

## **Barratt Ministries Challenge**

### **Issue 74**

#### **Healing In The Cross?**

#### **The Kingdom Series Part 13**

*by Alex Robertson*

The so-called 'prosperity gospel' promotes a lifestyle of 'health and wealth' for Christians.

They say that because we are Christians we have a right to be rich and a right to be completely free from sickness. We have already dealt with the question of wealth and seen how the 'prosperity gospel' has no support whatsoever in the New Testament, neither in the lifestyle of Jesus nor of the apostles or the early Christians. But what about health?

#### **Seeking an understanding of healing**

Ever since the Pentecostal revival in the early days of the 20th century, God's healing power has been manifested in a glorious way, bringing tremendous blessing to many. The Pentecostals realized that they had to incorporate healing into their theological understanding, and using scriptures like "by his stripes we are healed" they generally came to the conclusion that healing was part of the work of the atonement, that is, that Jesus died to save us from sickness as well as to save us from sin. Different Pentecostal movements understood this in differing ways, but in its most radical form, they argued that Jesus paid the price for us to be healthy, to live in 'divine health'.

In the Old Testament a permanent physical sickness or disability was seen as a sign that there was something wrong spiritually. Priests with "blemishes", disabilities or malformations, were not allowed to minister (see for example Leviticus 21:17-23). This thinking was still current during Jesus' day, and the apostles, seeing a man who had been born blind, asked Jesus, "Master, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" They automatically discounted any other possibility. Someone had sinned somewhere along the line, otherwise the man wouldn't have been born blind. Jesus, however, went right against their thinking and said that neither he nor his parents had sinned to cause this, but it was so that "the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:2,3).

Let me make my position clear straight away and say that I believe in the healing power of God today. I also believe that in one sense, healing is ultimately included in the work of the cross, the atonement, the reconciliation between man and God. But just as we have not yet entered into the fulness of some aspects of our salvation, for example, the resurrection of the body, even though the price has been paid to accomplish that, so it is with healing.

Teachers from the 'faith movement' like Kenneth Hagin and Kenneth Copeland, who promote the most radical version of this doctrine, have always said that we have been made as free from sickness as from sin. If we are sick, it is our fault, for one of 3 reasons: either we are ignorant of the fact that

we can claim our healing from God, or we don't have enough faith, or there is sin in our lives. But within the Assemblies of God, one of the two main Pentecostal denominations in the UK, there has been much debate recently about this issue, and David Petts, head of the AOG bible college, sought to revise the AOG constitution on this point. He quotes a tragic case as an example of where adherence to this doctrine can lead: "The parents of 11-year-old Wesley Parker threw away his insulin, trusting in the doctrine that healing is in the atonement. Refusing to see a doctor, they watched Wesley die in agony. Even then, in an attempt to exercise faith, they planned a 'resurrection service' instead of a funeral. After the service they were arrested, found guilty of child abuse and imprisoned."

An extreme example, but lesser examples abound, and people who find that the doctrine 'doesn't work' are told by these teachers that the fact they are not healed is their fault – they must be either lacking in faith, or else there is sin in their lives. They become burdened by condemnation and even shunned by other believers if their sickness persists. The 'faith teachers' have effectively turned what should be a blessing – the fact that Jesus does heal today – into a curse for the thousands of Christians who are not healed, despite their prayers and their faith. This has happened because thousands of believers have listened to and believed unscriptural lies from false teachers.

### **What the scriptures say**

What do the scriptures say, then? What does the New Testament have to say to us about whether physical healing is in the atonement? One of the two main so-called 'proof texts' used by those who promote this doctrine is Matthew 8:17, where Jesus "healed all that were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, He himself took our infirmities and carried our diseases". The problem with using this as a proof text for the fact that healing is in the work of the cross is that this prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus' ministry before the cross. If healing is a consequence of the atonement, how could Jesus heal before the cross?

The other scripture is 1 Peter 2:24 – "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". Peter clearly is talking about the atonement here, but he is just as clearly not talking about physical healing. Look at Isaiah 53:5-12, the Old Testament reference for this quote, and see how many times the words 'sin', 'iniquity', and 'transgression' appear – but never the word sickness. The 'healing' referred to in Peter and Isaiah is, in context, obviously the healing of a broken relationship – a reconciliation, in other words. To emphasize this point, Peter adds in the next verse, "For you were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the shepherd and bishop of your souls" (v 25). The straying sheep is restored, the broken relationship is healed.

There are many scriptural reasons to argue that physical healing is not included in the atonement. For instance, there are many sacrifices for sin in the Old Testament (sin offerings, trespass offerings, guilt offerings, etc.), and they are all 'types' of the sacrifice of Christ. If healing from physical sickness is in the atonement, shouldn't there be an Old Testament sacrifice or 'type' of it? But there is none. There are no sacrifices for sickness in the Old Testament.

## **Sickness needs no atonement**

It is also clear from the bible that sickness actually needs no atonement. It is sin that incurs God's wrath and brings about the separation between man and God, therefore sin clearly needs atoning for. But sickness or disease does not incur God's wrath or separate me from God, so how can sickness need atoning for?

We can see here a fundamental difference between sin and sickness, which is at the root of understanding this issue. Sin is the cause of the fall; but sickness is one of the consequences of the fall. Once we realize this difference we can appreciate why God sees sin and sickness differently and deals with them differently. The purpose of the cross was to deal with the cause of the fall, sin, but the cross did not deal immediately with the consequences of the fall. For example, one of the consequences of the fall is death. But death is still with us. Yes, it is true that death is eventually dealt with because of the work of the cross; but freedom from death is obviously not ours to claim yet, and will not be until we are resurrected. With other consequences of the fall we see the same thing. Take for example God's curse on the ground, another consequence of the fall (Genesis 3:17-19). The effects of that curse have not yet been removed, despite the cross, and they will not be removed until the future, when "creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption" (Romans 8:21) – also at the time of the resurrection. So sickness, being another consequence of the fall, is dealt with in the same way and at the same time as death, when the other consequences of God's curse on man are removed – when we are resurrected. In Revelation we see the time when there is "no more curse", and "no more death, no more sorrow, no more crying, no more pain" (Revelation 22:3, 21:4). Sickness is eventually removed, and it is true to say that it is removed because of the work of the cross; but we can say equally that we cannot claim total freedom from sickness now by right, no more than we can claim freedom from physical death.

## **No formulas**

So the fulness of our deliverance from sickness and death lies in the future; but nevertheless we do have a foretaste of this deliverance now. When Jesus was alive he raised some people from the dead and he healed some sicknesses. And today, Jesus still heals, and some people have been raised from the dead in Jesus' name. But not all. This is where the teachers in the 'faith movement' go wrong: there is no formula or divine law that we can 'tap into' to claim healing from sickness. We can always pray for healing, and we may receive it. But if we are healed, it is because of God's grace, not because we have invoked a law.

Why am I saying 'healing in the atonement' is a doctrine of the counterfeit kingdom? Because all the counterfeit kingdom doctrines are about victory, domination and success in this life, things which we can claim as a 'divine right'; whereas Jesus never promises us a successful, trouble-free, comfortable life in this world if we follow him. Quite the opposite, Jesus clearly warned us that we would face tribulation and suffering in this world, and Paul stated that if we live godly lives we shall be persecuted, but if we suffer we shall reign with Christ (John 16:33, 2 Timothy 3:12, 2:12). There may be a 'foretaste' of healing now, but the promise is for the future, when Christ returns in his kingdom.

## EXPERIENCES FROM LIFE

*by Joanna Barratt*

### **'Circumstances' is spelt G-O-D**

It caused a great stir in our neighbourhood when my mother was miraculously healed by God. Indeed, it caused a sensation in our household because Mum was like a new woman. God had completely restored her physical body of the complaint she'd had for 9 years.

The problem occurred when I was born. The umbilical cord had been wrapped around my neck and when the doctors were freeing me, they accidentally cut my mother's womb which brought on much misery as a consequence. She ended up with a septic pelvis, fibroids and suffered a prolapse. After this incident she had 3 major operations but none were successful and only left her in constant pain. During this 9 year period she had become pregnant a few times but the foetuses had come away in her own home. It was a very distressing time for Mum, as well as the whole family. She did managed to carry a baby and my premature sister was born when I was 6 years old. Mum had a horrendous time giving birth to this child and was terrified of ever becoming pregnant again. But when I was 9 years old she found that her worst nightmare had come true.

It was when I was 9 years old that Mum and Dad were reintroduced to Jesus. Mum knew about him and had gone to Sunday School in her childhood but had forgotten all she had learned as other things became more important in her life. But as soon as Mum asked Jesus to come into her life he changed everything, including her health, and he miraculously – instantly – healed her.

Since joining the church where my mother was healed, I witnessed many times the miraculous healing power of God. I have no doubt whatsoever that my God can, and does, do amazing things to restore peoples bodies and lives. In fact I received a miracle from God myself. Since being a child I was dogged with rheumatic pains in my legs. When the weather was cold or damp I would be in agony. I was a better guide than the weather forecast man on the TV as my legs told me when it would rain. In an effort to relieve the pain I would put hot water bottles on my legs and raise my feet above the level of my head. As I got older the pain just seemed to get worse and sometimes my knees and legs would be chilled right through to the bones causing me to cry out in agony for God to help me. I prayed many times, and even asked for prayer in my church many times, but the pain always returned.

When I was about 25 years old I was sitting in a church meeting when my Pastor was told by God that there were people in the church who were suffering in their legs. I was so desperate for God to do something for me that, even though a few other people went forward in response to this revelation, I felt that God was specifically calling out to me and so went forward for prayer. I didn't feel anything in particular when I was prayed for because at that point in time I wasn't suffering any rheumatic pain, but I never had it again, and I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God miraculously healed me that very moment.

### **Not just people ...**

God is not only concerned with people either ... About 3 years ago I was tickling one of my 2 cats on his tummy and felt a large, hard lump. I couldn't work out what it could be. After a couple of weeks it had grown bigger so I decided to take it to a friend of mine to look at as she was a Vet. She told me that Max had a malignant cyst which would not go away by itself and needed removing immediately otherwise he would be seriously ill, then quoted a figure for the operation which nearly made me fall over. I certainly couldn't justify spending such a large amount of money on my cat. I decided to adopt the same attitude with this animal as I did with the rest of the family – that is to take it to the Lord and ask for him to heal it.

I talked the situation over with my 3 children and told them exactly what had happened. Then we all agreed that we would pray for Max and ask God to heal him. Every day I would say a prayer and then Nathan (10), Izaak (7) and Tamar (3) prayed for Max, placing their hands on the cyst as they did so, and God answered. It took a couple of weeks. But each time we laid our hands upon him and prayed, we would notice that the lump had become smaller until it eventually disappeared completely. This really built up my children's faith in God and it was so wonderful for them to know that God will care even for our animal friends.

### **'Blessed' with sickness**

There are other times though when God does some rather strange and mysterious things. I have not only received healing from God, but have also been blessed with sickness. I say 'blessed' because it was through sickness that God chastised and redirected me.

I had been singing and playing the organ in church for a number of years but found the pull of the world extremely strong. When you become a Christian as a child you don't escape having to face all the worldly temptations that everybody else faces as you develop into adulthood. After the meetings I would put the cover on the organ and slip out of the church so that I could dash home to get changed into my night gear and lived a double life. I wasn't happy about the situation, my conscience was a real pain and gave me no end of trouble. I knew I would be banned from the platform if I was found out and was ashamed of my behaviour. But I did it so often that I found I had become ensnared and was powerless to stop what I had started.

Fortunately, God knows how to deal with his children, especially me, and he put me on my back with a strong dose of influenza. I was so poorly that the doctor remonstrated with me for going into his surgery in my condition. He said I should be at home in bed and demanded that I return immediately. I was extremely weak and was ill for a whole week. But during this time God dealt with me very severely in quite a remarkable fashion, and at the end of the week I had such unnatural backbone and strength that I cut off all my ungodly relationships and renewed my commitment to serve God with all my heart. I told God that if he still wanted me after all I had done then he could have me. I was amazed that God would go to such lengths to let me know he loved me.

## **A nasty accident**

At the beginning of this year Maurice and I had a family holiday in Scotland. On the very last day of our holiday, whilst Nathan and Izaac were watching a video in the chalet, Maurice, Tamar and I went for a little walk and ended up at the dri-ski slope - which wasn't so dry now as it had unexpectedly been snowing quite heavily. On the ground at the bottom of the slope was what looked like a plastic padded mattress. We thought it would be fun to all sit together on it and slide down the slope so we hauled it to the half way ledge and slid down. We all had a bit of a thrill and then Tamar suggested we took it all the way to the top. It didn't look that far, and we hadn't come down so fast that we had reached the end of the run on our last journey so Maurice thought it would be OK. But we didn't bargain for what happened next. Tamar sat in between Maurice and myself as we pushed ourselves off, but at the half way ledge we began to turn round so that now we were going down the slope backwards and were travelling at around 25 miles per hour. It all happened so suddenly, but the next thing we knew was that we had hit the railings at the end of the run. Fortunately, Tamar had been jolted off, and I was cushioned by Maurice, but he got the full impact of the accident as his left shoulder and back were smashed into the iron railings. He slumped forward with a moan and lay motionless in the snow for about 10 minutes. Tamar was fine, I had suffered some whiplash to my neck, but Maurice was badly damaged. We managed to struggle back to the chalet where he lay down. It was a very tragic incident, but we knew that God had allowed it. God had been telling Maurice through 'words' and visions that before he could use him properly he would have to 'kill his flesh' so that he alone would get the glory, and this was God's way of emphasising the point. We just knew it. Maurice didn't bother going to the doctor even though the pain was so severe it stopped him sleeping for 6 whole months. We have found that it's better to go through the trials rather than pray to get out of them, so that God can do his work in our lives.

## **Nothing happens without God**

It is noticeable that non-Christians often receive healing from God very easily, with no faith! But it seems to be very different for Christians. James says we should call for the elders of the church, confess our sins and the prayer of faith will save us. The Bible says God chastises his children and we must not despise the correction of the Lord. But often we don't recognise what is happening when God deals with us, thinking it is an act of the devil. Since we had the revelation that nothing could happen to us unless God allowed it – as with Job – we never have any problems with the devil. Those who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength! Pleasing God and obeying his instructions are the main issues now.