

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 at 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!"