

Associated Gospel Churches - Articles of Faith and Doctrine

Divine Healing of the Body

February 19, 2006

Divine Healing of the Body

XIX. Divine Healing of the Body

We believe that divine healing of the body is not in the Atonement in the sense that salvation and forgiveness of sins are in the Atonement. The suffering and death of Christ according to the New Testament was substitutionary, penal and vicarious. It is nowhere taught in Scripture that Christ died for the effects of sin but for sin, and sickness is directly or indirectly the effect of sin.

Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Context of the Article**
 - not present in original AGC Articles of Faith
 - appears to have been added in 1980s (with articles on Baptism with the Holy Spirit and Gifts of the Holy Spirit) in response to increasing influence of charismatic doctrines
 - **charismatic groups typically teach that divine healing of the body *IS* part of the Atonement, and that healing and good health are therefore available to all believers through faith**

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Assemblies of God – 16 Fundamental Truths**

“12. Divine healing is an integral part of the gospel. Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the atonement, and is the privilege of all believers.”

Isaiah 53:4,5

Matthew 8:16,17

James 5:14-16

(from www.ag.org)

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Statement of Faith from a non-Pentecostal charismatic church**

“We believe that divine healing and health through faith is provided for all in the Atonement.”

Isaiah 53:4-5; Matthew 8:17; I Peter 2:24; James 5:15

(from www.kcf.org)

Divine Healing of the Body

- **The controversy**
 - **Disagreement on Divine Healing of the Body centres on several issues:**
 - **the nature and scope of the Atonement**
 - **to a lesser extent, the nature and availability today of ‘miraculous’ gifts of the Holy Spirit (especially healing)**
 - **cessationism debate (see Article XIII – The Gifts of the Holy Spirit)**

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Atonement**

- **the work Christ did in His life and death to earn our salvation**

- **AGC article VIII on The Atonement of the Blood of Christ focuses on Christ's sufferings and death on the Cross on our behalf so our sins could be forgiven (“*passive*” obedience)**
 - **many theologians would include in the Atonement Christ's life of perfect obedience to earn righteousness for us so we could have favor and eternal life with God (“*active*” obedience)**

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Charismatic line of reasoning**

- **in the Atonement, Christ provided not only for our sins, but also for the consequences/effects of our sins**

“It is also clear, however, that atonement brought release from the penalty and consequences of sin in order to bring restoration to God’s blessing and favor... this atonement provided not only for the sin but the consequences of sin...”

...Again, atonement provides for the consequences of sin. Even where sickness is not the direct result of sin, it is still in the world because of sin. Therefore it is among the works of the devil Jesus came to destroy (1 John 3:8) and is thus included in the atonement.”

(from Assemblies of God official Position Paper on Divine Healing: An Integral Part of the Gospel, www.ag.org)

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Charismatic line of reasoning**
 - **sickness is, directly or indirectly, a consequence of sin**
 - **thus, healing and deliverance from sickness are the privilege of all believers and are available to all through faith**

“Deliverance from sickness is provided for in the atonement, and is the privilege of all believers.” (www.ag.org)

“We believe that divine healing and health through faith is provided for all in the Atonement.” (www.kcf.org)

Divine Healing of the Body

- Charismatic line of reasoning
 - some Scriptures used to support charismatic position

“Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:4-5)
 - charismatics use this passage to suggest that Christ’s wounds brought us not just peace with God, but also healing of the body

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Charismatic line of reasoning**
 - some Scriptures used to support charismatic position
- **“When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to Him, and He drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: ‘He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.’” (Matthew 8:16-17)**
 - **argue from this that divine healing is integral to the Gospel and fulfills Isaiah 53:4-5, which speaks not just of spiritual healing, but of physical healing as well**

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Charismatic line of reasoning**
 - some Scriptures used to support charismatic position
- “Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.” (James 5:14-16)**
- argue from this passage that healing is promised to all and available to all through faith

Divine Healing of the Body

- **AGC position**

- **divine healing is *NOT* in the Atonement, at least not in the same sense that salvation and forgiveness of sins are in the Atonement**

- **Christ's suffering and death primarily a judicial act - "substitutionary, penal and vicarious"**
- **Christ died not "for the effects of sin but for sin"**
- **"sickness is directly or indirectly the effect of sin"**

Divine Healing of the Body

- **AGC position**
 - consistent with basically cessationist view of ‘charismatic’ gifts of the Holy Spirit, including healing
 - primary purpose of gifts like healing was for authentication of God’s messengers of revelation
 - with the completion of Scripture, the primary purpose of these gifts is finished
 - many cessationists point out that most ‘healings’ done by those claiming gifts of healing today bear little resemblance to NT accounts of healing by Jesus or the apostles (e.g. clear and irrefutable healing of people with known organic disease)

Divine Healing of the Body

- AGC position

- Scripture references

“He was *delivered over to death for our sins* and was raised to life for our justification.” (Romans 4:25)

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ *died for our sins* according to the Scriptures...” (1 Cor. 15:3)

“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Cor. 5:21)

“For Christ *died for sins* once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.” (1 Pet. 3:18)

Divine Healing of the Body

- AGC position

- Scripture references

“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)

- Peter quotes Isaiah 53:5 – context shows that primary application of reference to ‘healing’ is to the forgiveness of sins, not to physical healing

Divine Healing of the Body

- AGC position

- Scripture references

“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24)

- Isaiah 53:4-5 speaks figuratively of *spiritual* healing, not physical healing
 - cf. Isaiah 1:4-6 – “Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt... Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness – only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil.”

Divine Healing of the Body

- **AGC position**

- response to Scriptures cited by charismatics

- **Matthew 8:16-17**

- refers to Jesus' compassion resulting in His healing people, not to the notion that healing for all is available in the atonement

- **James 5:14-16**

- encourages those who are sick to pray for healing, but does not guarantee healing to all who ask

- prayer and anointing with oil must be done “in the name of the Lord” (i.e. in accordance with His will)

- cf. John 14:13-14: ‘And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.’

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Problems with the charismatic position**
 - seems to confuse ‘already’ with ‘not yet’ aspects of Christian life
 - **Bible does promise ‘complete healing’ of the body for all believers (i.e. redemption of the body) at Christ’s return (e.g. 1 Cor. 15:50-54), as well as eternal life in heaven with “no more death or mourning or crying or pain” (Rev. 21:4)**
 - these promises were secured for all believers through Christ’s work of atonement
 - *in this sense*, there *IS* divine healing of the body in the Atonement – but only at His return
 - complete possession of all the benefits Christ purchased for us will come only “when He comes” (1 Cor. 15:23) – not here & now

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Problems with the charismatic position**
 - fails to acknowledge God's sovereign and good purposes in sickness
 - **God does not always choose to grant healing or good health to all believers**

“But I think it necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus... For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died...” (Phil. 2:25-27)

“...I left Trophimus sick in Miletus.” (2 Tim. 4:20)

“Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.”

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Problems with the charismatic position**

- fails to acknowledge God's sovereign and good purposes in sickness

- **God uses suffering – sometimes in the form of sickness – for His own purposes, to shape and discipline us for our good**

“And we know that in *ALL* things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.”
(Rom. 8:28)

“Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?... Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness.”
(Heb. 12:7,10)

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Problems with the charismatic position**

- fails to acknowledge God's sovereign and good purposes in sickness

- **God used sickness to bring the Gospel to the Galatians**

- “As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you. Even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus Himself... I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me.” (Gal. 4:13-15)

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Problems with the charismatic position**

- fails to acknowledge God's sovereign and good purposes in sickness

- **God may use sickness to draw us closer to Him**

- “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I obey your word... It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.” (Psalm 119:67,71)

- “For God does speak – now one way, now another – though man may not perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night... Or a man may be chastened on a bed of pain with constant distress in his bones, so that his very being finds food repulsive and his soul loathes the choicest meal.” (Job 33:14-20)

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Problems with the charismatic position**

- tends to blame the sick person for lack of faith if healing does not happen

- **healing is available to all in the Atonement through faith, thus**
lack of healing = lack of faith

“My sister got down to 79 pounds. The Lord kept telling me that she was going to die. I kept asking the Lord why I couldn’t change the outcome. He told me she had had five years in which she could have studied the Word and built up her faith (she was saved), but she hadn’t done it. He told me she was going to die, and she did. This is a sad example, but it’s so true.”

-K. Hagin, on his sister’s death from cancer, in *Praying to Get Results*, 1983; as quoted by MacArthur in *Charismatic Chaos*, p.283

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Problems with the charismatic position**
 - **tends to blame the sick person for lack of faith if healing does not happen**

“I pointed my finger at her and said, ‘Sister, you don’t have an ounce of faith, do you?’ (She was saved and baptized with the Holy Spirit, but I meant she didn’t have faith for her healing.)

Without thinking, she blurted out, ‘No, brother Hagin, I don’t! I don’t believe I’ll ever be healed. I’ll go to my grave from this chair.’ She said it, and she did it.

We weren’t to blame.”

-K. Hagin, on a woman he was unable to heal of arthritis, in *Praying to Get Results*, 1983; as quoted by MacArthur in *Charismatic Chaos*, p.283-284.

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Summary**

- **AGC - Points of agreement with charismatics**

- **Jesus Christ suffered and died for our sins**

- **the Atonement secures complete healing (i.e. redemption) of our bodies at the last day**

- **in this sense, divine healing of the body *IS* in the Atonement**

- **Christians should pray for healing in the name of the Lord, in faith that He can and does still heal**

Divine Healing of the Body

- **Summary**

- **AGC - Points of disagreement with charismatics**

- **Divine healing of the body is *not* in the Atonement, in the same sense that salvation and forgiveness of sins are in the Atonement**

- **i.e. in the sense that Jesus Christ's suffering and death means that healing is always available for all believers here and now, as long as they have faith**

- **charismatic position fails to acknowledge God's purposes in sickness and results in destructive consequences in people's lives (e.g. blaming the sick person)**

Next class

The Pre-Millennial Coming of Our Lord

February 26, 2006

References

- Grudem, W. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p. 355-375, 1063-1069.
- MacArthur, J.F. *Charismatic Chaos*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), p.103-104, 194-219, 264-290.