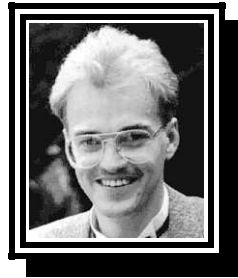


Reconciliation and Healing of Persons
ST514

"Part Two"



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1. Question Seven: Healing in the Atonement

1.1. The Atonement

1.1.1. Salvation

The central notion of our faith is that Christ has saved us. Our Salvation was accomplished by Him on the cross at calvary (Rom 5:1-2). We are reconciled to God through Him. We are set free from sin through Him.

Before that sin was our master. In our selfishness we would not acknowledge God and we were blind to his genuine love for us. We could not do what we recognized as good (Rom 7:13-23). We were full of mistrust and fear.

On the cross God has shown us His love and His desire to restore his relationship with us. Here we see that His aim was not to destroy us but to restore us into His love. Salvation is restoration into the relationship with God and simultaneously God's victory over the effects of sin¹.

In the resurrection God's ultimate victory over sin is realized. Death could not destroy the One who was loved by God. Christ's resurrection is the final overthrow of sin and death in this world and our promise for the world to come.

1.1.2. Forgiveness of our sins and the eternal life

The atonement provides forgiveness so that there is now "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Forgiveness here is the assurance that God does not regard our sin in our relationship to Him.

In raising Christ from the dead He gives us a sign of the validity of this promise, which still is a promise since God's judgment day has not come yet. Forgiveness is therefore experienced here as something from the future becoming a reality in our life².

John 4:24 promises eternal life for believers in Jesus Christ. This too is a promise that will be realized in the future. Yet here we live and die in this world. There is this tension between what is yet to come and the radiance of the last things breaking into our lives. The atonement is essentially the door to another age to come. It is the kingdom of God breaking into the world but not yet fully realized.

1.2. The Eucharist (Communion)

1.2.1. Memorial Feast

The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's death as expressed by Paul in 1 Cor 11:25-26³:

In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

¹Krauss Jesus Christ our Lord p.167- This is a different concept than the legalistic concept of salvation. I think it is more fitting and can be better understood by our congregation. The satisfaction theory of Anselm is very difficult to understand and to explain for Western Society since there is no code of honor anymore.

²Ray Anderson, Syllabus for ST514 p. 41

³Discussed by Zwingli in Hans J. Hillebrand The Protestant Reformation p. 115

We are "proclaiming the Lord's death" in that we remind us and others of His death for us and of the future that awaits us when He comes back.

1.2.2. Not to be abused

The Eucharist has no healing power in itself as expressed by Paul. Its power is that it reminds us of the basic truths of our faith. The name "Eucharist" means thanksgiving. It is a time of worshipping our Lord in our fellowship.

God may give healing to people in this time but the Eucharist should be focused on worship rather than on ourselves. The passage from Corinthians continues with a stern warning to not take the Eucharist in an unworthy manner. The Corinthians had brought judgment against themselves which resulted in illnesses and even deaths⁴.

1.3. Healing Ministry

You are probably wondering when I finally will come to speak about the issue of our projecting Healing Ministry. I have included the short introductions above to be sure that we are working on the right groundwork.

1.3.1. Healing in New Testament

The New Testament - especially the first three Gospels - are full of reports where Jesus heals or the disciples heal. The same is true for Acts. Healing Ministry was an important part of evangelism in the first century. Nowhere do we find any connection with the Lord's Supper. Healings are some sparks of the future that is to come. Although there is healing there is still the time of death coming for us all.

The most drastic illustration in the New Testament is the resurrection of Lazarus in John 11:1-44. A great miracle, but Lazarus is not among us anymore and must have died a second time later. Healing is a provisional thing, a sign of the future that is still not here. Ultimately all our healing is for nothing since we all die. Only at the resurrection will our victory over sickness be complete and we will be given a new spiritual body⁵.

1.3.2. Illnesses in New Testament

There is evidence in the New Testament that even Paul did not heal everybody. Paul had to leave Trophimus in Miletus because he was sick (2 Tim 4:20). Epaphroditus recovered from a nearly fatal illness (Phil 2:25-), Timothy was advised to take some wine with water for his stomach problems (2 Tim 5:29). On the other hand Paul could heal all persons on occasion like when he was stranded in Malta (Acts 28:9)⁶.

1.3.3. By Grace alone

It is the grace of God that heals not our own efforts. The two sided report from the New Testament suggests that there are occasions when God heals and there are occasions when

⁴The abuse of the Lord's Supper seemed to have been the neglect of the poor. The Eucharist was a real meal and some stayed hungry others had plenty. In this form the Lord's Supper did not display the unity of the body of Christ (Heiko Krimmer Bibelkommentar: Erster Korinther-Brief p.254-).

⁵Ken Blue Authority to Heal p. 112

⁶D.R. McConnel p. 159, Ken Blue p. 107

he does not. The question why God does not intervene in one incident is very difficult to answer. For some reflection on why God not intervenes read the Book of Job⁷. A comparison of healing to preaching might be in order. There are some days when a preacher is inspired and preaching very effectively and there are some days when he is not. It depends on many circumstances some in our control some not⁸.

1.4. Dangers

1.4.1. Fear of Healing Ministry

Healing is the sign of the coming Kingdom of God, the Kingdom that is already among us⁹. Therefore the church is called to minister in a healing ministry. The Holy Spirit was Jesus' source of healing. In the same way the Holy Spirit is with us and works healing through us (John 14:12)¹⁰.

Many are not comfortable with healing ministry since it is not controllable like other parts of our modern western world. There is the fear of embarrassment if healing does not take place. The fear of raising false hopes and the fear that others "discover" the ministers spiritual incompetence.

False hopes do not have to be raised. There is no guarantee of healing and that should be made clear beforehand. There are different gifts in the church and a minister must not necessarily be especially gifted with healing. His primary function is usually the preaching of the word. Others might be more gifted in praying for the sick¹¹.

1.4.2. Denial of Healing

Healing is often found as offensive to our modern rational minds who cannot accept the reality of a God that intervenes in life. It is certainly true that there are many factors that contribute to healing. But to claim exclusively rational and emotional reasons for healing is a one sided view¹². With the knowledge of science increasing our awareness increases that there are a lot of incalculable reasons for healing.

1.4.3. God heals always

This is not true. Even in the Bible there are examples in the ministry of Paul where people were not healed (see above). There are illnesses around and we tend to get sick from a flu and other illnesses¹³. God's reasons for not healing can be diverse. Sickness can in some

⁷There is no answer except that God is God and it is impossible to reason with God. The only recourse there is for us to trust him.

⁸Ken Blue p. 108

⁹MacArthur Divine Healing Today p. 65 especially. Teaches that healing has passed with apostolic age. The question then comes up if God does intervene at all in our world. The role of the miracles was the authentication of God's messengers. Do we not need this authentication today?

¹⁰C.P. Wagner How to have a Healing Ministry without making your church sick p. 113-114

¹¹Ken Blue p. 114

¹²McConnel claims that healings are due to "natural" powers of the body or other influence and essentially independent of a healing ministry (page 148-149). He assumes that a large part of healings are faked and that people are just denying their symptoms in order to assert their faith in being healed. A theology of faith-healing like this would be disastrous.

¹³McConnel p. 159

cases be beneficial and even fruitful for ministry like for example Joni Eareckson, or Paul with his thorn in the flesh¹⁴.

It has to be avoided that people go away thinking they did not have enough faith to be healed. Faith is trust in God and not a magical material that causes God to heal a person¹⁵.

1.4.4. Second Class Christians?

It has to be avoided that the ones not administering healing or the ones not experiencing healing are classified as secondary Christians. One can be fully saved and sanctified without experiencing healing. Healing is also not normative for general ministry. One cannot say that a church without a healing ministry cannot have a powerful ministry or is apostate¹⁶.

¹⁴Assuming this was an illness. See Wagner p. 110-111, Unknown Reasons for illnesses p.257

¹⁵C.P. Wagner p. 120- He has a long section on the distinction of different kinds of faith.

¹⁶C.P. Wagner p. 106-107, A critique of Hagin who believes this can be found in pages 117-. Hagin also advocates "faith" in healing to generate healing. Admitting symptoms is sign of unbelief and disqualifies from healing.