

Study 10

GOD HEALS TODAY

The grace of God provides healing of the human body in answer to believing prayer (Isa. 53:4-5; Matt. 8:17).

Does God heal the sick? Healed people seem to think so. When Jesus ministered during His incarnation (His time on earth) He showed the world what the Father was like. He went about spreading the love of God by, among other things, healing the sick.

1. Read the story of the healing of Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46-52. In what ways does this story reveal the Bible's theology of healing?

Some teach that the Cross (or, "The Atonement") of Christ was and is the basis for God to be able to heal.

2. What does Exodus 15:26 reveal about healing?

Thankfully, God has designed human bodies to 'auto-heal' to a limited extent. That is, under normal circumstances, our bodies have the amazing ability to repair themselves when we tear our skin, break a bone, get infected, or catch certain viruses. Sometimes God speeds up this recovery, sometimes He heals instantly.

3. What did the Psalmist know about divine healing according to Psalm 103 (and how might he have known it)?
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God healed every major disease (except blindness) during the Old Covenant era.

WHY WOULD GOD ALLOW SICKNESS, PAIN, INJURY, OR DISEASE?

4. In what way does Deuteronomy 32:39 counter the idea that God never wills for anyone to be sick or unwell?
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5. Tick which of these reasons could be why God might allow or even ordain sickness-

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Because He is cruel and nasty | <input type="checkbox"/> To make a person a stronger |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Because He knows it will work for the benefit of the afflicted | <input type="checkbox"/> Sickness may just be the 'Law of Decay' (Rom. 8:21) at work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Because He loves to make people sick | <input type="checkbox"/> To keep doctors and Mercedes Benz salesmen in a job |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> To cause us to hope for our resurrection |

Sickness, pain, injury, and disease can be used by God for His glory. We may not always appreciate how this is possible (especially when it is us who is sick - or even worse: when it is our loved ones). It's too easy to be too simplistic about sickness by claiming that it is "of the devil" or "because of sin" or "an ancestral curse".

6. Read the account of healing in John 9:1-34. What insights about divine healing do we get from this account?

(Note the Disciples' original question; Christ's response to them; Christ's method of healing; the investigation; the 'Biblical' basis for the Jews' skepticism; the use of a miracle to convert someone.)

JESUS & HEALING

7. What does Matthew 8:16-17 and Acts 10:38 reveal about Christ and healing?

Some people have concluded that Christ always heals or always wants to heal someone. This idea doesn't seem to appreciate that divine healing is an act of God's grace.

8. Read Second Corinthians 12:7-9 and discuss whether Christ always heals those who pray for it.

You may notice that in the above passage, the grace of Christ that heals also enables people to cope with illness. Some very charismatic Bible teachers argue that if a believer has faith and is filled with the Holy Spirit, *they can not get sick*. This is called "Word of Faith" teaching or "Healing in the Atonement".

"Healing in the Atonement" refers to the idea that when Jesus died on the Cross, He died to save people from sin and to take upon Himself the effects of sin (namely: sicknesses). Proponents of this idea cite Isaiah 53:5 and First Peter 2:24 to support this view. "Healing In The Atonement" is also referred to by saying- *Jesus died for your sins and sicknesses*.

9. The Gospel of Matthew shows more than any other of the other 3 Gospels that Jesus was the fulfilment of what the Old Testament prophets foretold of the Messiah. How does Matthew 8:16-17 counter the idea of *Healing In The Atonement*?

God did not need Jesus to die in order to heal the sick. He healed people before Jesus came to earth. He healed people during the ministry of Christ (before He died). The disciples never appealed to the Cross of Christ as the basis of their belief that God could heal people.

But what about 1Peter 2:24? Upon closer examination of this text (which talks of Christ bearing sins) it becomes apparent that the "healing" Peter is referring to is 'spiritual' healing, that is, *it is salvation from sin*. This becomes even more apparent when we read the next verse (1Peter 2:25). But if we accept that healing is in the Atonement, then we have to ask why then some sick people are *not* healed.

"The only thing in existence that can limit the power of the Lord Jesus Christ is our unbelief."

Kathryn Kuhlman

Thus, many sick Christians have been condemned for their *lack of faith* when they are not healed because of this poor understanding of what the Bible says about healing. By understanding that healing is an act of God's grace, such condemnation can be avoided.

10. How does First Corinthians 12:9 reinforce that healing should be seen as a gift (grace) rather than a "right"?

11. What does James 5:14-16 say that the sick (the context seems to indicate, "dying") believer should do in some circumstances?

Our ultimate healing is not merely physical. It is *spiritual* in the sense of our broken relationship with God being healed through Christ's Atonement. This is not to undermine physical (temporal) healing, but it is to understand its importance from an eternal perspective. When we pray for people to be healed and God responds in His grace by healing them, God is glorified - thus, He has supplied a "sign" and a "wonder" to point people to the ultimate healing of our souls. There is no "law" of, or "right" to, healing. It is the result of God's grace which is activated in the recipient through God-given faith (Gal. 3:5).

Because we worship a God who heals we should pray for the sick to be healed, ask God to heal us when we are sick, and invite others to pray for us when we are sick.

Amen.