

## Healing Faith

For today, may we again focus our attention on these precious closing words of this Book of James, words that tell us that when we find ourselves experiencing difficulties with our health, there might be something more that we should do instead of our usual quick call to our doctor. Those words again in James 5, beginning in verse 13 . . .

<sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. <sup>17</sup> Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. <sup>18</sup> Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

<sup>19</sup> My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, <sup>20</sup> let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.  
(James 5:13-20)

As we mentioned in the message last week, here in these words we encounter some instructions from God that are not commonly taught and preached, especially within a typical Presbyterian Church setting. And it's not because these words are any less valid or any less truthful or any less appropriate for us, it is rather that our doctrines lead us to focus on these matters differently from that which would be seen in some other churches.

Here first, we see instructions about "healing". And yes, we do believe strongly in the power of faith and in praying for the healing and the betterment of our loved ones. However, we do shy away from such activities as those that involve regular church services that are dedicated solely for the purpose of performing "healing ceremonies".

Why is that so? It is because of one of those doctrinal divides that developed somewhere back in the history of the Presbyterian Church. That doctrinal divide is called by some, "Cessation", and it involves "Spiritual Gifts" such as, "Healing". "Cessation" is the belief that certain of the "Spiritual Gifts" were given only for those beginning days of the church, intended as "signs and wonders" to draw people to Christ.

You will recall that in some of our earlier messages, we spoke on those passages in 1 Corinthians and in Romans and in Ephesians where God told us that when His Holy Spirit comes to live within us believers, He brings with Him special "Spiritual Gifts", "Holy Means" by which He would develop and carry forward the daily workings of the Body of Christ in His church.

And among those special gifts were abilities to do things that we would not otherwise be able to do, preaching, teaching, giving, administration, speaking in other tongues, and other such gifts. Among those Spiritual Gifts was also this matter that is before us today in our scripture passage, that of "healing".

And as I mentioned a moment ago, there are some church leaders, especially within our Presbyterian denomination that strongly believe that some of those Spiritual Gifts have "ceased" to be given by the Holy Spirit. That certain of those "Gifts" were given only for those beginning days of the church, intended as "signs and wonders" to draw people to Christ.

Among those Gifts that they believe God has ceased to give are the Gifts of "Speaking in Tongues" and "Miracles and "Apostleship" and, this Gift that we are considering today. The Gift of "Healing".

Some of our friends within the Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches differ strongly with our beliefs that such Gifts have "ceased" to be given, believing that those Gifts do continue today, and that those Gifts should even occupy a prominent place within their weekly worship services.

With that being said, may I recognize for us that most all of our churches and church denominations are not completely polarized with these doctrines, but

are instead a “mixture”. Just as all Baptist do not hold exclusively to traditional Baptist church doctrines, the same is true also with the Methodist, and with the Presbyterians, and on and on.

As a result, we each, sitting here today probably have varied understandings as to what these scriptures intend regarding these matters, and in particular these that I have just spoken about, “faith healing” and “speaking in tongues”, and the like.

Concerning these Gifts, may I say that I am not what some call a “cessationist”. I do not find any scripture within this bible that declares that the Holy Spirit has ceased to use these Gifts in us. Therefore, I believe that all of the gifts do continue to this day.

With that being said, I do acknowledge that some of those particular Spiritual Gifts don’t seem to be used by God in our present age, and because of that, we don’t see evidence of their application. However, God may choose to give some of those gifts to be used at any future time.

One “Gift” in particular that is not being used during our current church age is the “Gift of Apostleship”, and especially their gift of receiving and giving “new revelation” from God. From scriptures such as those in Revelation 22, we know that we are NOT to attempt to add to or to take away from the scriptures that have already been given, whether it involves “new revelation” or “healing” or any other of the scriptures.

Listen to that warning from the Lord.

<sup>18</sup> I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, <sup>19</sup> and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. (Revelation 22:18-19)

Again, from warnings such as these, you and I should be very careful about adding to or taking away from the words that have already been given within these scriptures.

If someone comes to you and tells you that they have a “word from God” for you, be ever so careful. I caution each of us to stay away from such false preachers and teachers. All indications are that those “new words from God” are not from God at all, but are probably from the devil.

As for some of the other “Gifts of the Spirit”, especially the “Spiritual Gift of healing” that some of our church groups practice, I confess that I don’t always agree with the manner in which those Gifts are practiced, especially the “theatrics” with which the “Gift of Healing” is presented by such church leaders as Benny Hinn. No such behaviors and no such “theatrics” are seen within the scriptures.

But I do believe that the simplicity of these words here in the Book of James are real, and that there are appropriate times and circumstances when Gifts such as healing may be effectual. Listen!

**14** Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

**15** And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. (James 5:14-15)

Why do I believe this? It’s because it says so right here. Do I do this each time I get a headache? Did I do this when I needed my knee replaced? No! for some reason, I chose instead to go to the doctor.

But folks, I did do this very thing a few years ago when I was experiencing a problem with ruptured vertebrae in my neck. The surgeon wanted to operate, but for some reason the Lord lead me to do this very thing,

**14** Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

**15** And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. (James 5:14-15)

The Elders in the church prayed over me and anointed my head with oil. And the result was, and is, I haven't had a problem with my neck since that day. And I praise the Lord for His healing.

And yes, I have pondered that circumstance numerous times, even asking myself why I do not do that same thing for every illness. And I have not been able to know why. But I'm convinced that there certainly is a time and a place for this kind of response to our illnesses.

And yes, the Elders and I did this very same thing with one of the members of our church sometime later. A dear lady was suffering with cancer and requested that we come to her house and pray over her. We did as these words tell us.

That was more than ten years ago. And while I have not had contact with her in these last few years now, I understand that she is still doing fairly well.

Is this kind of handling of illnesses effective every time? No! And I don't know the "whys" of it all. Perhaps it has everything to do with the kind of "faith" spoken about here. Again, I don't know, but I do know that it was effective for me personally. And so, I personally believe it.

So then, if this be so, what is the role that doctors are supposed to play within circumstances of ill health? Well, our bible scholars have developed some answers that are acceptable to me. They have suggested that because all such matters are dependent upon God's "grace", then there are apparently at least two forms of grace that God showers upon people, "common grace" and "special grace". "Common grace" being that form of grace by which God blesses all mankind, believers and unbelievers alike, "the rain falling on the just and the unjust", and such other provisions.

And then, there is "Special grace", being that form of grace that comes directly from God's own hand, and most often given to His blessed children, in this case "healing".

In other words, for common grace to take place, just as the "rain falls on the just and the unjust" providing blessings to all, God doesn't require a person to be a Christian believer for a doctor to treat and to heal him or her.

And there are many other forms of “common grace” that bless and provide for our needs, whether we believe in Christ or not. The legal system that protects us, the banking system that provides financial help, our governmental services, and the like, that help us, are all part of God’s “common grace”, making provision for both the just and the unjust alike.

And I am thankful for both of these provisions of “grace”, “common grace” and “special grace”. I do firmly believe that they both come from God for the betterment of all people.

A question for each of us, which of these forms of grace should you and I regularly depend upon, God’s “special grace” or God’s “common grace”? Folks, I don’t know the answer to that question, for me or for you. But God gives us the beginning answer to that question in this passage. Our responses must begin with our having an intimate relationship with the Person of Christ and by our exercising “faith” in Him. Listen!

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

16 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. (James 5:13-16)

As for “grace” itself, whether it be “common grace” or “special grace”, all of it is excellent and wonderful beyond measure, a free and unmerited gift from our God.

I especially love the thought of God administering “special grace” to my wearied body and soul. “Special grace” is so “Fatherly” and so loving! And I praise Him for His loving kindness to me!

Here also, in verse 17, God gives you and me a special message regarding our side of this relationship equation. And again, these words give emphasis to God’s blessed “grace”. Listen, here using the Prophet Elijah as an example for us to follow. Verse 17,

<sup>17</sup> Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. <sup>18</sup> Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. (James 5:17-18)

It's not easy for us to remember, but folks, with the exception of the Lord Jesus, all the men and women that are written about here in this bible were just men and women, like you and me, whether they be prophets or just common folk. They were flesh and blood like you and me, sinners saved by grace through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus.

But because of a special plan of God, and because of a special "gift of faith" that God imputed into their souls, and because those people were loyal to that faith, God did wonderful and miraculous things through them and through their efforts.

And so it was with the Prophet Elijah! He was just a man, like you and me. A common man! But yet, because of His relationship with God and because of his "faith", he was able to accomplish things he would not otherwise have been able to do.

And God is saying here that the same is true for you and me, that through an intimate relationship with Christ and through the exercise of faith in Him, you and I will be able to do things we would not otherwise be able to do, very special and even miraculous sounding things. These words again!

<sup>17</sup> Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. <sup>18</sup> Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. (James 5:17-18)

Isn't it a wonderful promise that is being made to us in these somewhat obscure words? We might be common folks, but God might just call on us to do something miraculous beyond our imagination. I would love for Him to do that through me! Wow!

One last consideration before we close for today. These words beginning in verse 19,

<sup>19</sup> My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, <sup>20</sup> let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his

wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.  
(James 5:19-20)

While these words are effective for all matters of sin, may I make application of them to the subject we discussed in last week's message, that of "sin and sickness" being often related, that yes, too often, the habits and behaviors we involve ourselves in can bring about sickness and disease.

And with those sicknesses and diseases we can find ourselves in need of going to the Elders of our church and asking them to pray for us, and not only for the healing of our physical bodies, but also and especially for the healing of our souls.

Listen again to these precious words, and with them, we'll close for today.

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

16 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. (James 5:13-16)

Praise be to God! May we pray!