Receiving physical healing directly through the internal work of the Holy Spirit’s presence and power within us

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‘He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you’ (Rom. 8:11)

When a person is born-again, s/he becomes a child of God and, when s/he is then filled with the Holy Spirit, s/he becomes a habitation of God ‘in which God dwells by His Spirit’ (Eph. 2:22). It is God’s intention in making us partakers in his kingdom that we ourselves become his tabernacle, the place which he indwells. So our physical bodies become the temple of a divine Person, the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). As Lake said: ‘God descends into man, man ascends into God!’

This is the glorious truth of the new covenant in Christ, vis. that as believers we become new creations which God indwells. God says that he will live with them and walk among them (2 Cor. 6:16); that by His Spirit he will live with and in them (John 14:17), and that the Holy Spirit will be like a spring of living water welling up within them (John 4:14).

In terms of His indwelling believers, it has been a theological error propagated through many centuries that, although the Holy Spirit dwells within the spirit of a believer, and that He can cleanse and strengthen the believer’s heart, and renew his/her mind (all of which are true), yet His indwelling, to all intents and purposes, has no consequences for the believer’s physical body in the here and now. This is, of course, rooted in the philosophical error of the ancient Greeks which created a dichotomy between the spirit/soul on the one hand and the physical body on the other: the inner spirit of man was seen to be good, but the body was seen as evil and so was either neglected (through asceticism) or abused (through immoral and licentious living). Although Christian discipleship addresses the issue of licentious living (Acts 15:20), and although there were several notable early Church Fathers who taught and practised healing ministry, yet this error was nevertheless inherited and perpetuated in a subtle form through the medieval institutional Church and thence down into evangelical churches. So, even today, many evangelicals speak of ‘the life of God in the soul of man,’ but rarely if ever speak of the life of God in the physical body of man.

So we have ended up with an evangelical message of ‘salvation’ in which God ‘saves your soul,’ but yet leaves many believers struggling with the issue of physical healing, with some sections of the Church still even today denying this truth. The ‘good news’ regarding

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our physical health is often shunted off into some far-off point in the future when our bodies will be resurrected and made imperishable, ‘the redemption of our bodies’ (Rom. 8:23, Eph. 1:14). It is the teaching of the divine healing of the body, taught and practised by pentecostals and charismatics, which has restored to the Church the good news regarding God’s intention towards our physical bodies in the here and now. The indwelling of a believer by God through His Spirit has consequences and implications for his/her physical body, not simply for his/her inner spirit/soul. This reflects a return to the biblical holism of the Hebrews in which God was viewed as God of the whole being, indeed the whole of life. God was concerned with every aspect of a person’s life and nothing was excluded from the caring authority of his presence and power, including their physical health and well-being (cf. Ex. 15:26, 23:25-26). He would forgive all their sins and heal all their diseases (Ps. 103:3). So, for example, we can read the testimony about Moses who, even though he was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, ‘yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone’ (Deut. 34:7). He was still a picture of good health even at that great age! God is the God of our body, as well as of our inner spirit.

Hence, in terms of the new covenant in Christ and our being indwelt by God through His Spirit, it is my conviction that it is God’s full intention that believers experience His life, power and blessing in every part of their life. He intends and desires that His life and power should permeate every part of a believer’s being, regenerating his spirit (Titus 3:5), renewing his mind (Rom. 12:2), cleansing and strengthening his heart (1 John 1:7-9, Heb. 13:9), animating his being and empowering him for ministry (Acts 1:8) and also keeping his body healthy: ‘He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you’ (Rom. 8:11, 2 Cor. 4:10-11).

It is clear that Lake understood that the struggle that many believers have with divine healing was rooted in the dichotomy described above. For example, when he was once approached by a woman seeking him to pray for her healing, he did not lay hands on her, but instead encouraged her to see that the Holy Spirit who dwelt in her could heal her directly from within. Evidently, she had not realized before that the Holy Spirit who indwelt her spirit and soul also therefore permeated every cell of her physical body. He said to her, “I want you to get well by realizing that right now that same Christ that dwells in your spirit and your soul is in your bones and in your blood and in your brain.” He went on to relate that, ‘Presently, the old lady hopped to her feet and said, “My God, He is.” She made it. Christ had been imprisoned in her soul and spirit. Now he was permitted to manifest himself in her body.’

He went on to say that, ‘Don’t you know Christians are stumbling every day over that fact. You are doubting and fearing and wondering if Christ is there [i.e. within you, Ed.]. Beloved brother and sister, give Him chance to reveal Himself. He is there. Probably because of your lack of realization your soul is closed, and he is not able to reveal Himself.”
You know God is never able in many to reveal Himself outside of the spirit or soul (underlining my own for emphasis).

Lake’s phrase about Christ being ‘imprisoned in her soul and spirit’ is telling and it underlines the negative consequences of the dichotomy described above. Many believers have never really understood what God’s intentions for their bodies are, and so confusion and ignorance reign. They rightly see Christ and the Holy Spirit as being within them, but the relation of this with their physical bodies is shrouded in confusion. Hence, in daily living, the actions and effects of the Holy Spirit’s working in them remain in their spirit and soul (heart and mind), and the validity of any effects and actions of the Holy Spirit through the members of their physical bodies such as free, open praise (Eph. 5:18-19), speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4), the power of the Holy Spirit to heal them from within (Rom. 8:11) and the power of God working through them as they lay hands on others for healing, may be either not understood (at best), discouraged and avoided, or simply denied and explained away (at worst). Many believers remain blocked and confused in this area and often have problems believing God for their own or others’ physical healing.

The solution to this lies in understanding the Holy Spirit’s relation to our physical bodies. Lake was clear that, if the Holy Spirit dwells within a believer, then not only does He permeate their spirit and soul with His life-giving presence and power, but He also permeates every cell and tissue in their body. As he said to the woman in the example above, He is ‘in your bones and in your blood and in your brain.’ For believers to be released from the blockage that many of them experience, this truth needs to be proactively received, embraced and acted upon with faith. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit can give life to their mortal bodies from within them and, as a consequence, believers can remain healthy and healing can be received when it is needed. Our Healer, the Holy Spirit, lives within us. It is not God’s intention that the Holy Spirit should be imprisoned in our spirit and soul, while our bodies remain bereft of His life-giving influence. In Christ, the life-giving streams of God’s presence and power have been restored to humankind and, in particular, to our physical bodies. The life-giving presence and power of the Holy Spirit within us is the secret, essential dynamic of physical healing. As Lake affirmed: ‘Beloved, all there is to divine healing, is that the life of God come back into the part that is afflicted and right away the blood flows, the congested cells respond, and the work is done. That is again God’s divine science in healing.’

Understanding the relationship of the Holy Spirit to our physical bodies is crucial to embracing this truth of receiving healing directly from the Holy Spirit from within. In Romans 8, Paul describes the Holy Spirit as ‘the Spirit of life’ (8:2). This description sums up not only the nature of the Holy Spirit as a divine life-giver, but also indicates the intention of God in permeating our entire beings with His divine life through His Spirit.

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3 ibid., “Science of Divine Healing,” p.343
become the objects of the active power of His divine life within us, including in our physical bodies. So, further on in this chapter, Paul relates the life-giving consequences of the Holy Spirit’s working within us: ‘those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires’ (8:5); ‘the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace’ (8:6); we become controlled by the indwelling Spirit of God (8:9); our spirit is ‘alive because of righteousness’ (8:10), and ‘he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you’ (8:11).

So, we are made alive in our spirits, and we can overcome the bias of the pull of our sinful natures which are reckoned dead; our minds become renewed and can learn to think according to what the Holy Spirit desires, and as a consequence our minds become controlled by life and peace, rather than stress and worry; and, furthermore, God also gives life to our mortal bodies through his Spirit within us. The words in Romans 8:11 do not refer to the eschatological resurrection of our physical bodies, but to the daily intention of God for us, vis. that our physical bodies will experience the ongoing, daily working of the Spirit of God to bring life, and therefore health and healing to them, just as our minds and spirits can experience this. In a word, therefore, our whole being can and should, in the intention of God for us, experience the life-giving consequences of the Holy Spirit living within us. It is for our spirits, our minds and our bodies.

Towards the end of his argument in Romans chs. 6-8 that sin has been dealt with through Christ and that the Holy Spirit now indwells us, Paul begins to draw his conclusion in Romans 8:12 – ‘Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation...’, but he does not go on at this point to develop his thought. He returns to it later on in Romans 12:1 and this time he finishes his thought: ‘Therefore, I urge you, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God... be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.’ This logical consequence of his argument that believers should learn to live by the Spirit and not according to the flesh, was also touched on briefly by Paul in Romans 6 where he exhorts believers to offer the members of their bodies to God as servants of righteousness (6:13,19), rather than continuing to live according to the sinful nature.

So, we can discover God’s good, pleasing and perfect will for our lives as we offer our physical bodies to Him as living sacrifices through which He can then work out His purposes. This discovery of God’s good, pleasing and perfect will includes the aspect of His intention for our physical bodies in terms of health and healing. His intention is that, having come to indwell us, He wants to give life to our mortal bodies in an ongoing way, but He can only do this as we learn to offer our bodies as living sacrifices. Our physical body is His temple. So His good, pleasing and perfect will for His own temple can be discovered, embraced, walked in and enjoyed as we surrender it to Him, and live according to his word and ways, embracing his life-giving intention for our body. In order to fulfil His purpose of giving life (and therefore healing and health) to our physical body from within, the Holy Spirit has to possess our body.
In recognizing and honouring the Holy Spirit’s presence in our beings as His habitation, in offering our bodies as living sacrifices, in generally learning to live ‘in the Spirit,’ and in learning to trust Him to heal us directly from within, it should be self-evident that we need to learn to live a surrendered life and to co-operate with this divine Person who lives with us and indwells us. We need to learn how to walk sensitively with Him in daily life, to spend regular quality time in His presence, to not grieve him (Eph. 4:30) or quench his working (1 Thess. 5:19). It is the development of this kind of close personal relationship with the Holy Spirit, and actively trusting Him to give life to our mortal bodies and to heal them when this is needed, which is the inner secret of walking in divine health. His divine life within us, permeating our physical bodies, can give us healing and keep us healthy.

So as new covenant believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we have the immense privilege of being able to trust and believe the Holy Spirit to heal us directly from within ourselves. His presence and power can give life to our mortal bodies as we proactively seek, ask and believe for Him to do this. Our Healer and His healing presence and power dwell within us. Indeed, it would not be going too far to say that the Holy Spirit waits and desires for us to relate to Him personally with respect to our need for physical healing, rather than simply and always depending on other believers to pray for us. We should learn not only to stand on and believe the promises of God for our healing, but we should also learn to draw on the well of salvation within ourselves (John 4:14, Isa. 12:2-3), by asking and committing our need for physical healing to the Person who dwells with and within us. His power can then give life and healing to the specific part of His habitation where it is needed. Furthermore, in standing on this truth daily by faith and confessing it over ourselves, we can be kept healthy.

This truth of trusting directly the Holy Spirit within us to give us health and healing should, of course, not be isolated from other truths regarding divine healing. It should be integrated with them. So there still needs to be an emphasis on overcoming faith, the laying on of hands by other believers, believing and confessing the promises of the word, walking in forgiveness, eating a healthy diet, and so on. In particular, the ministry of healing is often associated in the NT Scriptures with the laying on of hands. We can see this in the ministries of Jesus, the apostles and it is taught in James 5:14-16. This method therefore inherently involves the ministry of the Holy Spirit to us through another person or people; others are necessarily involved. This interpersonal method is taught and practised throughout the NT. Other people may need to be involved because when we are sick we often allow ourselves to become the victims of self-pity and unbelief. We may struggle to

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4 Intrinsic to this issue is the fact that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person. Although we can often tangibly feel His presence and its effects both within and upon us, particularly in meetings or in prayer and worship times, we should be careful not make the unconscious mistake of effectively treating Him in practice as something impersonal. The Holy Spirit is ‘He,’ not an ‘it.’ If we unconsciously treat Him as an impersonal force or presence, we may not realize that He desires and needs to take full possession of our lives in order to work His purposes out both in and through us. Learning to relate to Him as a Person who abides with and within us, helps us to release our need for physical healing to Him within us and to trust Him to do the work of healing.
believe the promises of God for ourselves. We can see this in the heart-cry of many people who came to Jesus for healing. We need other believers to join their faith to our own perhaps struggling faith, and God can work in this way to bring the needed healing. However, in addition to this practice, we can also learn to directly trust the Holy Spirit within us to bring healing and health to our physical bodies.

A natural extension of this truth of the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit permeating our whole beings and giving life to our mortal bodies, is that He can also actively work and minister through our physical body to others who are in need. We can see this clearly in the ministry of Jesus. The life-giving power of the Holy Spirit worked through his physical body to bring life and healing to sick people. The woman with the issue of blood is the obvious example. As she touched the hem of His garment, power went out from Him through His physical body and through his garment and into her sick body, healing her instantaneously (Mark 5:30). Luke also refers to this phenomenon. Sick people wanted to physically touch Jesus, because power was coming out of Him to heal them all (Luke 6:19). Central to this phenomenon is the issue of physical contact, of which another example is the laying on of hands. God’s life-giving spiritual power can flow through a believer’s body and into another person through the laying on of hands. He can use us today in the same way.