

No.25, The Ultimate Healing of the Body

In Rom 8: 23 the Apostle speaks of the redemption of the body. By this language he is teaching that it is the will of God that the bodies of believers should be delivered from all the consequences of sin in the form of sickness, disease and death itself. Moreover, by using the word *redemption* Paul is teaching that this deliverance of the body comes as a result of the atonement made by Christ, for the word *redemption* is inseparably connected with the work of Christ for His people in His atoning death. However, the crucial issue in view in the light of this verse pertains to the time when the body of the believer comes into the experience and enjoyment of the redemption that Christ has purchased for it.

At this point it is necessary to comment on the Pentecostal/Charismatic teaching known as *healing in the atonement*. The argument is advanced that *sickness* has been atoned for by Christ as well as *sin*. Therefore, it is concluded that healing should be preached as well as forgiveness. The passage used to support this notion is Matt 8: 16, 17. Cf. Isaiah 53 4, 5 – where *griefs* is the translation of the Hebrew word for *sickness*. Note also that Isaiah says that sinners are *healed* by the sufferings of Christ. What is Isaiah teaching? That in His suffering and death Christ not only bore the punishment that is due to our sin, but that He also made provision for the removal of the consequences sin, including all the results of the curse – disease, suffering, and physical death itself. In other words, in His atoning death Christ purchased full redemption for His people, including the redemption of their bodies from the effects of the curse. This is the clear teaching of these Scriptures.

But as already noted the crucial issue relates to the time when this freedom from the physical effects of the curse will be fully enjoyed. And what we must see is that this redemption is not wholly available now in this life. It is a simple truth of Scripture that all that Christ procured for His people is not available now or made good to His people in this world. The most notable example is deliverance from death – it is manifestly yet future. The believer now has everlasting life, John 3: 16. But this eternal life already possessed has reference to the soul, for the body of the one who has this eternal life is going to die. Thus, this benefit of the atonement in the form of physical resurrection lies in the future.

So it is with respect to the healing of the body. When Christ was on this earth He did heal some of their physical diseases – the sign miracles, wrought as an evidence of His Messiahship, in order to verify the Word He preached, and as a token of the full redemption that He had come to accomplish for His people, including as we have said the redemption of the body. This would be the sense of Matt 8: 17 – these were sign miracles, pointing to the truth that Christ would purchase redemption for the bodies of His people through His atoning death. But Matt 8: 17 lends no support to the notion that there is present healing in the atonement. The clear teaching of Scripture is that the principal fruit of this aspect of Christ's atonement lies in the future when all sickness, decay, disease and death will be swept away forever. Even when the Lord heals someone today it is only a temporary measure for that individual will again succumb to some other sickness and die.

Therefore, to elevate healing to a position alongside forgiveness is wrest the meaning of Isaiah 53 and have that Scripture contradict what so much N.T. Scripture teaches. Our mortal bodies must wait for their full and future deliverance from the effects of the fall and the entrance of the curse. It is in that sense that Paul writes here where he speaks of the "redemption of the body."

1. Regarding this future redemption there is a day

In speaking of this redemption yet to be Scripture refers to a certain day – "the day of redemption," Eph. 4:30. The day of redemption is a reference to Christ's coming when God's people will enter into the final phase of their experience of Christ's redemptive power. At that day the Church will be brought into the enjoyment of vast spiritual riches & unending spiritual pleasures of which she knows nothing on this earth.

In this world very little of the saints' inheritance is enjoyed or even seen. The ungodly look on the Lord's people & often see them enjoy just a little at best of the things of Christ. The world sees the Church, the believer, still subject to sin; to many infirmities; to scorn & ridicule etc. And from that perspective the unsaved see nothing attractive about the Gospel & wish to have none of it. But there comes a day when that will all change – the day of redemption. Then the saved will appear in glory, and the unsaved will see them in their glory, Luke 16:23. But it will be too late for the unsaved to join them, Matt. 8:11, 12; 13:41-43.

2. Regarding this future redemption there is a deliverance

The "redemption" in view is final deliverance from all the ravages & power of sin, see 1 Cor.1: 30. Note how *redemption* is distinguished from justification & sanctification. In Scripture "redemption" often includes all the benefits received from Christ – deliverance from guilt, defilement, Satan's kingdom etc. But in these verses it refers to the final deliverance of the saints at that great day. See Phil. 1:6 – the good work begun will be consummated at "the day of Jesus Christ." Complete deliverance will come.

It will be deliverance from the *power of death*. Christ died to deliver sinners from death, Heb. 2:15. While the Lord tarries, the saints pass to heaven through means of physical death. But that death has no sting; for their souls go to be with Christ and their bodies are still truly united with Christ. Then at the day of Christ those bodies are raised – this is deliverance from death's power.

It will be deliverance from the *prospect of death*. 1 Cor. 15:26, death is forever destroyed for the Christian. Rev. 21:4, "And there shall be no more death." Rev. 20:6 – on the believer the *second death* has no power. This redemption of the body will be a full transformation; a transformation into the likeness of the glorified body of Christ Himself, Phil. 3:20, 21. 1 John 3:2, "when He shall appear we shall be like Him." What is this but the ultimate result of the Gospel. Christ redeemed the body in His substitutionary death; Christ will bring final deliverance for the body at His return; a complete transformation will be given. A body incorruptible, glorious, powerful & spiritual – given by the second Adam to all who trust Him.