

## At One with God

### Chapter 9: Atonement Healing

*Rom. 2:1–29, 3:19–26, 2 Cor. 5:18–21, 1 John 4:7–11.*

#### Quotes

- Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else—you are the one who gets burned. *Buddha*
- Healing is embracing what is most feared; healing is opening what has been closed, softening what has hardened into obstruction, healing is learning to trust life. *Jeanne Achterberg*
- Take a day to heal from the lies you’ve told yourself and the ones that have been told to you. *Maya Angelou*
- The greatest healing therapy is friendship and love. *Hubert H. Humphrey*
- When I stand before thee at the day’s end, thou shalt see my scars and know that I had my wounds and also my healing. *Rabindranath Tagore*
- The practice of forgiveness is our most important contribution to the healing of the world. *Marianne Williamson*
- Of one thing I am certain, the body is not the measure of healing—peace is the measure. *George Melton*
- Healing does not mean going back to the way things were before, but rather allowing what is now to move us closer to God. *Ram Dass*
- Eventually you will come to understand that love heals everything, and love is all there is. *Gary Zukav*
- We are all broken and wounded in this world. Some choose to grow strong at the broken places. *Harold J. Duarte-Bernhardt*
- Life is not the way it’s supposed to be. It’s the way it is. The way you cope with it is what makes the difference. *Virginia Satir*
- The greatest barrier to our own healing is not the pain, sorrow or violence inflicted upon us as children. Our greatest hindrance is our ongoing capacity to judge, to criticize, and to bring tremendous harm to ourselves. If we can harden our heart against ourselves and meet our most tender feelings with anger and condemnation, we simultaneously armor our heart against the possibility of gentleness, love and healing. *Wayne Muller*
- Healing takes time. Despite great advances in medicine, the biggest part of your recovery is attributable to the enormous healing power inside you. The body heals itself according to its own timetable—anxious thoughts never hasten recuperation. *Criswell Freeman*
- And even in our sleep pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom to us by the awful grace of God. *Aeschylus*
- A person who hides the truth that he or she is sick cannot expect to be cured. *Ethiopian Proverb*

#### Summary

Our salvation is part of the whole process by which God heals the broken relationship, the self-based rebellion of sin. Only by accepting God’s gift of healing-salvation can we be restored to spiritual wellness, to be once again part of the harmony of God’s universe. The atonement is the

healing process by which God deals with the root cause of the “disease” of sin, and heals us from our iniquities. This is in distinct contrast to what we usually want—a “not guilty” verdict, a change in our legal standing. Far more than this, God not only wants to declare us righteous, but to make us righteous. For to be effective, this “making right” has to be essential and real, a total change in the way we think and operate. In the same way Jesus described the change he wanted as being reborn, so too God defines himself as the one who heals us—a total and complete healing that transforms our very being. Just being “cleaned up” is not enough—God recognizes that we are “rotten to the core,” and only a heart-change will work. And so God gives us living hearts—hearts of flesh—to replace our hearts of stone; he salvation-heals us so we can walk in newness of life. Only then can we have the harmony he seeks, only then are we truly one with God.

### **Questions**

What does God really want to achieve? How are we part of the bigger issues in the great controversy? What does salvation actually involve? Why are we so preoccupied with getting a “not guilty” verdict? What are the dangers of overstressing legal aspects of salvation? How do some images get in the way? Why does God stress the concept of our need for healing? What do we need to be healed of? What is so significant about God’s gift of healing? Why does God tie together healing and salvation? What happens if we refuse God’s offer of healing? How do we demonstrate the process of spiritual healing? What does this say about the God who heals us? In what way does this lead to atonement?

### **Bird in the grass**

I walked out into the flawless beauty of an English spring morning. Down the lanes into the dark-earthed fields, beside the fresh green of new-leaved trees, past yellow flowers shining like stars in the thorn hedges. I breathed in the perfection of all I saw, wanting to say ‘thank you’ again and again. Out of the corner of my eye I caught a quick movement among the grass. I went over to the roadside and looked. A beautiful bird peeked out at me from under a clump of weeds: bright yellow head and chest that made me think of canaries, chestnut-brown back, tail trimmed neatly in white. He looked so bright and smart that I smiled. Then I noticed one of his wings drooping awkwardly—it didn’t look broken, only sprained. He started calling frantically, frightened of this monster, and tried to get away.

I put out my hand to pick him up, speaking softly. But he would have none of it. Struggling desperately he ran into the long grass and tried to hide. He didn’t want any help, he only wanted to get away. So I tried again. And again. Every time he’d let me get just so close before running away as fast as fast as he could. I began to get a little frustrated, and wondered whether he was playing some game with me. After all, I was only trying to help—I wasn’t doing this for my own benefit.

So I told him straight: “Look, I’m only thinking of you. Just let me pick you up and see what’s wrong. I might be able to help.”

No use! I cajoled. I pleaded. I commanded. But every time I came close he was off, scurrying among the grass. At last he ran out of hiding places. He emerged from cover at the edge of a water-filled ditch. “OK,” I said, “That’s enough running. Now just let me pick you up gently. I won’t hurt you.”

But no. He launched himself into the air, and fluttered painfully across to the other side. He only just made it, trailing his legs in the water as he landed. He refused to trust; he only wanted to get away from me. All the aid I could have given him he totally rejected.

Now he may have had good reasons. Perhaps he couldn't see that I intended good. He wasn't sure what I was doing. He didn't understand exactly what was going on. He wanted to be "free." But whatever the case, he lost out. For a bird with a sprained wing can't go very far. By putting himself beyond my reach he showed he didn't trust my help and doomed himself to die. For a flightless bird will not live long.

And I felt in a very small way what a caring God must feel when those he loves fly away from him forever, rejecting his healing, refusing to be saved.

### **A murderer from the beginning**

"Your father is the Devil, and you love to follow your father's desires. From the beginning he was a murderer. He never stood for the truth, because there was never any truth in him. When he lies he reveals his own lying character—he's a liar, the father of lies." John 8:44 FBV.

Why does Jesus choose such a designation for the Devil? What was he trying to say? Because on the face of it, the Devil's primary sin was pride and selfishness, arrogance and ambition. Not murder. So why does Jesus call him a murderer from the beginning?

No doubt Jesus always chose his words carefully. This statement would be no exception. In employing the word murderer Jesus is saying much, and it fits exactly with what we know about the Devil's attack on God and his nature, the issues in the Great Controversy.

For the Devil's main charge was that God was not who he claimed to be. The Devil attacked God's very nature, claiming that God was not the benevolent Creator he said he was. Instead the Devil portrayed God as hostile and hateful, authoritarian and arbitrary, cruel and capricious. The Devil used what we would call "character assassination."

No wonder Jesus called the Devil a murderer from the beginning. For the accusations he made against God were tantamount to attempted murder—trying to systematically destroy the character and personality of God himself. Indeed, the accusations were worse than a physical assault, for in employing his subtle means, Satan sought to discredit God—to not only challenge his authority, but to deny God's very goodness, truth and right.

As some know only too well, when your character is attacked, it can seem worse than an attempted murder. The result can leave you feeling more than physically dead. If you end up shunned by friends and family, you perhaps wish you were dead.

Jesus identifies Satan as a murderer from the beginning—and we can see why. He then goes on to explain in more detail. The issue is not over an attack with a physical deadly weapon, but with something just as dangerous: the perversion of truth. In making up his accusations, the Devil had to lie. He had to reject the truth, and pervert the understanding of and motives behind God's attitude and actions.

## **Warped reality**

In doing so, he had to convince himself of his warped view of reality. In believing his own propaganda, the Devil ended up totally believing a lie, to the extent that Jesus says there is “no truth in him.” He became truth-less and lie-full. Consequently the Devil became the exact opposite of God—acting for evil and deceitfully, misrepresenting and counterfeiting—so that error became truth for him, and truth, error.

How do you deal with such a situation? How do you work with someone whose view of reality is exactly 180 degrees out? How do you try to convince someone who is totally self-convinced? How do you deal with someone who is 100 percent a liar?

God worked long and hard, that’s sure. Not by argument, but by demonstration. But in being so self-convinced, the Devil could see in every action of God an attack on himself. Eventually, and not without much suffering, God has to give up, for nothing works. Like those mentioned in Romans 1, God gives up—because they have exchanged the truth of God for a lie...

For “what may be known about God is plain,” for “Through everything that God has made, what may be invisible about God can be clearly seen—his eternal power and divinity—so that such people have no excuse.” Consequently we are “without excuse.” Romans 1:19 FBV.

There’s no excuse for not seeing the truth. That we may choose to not see, to reject, to pervert the truth does not mean there is no truth. But in choosing to deny truth the result is that our thinking becomes futile and our foolish hearts are darkened. While we may still claim to be wise, we become fools. (see Romans 1:21, 22).

Ultimately God gives up on all who reject truth in this way (Romans 1:24, 26, 28), allowing us to deprave our minds and to experience the consequences of turning error into truth. But the conclusion is eternal and unchangeable: “They replaced the truth of God with a lie.” (Romans 1:25 FBV).

Truth. That oh-so-difficult word, that idea of realness, rightness and the absolute that is so hard to define. What is truth? asked one famous agent of the original liar, not pausing for the answer and unaware that Truth stood right in front of him.

“I am the truth,” says Jesus. What did he mean? And what of walking in the truth and abiding in the truth and the truth setting us free?

Look again at the problem. God faces a world that does not know him, or like him, or want him. The Deceiver, the Liar from the Beginning, has gained control, and has made his lies reality. Mankind is hostile to God, and separated from him by an immense wall of evil rebellion, bitterness and despair. Whatever God says or does is deliberately twisted and distorted, his message perverted and misunderstood. God sees his children living a lie. That lie-life continues until the final bell tolls, and death, that most unnatural of “natural processes” claims another cold victim of deceit. So what can he do?

“A book is put into our hands when children, called the Bible, the purport of whose history is briefly this: That God made the earth in six days and there planted a delightful garden, in which He placed the first pair of human beings. In the midst of the garden He planted a tree, whose fruit, although within their reach, they were forbidden to touch. That the Devil, in the shape of a snake, persuaded them to eat of this fruit; in consequence of which God condemned both of them and their posterity yet unborn to satisfy His justice by their eternal misery. That, 4000 years after these events (the human race in the meantime having gone unredeemed to perdition), God engendered with the betrothed wife of a carpenter in Judaea (whose virginity was nevertheless uninjured), and begat a son, whose name was Jesus Christ; and who was crucified and died in order that no more men might be devoted to hell-fire.... The book states, in addition, that the soul of whoever disbelieves this sacrifice will be burned with everlasting fire.” *Percy Bysshe Shelley*

The Deceiver is still operating, and confusing people with his empty words that can seem so true. Consider this:

“Lucifer was a true pioneer in the defense of basic moral rights and freedoms, questioning God’s omniscient authority over the world. He was at the forefront in the fight for the right to free thought, knowledge and will. Lucifer liberated a helpless species from a malevolent dictator and he is the one who suffered the consequences, with no praise or gratitude. By today’s standards we would consider him a saint, greater than Martin Luther King or Mother Teresa. But instead we condemn him, and follow God, undoing his ultimate sacrifice. Perhaps at the very least we owe him an apology?” *Mike Hutchison*

No. He is the murderer of God’s reputation, the slanderer of his character. And through this serpent came the knowledge of sin and evil and death.

And it is only through God that this brokenness can be healed, the damage repaired, the relationship restored.

“But now God has revealed how we can be made right—a way that isn’t to do with the law, even though it was spoken of by the law and the prophets. This is God’s way of making right everyone who believes and trusts in Jesus Christ. It doesn’t matter who we are: everyone has sinned and is a long way from reaching God’s glory. God’s free and gracious gift is to make us right through the purifying salvation of Christ Jesus, whom God sent to bring about reconciliation through trusting in him. Romans 3:21-26 FBV.

The question as always is how?

### **Salvation in Court**

Many current concepts of salvation are very dependent upon legal images, primarily those of western justice. The courtroom scene is invoked to represent the way in which God “saves” us, primarily from the verdict and sentence of “Guilty”. Consequently interpretations of the saving process center on the payment of penalties, substitutionary punishment, and the adjustment of the

accused's legal position (the blotting out of the Guilty verdict, satisfaction for sin, writing the person's name in the "right" book etc.)

While the New Testament does indeed make use of legal and judicial concepts in describing God's salvation of mankind, the stress on (and development of) such concepts and terminology obscures some other very significant understandings.

In both Catholic and Protestant thought theology has tended to concentrate on the question of legal forgiveness. How is it obtained? What is the process God uses to effect forgiveness? What happens if forgiveness is not achieved?

### **Guilt and Hell**

Why the stress on the need for legal forgiveness? Because mankind is conceived of as being criminally guilty, and thus under executive sentence of doom from God. If a person is not legally forgiven, then that person will suffer the penalty—usually expressed as enduring the torments of Hell inflicted by a vindictive God for all eternity.

Such a stress on the penalty of Hell explains the great need (especially in the popular mind) to ensure that this penalty is not applied, and that the individual receives legal forgiveness from God (or his representatives).

From a Catholic perspective the selling of Indulgences, paid Masses for the Dead, and even the doctrine of Purgatory itself relate to this concept of being legally forgiven and paying for sins committed so that the awful penalty of eternal torture will not be enforced.

Man's main objective is therefore to be forgiven, to know that legally you are not debarred from salvation. Hence the procedure of granting Absolution, the Last Rites and so on, which attempt to guarantee that the person is rendered legally "Not Guilty" in the eyes of God.

Protestant denial of such practices has not eliminated the basic drive—to acquire "divine absolution", the "Not Guilty verdict. So while Luther rejected the means by which this divine legal forgiveness was achieved, he still viewed it as being the prime objective. Jesus Christ is therefore viewed as the legal payment for sin, as the substitute in the dock, and only through his blood is the penalty God will impose averted.

### **Fire Insurance?**

Once again the emphasis is on the individual's legal standing before God. The need is for legal absolution from the paying of the penalty. The appalling alternative is that one ends up in the eternal flames of never-ending torment—evidently a major incentive to ensuring a "Not Guilty" verdict is obtained from God.

Such a view of God and his salvation does not find expression in the gospel Christ brought. It was not a question of ensuring you were legally "without fault" before God, like a "no-fault" insurance claim!

Forgiveness is surely important, but not as a guarantee to avoid punishment. Salvation is not a question of making sure you have paid your premium for fire insurance! God is not to be viewed as a hostile Judge determined to sentence all the Guilty, and only allowing those who hold “Get out of Hell” cards (“the forgiven”) to profit from his salvation. This highly-objectivized view of salvation ignores the personality of God and of us, and reduces God’s salvation to a mechanistic kind of contractual process whereby when all the right actions are performed then salvation is automatic.

### **Jesus = Salvation**

Jesus came to be God’s salvation: primarily as he revealed what this salvation is. Not a mechanical process or some objective legal transaction, but the relationship of persons. Salvation is subjective in the sense that it applies to and inside of us, rather than somewhere “out there”. (Those who view the salvation effected through the cross of Jesus as being concerned with taking care of our legal standing before God see the ceremonialism of the act. As someone who subscribed to this legal view once remarked, Christ’s sacrifice on the cross could have taken place on the other side of the Universe and it would have had the same effect. But the truth is that Jesus died here on the cross. It was not some kind of rite or ritual that had to be undergone to provide for the legal readjustment of sinners before God. Only the contrary, the cross says and means something far different.)

In Jesus we are reconciled to God. That’s the assurance—and not just that God declares that we are reconciled, we truly are reconciled:

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” 2 Corinthians 5:18-21 NIV.

### **Healing**

Above all, God’s revelation of salvation through Jesus is expressed in terms of divine healing of the sin-damaged individual. It surely is no coincidence that having been announced as the one who makes God known (John 1:18), Jesus spent the vast majority of his ministry in acts of physical healing. Jesus told those around him: “When he [a man] looks at me, he sees the one who sent me” (John 12:45 NIV) and “If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him...Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:7, 9 NIV)

In the announcement of Jesus’ birth, the angel tells Joseph, “She [Mary] will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” (Matthew 1:21 NIV). Salvation here is understood as meaning saved from sin. Now of course this could be taken as expressing the same image as the legal model mentioned above. But note first that they are saved from their sins. Not a prescription as to the judicial absolution of sins.

But there is something far more important here. As already noted, Christ’s main method of demonstrating God to the world was through acts of healing. “Wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch

even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.” (Mk. 6:56 NIV). All perfectly clear. A wonderful description of the healing emphasis in the life of Christ.

### **One word, two meanings**

But that word “healed” in this text hides a greater truth. The verb is the Greek word *sozo*. Which is the exact same word as used to describe salvation! So Matthew’s description of Jesus noted above could be translated “Because he will heal his people from their sins.” Why? Because in this case the word used for “save” is *sozo* too.

The insight that salvation means healing is essential to a proper understanding of the life and ministry of Jesus. When blind Bartimaeus shouts out to Jesus, asking to receive his sight, Jesus replies: “Go, your faith has healed you.” (Mark 10:52). “Healed”? Well, it could as well be “saved”—for the word is *sozo* again. For through Jesus’ healing he was saved; receiving God’s salvation he was healed.

As Jesus walks towards Jairus’ house, messengers come to inform him not to bother continuing his mission. The girl has died. But Jesus turns to Jairus and tells him: “Don’t be afraid; just believe and she will be healed.” (Luke 8:50 NIV). The girl was dead, and Jesus speaks of healing? Yes, says Jesus, she can be rescued from death by Jesus the Life-giver, she can be saved from death. And in order to be saved, she would have to be re-made, made well again, totally healed. Healing is salvation again, as demonstrated by the word *sozo* being used once more.

### **A progression of healing**

Other examples could be added. Perhaps the point is best made by the woman who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. In Luke’s account it is noted that “No one could heal her.” (Luke 8:43). Here the word *therapeuo* is used—from which we get “therapeutic”. She’d been to the doctors, but without getting any therapeutic benefit. The idea here is more the idea of being medically treated.

Then after the miracle she is discovered and so “In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed.” (Luke 8:47). Now the word for healing becomes *iaomai*. Meaning: to be cured of an illness, to be delivered from ills. So she is specifically referred to as having received a cure for her particular health problem.

But then Jesus says to her: “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace.” (Luke 8:48 NIV). Here at the climax of the story the word for healing is *sozo*. Not merely medically treated. Not just healed from a particular illness. No: this woman experiences the transforming power of God that brings salvation-healing. There would seem to be no reason to use these different words for healing unless the writer (Luke—a doctor!) wanted to reveal some kind of different meaning to the healing that is shown as the incident progresses.

### **Saying the same thing**

This essential meaning of salvation as healing is further demonstrated by those words of Jesus to the healed woman: “Your faith has healed you. Go in peace.” Just one chapter previously Jesus is recorded as saying to the woman who anointed his feet: “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

(Luke 7:50 NIV). In the Greek, Jesus' announcement to the two women is identical, since it uses the word *sozo* which is translated as "saved" or "healed" as the context dictates.

Consequently, that famous verse in Ephesians 2:8 which describes God's salvation could have the word "saved" replaced by "healed": "For it is by grace you have been healed, through faith..." Or in other words, "by the graciousness of God you have been healed by trusting God."

That is what Jesus Christ came to do. To win our trust so that through his gracious nature he could then heal (save) us. This nature and desire is illustrated by the many miracles of healing, restoration and cure that Jesus did during his ministry—revealing God as the one who wants to heal us, not just physically, but spiritually.

### **Salvation as sin-healing**

Understanding this provides another insight into one of Jesus' miracles that produced such opposition. In Luke 5 (and the parallels in Matthew 9 and Mark 2) a paralytic man is lowered through the roof into Jesus' presence.

Jesus does not say: "Be healed," or "Get up and walk." Instead he points out the healing significance of salvation by saying "Friend, your sins are forgiven." (Luke 5:20 NIV). Salvation is the healing of the sin damage.

But the Pharisees are incensed, and ask "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (Luke 5:21 NIV).

True enough. Only God can forgive sins. But as Jesus wanted to point out, their view was one that required legal forgiveness in order to receive God's blessings. An exterior kind of work, a ritualized concept of salvation.

But Jesus points them back to what salvation really is by saying to them: "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take up your mat and go home." (Luke 5:22-24 NIV). In the Pharisees' minds which was easier? To heal or to forgive sins? Obviously they could handle Jesus as "just another miracle worker who heals" but not as someone who went around forgiving sins. They, the Pharisees, had developed a very meticulous set of rules and regulations for achieving forgiveness. Their idea of salvation was of strict observance to the ceremonies and rituals. So when someone comes around saying he is able to forgive sins, that "blows their minds".

For salvation as healing is not part of their concept of how God works to restore people to himself. Salvation, they think, has to come "through the proper channels". There are rigid requirements to achieve this salvation, and which, if legalistically obeyed, will ensure success. So how can this "faith healer" promise forgiveness of sins?

How? Because he is God, and because his salvation is healing, not rigid observance of outward requirements. An inherently non-legal process. Blasphemy to those who saw the achieving of legal forgiveness as the essential part of salvation!

That is what led to Jesus' death. He "bucked the system", he "blasphemed God", and it was "better that one man die for the sake of the people" (see John 11:49) than the whole national system of achieving salvation be destroyed.

Jesus spoke so often to these religious systematizers of their problem. He called them "whited sepulchres" (Matthew 23:27) because they carefully followed the salvation rules on the outside, but inside were full of corruption. What Jesus wanted to do was to salvation-heal them from the inside, so that then they would be genuinely right on the outside. He told them they were blind. And because they thought they could see, their sin remained. (see Matthew 23:16ff, John 9:41). Why? Because their arrogant claims to 20-20 vision meant they would not come to him for salvation-healing. That's why Jesus pronounced so many woes on the scribes and Pharisees—for they, the religious leaders, had failed to understand the truth about God's offer of healing, a spiritual healing that would transform them from being sin-sick rebels to healthy trustworthy friends of God.

### **Dangerous misunderstandings**

So what happens to us if we fail to see salvation as healing? Well, if we only see it as fixing our legal problem, of rectifying our legal standing before God, of being a contractual process by which our legal guilt is expiated, then...

As Jesus said to the followers of the religious system in his time, those preoccupied with judicial, forensic salvation: "Your sin (that fatal sickness) remains." A preoccupation with legal demands, legal payment and legal consequences leads to the worse kind of legalism: the making legal of the cross of Christ. Even the Pharisees didn't manage that!

Concentrating on the legal and judicial, the guilt-payment and expiatory penalties means that we fail to see the cross as the remedy for sin as an attitude, rather than some legal compensation for sin as an external action. For if we do not come to him who can heal us, if we do not accept his gift of sight, and if we remain blind guides leading others and all falling into the ditch (see Matthew 15:14), then how can God help us?

As God said to his people of old, "I am the Lord who heals you." (Exodus 15:26). This is his salvation—healing all the wounds of sin, curing the sickness of evil, and restoring us once more into full spiritual health: remade into his glorious image. This is his salvation, so fully and freely demonstrated in Jesus and made available to all who will. This is his salvation: brought to us by God himself, as he hung there on the cross. Salvation is healing.

We respond to God's offer of rescue and healing because that's the only way. We love God just for what he is—not from fear of punishment, or desire for reward. In the end we accept God's salvation for that is all we have, and we agree with God that he is good and true and right. Because he loves us and wants to win us back to love him and trust him. As John writes:

"Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us

and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.” 1 John 4:7-11 NLT.

Sadly so many—even those within the church—refuse God’s offer of salvation, or fail to understand what it truly is. We make up our own versions of salvation, and then try to impose our theory on ourselves and those around us. Salvation consists of doing this or that, or not doing this or that! The result? A dry and dusty experience; a hardening of the spiritual heart; a desert place that is not refreshed and revitalized by God’s healing and living water of eternal life:

“For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.” (Matthew 13:15 NIV). *God’s healing is our salvation.*

### **Comes the Winter**

I sit languidly beside a cool-flowing river under summer’s warm-embracing sun. Idly I toss a pebble into a pellucid pool, shadowed dark and deep under a spreading oak. Ripples, slivering silver, mirror out in circles, wider, ever wider in sparkling life. But as I watch, they fade, slipping away downstream, disappearing into grassy banks. I look away, unwilling to admit their passing.

My eyes are caught by flitting butterflies, dancing and reflecting over the tranquil waters. Majestic dragonflies cruise the caressing breeze. But closest by flutter two dazzling damsel flies, shimmering vivid green. In their aerial dance together they are self-absorbed, unconcerned, delighting in the beauty of summer’s moment.

But like a chill north wind blows the recognition: comes the winter. Frost and ice and snow will end their dance, gossamer wings frozen and broken. For all of us, however long we wish to dance: comes the winter. The afternoon sun slides down the sky into evening, and the coming dark. I reluctantly stand to leave, my eyes absorbing the last of the scene that will never be the same again. Now in the evening I sit in a church full of weeping. The funeral of a lovely girl of just seventeen, taken long before her time. Comes the winter: cold, harsh, relentless.

But in the sad silence comes the words of promise—in the twinkling of an eye, we shall all be changed, and be raised...

Newness of eternal life, in a time and place where winter never comes. A time of constancy, where the beauty never fades, and hours never need to be counted. A time when the ‘change and decay all around I see’ becomes an eternity of permanence in the presence of my healing, transforming God. A time when death is destroyed, swallowed up in victory; when sorrow and sighing have all fled away; and when all share together in a universe of God’s everlasting summer.

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### Atonement study 9: EGW quotes

From Him [Jesus] flowed a stream of healing power, and in body and mind and soul men were made whole. {MH 17}

...you who have not fed on the living Bread, who have not drank of the healing streams of salvation, and do not know where to lead the flock of God that they may find refreshment, for Christ's sake, do not try to minister in the sacred desk, until you have an experience in the things of God. {1888 962}

Jesus was the Healer of the body as well as of the soul.... virtue—the healing power of love—went out from Him to the sick and distressed. {DA 92}

His presence was healing virtue for the sinner. {MH 70}

And when virtue from Him entered into these souls, they were convicted of sin, and many were healed of their spiritual disease as well as of their physical maladies. {MH 73}

And the same power that gave life to the body had renewed the heart. He who at creation “spake, and it was”, who “commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:9), had spoken life to the soul dead in trespasses and sins. The healing of the body was an evidence of the power that had renewed the heart. {MH 77}

Our saviour's words, “Come unto Me,... and I will give you rest” (Matt.11:28), are a prescription for the healing of physical, mental, and spiritual ills. {MH 115}

Through the same faith we may receive spiritual healing. By sin we have been severed from the life of God. {DA 203}

The God whom they had been claiming to serve, but whose character they had misunderstood, was set before them as the great Healer of spiritual disease.... He who had been walking frowardly in the way of his heart might find healing by turning to the Lord. {PK 315}

The paralytic found in Christ healing for both the soul and the body. He needed health of soul before he could appreciate health of body.... They can find no relief until they come to the Healer of the soul. {MH 77}

In the uplifting of this fallen soul, Jesus performed a greater miracle than in healing the most grievous physical disease; He cured the spiritual malady which is unto death everlasting. {MH 89}

Were they not soul-sick because of sin? {MH 76}

Upon many is a soul-sickness which no earthly balm can reach nor physical heal. Pray for these souls. Bring them to Jesus. Tell them that there is a balm in Gilead and a Physician there. {PK 719}

With tender, courteous grace He ministered to the sin-sick, bringing healing and strength. {MH 23}

It was His mission to bring to men complete restoration; He came to give them health and peace and perfection of character. {MH 17}

We are to be workers together with God for the restoration of health to the body as well as to the soul. {DA 824}

For earth's sin and misery the gospel is the only antidote. To make known to all mankind the message of the grace of God is the first work of those who know its healing power. {MH 141}

The very essence of the gospel is restoration... {DA 824}