

Healing In the Years of COVID19

James 5:14-18

I'm going to address this morning, one of the most controversial topics I have ever preached on. As a matter of fact, I've never preached about healing in all my years as a pastor. I became familiar with faith healers, or better, "fake healers," way back in the 70's with the likes of Oral Roberts and Earnest Angley and they were enough to turn me off from believing in healing. My problem was I wanted to believe that God still heals, but the only leaders and teachers in the Charismatic/Pentecostal Movement, a movement that I was heavily involved in for 9 years, who paraded their victims across their stages for the world to see were pretty nutty. My inner conflict came from the fact that healing is found in the New Testament and is listed as one of the gifts of the Spirit in First Corinthians 12 verse 9. ⁷ *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all:*

⁸ *for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit,*

⁹ *to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, (1 Cor. 12:7-9 NKJ)* So what's a pastor to do?

There is no expiration date on the spiritual gifts. The Bible does not teach us that the spiritual gifts would cease once the last apostle died as some of my favorite pastors and teachers believe. The body of Christ is the body of Christ precisely because we are all indwelt by the same Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit, who indwelt the apostles. We are all baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. ¹³ *For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free-- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. (1 Cor. 12:13 NKJ)* The timelessness of that one verse and the use of the pronoun "all" tell me that this is a timeless universal truth for all who come to faith in Jesus.

If there has ever been a time when the body of Christ needed to rediscover the Biblical concept of healing, it is now. I'm talking about the genuine gift of healing found in the word of God.

Why now?

Obviously because the coronavirus is making people sick all over our little planet including many who profess faith in Jesus Christ. So, it just seems logical to me that those of us who hold leadership positions in the church would want to examine Biblical healing and then decide if we want to apply it in our congregation. And I say we most certainly do. I know from experience that not all in any congregation will welcome having a time during the worship hour for prayer for the sick. But the word of God takes precedence over their resistance. And, it has been practiced by local churches since local churches began. It was jettisoned by theologians who preferred their scholarly approach to faith over a Biblical approach.

FAQ's

I have a few frequently asked questions I want to mention before we go any further.

Do you believe that God still heals today?

I believe that God can heal I just wonder if He will?

What exactly is the prayer of faith?

Can just anyone pray the prayer of faith over the sick?

Why wasn't sister so-n-so or brother so-n-so weren't heal after being prayed for?

I'm going to attempt to answer those questions and a few more today, but ultimately, you're going to have to make up your own minds. I hope you will wait to make up your mind til after studying healing from the word of God rather than basing it on what you may have heard.

James 5:14-18: ¹⁴ *Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;*

¹⁵ *and the prayer offered in faith (or and better, "the prayer of faith") will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.*

¹⁶ *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*

¹⁷ *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.*

¹⁸ *Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit. (Jas. 5:14-18 NAU)*

The first thing I want to do is define faith as it's used in our text.”
the prayer offered in faith, or, the prayer of faith.

You can see that faith in v.14 is a noun and it means, trust, belief. A noun is a person, place or thing. So, **Faith is a thing**. And it's a **real thing**. It's just as real and substantial a thing as the chair you're sitting on right now. It's just as substantial as the device you're watching this sermon on. **Hebrews 11:1** *Now, (I'm telling you that) faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.* (Heb. 11:1 NAU) **Faith is found in one's mind. Faith is knowing.** It is knowing something like knowing your name or your spouse's name. It is like knowing that 2 + 2 equals 4. That's who faith is used in James 5:14.

The prayer of faith is the prayer of knowing. It is knowing that the thing we hope for is going to happen. It is knowing that the sick will be healed. And this is what the elders of the local church experience when they pray for the sick if it is that God is going to heal the people they're praying for. They are convinced that God still heals and they believe in Biblical healing. And as they pray for the sick knowing these things to be present truths, God gives them the assurance that the person over whom they are praying is going to be healed. **The prayer of faith is offered by elders who know that God heals. And then God assures them that He is going to heal the sick.**

So, faith is a thing; faith is real; faith has substance; faith is knowing; and faith for healing is the gift of God.

Second, the prayer of faith is meant for more than just physical sickness.

Beloved, that's important! The coronavirus has not only made people physically sick but mentally and emotionally sick as well. There has been a dramatic rise in suicides because of this virus and that's especially true among our health care workers. But God has it all covered in the one act of praying for our folks who have gotten the virus as well as those who are down and out because of all the damage the virus has done to our psyches and our pocket-books and bank accounts. When our people are deathly afraid of going out for anything, we can be sure that the novel coronavirus is eating away at their souls. We can pray for that.

I discovered this week as I was studying for this sermon that in our text in James' letter there are two different Greek words translated sick. One is **ἀσθενέω**, that's the word translated sick in v.14. The other is **κάμνω**, and that's the word in v.15. The word in v.14 includes the following meanings, a **physical weakness**, a **moral weakness**, a **spiritual weakness**, and an economic or **financial weakness** which just means that something has emptied our bank account.

The word in v.15, **κάμνω**, means to *be weary in soul*, i.e. *be discouraged*. Does that describe you or someone you know? It's no wonder. This business of being quarantined for such a long time can do that to the best of us. Being isolated from family and friends is hard on us mentally and emotionally. Having to miss work and even worse, losing one's job because of the quarantine is devastating.

Beloved, if you are physically sick or if you're struggling with some sin, some moral issue, or if you're discouraged and depressed or you're struggling spiritually with your relationship with the Lord Jesus or His church, and if your finances have hit rock bottom, call for the godly men in your church to pray for you.

Unemployment has hit the roof. It's the worst it's been in our nation since the great depression. Millions of people who were sure that

they had wonderful careers going for them, now find themselves unemployed, out of a job and out of a steady income. It's insane. Suddenly millions of people find their mortgages and homes and marriages in jeopardy. Those who are in Christ are suffering from the effects of the virus just like the rest of the world is, only difference is, we have the Spirit. We need to be praying for our people who are experiencing any of the maladies I've just named.

Third and finally, the prayer of faith comes with promises.

¹⁵ *and the prayer offered in faith **will restore** the one who is sick, and **the Lord will raise him up**, and if he has committed sins, **they will be forgiven him**.*

And specifically, Paul gives us three promises. Did you see them?
and the prayer offered in faith

*First, **will restore** the one who is sick, and second, **the Lord will raise him up**, and if he has committed sins, and third, **they will be forgiven him**.*

Those three promises alone being fulfilled by the prayer of faith tells me enough to answer one of my early questions, "do we want to apply the concept of praying for the sick in our local church?"

I close with this, every malady those in the church are suffering through right now has been included in the prayer of faith for the sick. That's what the prayer of faith will accomplish. Whether you are physically ill or you're struggling with some kind of moral issue or moral failure or you're depressed and discouraged and are about to give up and your personal life is in shambles, call me.

I do not have to be their with you physically for me to pray the prayer of faith. Just let me or some other man of God in our congregation know your prayer need and we will pray the prayer of faith over you.

In Jesus' name, amen.