

PRAYER, PRAISE AND HEALING - PART 1

Is anyone among you suffering?

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: James 5:13a
Subject: What a believer who is suffering should do
Complement: pray
Exegetical idea: A believer who is suffering should pray.
Homiletical idea: **When you are experiencing hard times, cry out to God!**
Purpose: To encourage my hearers to pray at all times, including times when they are suffering.

Introduction

We are about to begin an amazing study on a powerful passage from the Word of God. And I'm excited! Over the next four weeks, we will carefully and prayerfully study a life-changing passage from the New Testament book of James.

But first, let me give you a little background information. Open your bible to the book of James, near the end of the New Testament, and look with me at James 1:1-2. "....."

Who is this James who writes an epistle which bears his name? He simply identifies himself as a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. Is it James, the brother of John, one of the sons of Zebedee? No. According to Acts 12, that James was martyred, shortly after the death of Stephen. So this epistle of James is not written by James, the brother of John.

What other James do you know in the early Christian church? Well, there was another disciple of Jesus named James. His name is recorded in Luke 6:15. James, the son of Alphaeus. But that is about all that we know of this James. He was one of the twelve. And there is little evidence to suggest that he was the author of the epistle of James.

There is another James. His name is mentioned first in Matthew 13:55. He was one of the brothers of Jesus. It's interesting that his name is mentioned first, even before Joseph, who would have been the first-born, named after his father according to Jewish custom. These men

were step brothers of Jesus, children of Joseph by a former marriage, and thus older step-brothers of Jesus. And why is James mentioned first? A good question. This James, step-brother of Jesus, eventually becomes a believer! Along with his other brother, James accepted that Jesus was more than just his step-brother. Jesus was his Messiah. Dr. Luke tells us in Acts 1:14 that the brothers of Jesus, which would include James, were present with the other apostles in the upper room as they prayed together for the coming of the Holy Spirit with power. And James becomes the leader of the Christian church in Jerusalem.

We find evidence of James' leadership role in several New Testament passages. Look with me at Gal 1:18-19. "....." And then in Acts 15, we find James mentioned again in connection with the importance Christian council in Jerusalem. After extensive discussion at the council, Luke records, in Acts 15:13, "....." What do James' words reveal? He is in a position of authority. A leader.

Many Bible scholars believe that it is indeed this James, leader of the Christian church in Jerusalem, who authors the epistle of James. While not identifying himself at the beginning of his epistle as "the brother of our Lord," James needs no formal introduction. He is obviously well known by all of the believers. He simply refers to himself as "a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Some of you may be aware of the fact that the Protestant reformer, Martin Luther, did not appreciate the epistle of James. In fact, Luther referred to this book as "an epistle of straw." Luther was so passionate about the message of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, that he saw no place for the practical counsel on Christian living of James, who pointed out that faith without works is dead.

But there is a place for the inspired testimony of James. It is part of the whole counsel of God. Study the four Gospels. Read the apostle Paul's powerful letters like the book of Romans. Read the rest of the New Testament, and read the Hebrew Scriptures. But don't discard the practical counsel on Christian living in the epistle of James.

At the close of his epistle, James asks 3 questions. We will consider the first question today, the second question next week, and we will take the last two messages to look at a vitally important third question that James asks his readers.

So, if you're ready for a life-changing study of God's inspired word through His servant James, let's turn our attention to the first question that James asks in James 5:13. James asks, in James 5:13, "Is anyone among you suffering?" Please note, before we dig anymore deeply into the text, that this question is addressed to believers. Is anyone among you..? And while this epistle is primarily addressed to Jewish Christians, "the twelve tribes that are scattered abroad," there is a powerful message for Gentile Christians as well! Is anyone among you....?

The translators of the NKJV, from which I just read, translate the next word "suffering." How does this question read in the KJV? "Is anyone among you afflicted?" What does it say in the NIV? "Is anyone of you in trouble?" Do you notice anything interesting from those 3 translations? Each one translates the last word differently. What does that tell you? It's probably not a very common word, and the meaning is not clearly defined. The verb that is used here is $\text{6}\forall\text{6}\cong\text{B}\forall\text{2}\Xi\text{T}$. It's a combination of two words: $\text{6}\forall\text{6}\cong\text{H}$, which means bad or evil, and the verb $\text{B}\forall\text{2}\Xi\text{T}$, which means to suffer. So this verb, $\text{6}\forall\text{6}\cong\text{B}\forall\text{2}\Xi\text{T}$, literally means "to suffer evil", "to suffer bad thing", "to suffer misfortune".

But if you don't have a Greek lexicon, you can learn a great deal about this verb by

reading the two other places in the New Testament where this same verb is found. This is how we study the Bible. Line upon line, precept upon precept. We can learn from a Bible concordance that this verb $\delta\epsilon\delta\epsilon\mu\chi\tau\omicron$ is found in two other texts in the Greek NT. Let's look at both of them! Both of these other usages are found in Paul's second letter to Timothy. Let's look first at 2 Timothy 2:9. Let's start reading from 2 Tim 2:8. "....."

Notice, that Paul gives an example of his misfortune. What happened to him? He was in chains. But I love what he says next! "But the Word of God is not chained!" Someone ought to say "Hallelujah" out there. Even when bad things happen to God's people, the Word of God is not chained. The Lord Jesus Christ is not chained. That's encouraging to me! What about you?

Let's look at the other reference where this same verb $\delta\epsilon\delta\epsilon\mu\chi\tau\omicron$ is used. 2 Timothy 4:5. "....." Paul is saying to Timothy, "Bad things happened to me. Bad things will happen to you." Endure afflictions. That's the same verb. And what were some of the afflictions that Paul suffered? Listen to his testimony to the Christians in Corinth. 2 Corinthians 11:24-27. "....."

It seems that suffering, affliction, trouble, is part of life's journey, even for followers of Jesus. You know, there are some people who have the strange misconception that if you become a Christian, a follower of Jesus, that the rest of your life will be trouble free, a smooth ride all the way into glory land. Where did they get that idea? Jesus clearly stated in John 16:33, "In this world, you will have tribulation." Not necessarily all the time. But there will come times when you suffer evil, when you will suffer misfortune.

And some of you listening to my voice today can testify that these words are true. Some of you are suffering today. Am I speaking the truth? Some of you are afflicted. Some of you

are in trouble. And if not you, then you know someone close to you who is suffering, don't you?

So it should not surprise us that James should close his epistle to believers by asking, "Is anyone among you suffering?" Without hesitation, we can cry out "Yes!" If it's not you personally, then it's someone that you know and love.

But James doesn't just ask a question. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he gives some counsel. Just one word in the Greek text. Three words in most English translations: let him pray; let her pray. The verb that is used here is the same verb used when Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane crying out to His Father. "Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from Me." Jesus was in the midst of suffering, and He modeled for us what we must do. Pray. Cry out to God

That might sound rather obvious counsel to some. After all, didn't the apostle Paul appeal to Christians to "pray without ceasing" and to "continue earnestly in prayer"? Why do we need to be reminded to pray when we are in midst of suffering, in the midst of bad things happening to us, in the midst of misfortune? Let me suggest two reasons why we need to be reminded to pray. First, we may become so preoccupied with our trials that we forget to pray. Let me say that again. We may become so preoccupied with our trials that we forget to pray. Have you ever been in a crisis and you went all day without eating anything? It has happened to me. Just before Paul and his traveling companions were shipwrecked off the coast of Malta, he encouraged them to eat because they hadn't eaten anything for 14 days. They were all on a diet. Or a fast. They were so preoccupied with their suffering that they forgot to eat.

The same thing can happen to us in regards to prayer. It's possible to become so preoccupied with the suffering, so preoccupied with the misfortune, that we fail to pray. Perhaps

that's why James reminds us: Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Let her pray.

But there may be a second reason why James reminds us to pray when we are in the midst of suffering, in the midst of trouble, in the midst of affliction? We may become discouraged and feel like it won't do any good to pray. Have you ever felt like that? Someone gave a powerful testimony this past Wednesday evening at prayer meeting. He had been through a time of suffering, a time of trouble. He could easily have been discouraged and given up on God. But he came to prayer meeting, he asked others to pray with him and for him, and he gave testimony last Wednesday evening that Jesus is making him whole!

We all run the risk of becoming discouraged, or giving up on praying. But James appeals to us: "Pray! Pray! Pray!" James knows the Word of the Lord recorded by the Psalmist Asaph, in Psalm 50:15. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you will honor Me." James knows the Word of the Lord recorded by the prophet Jeremiah, in Jeremiah 33:3. "Call to Me, and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things which you do not know."

And so James appeals to believers: "Is anyone among you suffering? Is anyone among you afflicted? Is anyone among you in trouble? Let him pray! Let her pray!" And if your heart agrees with James' counsel, then the next question is a practical one. "OK, then HOW should I pray?"

And that is a good question. A vital question. How should we pray when we are in the midst of suffering? My answer would be simple: however you can! Just cry out to God with a sincere heart. It doesn't have to be a complicated prayer. "O Most glorious and resplendent Creator who dwells between the cherubim..." When Jesus was in the midst of suffering, affliction and trouble, He cried out to God, "Father, if it's possible, let this cup pass from Me.

Nevertheless, not My will but Yours be done!” Peter, when he was sinking like a rock in the middle of a lake that was 150 feet deep—he was in trouble! And he cried out, “Lord, save me!” The thief dying on the cross next to Jesus cried out, dying for crimes that he had committed—he was suffering, he was in the midst of bad times. And he also cried out, “Lord, remember me.” That was a prayer. Nothing complicated but an earnest heart cry.

I vividly remember one of the many times that I have cried out to God. I was a close to death as I have ever been. I was driving on a mountain road in western Pennsylvania early one morning. It had just started to rain. And as I drove down a winding road on the side of a mountain I completely lost control of the vehicle. I found out later that a big coal truck had spilled some diesel fuel on the road. But I felt like I was on ice. I hit the guardrail, spun completely around. It must have looked quite dramatic from up above. Then my front bumper hooked onto the steel cable of the guardrail, my car did a handstand and was catapulted backwards upside-down off the side of the mountain. I was 26 years old. I had a young wife and a 10 month old son back home and I wanted to live.

So do you know what I did? I cried out to God. I don’t remember if I was even able to vocalize my prayer. But we have a Father in heaven who can even hear out silent heart cry. Am I speaking the truth today? He hears your heart cry today. He hears my heart cry. Wherever we are on this planet, wherever we find ourselves, in the midst of trouble, in the midst of suffering, in the midst of affliction, he hears out heart cry.

Perhaps you’re wondering how I survived such a terrible accident. My car was totally demolished, but praise God, my life was spared. And I don’t think that I was just lucky. When you find yourself in the midst of suffering, in the midst of affliction, in the midst of trouble,

don't get so preoccupied with the trials that you forget to pray. And don't believe Satan's lie that your prayer is useless and won't accomplish a thing. Pray. Cry out to God. His promises are sure. He will be faithful to His Word. He will never leave you or forsake you. He will be with you in life and also in death. So cry out to Him, and do so with peace in your heart, because He is with you, even to the end of the age.

The message from God's Word is simple: **When you are experiencing hard times, cry out to God!** There may be someone here today, or joining us via our media ministry, and you are in the midst of a time of trouble. You are in the midst of a time of suffering. You are in the midst of a time of affliction. And you realize that you need to pray. You need to cry out to God. I want to invite you to fill out a prayer request card so that we can cry out to God on your behalf. If you are joining us via our media ministry, send us an e-mail. We want to pray with you and for you.

I also want to encourage each one of you to come to one of our 3 prayer services here at the Forest Lake Church. You say, "Pastor, I'm not suffering right now. I don't need to come to one of the prayer services." And I would respond, "Then come and pray with and for someone else who is suffering." We have a prayer service on Sabbath morning at 7:45AM in Room 9, right off the main lobby. We have two prayer services on Wednesday, one at 10:30 AM and another at 7:00 PM. Come to one of those prayer services, cry out to God, let others cry out to God on your behalf, cry out to God on behalf of those around you and you WILL be blessed.

Let this church become what God desires it to be—a house of prayer for all people. Let's hear the counsel of James. **When you are experiencing hard times, cry out to God!**

PRAYER, PRAISE AND HEALING - PART 2

Is anyone cheerful?

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	James 5:13b
Subject:	What a believer who is cheerful should do
Complement:	sing psalms
Exegetical idea:	A believer who is cheerful should sing psalms.
Homiletical idea:	Sing songs of praise to the LORD when you're having a good day so when the bad day comes, you will praise Him still!
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to fill their minds with the Word of God while they are cheerful so that God can instruct them through His Word in every situation of life!

Introduction

I have been really looking forward to today's message! The short passage of Scripture that we are going to study today has changed my life and changed my family! We are continuing our series on Prayer, Praise and Healing from the book of James. Toward the conclusion of his letter, James asks three important questions. We considered the first question last week. It's found in the first half of James 5:13: "Is anyone among you suffering?"

That word "suffering", "afflicted" in the KJV, "in trouble" in the NIV, means to be in the midst of hard times, to be going through bad times. James asks, "Is anyone among you going through hard times?" That can happen even to Christians, can't it? Oh, yes. Even followers of Jesus go through hard times. And what should we do when we are in the midst of hard times, according to James? Pray. Cry out to God! And how should we pray? How should we cry out to God? However we can. Just cry out to God. He will hear your heart cry. And, even if you can't find the words to say, God will hear your silent heart cry. Hallelujah! Praise His holy name!

So, when you're in the midst of hard times, cry out to God. Some of you have been

crying out to God this week! And He hears your cry. He says, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you, and you will honor Me!” Psalm 50:15 We also were challenged last week to cry out to God not just for ourselves, but for others that need our prayers. I was so blessed on Wednesday evening at the 7:00 PM prayer service! People were crying out to God, not just for themselves but for others! It was powerful! God is doing a mighty work in our midst!

If you missed the first message in this series on Prayer, Praise and Healing, you can watch it or listen online at www.forestlakechurch.org.

Today, we are going to consider the second of three questions that James asks near the end of his epistle. This second question is also found in James 5:13, the second half of the verse. I invite you to open your Bible to the book of James, chapter 5, and let’s look at the second half of verse 13. The NKJV translates the second question in James 5:13 this way: “Is anyone cheerful?” Is anyone cheerful? Who has the KJV of the Bible? How is this second question translated in your version of the Bible? “Is anyone merry?” What about the NIV? “Is anyone happy?”

What do you notice about these three translations? They are all different. So what does this word mean in the second question that James asks believers? Cheerful? Merry? Happy? The Greek verb that is used in this second part of James 5:13 is $\epsilon\upsilon\delta\alpha\iota\mu\omicron\text{ν}$, and I’m not convinced that any of the Bible translations that we just quoted have translated this verb accurately. The verb $\epsilon\upsilon\delta\alpha\iota\mu\omicron\text{ν}$ is made up of two words: the prefix $\epsilon\upsilon$, which we find in English words like eulogy and euphoria. The prefix $\epsilon\upsilon$ means good or well. And $\delta\alpha\iota\mu\omicron\text{ν}$ means passion. That includes anger or wrath, but combined with the prefix $\epsilon\upsilon$ this unusual Greek

word literally means “to be of good passions”, “to be in good spirits”.

James might have said, “Is anyone having a good day?” That’s the etymology of the word ,↔2Λ:ΞT, translated in our text, “Is anyone cheerful?” “Is anyone merry?” “Is anyone happy?”

We can also learn about the meaning of this key word in James 5:13 by examining the two other places in the NT where this same verb ,↔2Λ:ΞT is found. Both other occurrences are in the book of Acts, chapter 27. Dr. Luke is recording the story of Paul’s stormy voyage and shipwreck off the coast of Malta. And in Acts 27:22 we read, “.....” And then again in Acts 27:25, “.....”

You can see from the context why “be of good courage!” or “cheer up!” is a good translation. They have not been having a good day. In fact, it has been more than two weeks since they had a good day! So, with that story in mind, to translate ,↔2Λ:ΞT in James 5:13 as “Is anyone happy?” sound rather weak to me! What do you think? And “is anyone merry?” That sounds too much like Christmas! A good translation might be “Is anyone of good courage? Is anyone in good spirits? Is anyone having a good day?”

I’m sure that some of us here on campus today, or some of you who have joined us via our media ministry, might answer “Yes!” I’m of good courage today! I’m having a good day!” If you can answer “Yes!” to James’ question today, then James has some very specific counsel for you. Again, just one word in Greek text. It’s the Greek verb Pϙ88T. It’s a word that will require some careful study in order to understand the counsel that James has for us, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

How does the second half of James 5:13 read in your translation of the Bible? In the

NKJV it reads, “Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.” What about the KJV? “Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.” That’s the same as the NKJV. What about the NIV? “Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise!”

What’s the best translation? Is it “Let him sing psalms” or “Let him sing songs of praise?” To answer that question, we need to go back to the Greek translation of the book of psalms. What do we call the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures? The Septuagint. When the Jewish scholars around 200 BC translated the Psalms from Hebrew into Greek, they often used the verb P₅₈₈T, the same verb found in our text in James 5:13.

Let’s look at three psalms where the verb P₅₈₈T is used when translating from Hebrew to Greek. These passages will help us to understand the answer to James’ second question in James 5:13. Turn to Psalm 18:49. “.....” When the Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew zamar, “to sing praises” into Greek, they used the Greek verb P₅₈₈T, the same verb found in our text in James 5:13.

Look at another example in Psalm 47:6. The Hebrew verb for sing praises is zamar. And you can guess what Greek verb the Jewish scholars chose! P₅₈₈T.

One more example. Psalm 9. That’s one of my favorite psalms of praise! The psalmist declares, “I will praise you, O Lord, with my whole heart! I will tell of all your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You. I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.” When the Jewish scholars translated that Hebrew for “I will sing praise,” they used the verb P₅₈₈T.

So, when James asks, “Are you having a good day?” and then uses the verb P₅₈₈T, he is not simply encouraging us to sing songs. He is specifically encouraging us to sing songs of praise to the LORD. Specifically, to sing Scripture songs of praise!

And that's something that I love to do. I love to sing Scripture songs of praise to the LORD! And I am blessed to live with someone who compose the melodies for those Scripture songs of praise so that I can hide those words in my mind and in my heart. You are going to hear one of those Scripture songs of praise to the LORD in just a few minutes.

But someone might be thinking, "Wait a minute! Why does James tell us to sing Scripture songs of praise if we're having a good day? Aren't we supposed to praise the Lord at all times? Yes! We are supposed to praise the Lord at all times. The psalmist David declared, "I will bless the LORD at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth!" So it's good to sing songs of praise to the Lord at all times.

But I can think of at least two reasons why James encourages us to sing Scripture songs of praise when we're having a good day. First, if you're having a good day, and you are thankful for all of God's blessings, don't you think that it's appropriate to sing Scripture songs of praise to the Lord? Isn't that a good idea? Moses makes it clear in Deuteronomy chapter 8 that when we are in the midst of good times we ought not to forget that it is the Lord who is the giver of every good and perfect gift. All of our blessings come from His hand. So it makes sense for James to say, If you're having a good day, sing Scripture songs of praise to the LORD!

But there's another reason why we should sing Scripture songs of praise to the Lord when things are going well. It's during the good times that we need to be filling our minds and our hearts with the Word of God. **"Sing songs of praise to the Lord when you're having a good day!** That's good counsel. When you're in the midst of hard times, it's not that easy to focus. **"Sing songs of praise to the Lord when you're having a good day!**

Do you remember the story of Joseph when he became ruler over Egypt. During the

seven years of plenty, Joseph ordered grain to be stored up in barns. Why? So that there would be reserves when the seven years of famine came. And we also need to store up God's Word in our hearts during the times when things are going well. Then, when the seven years of famine come, when we are going through hard times, we will have the precious Word of God stored in our minds and hearts! Does that make sense to you?

James wisely, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, encourages us to learn those Scripture songs of praise, and to sing those songs of praise, when we're having a good day. Then, when the hard times comes, we'll not only cry out to God, as we learned last week, but we will already have His Word in our minds and in our hearts.

That's why I'm so excited that we are learning the Scripture songs of praise at our Wednesday evening prayer service! If you haven't been to the Wednesday evening prayer service recently, you have missed some beautiful music! I've asked some of those who come the Wednesday evening prayer service to help me sing one of those Scripture songs of praise today. It's actually that same psalm that I quoted earlier: Psalm 9. If you know the song, please feel free to sing along with us.

Psalm 9:1-2

I will praise you, O LORD, with my whole heart.

I will tell of all Your marvelous works.

I will be glad and rejoice in You.

I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.

We have a special prayer service Scripture song CD that we have prepared. It includes

this psalm of praise, and 5 other Scripture songs. And we'd like to give you a free copy of this CD! There's just one condition: You have to come to the Wednesday prayer service to get it! That is, unless you live far from here. If you're joining us via our media ministry, via web church, or radio, or television, just send us an e-mail with your mailing address, and we'll send you a copy of this Scripture songs CD as a gift from the Forest Lake Church family!

Why would we do that? The answer is simple. We need to fill our hearts and minds with the Word of God! And James has given us some very practical counsel today: **Sing songs of praise to the LORD when you're having a good day so when the bad day comes, you will praise Him still!** Don't wait until the hard times come to start scrambling around for the precious promises of God's Word. Fill your mind and heart with the Word of God now!

And if you're not having a good day, if your not of good courage, then just get one of the Scripture songs CDs and listen to it. Even if you're too down to sing along, just let the Word of God soak into your mind and heart. The day will come when you will be able once again to lift up your heart and voice in praise to the Lord!

Several weeks ago, something happened to me that filled my heart with joy! I heard a young family filling their hearts with the Word of God! They were having a good day, and there is no better time to sing Scripture songs of praise than when you're having a good day! I was so blessed by their singing that I asked them if they would sing for us today at church. Please remember that this is not a performance. This is an illustration of what we all should be doing: filling our hearts with the Word of God!

I would like to invite Noah, and Levi and Eden, and Zion, and their parents Pamela and David to come up here with my wife Bodil. They are going to share with you one of the

Scripture songs that they have hidden in their hearts!

Which song are you going to sing for us today? “The Fruit of the Spirit.”

Galatians 5:22-23 NKJV

**The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering
kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control**

Thank you, Nerness family, for sharing that Word of God with us today. That is also a song of praise! You are praising God for the fruit of the Spirit which is given to us! That was beautiful, wasn't it? And thank you, Pamela and David, for filling your hearts and the hearts of your children with the Word of God!

I'm thankful for another piece of practical counsel from James, the brother of our LORD. Last week we learned, “If you're in the midst of hard times, cry out to God!” I hope that you not only remembered that, but that you will live it too! **Sing songs of praise to the LORD when you're having a good day so when the bad day comes, you will praise Him still!** Very practical counsel! **Sing songs of praise to the LORD when you're having a good day so when the bad day comes, you will praise Him still!** And in the days or weeks ahead, whether you're having a good day or a bad day, you'll be glad that your mind and heart is filled with the Word of God!

PRAYER, PRAISE AND HEALING - PART 3

Is anyone among you sick?

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: James 5:14a
Subject: What a believer who is sick should do
Complement: call the elders of the church
Exegetical idea: A believer who is sick should call the elders of the church.
Homiletical idea: **You can cry out to God and ask Him to make you whole!**
Purpose: To inspire my hearers with the testimonies of those who have experienced personal healing and to encourage them to let Jesus make them whole.

Introduction

Today you will hear the amazing testimonies of people who have been healed by our great and awesome God! This is part three of a life-changing series entitled Prayer, Praise and Healing! We have been studying a passage of Scripture from the book of James. In this passage, James asks three questions. In the first message in this series, James began by asking in James 5:13, “Is anyone among you suffering?” Is anyone going through a hard time? What should we do? Pray! Cry out to God. And how should we cry out to God? However we can. Like a sinking fisherman who cried out, “Lord, save me!” Or a dying thief who cried out, “Lord, remember me!” When you are going through a hard time, cry out to God! And He will hear your cry! He says, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you and you will honor Me.” “Call on Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things which you do not know.”

Then James asked, in the second part of James 5:13, “Is anyone cheerful?” Is anyone of good courage? Is anyone having a good day? What should we do? Sing songs of praise to the Lord! You say, “Shouldn’t we praise the Lord at all times?” Yes! But James wisely counsels us to fill our hearts with songs of praise to the Lord when we’re having a good day so when the bad

day comes, we will praise Him still!

I am so blessed to see families filling their minds and hearts with songs of praise to the Lord! God is worthy of all of our praise, isn't He? And there is no better time to fill our minds and hearts with songs of praise than when we're having a good day! Then, when the bad day comes, we will praise Him still.

Many of you came on Wednesday evening to our prayer service and got a free copy of our prayer meeting Scripture songs CD. And we received e-mails from web church members who also requested a copy of our Scripture songs CD. It's encouraging to me to see you putting into practice what you have learned! Is anyone having a good day? Sing Scripture songs of praise to the Lord!

Then comes the third question that James asks, recorded in James 5:14. "Is anyone among you sick?" This is such an important question that we are going to take two weeks to carefully study this passage. A key word to understand is the word translated "sick" in the NKJV. How does it read in the KJV. "Is any sick among you?" And the NIV? "Is any one of you sick?" There seems to be a general agreement in translating the verb that is found here in James 5:14. Is anyone among you sick?

But there is a problem. Because in my culture, when I hear the word "sick", I automatically think "blaahh", physically sick. What about you? If someone says, "I'm sick!", what comes to your mind? Physically sick. The verb in the Greek is $\sigma\chi\epsilon\iota$. It's a fairly common verb in the New Testament, used 33 times. The Greek verb $\sigma\chi\epsilon\iota$ means to be feeble or weak, without strength. Does that include physical sickness? Absolutely. I found 9 passages where this verb is clearly a reference to physical sickness. When you are physically sick

you can be feeble, weak, without strength. But I have a question for you? Can a person be feeble or weak in other ways? Certainly.

There are many ways to be feeble and weak: physically, emotionally, spiritually, mentally, relationally. One of my favorite passages of Scripture is 2 Corinthians 12:9-10. Here is same verb $\square H2, < \text{ET}$ is used. “.....” Is Paul saying, “When I am physically sick, then I am strong?” No! He is talking about a different kind of feebleness and weakness. When I recognize that I am powerful, without strength, then I find my strength in the Lord!

So when James asks, “Is anyone among you feeble or weak?” he is including all kinds of weakness: physically, emotionally, spiritually, relationally. And notice that he is speaking to believers, to followers of Jesus. “Is anyone among you..?” Are there followers of Jesus who are feeble and weak? Are there followers of Jesus who are without strength, physically, emotionally, spiritually, relationally?

Janet was feeble, weak, without strength. Janet had come to the end of her resources. The first time that Janet came to my office, she was a freshman on the campus of Southern Adventist University. Janet was a gifted student. She never skipped classes, took careful notes, and always completed her assignments on time. But something was wrong. She always seemed so sad, so downcast, so damaged. Sometimes I would see her in the hallway, stooped over, hugging her pain. I had noticed the bruises on her face, and the burns on her arms, but I did not understand. I could not even begin to imagine a petite young lady beating her head with a baseball bat, stabbing herself with a knife and laying burning matches on her skin. But it was obvious, as she sat there in my office, that something was radically wrong. She could not conceal her desperate need. She was

battered, bruised, and broken. I don't remember everything that Janet shared with me that day, but I can never forget the look of pain and the helplessness. She summarized the trauma of her life in a letter that she sent to me some time later: "I looked at some old pictures of me as a little girl. It is sad to look at myself. That little girl was sweet and innocent. I have picture of when I was two years old. I just want to take that little girl in my arms and hold her and protect her. She was so little and defenseless. but that little girl was not me. I should have been able to defend myself. I should have known better. It was my fault. I just need to accept that and stop punishing myself for it. I looked at some older pictures of me. I don't remember anything about certain times. The older girl smiles, but not with her eyes. Why can't I remember her? Everything is just very confusing. It's my fault."

I referred Janet to a Christian counselor, but I later learned that she had only attended for a few sessions. The following Spring she was hospitalized because of an eating disorder and dropped out of college for the semester.

The years slipped by, and toward the end of her senior year of college, Janet wrote to me again. As I read the letter, I realized that nothing had really changed. Her life was still filled with pain. She recounted a long list of counselors who had tried to help her and how she had run from them all. She concluded her letter in this way: "The problem is with me. I know there is something wrong with me. I know that I am bad inside and I deserve bad things to happen to me. I don't remember any specific incidents of abuse. I do have feelings of terror and panic at times. The eating disorders, the self-injury, mutilation, the depression, low self-esteem. I know these are all symptoms of childhood

abuse. I don't deny that, but I just can't remember. Is what happened so terrible? I am so confused."

On occasion I would see Janet on campus. Usually she was clutching her feeble frame, her head bowed low. Often there were bandaids to cover the knife slashes and baggy clothes to conceal her mutilated arms and legs. But she could not hide her pain. It oozed out of every pore of her body. It called out, like a silent scream, to all who would dare to listen.

I remember the day of the Awards Chapel during Janet's last semester of college. She was honored as the outstanding senior in her field of study. As she walked up to receive her award, she even tried to smile. But how could she help anyone else when she was so broken herself? Was she going to leave this campus as damaged and desperate as when she came? "O God," I prayed, "please heal Janet." I knew that it would take a miracle. All human help had failed.

Ten days after graduation Janet was driving through the campus of Southern college and as she drove by the Religion Building she felt impressed to stop. It was Wednesday evening and students were gathering for a special mid-week prayer service. She continued driving passed the Chapel, but the impression grew stronger. "Go to the prayer service tonight." Janet had come to that Religion Department many times before. But this time was to be different. Life-changing. Janet didn't realize it, but this was the night that she would be healed.

"I was really in the depths of despair," she recounted later. "I felt that I had used up all of my resources." For 18 years she had been hounded and harassed by Satan. Now

she was desperate. Janet made her way, battered and bruised, into the Chapel and found a seat in the back pew. As the group knelt together for prayer, they invited her to come forward and join the circle. She protested for a few seconds, but eventually, hugging her pain, she made her way timidly to the front. During the season of prayer several students gave spontaneous testimonies of praise for healing that they had received from God at an anointing service two weeks before. Janet told us later that as she listened to those testimonies of healing, she saw a glimmer of hope. The Son of Righteousness was already rising with healing in His wings! But she remained silent during the season of prayer and, when the service concluded, she slipped out unnoticed.

After the last person had left the Chapel, I turned out the lights, and made my way to the outside door. As I turned the corner in the hallway, there was Janet. She startled me! She looked very intense. Deliberate. "I can't live with this anger anymore," she exclaimed, "but I saw a glimmer of hope tonight." My first thought was to invite her to come to an anointing service the following week. But as we stood there, the Holy Spirit brought this radical thought to my mind: "God is going to heal her tonight!" I knew instantly that I was not talking to myself. These were not my thoughts. In fact, my head was spinning. Heal her tonight? Did I really believe that this was possible? Oh yes, theoretically I believed that God could do anything. But could He heal Janet, tonight? I had never met anyone this broken before, this damaged by the ravages of the enemy. There was only one appropriate response at a moment like this. Sensing that we were on holy ground, we fell to our knees in prayer. As we prayed, I became very aware of the presence of the Lord. In fact, it was as if I was listening to the prayer, and the Holy Spirit

was praying the prayer through me. With a holy boldness that was not my own I asked God to lift the heavy burden that was oppressing Janet's soul and cast it into the depths of the sea. As we prayed, Janet was earnestly pleading with God, "Please, Lord, please." Then we began to recount the story of Jairus' daughter, and how Jesus raised her from the dead. And all of a sudden it hit me. You see, I knew the theory about what happens to a victim of abuse. The child dies emotionally. She becomes buried under all of the suffering and shame. Janet had been dead emotionally for 18 years, but Jesus was about to raise her from the dead! Again with a holy boldness that only comes from above, I prayed "Janet, the Lord Jesus says to you, "Little girl, I say to you, arise."

At that moment it was like something inside of Janet broke loose. "Everything was gone in an instant," she testified later. She began to laugh and cry at the same time as a waterfall of emotion cascaded over her soul. Then she stood to her feet she exclaimed, "I can breathe, and I can smile!" The darkness was banished. The oppression was gone. Janet's eyes were bright and her countenance was transformed. Her heart was filled with rejoicing as she began to praise and glorify God. There was no place for doubt. Janet had just experienced the healing power of God.

As we arose from our knees, I encouraged Janet to go home and share what the Lord had done for her. This was her testimony: "I just feel that God has raised me from the dead, and I don't think I even had any faith at that point. It was like a gift, no price required. Every day I wake up praising God, and everything is new. I feel like a little child again. Everything is joyful. I went from being permeated with despair and desperation to being permeated with peace. Everything has changed."

And as the hours and days passed, Janet became more aware of her healing. The following morning she was peeling potatoes. Suddenly she realized that she had a knife in her hand. She remembered the many times that she had cut herself, rationalizing that she deserved the pain. But now all that chaos was past. She looked up to heaven and rejoiced, "I'm free. Praise God, I'm free." Later that same day, Janet sensed the presence of the evil one, seeking to oppress her once again. Quickly she called upon the Lord, and rebuked Satan in the name of Jesus. Instantly, the enemy left her.

Janet recently wrote to me again, praising God for His healing power: "Now my scars are scars of victory! I'm starting to wear short sleeves again. My legs aren't covered with bruises anymore. Before I was healed, pain was my life. But I had gotten to the point where the more severely I hurt myself, the less I could physically feel it. Now when I accidentally get hurt - which is rare because I'm more careful than I used to be - I can feel it! I can feel emotionally too. I'll continue to praise the Lord for raising me from the dead. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. Jn 8:36 Free indeed! Praise God, I'm free!"

Janet asked me to share her testimony. Janet believes that her dramatic healing was not only for her blessing but also for the blessing of others who are feeble and weak, others who are without strength. Others need to know that Jesus can make them whole!

One Friday evening on the campus of Southern Adventist University, near Chattanooga, Tennessee, I shared Janet's story. I know that God is a great and awesome God, but I was not expecting the amazing miracle that He would perform that night. I want you to hear the story

from the young woman whose life was forever changed! Eve, please join me here on the platform.

Eve, what was going on in your life in the days and weeks leading up to the Friday evening?

What happened inside of you when you started to hear Janet's story?

What happened next?

What was going on in your heart and mind as you came forward to the front of the church?

How were things different after the prayer that evening?

What an amazing testimony! Perhaps it surprises you that there would be Christians who need to be made whole. After all, Christians are supposed to have it all together, right? Pain free. Trouble free. Trauma free.

But James knew the truth. James, the brother of our Lord, knew that there were many followers of Jesus who needed to be made whole. And so James asks a question of believers. It's the third question in a short passage at the end of his epistle. Is anyone among you feeble or weak? Is anyone among you without strength?

Next week we are going to carefully study some specific counsel that James provides. But this much we have learned from Janet's testimony and Eve's testimony. When you are feeble and weak, when you are without strength, cry out to God! He will hear your cry. Listen to the heart cry of Jeremiah, found in Jeremiah 17:14. It's a cry of the heart to the One who can make us whole! "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed. Save me, and I shall be saved. For

you are my praise!”

I have asked Bodil, Lisa, and Rachel to sing this heart cry for us. Listen as they sing this beautiful Scripture song. As they are singing, if you sense that Jesus is inviting you to experience some personal healing in your life, whether physical, emotional, spiritual, relational...if you sense that the LORD God wants to make you whole, I want to invite to do something courageous. I want to invite you to stand up and come to the front of the church. If you're in the balcony, we'll wait for you. When you get to the front of the church, you can stand or kneel. Just come as you are, crying out to Jesus. We are going to pray for you, and we will help you to prepare for a blessing that will change your life forever! Listen now to this heart cry and if the Lord is speaking to your heart, just come as you are and ask Jesus to make you whole.

Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed. Save me, and I shall be saved.

Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed. Save me, and I shall be saved.

For you are my praise! You are my praise!

You are my praise! You are my praise!

"I looked at some old pictures of me as a little girl. It is sad to look at myself. That little girl was sweet and innocent. I have picture of when I was two years old. I just want to take that little girl in my arms and hold her and protect her. She was so little and defenseless. but that little girl was not me. I should have been able to defend myself. I should have known better. It was my fault. I just need to accept that and stop punishing myself for it. I looked at some older pictures of me. I don't remember anything about certain times. The older girl smiles, but not with her eyes. Why can't I remember her? Everything is just very confusing. It's my fault."

"The problem is with me. I know there is something wrong with me. I know that I am bad inside and I deserve bad things to happen to me. I don't remember any specific incidents of abuse. I do have feelings of terror and panic at times. The eating disorders, the self-injury, mutilation, the depression, low self-esteem. I know these are all symptoms of childhood abuse. I don't deny that, but I just can't remember. Is what happened so terrible? I am so confused."

"I can't live with this anger anymore, but I saw a glimmer of hope tonight."

"I just feel that God has raised me from the dead, and I don't think I even had any faith at that point. It was like a gift, no price required. Every day I wake up praising God, and everything is new. I feel like a little child again. Everything is joyful. I went from being permeated with despair and desperation to being permeated with peace. Everything has changed."

"Now my scars are scars of victory! I'm starting to wear short sleeves again. My legs aren't covered with bruises anymore. Before I was healed, pain was my life. But I had gotten to the point where the more severely I hurt myself, the less I could physically feel

it. Now when I accidentally get hurt - which is rare because I'm more careful than I used to be - I can feel it! I can feel emotionally too. I'll continue to praise the Lord for raising me from the dead. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. Jn 8:36
Free indeed! Praise God, I'm free!"

JANET'S TESTIMONY

(given May 19, 1992 at Religion Dept Chapel, Southern College)

A week ago I was driving by and I really felt impressed to stop. I had just been out to the recycling center to take my newspapers. More than newspapers were going to be recycled that night, but I didn't know that. I drove back by and really felt impressed to come back, so I did. I wasn't going to come in and sit in here, I was going to sit outside the door, but again I felt impressed to come in and so I did. I was really in the depths of despair - burdens of life, the burdens of the past twenty-three years of my life had bound me. Satan had me bound and tormented and harassed me since I was a little girl. Most of it was through pain, inflicted upon me by others. And I carried that with me and was overwhelmed by that. I couldn't let go of it. I was very self-destructive. I struggled with eating disorders until last Wednesday. And also I've had a lot of self injury since I was a little girl. I would cut burn and hit myself. But it's all gone. All the urge to do that is gone. It's so incredible to be free from that. And as I look back on my life, I can see that Jesus was working even when I was a little girl. My mom started to take us to church when I was about four or five years old. I loved learning about Jesus but I couldn't take Him home. I loved going to church and sabbath school. As I look back, there is a lot to be thankful for. He planted the seed within me but satan overwhelmed me so much that I couldn't seem to do anything. I don't know how I made it this far. I tried to kill myself when I was eleven and all the behaviors got worse as I grew older. Then I began to grow away from God. I ran from Him. I didn't want Him in my life, yet I did, but didn't know how to find Him. I thought He could never free me from this. I was just going to have to learn how to deal with it. So five years ago I came to Southern College, following in my sister's footsteps, and He began to

touch my heart. I went to church and vespers again and He began to draw me to Him. But the power of sin had me so bound and in my own power I couldn't brake free and I didn't see that God could release me from that. I could see that He could do that for someone else, but I thought He could never do that for me and He wouldn't do that for me. But He did and He can do that for anyone, I know that. I got married two years ago and we were having a lot of problems. I was filled with so much anger and so much bitterness and so much rage and I took that out on my husband and praise God that He stayed with me and that the marriage is healed and healing. I just praise God for him and for sending Him to me and for sticking with me. Because I don't know if it would have lasted much longer. But that's all in the past. Like I said, all those urges and the eating disorders-bulimia for nine years and I'm eating normally now and I'm enjoying food. I felt that I had used up all my resources but I hadn't looked to the one true source of healing. I've been reading a book called "God up Close" and there is a story in Luke seven about a woman's only son who died and Jesus raised him from the dead. And the book states that "the mother was overwhelmed with astonishment, the suddenness of it all, the unexpected, no price required, not even faith. Just a gratuitous gift from a God unwilling to accept longer, without rebuttal, the relentless tragedies and depredations of His severe and bitter enemy carried out upon His children as a way of striking at Him. It was time." The book goes on to say that it was time for God to show His power that will one day end the controversy, bringing a long separated God and His many children back together forever. I just feel that God has raised me from the dead and I don't think I even had any faith at that point and so it was like a gift, no faith, no price required. Every day I wake up praising God and everything is new, I feel like a little child again. Everything is joyful. It's hard to put words to all this and hard to describe. I went from being

permeated by despair and desperation to being permeated by peace.

It's deeper than a feeling. It's not just a feeling, it's a peace. And I'm just so thankful that we have a God that can do this for us. He can do this for any of us, He loves all of us. Everything has changed in an instant and it was an instant miracle. I waited after the prayer meeting last wednesday because I wanted to learn about the anointing. And I remember I had told Dr. Morris that I had felt a glimmer of hope, maybe things aren't so bad. But I don't know if I really believed. And we knelt and he began to pray and all I could say was "please." He had told me before to pray and maybe God would heal me next week. And then he said, "maybe God doesn't want you to wait another week, maybe God doesn't want you to carry that another week." So we knelt down and he began to pray. He prayed that Jesus would lift that burden and through it into the depths of the sea. And I could feel it, I could almost feel it leave. And then he prayed, "little girl, I say unto you, arise." It was like something inside of me broke and everything was gone in an instant. I can take a deep breath without feeling that pain and headiness. And I got up and I just started laughing. And I started smiling and I said, "I can breath and I can smile." And it's been that way ever since. There have been moments I've felt discouraged but I just get on my knees and say, "Lord, I don't even know what I'm discouraged about but please just lift this and draw me back to you." And He always does. I hardly ever do this, but I opened my Bible up to Psalm 30, it just fell open there, and the Psalm goes, "I will exalt you oh Lord for you have lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me. Oh Lord, my God, I called to you for help and you healed me. Oh Lord, you brought me up from the grave, you spared me from going down into the pit. Sing to the Lord you saints of His, praise His holy name. For His anger lasts only a moment but His favor lasts a lifetime. Weeping may remain for a night but

rejoicing comes in the morning. When I felt secure I said I will never be shaken. Oh Lord when you favored me, you made my mountains stand firm. But when you hid your face I was dismayed. To you oh Lord I called, to the Lord I cried for mercy. What gain is there in my destruction, in my going down to the pit? Will the dust praise you, will it proclaim your faithfulness? Hear oh Lord and be merciful to me, oh Lord be my help. You turned my whaling into dancing, you removed my sack cloth and clothed me with joy that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. Oh Lord my God I will give you thanks forever." I just thought that was such a blessing. I was feeling a little discouraged and He opened that up to me and showed it to me and He's been doing that ever since. I have so many verses that keep coming back to me that I haven't really looked at for so long. I guess the words of a song that Sandi Patti sings best describes who Jesus is. "For He's more wonderful than my mind can conceive, He's more wonderful than my heart can believe. He goes beyond my highest hopes and fondest dreams. He's everything that my soul ever longed for, everything that He's promised and so much more. He's more than amazing, more than marvelous, more than miraculous could ever be. He's more than wonderful, that's what Jesus is to me." And that's what Jesus is to me.

Eve's Testimony

I was born into an Adventist family. I grew up hearing about God and attended church every week with my family. I went to Adventist schools, from elementary school, on to a junior academy, and then here at GCA. I had good, Adventist friends. I was quiet, loved to read, and made good grades.

That all sounds pretty good, right? But you know, in spite of how good it sounds, it's not the whole truth. What I just told you about my life was what I wanted everybody to think about me. I took great care to keep up the appearance of "just your average student." Now I'm sure that sounds a bit strange, working hard at being average. But it's true. I didn't want to be on either extreme of what I'd call the popularity scale. I didn't want to be the one everybody picked on, and I didn't want to be among the super-popular crowd. Both places on the scale meant too many people would be watching, and I wanted to be safely in the middle, un-noticed. Average.

Well, still, you might be thinking that's pretty strange. And it is. But you see, I didn't want anybody to pay too much attention to me. I was afraid that if someone looked, they might see beyond the mask I hid behind to the darkness and pain inside. So I held out this image. I knew all the right things to say and do to appear normal, but the constant pretending caused what felt like a huge gulf between me and other people. No matter how many others were around me, I was still alone & isolated. I would have brief moments of feeling connected while singing during Vespers or Afterglow on Friday nights, but the contrast between that and the emptiness I'd experience again later would send me spiraling even further into depression. The times when

I felt I could not keep up the appearance of normal, I'd sneak off into the woods near the dorm and allow myself to cry where nobody would hear me.

I did have one small lifeline. Someone, sometime in my life told me that God would always be there for me, and I believed it. So I would pray while I cried. I didn't really believe God could do anything about the pain I felt, because it was tied to memories of being molested for two years when I was growing up. I reasoned that since the pain came from the memories, and I would always have those memories, then I would always have the pain. But somehow it helped to express how I felt to God. Well, it would help for a little while, because when I left the prayer time and headed back to the dorm, I'd have to put the facade back on, and the cycle would start again.

I was here at GCA for two years, and then went on to school at Southern. By my Junior year there, the depression had grown until I felt like I was completely filled with darkness, and contaminated people just by being around them. It got so bad I started to consider suicide. Life just didn't seem worth living. I could keep up my "I'm normal and happy" mask during the day, but often at night the memories and pain haunted me. One evening I started thinking about what method I might use to end my life, and realized how easy it would be. With that thought, my mind flashed back to an English class the previous year, and the professor's statement that the wrong way, Satan's way, is often the easiest path to choose, and I immediately dropped all thoughts of suicide. I told God I couldn't figure out why He'd want me to continue living, but since it seemed like that's what He wanted, it's what I would do.

My life continued with much the same routine after that. Some days were easier than others, some were harder. I developed a habit of going each weekend to visit family or friends. But after a few months of this, I had the strangest desire to stay on campus for the weekend, and I specifically wanted to go to Vespers on Friday night. So I didn't make any plans for leaving. Thursday night of that week turned out to be one of my really bad ones, and as I lay curled up on my bed trying to shut out the memories, I prayed, "God, please save me." Finally, after a couple hours, I managed to fall asleep.

I spent the next day at the mall with one of my good friends, but I insisted she bring me back in time to go to Vespers. To my surprise, she decided to come with me. We got to the church ten minutes early and happened to run into another good friend of mine in the lobby, so we all decided to sit together.

The program started right on time with song service, and then a student got up for special music, and sang "The Savior is Waiting." I'm a very visual person, so as he sang, I got a picture in my mind of Jesus standing outside the door to my heart and knocking. It occurred to me that the only reason He had to knock was because the door was closed! I immediately imagined myself opening the door to let Him in.

After the song, the speaker got up, and it turned out to be Dr. Morris, one of the Religion professors. The first thing he did was pray, asking for the Holy Spirit to fill the sanctuary and work on each one of us in a special way, so everyone listening would be able to step aside and

listen to the Spirit and let Him lead. I thought that was an excellent idea, and promised God I would do that.

Dr. Morris started with John 8:36, “If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed.” He said, “Satan is the bondage-maker, but Jesus is the bondage breaker,” and went on to tell three stories. The first two stories were about two men who were in bondage to Satan for different reasons and were set free by the power of Jesus.

Then he started the third story. He said he had met a young lady who had been harmed by someone very close to her when she was very young, and the pain from that would not go away. I knew instantly what the story was about, and I knew I didn’t want to deal with the pain that would come from hearing it. So I started putting up my emotional “wall” to distance myself and to shut out what I was hearing. As I was doing this, however, I heard a quiet voice in my mind say, “If you do this, you will be resisting the Holy Spirit.” For much of my life, God had always been the only one I could turn to, and I could not deliberately choose to resist Him. I reluctantly let go of my defenses, allowing the wall to fall. And the pain that had been pushed back for so long began to pour out.

As I listened to the story of this young lady and about how she had so much pain that she’d hit herself & cut herself in an attempt to deal with it, tears started to fall. Slowly at first, then more and more. When I heard how God healed her one day, I began to think if God could heal her. . . then maybe He could heal me, too. At the end of the story, Dr. Morris made a call for anyone

who wanted to be set free to come to the front while the special music was being sung again.

My two friends sitting with me, both of whom “just happened” to be ones who knew my story, asked me if I wanted to go up front. By this time, I was crying pretty hard, hunched over and holding on to my stomach as if it would help keep me from falling apart. When we got into the aisle, they each took an arm and started helping me get to the front. With each step I felt like weight was being pressed on me, getting heavier and heavier the closer we got to the front.

Without my friends, I would never have made it. As it was, when we did get there, they could no longer keep me standing, and carefully let me down until I was kneeling, hunched on the floor.

When the song ended, Dr. Morris prayed for everyone who had come up, but I still felt the same, overwhelmed by the pain inside. In my mind, I cried out, “Oh God, please don’t leave me like this!” A moment later, I heard someone telling people to give me room to breathe, and I felt a hand on my shoulder. When I looked up, I saw it was Dr. Morris, kneeling in front of me. I wanted to ask him to pray for me, but I couldn’t speak. He seemed to get the message anyway, though, because he did pray for me. He asked God to give me peace and joy, and it was like a ray of God’s love started from my head and went all through me, chasing all the pain and darkness away, and I stopped crying. Then he prayed that I would realize that when the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed, and I knew I was, indeed, free. He asked that God would send angels to surround me and protect me in my new freedom and ended the prayer. He looked at me and said, “Peace of Jesus be with you.”

I stood up then, and I have never felt lighter than I did at that moment. The weight was gone! I

can't even begin to describe the joy I felt. I was completely amazed at what God had done. Later that night I was getting ready for bed . . . something I was used to dreading each day . . . but now, even though I still had my memories, there was no pain. It occurred to me then that my life would never be the same. I sat there for a moment in awe, and then said, "Well, God. . . Now what?" His answer was "Get to know the One who set you free."

I opened my Bible and started reading in John chapter 1. When I got to verse 14, where it says, "We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth," I had to stop. I could understand the world's need for grace, but why the need for truth? I started studying that night and on into the next months that followed, and I began to understand why the truth would be so important to Jesus.

Jesus said that if we hold to his teaching, we would know the truth, and the truth would set us free. Did you catch that? It's the truth that sets us free. Do you know what that means? It means I was not chained down by my pain or by my past. I was chained because of the lies I believed.

Do you want to know some of the lies the enemy told me? Here are some of them:

"God can't help you or heal you"

"You will always be alone"

“You are worthless”

Each lie tied me down. Each one distanced me a little more from God. Because I believed the lies, I also lived a lie—always pretending to be what I was not. Until God stepped in, orchestrating the events of that incredible week, and taught me the truth.

When Satan said, “God can’t help you or heal you”

Jesus responded, “With God, all things are possible”

The truth will set you free.

When Satan said, “You will always be alone”

Jesus responded, “God will never leave you nor forsake you”

The truth will set you free.

When Satan said, “You are worthless”

Jesus responded, “You are worth dying for”

The truth will set you free.

Jesus and the Truth – or Satan and lies. Freedom or chains. There are only two options.

My challenge to you now is the same one God gave me, get to know Jesus.

Get to know Jesus . . . Get to know the Truth. . .and you WILL be set free.

PRAYER, PRAISE AND HEALING - PART 4

Heal me, O Lord!

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	James 5:14-15
Subject:	What happens when a believer who is feeble and weak calls the elders and is anointed with oil in the name of the Lord
Complements:	the prayer of faith will save the sick the Lord will raise him up if he has committed sins he will be forgiven
Exegetical idea:	When a believer who is feeble and weak calls the elders and is anointed in the name of the Lord, the prayer of faith will save that sick person, the Lord will raise him up and his sins will be forgiven.
Homiletical idea:	Heal me, O Lord!
Purpose:	To help my hearers to understand the teaching of Jesus concerning the anointing of the sick and to encourage them to request anointing when they are feeble and weak.

Introduction

I wish that each one of you could have been here in this sanctuary this past Wednesday evening for our prayer service. You would have witnessed first-hand God's awesome power to bless and to make whole. You might even have cried out to God like the prophet Jeremiah, "Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed! Save me, and I shall be saved, for You are my praise."

This is part four of a life-changing series entitled Prayer, Praise and Healing! In the last portion of his letter, James, the brother of our Lord, asks three questions. In the first message in this series, James began by asking in James 5:13, "Is anyone among you suffering?" Is anyone going through a hard time? What should we do? Pray! Cry out to God. And how should we cry out to God? However we can. Like a sinking fisherman who cried out, "Lord, save me!" Or a dying thief who cried out, "Lord, remember me!" When you are going through a hard time, cry out to God! And He will hear your cry! He says, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I

will deliver you and you will honor Me.” “Call on Me and I will answer you and show you great and mighty things which you do not know.”

Then James asked, in the second part of James 5:13, “Is anyone cheerful?” Is anyone of good courage? Is anyone having a good day? What should we do? Sing songs of praise to the Lord! James wisely counsels us to fill our hearts with songs of praise to the Lord when we’re having a good day so when the bad day comes, we will praise Him still!

Last week we considered a third question, recorded in James 5:14: “Is anyone among you sick?” We discovered that the Greek verb used in this text, $\sigma\lambda\epsilon\beta\omega$, means to be feeble or weak, without strength. We also discovered that there are many ways to be feeble and weak: physically, emotionally, psychologically, relationally, spiritually. So when James asks, “Is anyone among you feeble or weak?” he is including all kinds of weakness: physical, emotional, psychological, relational, spiritual.

Last week, we heard the remarkable testimonies of two young women who cried out to God in the midst of their feebleness and weakness. I shared Janet’s story with you and then Eve shared her testimony. I was blessed! What about you? Powerful! Janet joined us online last week from southern Virginia, and she sent me this e-mail:

“I just finished watching the online church service for the second time! I am just amazed at the Lord—not only what He has done for me, and trust me, there is still healing going on in me—but also what He has done for Eve. I was so blessed by her testimony! What an awesome God we serve. I feel so at peace in His love and grace—for what He has done and is continuing to do in my life and the lives of others. So at peace! Wonderful peace. I have peace inside and it’s amazing!”

What a testimony from a young mother of 5 who at one time in her life used to cut herself and burn herself because she was so damaged and filled with pain. She was feeble and weak, without strength, but Janet cried out to God—“Please, Lord, please!”, and Janet was healed by the power of our great and awesome God!

Why did Janet ask me to share her story? And why did Eve drive 500 miles to share her testimony? Because they know that there are many others who are feeble and weak, many others who need to experience personal healing, physically, emotionally, psychologically, relationally, spiritually. And James, the brother of our Lord, knew that too. James knew that there were many believers who were feeble and weak. And so, having asked the question in James 5:14, James shares the teaching of Jesus about personal healing.

Open your Bible to the book of James, chapter 5, and verse 14. Let’s study this powerful passage of Scripture together. “.....” This is not the first mention of the anointing service in the New Testament. Apparently, Jesus had taught His disciples about anointing the sick with oil. Keep your place in James chapter 5 and turn with me to Mark 6:12-13. “.....” Did you notice that the disciples “anointed many sick people with oil and healed them”? The disciples were following the specific instructions of Jesus to preach the gospel and heal the sick. And so it is logical to conclude that the teaching regarding the anointing of the sick comes from Jesus himself. He is the Source of this sacred service. James is simply reiterating the teaching of our Lord.

Let’s go back to James 5:14. “Is anyone among you sick?” We learned last week that this verb translated “sick” literally means to be feeble or weak, without strength. This includes physical sickness, but there are others ways a person might be feeble and weak: emotionally,

psychologically, relationally, spiritually. And notice that believers go through those times when they are without strength. Is anyone AMONG YOU sick, feeble or weak?

What should we do at the times when we are feeble and weak? What does James tell us? “Let him call the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” Did you notice that special service should be requested? We read, “let him/her call the elders of the church.” God wants to bless you. He wants to make you whole. And He is able, but we must be willing. We must be open to His miracle-working power in our lives. We need to call. The only exceptions I can think of would be where believing parents would request anointing for their child, or perhaps a believing spouse, relative or friend, might request anointing for a loved one who is physically unable to personally request the service. But we must ask. We must take hold of the promise of God. It is a solemn thought to consider that God may have been willing and ready to heal you for years and years and years but you have not given him that opportunity. You have not yet given Him the invitation to manifest his healing power in your life. God wants to make you whole!

When a person makes a decision to cry out to God for personal healing, what should the elders do? James tell us that the elders should anoint the person with oil in the name of the Lord. I want to make it very clear that the anointing oil contains no magical power. Don't go and buy some magical oil from a religious trickster. The oil contains no magical power. It is a sacred symbol, representing the ministry of the Holy Spirit of God. And the anointing is not essential. There have been many miracles of healing in response to the prayer of faith when anointing oil was not available—like the crippled man at the temple gate, recorded in Acts 3, and the healing experiences of Janet and Eve that we heard about last week. All of those miraculous healings

occurred without anointing oil. The anointing oil is not essential. But it is a sacred symbol of the ministry of the Holy Spirit of God and should be used when available. What is essential is the prayer of faith that opens the life to the healing power of God.

I had a personal experience with anointing where God blessed my life in a profound way. My wife and I were on a weekend retreat in northern Idaho. One evening we were spending time in prayer with another Christian couple and I was deeply convicted that I needed the special blessing of God. So, I asked if I could be anointed. One of those kneeling in prayer got up, went to the kitchen, found a flask of olive oil on the table, and came back to our place of prayer. My eyes were still closed in prayer. As we continued in prayer together, someone poured the flask of oil on my head. Now, you have to understand that usually the elders just put a small amount of oil on the forehead, as a symbol of saying “Yes” to the special work of the Holy Spirit of God. But this person poured the flask of oil on my head! My first thought was “That’s not how you’re supposed to anoint someone!” but my second thought was “God’s blessings are always more abundant than we expect!” That anointing released a river of blessing and healing in my life that is still continuing to this day!

Notice, according to James, that there will be three amazing results when a person is anointed with oil in the name of the Lord. James 5:15 “.....” The NIV translates the first part of James 5:15, “And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well.” But, in my opinion, that is not the best translation. The Greek verb is not the common verb for heal, *therapeuo*, but is the verb *sodzo* - which means to save or to make whole. The KJV and the NKJV have a more accurate translation with “the prayer of faith shall save the sick” or “the prayer of faith will save the sick.” The verb literally means to save or to make whole.

This verb is used in reference to the healing of the demoniac possessed by Legion in Lk 8:36 and the healing of the man crippled from birth, in Acts 14:9. Not everyone is healed physically, but God will give the wholeness, the saving that He knows you need!

Then James tells us that in addition to making us whole, the Lord will raise us up! That might happen immediately, or over time. For some, being raised up in physical well being might not happen until the resurrection. But we have the blessed assurance, the Lord will raise us up.

I had the privilege of participating in an anointing service for a retired pastor who was suffering from advanced prostate cancer. He called the elders, and we had the privilege of anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. We thanked God for the blessing that was given to him in Jesus' name. And then the pastor spoke: "Now I can face death unafraid!" He knew that the Lord would raise Him up! God gave him the wholeness that was needed and that pastor received the blessing with thanksgiving!

And then James tells us, "and if he had committed sins, he will be forgiven." That always sounded strange to me. After all, how many of us have committed sins? You don't have to raise your hand. I already know! All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. But James is reminding us that there is a deep spiritual healing that is part of this special blessing from our great and awesome God! You can have the complete assurance of forgiveness and cleansing from every sin! Hallelujah!

The thrilling truth contained in James 5 is that God's blessing is certain when we come in faith. The text says, "....." There is nothing tentative about this Word from the Lord. It doesn't say it might happen, or it could happen - it says it will happen!

We must conclude then, that, in response to the prayer of faith, God will give the

wholeness that He ordains, that which is in harmony with His will and for our ultimate good. It may not always be the healing that we expect, but it will be the healing that God knows is best!

So James appeals to the believers in the early Christian church and also to us in James 5:16 when he says, “Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The effective, fervent, prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Make things right with one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. And who is the righteous man? Is it the pastor? Is it the elder? No. There is only one who is perfectly righteous? Who is that? Jesus! That is why, when we anoint someone with oil in the name of the Lord, and cry out to God with thanksgiving for His blessing upon that individual, we pray in Jesus’ name! Because Jesus has the name that is above every name! He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the Beginning and the End. He is the One who was and who is and who is to come. He is the One who was dead and behold He is alive forevermore. He is the One before whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord!

And so, we pray with thanksgiving, in Jesus’ name. Some months ago, my administrative assistant, Lois Northcutt, was struggling with a major health problem. God was blessing her ministry here at the church, but her health failing. Lois wasn’t sure that she could continue her active ministry. Lois was feeble and weak. And so she called the elders of the church.

I’ve invited Lois to come and share her story.

(Lois shares her testimony)

(Include one more testimony of healing from the past month)

We have seen many miracles of healing in the past 12 months—physical, emotional, relational, spiritual! And it is my prayer that we will witness many miracles in the weeks and months ahead!

Do you need to open your life to the healing power of God today? Maybe you have thought that miracles of healing were only for those who were critically ill, perhaps in the hospital, or almost dead! But today you realize that the gift of God is for you. Perhaps you sense the need to cry out to God: “Heal me, O Lord! Whatever miracle of personal healing You want to perform in my life, I am open to receive it.” Or perhaps you just want to pray the simple prayer that Janet prayed on the evening of her healing: “Please, Lord, please!”

If that's you, I want to invite you to come to a special prayer service this coming Wednesday evening here at the church. We are going to have another special anointing service as part of our weekly prayer service, and we are going to rejoice together in the name of Jesus!

We've made a special Scripture song CD for you. It is called Words of Hope and Healing. It includes 2 of the songs that Bodil, Lisa and Rachel sang for us last week. I'd like to give each one of you a copy of this 6-song CD. There only one catch. You have to come to the Wednesday evening prayer service! You knew that I was going to say that, didn't you?!

If you're joining us from another part of the country, or somewhere around the world, or if you just can't be here on Wednesday evening, and you would like a copy of these songs of hope and healing, just send us an e-mail with your complete mailing address. These beautiful

Scripture songs of hope and healing will bless your life!

We're all at different places in our lives. Some of us are strong and courageous. Others are feeble and weak. But James wants each one of us to know that when we come to the place where we are without strength, we can cry out to God. We can cry out, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed. Save me, and I shall be saved. For You are my praise!"