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DIVINE HEALING-AS IN THE ATONEMENT

"I am the LORD that healeth thee" (Exodus 15: 26).

From the opening chapters of the Bible, throughout the subsequent unfolding of the scheme of Redemption, the story is punctuated with the sobs of the sick and suffering.

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" (Romans 5:12) is the woeful resume of the effects of the Fall. As a direct result of sin we have all of its loathsome byproducts, including disease and sickness of mind, soul, and body.

In spite of man's disobedience in the Garden, God did not allow the immediate and ultimate consequences of sin to fall upon him; but with the transgression made a way of escape.

Redemption through Christ reaches beyond the atonement for sin and the settlement of the sin question. It also includes the healing and final redemption of the body. The sacredness and importance of the body is underscored by many Scriptures. It is the house of the soul, the temple of the Holy Ghost.

Documented Old Testament evidence, together with abundant New Testament truth, gives us the necessary foundation upon which to build the superstructure of the doctrine of Divine Healing.

Not only is God at work in Eden, slaying an animal for the covering of Adam's sin and later providing a lamb for a burnt offering for Abraham, but He enters into the problem of physical suffering with a personal interest, which unequivocally identifies Him with health and physical wellbeing. God promises Israel not to afflict them with the diseases that He brought upon the Egyptians if they would observe certain moral laws and adhere to certain divine directives. (Exodus 15: 26; 23:25.)

Above and beyond all circumstances or situations in the malfunctions of universal law, God declares Himself to be completely sovereign in all things, including healing of the body of all manner of diseases, by saying, "I am the God that healeth thee."

Anticipating the possible health problem that would develop as a natural result of gregarious living and nominal neglect, God gave them specific directives in laws of sanitation and hygiene involving their public, private, and social life. (Numbers 5: 4; Leviticus 11.)

The priests were authorized to enforce the quarantine law in cases of communicable diseases, but there was a responsibility placed upon every man to guard his own health and the health of his fellowman.

Jehovah is recorded as having brought affliction upon the Egyptians. Yet we are not to understand that He is the author or originator of disease and sickness. We can accept, however, on the basis of scriptural record, the fact that God employed the instrument of affliction to achieve a higher good. (Numbers 12:10-15; 16:46-48, and the book of Job.)

To take the position that it is the highest will

of God to be sick is not in keeping with the Scriptures. Scriptural evidence is also inconclusive that it is the will of God for everyone to be healed. The only safe doctrinal position must be based on the general teachings of both the Old and the New Testaments, which provide for healing when conditions are met in the will of God. No isolated Scripture, however positive it may appear, is sufficient foundation to exploit any theory of Divine Healing.

The ray of hope that cheered the heart of every Old Testament saint is echoed in the words of Isaiah 53: 5, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."

With respect to the divine provision in the atonement for healing, New Testament writers take the position that the mission was accomplished and that the question of Divine Healing was settled on Calvary once and for all (1 Peter 2:24).

All evangelical theology agrees that Christ came into the world to settle the sin question. But we cannot overlook the fact that Christ's ministry was largely a campaign against disease, and that He viewed sickness generally as contrary to God's will.

Man's most vulnerable point for Satan's attack is possibly his physical susceptibility to disease. Satan thus wages a relentless warfare on the human race through the medium of sickness and suffering. Christ was manifest to destroy the works of the Devil. He did not operate on a physical level or through some psychic medium. His was a spiritual ministry. He healed the sick,

relieved human suffering, and cast out devils by a direct application of divine power.

There is no Bible basis for the idea that the healing ministry of Christ was to terminate with His ascension or was confined to the period of His earthly life.

He gave to the twelve disciples power over disease and devils. To the seventy He imparted the same power. To all who believe the Gospel, He commands, "these signs shall follow them that believe."

The preaching of the Gospel is calculated to produce definite results. These results are not to be confined to the saving of the souls of men; but along with this, the Apostles and their contemporaries accepted and recognized miracles of healing as the normal and natural by-products of the Gospel ministry.

The record nowhere indicates that this miraculous manifestation of divine power ended with that generation; but it has continued and will continue wherever the Gospel is preached in power and purity until Jesus comes.

Sin and physical disease are not treated by the Scripture in the same sense. Sickness is in the world as a result of sin. The physical body is subject to disease and decay and will not be completely redeemed until Christ returns.

On the other hand, we do know that one may be delivered from all sin in this life and perpetually kept by the power of God. We are only saying that not all of the material and physical benefits of the atonement are now available. They will be reserved for us until that day when this corruptible will have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.

It seems conclusive that God has and does

accomplish some things through sickness that appear to be impossible any other way. This is not because of divine insufficiency, but because of human frailties and limitations. It is undeniable that some people suffer as a direct result of sin; but others may suffer because they are good, and God can trust them and use them in this way for the greater good.

Divine Healing is a fact. It is so attested by the general pattern of the Scriptures. It is supported by unnumbered witnesses in every generation. The real problem then is how to receive it.

Divine Healing is a spiritual grace which must be received spiritually and by faith alone. A miracle of healing is unexplainable by the laws of reason. It is received through the exercise of faith, and its extent or limitation is determined by the degree of appropriated faith.

It is impossible to consistently separate the healing of the body by divine power and a moral and spiritual quality of heart and life. Basic to the stimulation and exercise of faith is moral preparation and moral purity. Faith grows and thrives only in a pure heart and a dedicated life, and healing comes only in response to active faith.

How clear and concise is the scriptural pattern. "The prayer of faith shall save the sick" (James 5: 15). "These signs shall follow them that believe . . . they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16: 18). "According to your faith be it unto you" (Matt. 9: 29). "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mark 9: 23).

Salvation is the redemption of the soul, which the Saviour purchased for us. Healing is the salvation of the body, which the Divine Healer gives to us. Divine Healing is the work of the Holy Spirit,

breaking through to the physical sphere and extending to us Christ's redemption in its powerful workings in our bodies. Thus, the body shares in the benefits of redemption. Physical healing is but a token pledge to us, confirming the promise of the final and glorious redemption of the body.

Miracles of healing in apostolic days were tangible fruits of the Gospel ministry. It is therefore the normal thing today to expect it in the propagation of the full Gospel.

Divine Healing is one of our most precious legacies. It transcends all language, uniting the human and the divine. It provides the one medium through which the church can alleviate much of the suffering of a sick and sorrowing world.