

Grace to You :: *esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Are We Physically Healed by Jesus' Stripes?

Scripture: Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24

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Most of us have heard of faith healers. They exist almost exclusively within the charismatic movement and claim to be divinely gifted to supernaturally heal the sick.

For these miracle workers to have any longevity—some of them have thriving ministries that last for decades—they need to develop the illusion of legitimacy. Sensational claims and spectacular crusades certainly play a role in drawing an enthusiastic crowd. But enthusiasm only gets you so far; they also require a façade of biblical authority. And for many of these false teachers, Isaiah 53:5 is the go-to verse, ripped from its context and contorted to fit their self-serving interpretation.

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. (Isaiah 53:5, NKJV)

Isaiah 53 is the most renowned Old Testament passage on Christ's atoning work. John MacArthur refers to it as "the first gospel" or [The Gospel According to God](#). It contains vivid and precise prophetic imagery concerning Christ's suffering and crucifixion. And the "stripes" mentioned in verse five refer to the lashes Christ received at the hands of Roman soldiers.

Word-Faith charismatic teachers routinely claim that Isaiah 53:5 is proof that physical healing is inherent in the atonement—that it was won by Christ's physical suffering. For example, Joseph Prince argues that physical healing is the right of all believers—something they can simply "confess" into reality:

But what came on [Jesus] was not just the whip stripping the flesh off His bare back, but your sicknesses and diseases. Each time He was whipped, every form of sickness and disease, including arthritis, cancer, diabetes, bird flu and dengue fever, came upon Him. "The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed."

Today, healing is your right because Jesus has paid the price for your healing. So if the devil says, "You cannot be healed," just declare, "Jesus has paid for my healing. Disease has no right to be in my body. I am healed in Jesus' name!"

Every curse of sickness that was supposed to fall on you fell on Jesus instead. He bore every one of those stripes, so that you can walk in divine health all the days of your life. The price has been paid so that you can rise up and get out of your bed of affliction! [1] <http://www.josephprince.org/daily-grace/grace-inspirations/single/by-jesus-stripes-you-are-healed>

Prince's view of the atonement is really only a potential atonement. It doesn't actually deliver you from sickness but rather gives you the ability to "rise up and get out of your bed of affliction." And how do you activate the atonement to receive the healing that's rightfully yours? Kenneth Hagin's testimony provides the answer.

Hagin staked the credibility of his healing ministry on 1 Peter 2:24—a New Testament quotation of Isaiah 53:5—and his claims regarding his personal experience of divine healing:

Some years ago, I was awakened at 1:30 A.M. with severe symptoms in my heart and chest. I knew something about such symptoms because I had been bedfast and given up to die with a heart condition as a teenager.

The Devil said to my mind, "You're going to die. This is one time you're not going to get your healing." I pulled the covers over my head and began to laugh. I didn't feel like laughing, but I just laughed anyway for about ten minutes. Finally, the Devil asked me what I was laughing about.

"I'm laughing at you!" I said. "You said I wasn't going to get my healing. Ha, ha, Mr. Devil. I don't expect to get my healing! Jesus already got it for me! Now, in case you can't read, I'll quote 1 Peter 2:24 for you." And I did.

After quoting the last phrase, "By whose stripes ye were healed," I said, "Now if we were—I was! So I don't have to get it. Jesus already got it! And because Jesus got it for me, I accept it, and claim it, and I have it. Now you just gather up your little symptoms and get out of here, Mr. Devil!" [2] Kenneth E. Hagin, *Faith Food Devotions* (Tulsa, OK: Faith Library Publications, 1998) Page unknown.

For Hagin, and countless other Word-Faith preachers like him, supernatural healings need only to be spoken into reality. Joyce Meyer expands on that idea, arguing that Satan is involved in the illegal activity of inflicting "sickness on us, and there is no good reason to let him do it."

How do you stand against sickness? For starters, plead the blood of Jesus against the sickness and over every part of your body—your immune system, your organs, your blood cells and so on. Then speak the Word over your body. You can pray, "Father, I believe it's Your will that I be in health. I believe that by the stripes of Jesus, I am healed. Your Word is health and life to my body, and it will accomplish that which You please and purpose." [3]

<http://www.joycemeyer.org/OurMinistries/Magazine/0703/Healing+and+Wholeness.htm>

So according to Joyce Meyer, healing is a right but it isn't always *fait accompli* for the Christian. It's something that's been provided for believers, but they need to successfully claim it. It needs to be confessed into reality—spoken into existence through the power of faith. Like Joseph Prince, Meyer describes a potential atonement that requires our activation. That's a cruel doctrine to inflict on Christians who have sought healing but continue to spend their lives in wheelchairs, on respirators, and under medication.

The belief that Christ's physical suffering somehow guarantees our physical healing in this life isn't merely an abuse of Scripture—it's a form of mental and spiritual torture to those who sit under such false teaching. It's a lie that has left many churchgoers disappointed with the gospel. Rather than longing for their heavenly home, they are gripped by unrealized expectations in the here and now. The sickness they struggle with leaves them feeling like failures who lack the necessary faith to claim

the healing that's rightfully theirs.

The fact that everyone still dies should be proof enough that on this side of eternity *all people* are still subject to Adam's curse. Sickness is a very real part of life in this fallen world, and no amount of claiming divine health is going to change that. Even the disciples of the early church didn't rebuke their physical ailments into oblivion—they dealt with them as best they could like everybody else.

Paul left Trophimus behind during one of his missionary journeys because of illness (2 Timothy 4:20). He recommended wine to Timothy for his "stomach and [his] frequent ailments" (1 Timothy 5:23). Epaphroditus got so sick he nearly died (Philippians 2:25–27). And sometimes God sent sickness to discipline members of His church (1 Corinthians 11:29–32).

So what does Isaiah 53:5 promise Christians if it's not an offer of immediate, unblemished health for all Christians? John MacArthur sheds clear light on the matter in his commentary on 1 Peter 2:24 (which, noted earlier, quotes from Isaiah 53:5):

Christ died for believers to separate them from sin's penalty, so it can never condemn them. The record of their sins, the indictment of guilt that had them headed for hell, was "nailed to the cross" (Colossians 2:12–14). Jesus paid their debt to God in full. In that sense, all Christians are freed from sin's penalty. They are also delivered from its dominating power and made able to live to righteousness (cf. Romans 6:16–22).

Peter describes this death to sin and becoming alive to righteousness as a healing: by His wounds you were healed. This too is borrowed from the Old Testament prophet when he wrote "by His scourging we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). Wounds is a better usage than "scourging" since the latter may give the impression that the beating of Jesus produced salvation. Both Isaiah and Peter meant the wounds of Jesus that were part of the execution process. Wounds is a general reference—a synonym for all the suffering that brought Him to death. And the healing here is spiritual, not physical. Neither Isaiah nor Peter intended physical healing as the result in these references to Christ's sufferings. Physical healing for all who believe does result from Christ's atoning work, but such healing awaits a future realization in the perfections of heaven. In resurrection glory, believers will experience no sickness, pain, suffering, or death (Revelation 21:1–4; 22:1–3). [4] John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: 1 Peter* (Chicago: Moody Press, 2004) 171–72.

To be fair, Matthew's gospel does seem to make a connection between Isaiah 53:5 and physical healings that occurred during Christ's earthly ministry:

They brought to Him many who were demon-possessed; and He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were ill. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: "He Himself took our infirmities and carried away our diseases." (Matthew 8:16–17)

But was Christ's healing ministry His end game, or did it point to an eternal cure? After all, the people he healed still died. Lazarus was raised from the dead, but he still eventually died again. People were healed but the curse wasn't reversed. Jesus died for the sins of men, but men still continued to sin. He defeated death but His followers continued to die. There is an ultimate fulfillment of Christ's atoning work that will not be realized this side of eternity (Romans 8:22–25). That's why John MacArthur rightly observes:

Those who claim that Christians should never be sick because there is healing in the atonement should also claim that Christians should never die, because Jesus also conquered death in the atonement. The central message of the gospel is deliverance from sin. It is the good news about forgiveness, not health. Christ was made sin, not disease, and He died on the cross for our sin, not our sickness. As Peter makes clear, Christ's wounds heal us from sin, not from disease. "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (1 Peter 2:24). [5] John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 8–15* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987) 19.

There is healing in Christ's atonement but it's obviously not fully realized in the present. Christians and non-Christians alike still feel the effects of the curse, and will ultimately die. Our ultimate perfect healing is certain, but it awaits us in the same way that we still await our resurrection bodies. And that shouldn't bring disappointment to this present life. Rather, it is a glorious future reality for us to anticipate with great joy.

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