel is my firstborn. And if you do not let my Israel go, I will kill your firstborn.

So God spoke of Israel collectively as if they were an individual, his son, his firstborn son. And so Hosea picks up the imagery from the, from Exodus. And since when Israel was a young child, I loved him.

I called my son out of Egypt. Of course, we know this is later applied to Jesus as an antitype. Verse two, and they called them as they called them.

So they went from them. They sacrificed to the baals and burned incense to carved images. This is talking about their behavior in the wilderness.

And after that, after they've been delivered, he says, I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms, but they did not know that I was the one who healed them. I drew them with gentle cords and bands of love. I was to them as those who take the yoke off of the neck.

I stooped and fed them. These are references poetically to God's care for Israel in the wilderness. He stooped and fed them.

He brought down food to them every day in the form of manna. I was like one who takes a yoke off the neck. The yoke is the image of bondage.

They were in bondage to Egypt and he took the yoke off. He delivered them. He says, they didn't know, however, that it was I who healed them.

Healed them. We read nothing in Exodus of him healing their diseases necessarily, but we do know, I mean, he may have healed their diseases too, but we do know that when they first came out of Egypt, God wanted to make sure that they knew that he was the one who healed them. But this idea of healing them connected with the Exodus in Hosea is sort of personifying the nation as a whole, sort of like Isaiah did when he talked about the nation was like a man sick from head to foot.

Well, so was Israel like a man sick in Egypt, under bondage, afflicted, beaten, just the same as what Isaiah describes the nation as later on in different circumstances, but God healed them of that circumstance. Now he says to them in Exodus 15, if they will obey his covenant, he will not put the same diseases on them that he put on Egypt. Well, what diseases did he put on Egypt? Cholera, cancer, AIDS? Not that we know of.

What he did put on Egypt were plagues. Judgments. In other words, the disease is the judgment of God.

The healing is the deliverance from the judgment of God, exactly as it is in Isaiah. So is it here. They were being chastened by God in Egypt, but then God began to chasten the Egyptians.

He put diseases, he put the disease on the Egyptians. What was that? His acts of judgment. And he says, listen, I won't judge you the way I judged Egypt if you keep my covenant.

But you know what? The book of Revelation points out that since they didn't keep his covenant, he put exactly those kinds of diseases on them. You read in Revelation, the same kinds of plagues coming on Israel as came on Egypt in the Exodus, because they didn't keep his covenant. But the point here is he's not talking about physical sicknesses on individuals.

He's talking about the nation collectively. He's the one who healed the nation. He's the

one who afflicted their enemies, and he won't afflict them similarly, but rather they'll enjoy the healing they've received from him if they keep his covenant.

But none of this is in the context necessarily of individual sicknesses of individual people. Now let me say this too. The waters of Marah are a symbol of all of this, because they were bitter, but they were made sweet by an act of God.

You know that the Israelites, the Jews today, even when they keep Passover, they have on the table a bowl of bitter herbs, and they dip their sop into the bitter herbs and eat the sop. It's a bitter tasting thing. And do you know what that represents, if you ask them? It represents the bitterness of their bondage in Egypt from which they were delivered by the Passover.

The bitter tasting herbs are a symbol to the Jews of the bitterness of their condition in Egypt. To my mind, it's not unlikely that the bitterness of the waters of Egypt were intended to symbolize the same thing. And when God turned those waters sweet, it's symbolic of him bringing out of those bitter circumstances the Jews, healing them of that disease as it were, putting that disease on the Egyptians, and healing the people.

Just as he healed the waters of Marah, the bitter waters were made sweet, so he healed the nation of Israel of their bitter experience in Egypt. And this, by the way, is a story, one of the very first stories that occurs after he had done so, after the Exodus. The previous chapter did this.

So, while I would not find any abhorrence to saying that this passage in Exodus is about physical sickness, it still wouldn't teach that healing is in the atonement, even if it was. But I think the evidence actually is in a different direction. I think it's not talking about physical healing and so forth.

And there is another scripture that is sometimes brought up, and that is Psalm 103. We're out of time here, so I've got to run this one down real fast. Psalm 103, and there we have David rejoicing, remembering the benefits of God.

He says in verse 3, "...who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases." That says God heals all your diseases. And some people think that that means that that's in the atonement, but it doesn't say so. David had been healed.

He was talking to his own soul here. David had been healed of diseases. God had done it.

God had healed him of all his previous diseases. That's what he's saying. He's reminding his soul of all that he has to be thankful about.

He'd been sick before, and now he wasn't sick anymore. All the diseases he'd ever had had, up to this point, been healed. But not by the atonement of Christ necessarily, but by the mercy of God.

Therefore, this verse and all other verses that are usually thought to teach this do not in any way, shape, or form teach that healing is in the atonement of Christ. Healing is a work of Christ, and one that he is currently continuing to involve himself in. But it is not a purchased right of the believer to claim, in the same sense that forgiveness of sins is.

Well, this brings us to the end of our session. We'll continue to talk about healing, and it's the biblical teaching next time.