

“BY WHOSE STRIPES YE WERE HEALED” – What Does It Mean?

- By Pastor Greg Hooker

Every good student of the Scriptures is aware of the importance of studying the Bible in context of the surrounding passages, the culture and geographic locale in which the teaching was addressed, the historical settings and the syntax (grammar) used by the writer. Anyone can draw out a certain verse of Scripture to the exclusion of surrounding passages and use it to give credence to almost any doctrine they desire to peddle. This is one main reason many false religions, denominations and cults are started. With having said that, let's look at the phrase *“by whose stripes ye were healed”* and see if we can derive its true meaning via applying good principals of Biblical interpretation.

In 1 Peter 2:24 we find the following words penned by the Apostle Peter, *“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed”*. Peter is alluding to another passage from the Old Testament in Isaiah 53:5, *“But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed”*. In both passages we have the phrase, *“... by whose stripes ye were healed.”*

We know from historical records, that horrible, gruesome and inhumane punishments were administered to those convicted of crimes. The unfortunate victim of scourging's were secured tightly by ropes to a 'whipping post' and stripped of their clothing. Hanging there exposed to the jeering crowds, the whipping master would lash out repeatedly with all the force he could exert with a special whip, often called a cat-o'-nine-tails.

This merciless device was constructed of braided leather and had razor-sharp pottery shards and sharp stones embedded in the frayed ends of the whip. When the whip master would lash out and wrap the whip around the exposed body of the prisoner, he would immediately draw back the whip causing the sharp shards and rocks to literally fillet and peel the skin, flesh and muscle from the poor individual. Most often the accused died from such an atrocious beating due to massive blood loss, broken bones and whole organs being ripped from their bodies. They were literally 'shredded' to bits and pieces.

This is the type of beating Jesus endured just prior to His sufferings on the cross and this is what Peter and Isaiah were referring to when they recorded, *“... by whose stripes [lashes from the cat-o'-nine-tails] ye were healed.”* The Greek word used here is μῶλωψ, which means the marks, cuttings or welts left in the flesh by a scourge.

While this unspeakable physical beating was inflicted upon our Savior, Jesus also endured a far worse infliction that was both mental and spiritual. Jesus Christ endured the untold weight and darkness of our sins and transgressions in His broken, bruised and mutilated body. Moreover, He endured the wrath of His Father against those sins which Jesus chose to bear for all mankind. Wow! What boundless love! What compassion and grace! What mercy hath our Savior afforded to all sinners such as us!

We come back now to the phrase Peter and Isaiah made, “... *by whose stripes ye were healed.*” Both the Greek and Hebrew word for “healed” can mean either ‘physical’, or ‘spiritual’ healing, depending on the way in which the word is used in context. When taking this phrase in context in both 1 Peter 2:24, and Isaiah 53:5, there is no doubt that it primarily refers to ‘spiritual’ healing, rather than ‘physical’.

Notice in context 1 Peter 2:24 again, “*Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*” Peter is definitely referring to ‘spiritual’ healing of our sins. Jesus was “wounded for our sins/transgressions”; He was “bruised for our iniquities” and in His own body on the cross, spiritually paid for every sinners sins – past, present and future – with His own broken body and blood.

In addition, Jesus purchased eternal salvation and righteousness for “*whosoever will*”, and “*by His stripes [beatings, whippings, scourging’s, and ultimately nailing to the cross] ye were spiritual healed from the disease of sin.*” While the Lord is certainly still healing people today through faith and prayer, these two passages of Scripture are alluding to the ‘spiritual’ healing of a person from their sinful state in which they are born. It is not referring to a ‘physical’ healing as some have implicated via taking it out of context of the surrounding passages.