

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, November 2, 2016 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

GETTING PRACTICAL WITH YOUR FAITH A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES “Suffering, Sickness, Sin... and Healing” *James 5:13-19*

She had tried her last resort. The doctors had given her little hope. She had prayed and asked God for healing, but with little change to her health. She had done all that the doctors had prescribed, and now the new; “We’ve done all we can do for you!” In one last ditched effort a Christian friend of a different denomination had invited to a healing service. She went, thinking; “What could it hurt to try?” She had never seen anything like it... dancing in the aisles, everyone praying at once, and in languages she could not make sense of. She had heard of things like this before, but had never experienced anything like this before. It was all a bit overwhelming, a bit frightening, but also very exciting, and emotional. The preacher spoke of God presence being there with them, and that He was there to bring healing to the sick, the suffering, those in pain, the hurting, the hopeless, and those who had nowhere else to go. That sounded like her. Then he spoke of something God was showing him at that moment, and he began to describe a woman who was present and her very serious condition. He spoke very detailed and it took me by a blink to know he was describing my situation and me to the “t.”

I can’t even begin to describe the surge that began to shoot through my body... almost electrical. It was like it was drawing me to the front of the church where the preacher was, and before long I found myself standing right in front of him. He spoke directly to me and asked if I believed that Jesus would heal me. He said if I had enough faith I would be healed. I responded that I did, and he proceeded to place his hand on my forehead and pray, but I don’t remember anything after that. I blacked out... fainted I guess. When I came to several were gathered around me on the ground praying. They said I had been healed. I went home that night floating higher than I had ever been. I felt great. I had been healed... miraculously healed.

For the next several days, I basked in the truth that I had heard and celebrated my healing just as my friend told me to. However, it was but a week later that my health grew worse... worse than before. I returned to my doctors, who told me that my disease was progressing even faster than they thought, and that I should go home and put my affairs in order. They estimated that I had less than 2 months at the most. Needless to say, I was devastated! I felt totally defeated, crushed and faithless. Did God not love me? Did I not love Him enough? Was I not spiritual enough to be healed? Did I not have enough faith for God to heal me? I felt like I didn’t know anything anymore, and that I had nothing to hold on to. My friend who had taken me to the healing service told me I should “come against those doctors and their prognosis and continue to believe

that by His stripes I am healed and I would be.” I tried... with everything in me I tried, but I just felt so bad. I could tell I was going down. I guess I just don’t have enough faith, and that I am not spiritual enough to get the healing I heard about! Now I’m so confused I am not even sure I’m a Christian and that I will go to heaven when I die, because my faith is so weak.

If you think this doesn’t happen, you would be wrong. One of the most controversial issues of our day has to do with healing... divine healing and faith healing. People travel halfway around the world to get in touch with those who claim to have the gift of healing. Testimonies abound of people who claim that they have been healed. Are these matters authentic? What about the use of medicine? Should everyone believe God for healing? What is the method God honors? A better question than these is “What is the biblical teaching regarding healing?” James 5:13-16 assists in answering that question.

Pastoral Affirmations:

1. **I believe in the Biblical miracles** – I believe that they are literal and true, that they actually happened just as scripture describes.
2. **I believe that the same God who performs miracles in the Bible can still perform miracles today** – I believe in miracles
3. **I believe God heals** – I believe that God can and sometimes does heal today when it is in accordance with His will and when He alone gets the glory and for His purposes
4. **I believe that God heals in many different ways sometimes beyond what we can see** – He may use nothing at all to heal. He may use the miracle of medical science and medicine to heal. He may heal in his life and He may choose to heal in the next life.

FOUNDATIONAL FACTS TO EMPLOY

Five statements follow. These are grounded solidly upon Scripture and constitute a framework for this study.

5 Foundational Facts About Suffering, Sickness, Sin and Healing Rooted in Scripture:

1. **There are two classifications of sin: original sin and personal sin** – The root of “original sin” is in the Adamic nature. The fruit of “personal sin” is daily disobedience.
2. **Original sin introduced sickness and death to man** – Paul says in Romans 5:12, *“¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.”* In the broadest sense, we can say that all sickness is the result of sin, which ultimately results in death.
3. **Sometimes there is a direct link between personal sin and death** – Paul in speaking of the results of personal sin says in 1 Corinthians 11:30, *“For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.”* King Saul in the Old Testament is an example of this. After he sought out advice and counsel from the witch of Endor, he became terribly affected and died.
4. **Sometimes there is no relationship between personal sin and sickness** – Jesus addressed this fact while healing a blind man in John 9:1-3, *“Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. ² And His disciples asked Him, saying, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ³ Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.’”*

5. **It is not God’s will that everyone be healed** – Paul had the gift of healing, yet one with whom he lived, Epaphroditus, was sick. Paul had to leave Trophimus behind in Miletus, where he remained ill. And Paul himself battled an undisclosed affliction which went unhealed. **NOTE: A popular teaching of our time is that it is God’s will for everyone to be healed. This is based upon Isaiah’s prophetic words regarding the minister of the coming Christ in Isaiah 53:5, “... and by His stripes we are healed.” However, the context of this verse relates to spiritual illness, not physical illness. When Christ came, He died that He might spiritually heal us. Peter underscored this in I Peter 2:24 when he wrote, “²⁴ (Jesus) Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed.” Peter frames the Isaiah passage in the context of our salvation and spiritual healing, not physical healing.**

SCRIPTURAL STEPS TO EMPLOY (James 5:13-15)

In this portion of his letter, James identified three types of people: the suffering, the cheerful, and the sick. He also described what each should do in his or her circumstance. Whichever category we fall into, here is what we are to do.

WHAT WE ARE TO DO WHEN WE ARE SUFFERING? (James 5:13a)

In the first part of **verse 13** James says, “¹³ *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray...*” The term “suffering” means “in distress.” It may be anxiety, mental or emotional illness, or some other difficulty for which there seems to be no answer or immediate relief. This antidote to the suffering is in specific reference to that cause by evil treatment or persecution, a reference back to James specific recipients of his letter who were undergoing persecution and therefore had scattered because of it. James says to this person, “Pray!” He doesn’t promise that prayer will result in healing, but his tone suggests praying for endurance, patience, strength, and for those ministering to our physical needs.

What prayer does for us when we are suffering?:

1. **Prayer strengthens our faith in the midst of suffering** - Psalm 27:13-14 “*I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.* ¹⁴ *Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!*”
2. **Prayer sustains and stabilizes us in suffering** - Psalm 55:22, “*Cast your burden on the Lord, and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved.*”
3. **Prayer revives a fainting spirit in suffering** - Jonah 2:7, “*When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer when up to You, into Your holy temple.*”
4. **Prayer settles and calms us in suffering** - Philippians 4:6, “*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made know to God.*”
5. **Prayer lifts and relieves the weight on us in our suffering** - I Peter 5:6-7, “*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*”

WHAT WE ARE TO DO WHEN WE ARE CHEERFUL? (James 5:13b)

In the second half of **verse 13** James writes, **"...Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms."** When someone is happy, satisfied, and enjoying good health, he is not to second-guess God; neither is he to feel guilty because he is about to laugh and rejoice. A person's appropriate response to such circumstance is to praise God.

5 Ways We May Wrongly Respond to Blessing in our Life:

1. **We diminish the blessing** – Play it down... approach it with a false sense of humility! "Oh, I have it better than I deserve!" Yes, you probably do, but that doesn't diminish one bit God's goodness in blessing you, it just draw attention to the "blessed" rather than the "Blesser!" We may also diminish God's blessing by all that follows in the list below...
2. **We over-spiritualize the blessing** – When God's blessings in our life cause us to begin to feel spiritually proud, pious, elevated in our estimation of ourselves, as if "God must really love us because He has so blessed us" we may be over-spiritualizing our blessing. Our blessings are more a picture of what kind of God we serve, than they are a picture of what kind of Christian we are.
3. **We over think the blessing** – "What does this blessing mean?" "Is God trying to tell me something?" "Does this blessing mean I'm living right, that God is more pleased with me than others?" "Does this blessing mean that God loves me?" Well God does love you... unconditionally, and He couldn't love you any more than He does right now. He loves us when we are at our worst, so you can't do anything to make Him love you any more than He does. You can't earn His love. God blesses us because He wants to, because He desires to, because that is who He is in His nature. We certainly in some way we incur His blessing when we live and walk in obedience to Him, but this is more seen as a consequence of reaping the kind of life we have lived, and just because we are living this kind of life does not necessarily mean that all will go well. Committed and obedient believer suffer persecution, get sick and die too! The point here is not to "over-thing" the blessing of our life, but to live in them celebrating the giver of every blessing in life.
4. **We "pessimize" (pessimistic) the blessing** – Some have a tendency to see very glass as half empty rather than half full, and rather than enjoy God's blessing they look at every blessing as a barer of bad things ahead. We may see a blessing as a "bad" omen, or as a sign that worse days are ahead. God is blessing me now, because darker days are up ahead. Like "Eyeore" in Winne the Pooh life is seen through a bleek set of specks and the beautiful bow that attaches the tail is missed because the tail keeps falling off.
5. **We flaunt and/or take for granted the blessing** - When God blessed His people with food from heaven during their wilderness wanderings, whether it was manna or quail, they flaunted God's blessing by taking more than they needed and the blessing rotted and stunk... or they grumbled and took for granted God's blessing and wanted to go back to hard-labor and enslavement in Egypt rather than enjoy God's blessing. Perhaps we aren't far from this when we take for granted the blessing God daily pours into our life and flaunt and take advantage of those blessing as if they will always be ours.

What should be our reaction when we are "blessed?" The Psalmist tells us in Psalm 103 **(READ: Psalm 103)** As **Psalm 103:2** says, **"... forget not all His benefits."**

Remember James said earlier in our study in James 1:17, “Every good and perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is not shadow of turning.”

Given all of this why do you suppose that James says in James 5:13b, “... *Is anyone cheerful (feeling really blessed)? Let him sing psalms?*” Why, sing psalms? Perhaps to acknowledge the “Blessor” with every good and perfect gift!”

WHAT WE ARE TO DO WHEN WE ARE SICK?: (James 5:14-15)

In verses 14-15 James writes, “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.*” The word “sick” specifically refers to those who are “without strength or ill to the point of being incapacitated.” In other words, James refers to seriously ill individuals. The steps we are about to consider were not only intended for first-century sufferers, but also for those who are sick today.

3 Scriptural Steps to Employ When We Are Sick:

1. **We are to take the initiative and summon the spiritual leaders (v.14)** – There is no way others can know we are sick unless we tell them. This is not just a prerogative, but a requirement. When we announce our needs to the leaders of the assembly, they can become involved in ministering to us.
2. **We are to have the elders perform two functions: (1) anoint us with oil, and (2) pray (v.14)** – James stated, “... *and let them prayer over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*” The construction of this sentence in the Greek text indicates that one action actually goes before the other; in other words, the anointing is to precede the praying. Therefore, we may translate this passage, “Let them pray over him, having anointed him with oil.”

A WORD ABOUT ANOINTING

The specific Greek term used in James 5:14 for “anointing” does not convey the thought we usually ascribe to it, that is, a religious ceremony in which oil is applied to the head. Here the word literally means “to apply or to rub something into the skin.” This term was used in extra-biblical literature in regard to plastering walls (i.e. smearing something onto something else). In biblical times, oil was used on one who was sick for its medical affects. WE find this occurring in Luke 10³⁴ when the Samaritan poured oil and wine onto the wounds of the man victimized by robbers and left for dead. James does not write about “ceremonial” anointing; what he called for was the use of the best medical procedures of the day: simply rubbing or massaging oil into the body, the praying. Translating into today’s terms, oil represents antibiotics, various other medications, surgery, therapy, and so on.

In this passage, James urged that treating of sickness by medical means, along with prayer. The two were to be used together, neither excluding the other. So instead of teaching “faith healing” apart from the use of medicine as some today may suggest, James taught just the

opposite. **A FINAL NOTE:** *This procedure was to be carried out in “the name of the Lord.” This phrase is synonymous with “the will of the Lord.” In the New Testament these thoughts were not separated: they are as two arms of the same body. In other words, this action is to be taken while saying, “Lord, I invoke your will (Your name) in this situation.”*

3. **We are to leave the specifics in God’s hands (v.15)** - James writes in verse 15, *“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.”* The context of this passage involves a sick person suffering from unconfessed sin. The sufferer is struggling with a psychosomatic ailment brought on by sin (cf. vv.19-20). The prayer offered in faith in such a situation will result in restoration, raising by the Lord, and forgiveness of sin.

PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES TO CLAIM (James 5:16)

Looking back at this study through the lens of this verse, we can draw five conclusions:

5 Practical Principles to Claim:

1. **Confession of sin is healthy... employ it!**
2. **Praising God for His blessing acceptable! ... enjoy it!**
3. **Praying for one another is essential... practice it!**
4. **Use of medical assistance is imperative... obey it!**
5. **When healing comes from God... claim it!**

Q:

Does God still heal people, like He did when Jesus was on earth? If He does, then why do we need doctors and medicine? Shouldn't a strong faith be enough, and isn't that what God wants us to have?

A:

I have no doubt that God does intervene on occasion to heal people without the aid of medicine — but nowhere does the Bible urge us to reject medical treatment. God has given us the ability to develop modern medical treatments, and we should see them as a gift from His hand.

It’s interesting that Luke, who wrote two major books in the New Testament (Luke and Acts), was a physician; Paul called him “our dear friend Luke, the doctor” (Colossians 4:14). Luke witnessed a number of miracles while traveling with the Apostle Paul, and he realized that they came from God’s hand. But he never rejected the use of his medical skills, because he knew God could use them to bring healing.

This doesn’t mean, however, that we shouldn’t pray when someone is sick and ask God to heal them. Ultimately, our lives are in God’s hands, and even when He uses medicine to bring about a person’s healing, He still should get the credit. The Bible is clear: “From the Sovereign Lord comes escape from death” (Psalm 68:20).

You are right, however, when you say that God wants us to have a strong faith. But how does our faith grow? It begins with our personal commitment to Jesus Christ and His will for our lives. It continues as we grow closer to Him through reading His Word, the Bible, and through prayer and fellowship with other believers. Is your faith in Christ growing stronger every day?