

THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF HEALING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

AN OVERVIEW

Originally, man was created sinless and healthy in body, soul, and spirit. Death and its associated degeneration of the body entered the world as a result of the sin of the first man and woman (Genesis 3).

But in this dark moment of history, the first promise of spiritual and physical healing was given. In Genesis 3:15, God said that the "seed" of the woman would bruise the head of satan. This "seed" was a prophetic promise about Jesus who, through His earthly ministry, death, and resurrection, would defeat satan.

The Genesis record contains two accounts of divine healing. In Genesis 17:18-19, God promised to heal Sara's barrenness. In Genesis 21:1-7 this was fulfilled. Genesis 20:17 records the healing of Abimelech.

In the book of Exodus, disease and divine healing more clearly enter the Biblical record. After the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the people marched for several days without finding water. When they finally came to Marah, they could not drink of the water because it was bitter.

God showed Moses a tree which, when cast into the waters, made the waters sweet. Following this God revealed Himself as Healer of His people. He said:

"...If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord that healeth thee." (Exodus 15:26)

A more accurate translation of this is "I am the Lord your physician." This indicates a habitual, continuing action.

Because this promise was first given to Israel in a specific situation, some say it applies only to them and that Christians cannot claim it. We must remember, however, that the names of God are revelations of His nature and character, and God does not change. If He was by nature a physician and healer then, He is the same today. Other specific references to healing in Exodus are the healing of Moses' leprous hand (Exodus 4:1-7) and God's promise to take away sickness from among his people (Exodus 23:25).

The book of Leviticus might be called the "health care manual" of the Bible. God reveals regulations regarding the treatment of disease (for an example see Leviticus 13:1-46; 14:1-32) and gives directives regarding healthy living (see Leviticus 15:1-33 for an example).

The book of Numbers records the healing of the leprosy of Miriam and Aaron (Numbers 12:1-15) and the healing of plagues that affected Israel (Numbers 16:41-50 and 21:5-9).

Deuteronomy 28 is a very important chapter related to healing. It explains the relation of obedience to physical health. Other passages in Deuteronomy stressing this truth include 7:15; 29:22; 30:20.

Manoah's wife was healed of barrenness in Judges 13:2-24. There are several records of healings in the book of 1 Kings. There are stories about a man with the withered hand in 1 Kings 13:4-6 and the raising of a dead child in 1 Kings 17:17-24. The record continues in 2 Kings with the healing of a child by Elisha in 2 Kings 4:8-37 and the healing of Naaman in 2 Kings 5:1-14. Study also the case of King Azariah in 2 Kings 15:1-12.

From the healing of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:1-11 we learn that God can heal terminal illness and add years to life (see also 2 Chronicles 32:24-26 and Isaiah 38:1-12,16). We also learn from 2 Kings 13:14 and 21 that death comes to all men, even those with a ministry of healing.

A great prayer of repentance related to healing is recorded in 2

Chronicles 6:26-31. II Chronicles 20:9 promises that God hears when we cry in affliction. In 2 Chronicles 16, you can read the story of Asa who died because he did not seek healing from God. His sin was not going to medical doctors, but ignoring God and His healing power. In 2 Chronicles 26, you can read about Uzziah's leprosy, and in 2 Chronicles 30:20, of the healing of the people through the prayers of Hezekiah.

The book of Job, especially chapters 1 and 2, permits us to see behind the scenes to identify the source of Job's problems, including his sickness. The book of Psalms contains many promises, revelations, and prayers concerning healing. Study the following passages:

The book of Proverbs provides wisdom regarding healthy living. Proverbs 3:7-8 explains how to be healthy. Proverbs 4:20-23 reveals that the issues of life are affected by the heart attitude and that God's promises bring life and health.

Proverbs 15:4 and 30 confirm that wholesome talk results in health and Proverbs 16:24 shows that God's Word brings healing. Proverbs 16:24 indicates that the Word of God brings healing to the bones, and Proverbs 17:22 reveals the physical affects of spiritual problems.

Ecclesiastes 3:3 confirms that there is a set time for healing, and Ecclesiastes 5:17 demonstrates how sorrow and wrath are related to sickness.

Isaiah 6:10 explains the relationship between spiritual understanding, conversion, and healing.

Isaiah 19:22 confirms that when God is entreated He heals ("entreated" means to "ask earnestly and solicit pressingly").

Isaiah 32:3-4 is a great prophetic promise of healing being part of the Kingdom of God. Isaiah 33:24 and 35:5-6 tells of healing during the Millennium and how the inhabitants will say "I am not sick."

In Isaiah 53:5, we are promised healing and deliverance through the atonement. Isaiah 57:18-19 encourages us to draw near for healing, and Isaiah 58:8 confirms that our "health shall spring forth."

In Isaiah 61:1, we learn that Jesus was sent to bind up the brokenhearted. This speaks of an inner, emotional healing.

In Jeremiah 8:14-15; 20-22, the bitterness of sin is tied to physical illness, and Jeremiah 15:18 explains how to deal with an incurable wound. Jeremiah 17:14; 30:12-17; and 33:6 confirms God is the source of healing.

Lamentations 3:33 confirms that "God does not willingly afflict." Ezekiel 17:14; 30:17; and 33:6 confirm that God can heal and restore health.

Ezekiel 30:12-13 speaks of incurable wounds medicine cannot heal. Only spiritual healing can cure these types of wounds. Ezekiel 34:4,16,21 and Zechariah 11:16 contain warnings to shepherds (spiritual leaders) who have ignored the sick sheep (people).

Daniel chapter 4 records King Nebuchadnezzar's sickness and healing. Hosea 5:13 warns of the danger of going elsewhere for healing, and Hosea 6:1 and 7:1 confirm that God can and will heal both physical and spiritual conditions. Hosea 11:3 records God's sad words about Israel: "They knew not that I healed them." The Old Testament record of healing closes with the promise in Malachi 4:2 that Jesus will arise with "healing in His wings."

OLD TESTAMENT NAMES OF GOD:

Jehovah-Jireh The Lord will provide Genesis 22:14

NT: Philippians 4:19

Jehovah-Nissi The Lord our banner Exodus 17:8-15

NT: John 15:13

Jehovah-Shalom The Lord our peace Judges 6:24

NT: Ephesians 2:14

Jehovah-Raah The Lord our shepherd Psalms 23:1

NT: John 10:11

Jehovah-Tsidkenu The Lord our righteousness Jeremiah 23:6

NT: I Corinthians 1:30

Jehovah-Shammah The Lord is present Ezekiel 48:35

NT: Hebrews 13:5

Jehovah-Rapha The Lord thy Physician Exodus 15:26

NT: James 5:15

HEALING AND THE ATONEMENT:

"Surely, He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. 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." (Isaiah 53:4-5)

Isaiah 53 is a prophetic chapter referring to Jesus Christ. Verses four and five definitely link healing to the atonement of Jesus by His death on the cross. The only use of the word "surely" in this chapter, which is a word of emphasis, precedes this provision for our salvation and healing.

Sin and sickness are satan's twin evils. Salvation and healing are God's twin provisions for deliverance. Before Calvary people were saved and healed by looking forward to it in faith. Afterwards, salvation and healing comes by looking back to it in faith.

Disease and death entered by sin and are penalties for iniquity, so their remedy must be found in the atonement of Christ. Jesus bore your sicknesses and carried your diseases at the same time and in the same manner that He bore your sins.

"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses." (Matthew 8:17)

God laid both sin and sickness on Jesus in the same atonement. Peter speaks of salvation and healing as being an accomplished fact:

"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." (1 Peter 2:24)

Since Jesus bore your sins, it must be God's will to save when you come to Him. Since He bore your sicknesses, it must also be His will to heal when you come to Him. The same God who forgives all your sin also heals all your diseases:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases." (Psalms 103:2-3)

The redemptive name "Jehovah-tsidkenu" reveals God's redemptive provision for your soul. The redemptive name "Jehovah-rapha" reveals His redemptive provision for your body.

The word "saved" in Romans 10:9 is the same word used by Mark when he said, "as many as touched him were made whole." The Greek word "sozo" used in these passages means salvation from sin and its penalty. Sickness is part of the penalty, so salvation is part of the atonement for sin.

While the atonement of Christ has guaranteed the believer's final perfection, both physical and spiritual human imperfections continue. The believer continues to suffer attacks of sin and sickness. The ultimate benefits of Christ's atonement are yet to be revealed. We are...

"...kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:5)

The benefits of salvation to be revealed in eternity are those of physical and spiritual perfection. We still battle sin and sickness while we are in this world.

There is a past, present, and future tense of salvation:

- Past: You are saved from the penalty of sins committed in the past.

- Present: You are saved from the power of sin in the present.
- Future: You will be saved from the presence of sin in the future (eternity).

The same is true of healing. You are saved from the penalty of sickness for your sin. You can overcome the power of disease in the present time and be saved from the actual presence of disease in eternity. Since healing is a benefit of the atonement, you should accept Jesus not only as Savior, but also as Healer. How can He keep you from sin if you have never accepted Him as Savior? How can He keep you from sickness if you have never accepted Him as Healer?