

AND HE HEALED THEM

James 5:13-18

Intro: Jesus healed people. He forgave their sins and then he healed their afflictions. Time after time, all through the Gospels we read something similar to what we read in Matthew, *And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he healed them,* Matthew 15:30. Jesus healed people. He always has and he still does.

Psalm 34, which Sharon and Kathy read earlier, is a testimony to the goodness of God as David is exuberant in his praise. God delivers us from fear as his angels encamp around us. He fairly shouts, *Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!* Psalm 34:8. As we seek the Lord we lack no good thing and his eyes are ever on his people. (vv. 10, 15). And then we hear this promise,

*When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears
and delivers them out of all their troubles.*

*The Lord is near to the brokenhearted
and saves the crushed in spirit.* Psalm 34:17-18.

And this, *Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the Lord delivers him out of them all.* Psalm 34:19

David's words are our promises and they lead right into a familiar text on the subject of healing prayer. I'll read it to you,

(Read James 5:13-18)

I'm going to take the main points James offers as we prepare for our time of prayer later. First . . .

PRAY

- Is anyone suffering? PRAY!
- It's our first line of defense. We have the word suffering here, and it can mean physical suffering, but it's not inclusive of that – it can mean any kind of negative occurrence in a Christ Follower's life. Are you suffering loss? PRAY! Are you struggling to make ends meet? PRAY! Suffering comes in many and varied ways and we need to pray.
- Why? Because we need to pray all the time. We need to be in communication with the Lord. He knows what's happening, so our prayers don't change him – they do, however, change us – and for the good.
- In fact, our prayer can actually be . . .

PRAISE

- If you're cheerful it's easy to praise – but do we remember to actually pray? The old adage is “There are no atheists in foxholes.” and it obviously means, as I just pointed out above, when the going gets rough it more easily comes to mind to cry out to God. Do we remember to give credit where credit is due? We need to.
- Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Don't forget to praise.
- But be sure to . . .

CALL

- Prayer and praise are calling out to God and acknowledging his power and goodness. But this call is specifically to the body of Christ. *Is anyone sick, let him call for the elders of the church . . .* James 5:14a. Christ Followers need each other and, as we know, Lone Ranger Christians are cheating themselves out of the power of numbers. Calling on the power of prayer and anointing of the saints is being open and vulnerable to other. If we know what's going on with you, we know how to pray better. If you don't share it with us, you're missing out on the force multiplier of corporate prayer. That's why our sharing time is a significant part of our worship service. Call for the body of Christ to pray for you. You don't have to give all the details, in fact, too much detail is, all too often, too much information.
- Today is a perfect example of the power of corporate prayer as we have ABCers who will be at 4 stations around this room and you can go to them for special prayer and even anointing with oil if you desire that.
- Yes . . .

ANOINT

- In Biblical times, olive oil was used for its healing properties. Perhaps you remember that the Good Samaritan treated the wounds of the beaten man he found on the roadside with oil and wine. It's not a bad idea. Ten days

ago I went to the dermatologist and he burned a half-dozen or so pre-cancers off the top of my head and right here on my ear. Then his nurse came in and gave me petroleum jelly to put on the burns, beginning the next day. Like petroleum jelly, which is greasy, olive oil has healing properties.

- In this case, however, the anointing with oil is symbolic of the power and healing of God. Samuel anointed David with oil to show he had been set apart by God to be king of his chosen people. It was symbolic. When we anoint with oil, the oil has no power in itself, but it is a representation of the healing power of our infinitely powerful God. Most, if not all, of the oil that we use here at our stations is scented. The oil I often use is from Israel and it has nard in it. I think this is a good thing. As you go from this place, the aroma of that scented oil will be a reminder of the fact that you have called upon the body of Christ for prayer and anointing.
- And it's also healing to . . .

CONFESS

- Several commentators point out, correctly, that when James wrote this, it was commonly believed that sin and sickness were directly related. And, true, sometimes sin DOES lead to illness, and there are many ways that can happen. Indeed, illness did enter humanity with Adam's sin in the Garden. So there is a connection.
- John 9 begins with an account of Jesus and his disciples walking past a man who was blind from birth, and his disciples asked him, "*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" John 9:2. Jesus answered, "*It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.*" John 9:3. Sometimes sickness is just a way for God to be glorified. Think about that.
- Now back to confession: I'm sure you've heard, "Confession is good for the soul". I Googled it and it seems to derive from an old Scottish proverb, "Open confession is good for the soul"—and it means that if people come clean regarding anything that they are guilty of, they will feel better about themselves. Well, that might be true, but it's not why we do it. We confess because, as we do, we are acknowledging that which we are guilty of. We are owning our sin.
- Further, as we are vulnerable to the Body of Christ, we are opening ourselves up for their prayer and support. One writer makes a great point of confession in that "a problem shared can be a problem solved." There is power in numbers, even when it comes to confession.
- It also shows our faith as we simply . . .

BELIEVE

- The prayer of a righteous person is taking advantage of their belief in the power of God. James uses the example of Elijah who prayed fervently for it not to rain and it didn't – for 3½ years! And then he prayed for it to resume raining, and it did. Elijah was a man of faith who called down fire from heaven on his sacrifice, showing that God was the only God and Baal was a fatal mistake. Elijah believed. But there were times when Elijah's faith faltered and he needed to be reminded that he wasn't the only Godly person – there is strength in numbers.
- Now, the response might be "I prayed and prayed and prayed to be healed and God didn't heal me. I believed and my belief has been rewarded with silence." Think back to the John 9 passage where Jesus referred to the works of God being displayed. Is that what God is doing in you? And what is healing? And what is the healing God has in store for you? Believe and then watch what God does.
- So just . . .

PRAY

- We've come full circle. We began with prayer, and we've ended with prayer. If you are suffering, PRAY! Elijah prayed and the rain stopped and the rain returned. Call upon the elders and pray. The prayer of the faithful will bring healing. The prayer of the righteous one has great power.
- PRAY! PRAY! PRAY! And not just on a healing prayer Sunday. Let's be people of prayer. Call upon the one who heals. He healed then, and he still heals TODAY. Amen.