

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.

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For you are my praise! You are my praise!

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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.