

HOW TO PRAY ABOUT YOUR PROBLEMS 1

Developing A Faith That Works - Part 16 of 17

James 5:13-20

Roger Miller

v. 16 *"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."* The word "prayer" is mentioned seven times in this passage. That's what it's about.

Prayer.

Jesus said, *"The things that I do, you'll do also even greater works."* How do you do greater works than Jesus? Jesus said in the verse underneath that, "It's by prayer". And it is just not the miraculous that Jesus is talking about, Jesus was confined to one geographical place; as Christians we can make a difference all over the world through prayer.

Anything you ask, you pray for. It's our greatest responsibility. It's probably our greatest failure in the Christian life. We talk a lot about prayer, we study about prayer. A lot of us are not too satisfied with our prayer life. The next two weeks we will be discovering how God works through His people as they pray!

II. The Scripture teaches that there are three different kinds of sickness.

The Bible says that first there is the sickness for death. It's covered in 1 John

5:16, John 11:4. That kind of sickness God allows to take us on home to be with Him. There are some sicknesses that you never recover from. There will be an illness someday that you will never recover from because God doesn't want you to live indefinitely. If every sickness could be healed by faith then anybody who had a lot of faith would never die. There is a sickness for the purpose of taking you on home.

Then there's a sickness for discipline. The purpose for a sickness for discipline which is covered in 1 Corinthians 11:28- 32 where they were abusing the Lord's Supper. Paul said, because they were abusing the Lord's Supper was the reason some of them were sick. The Lord is disciplining you because you're out of the will of God. When we sin it does bring sickness into our lives.

The third kind of sickness is sickness for the glory of God. The sickness for the glory of God is a sickness that God has allowed in your life simply because He wants to heal you of it and let it be a testimony to the world.

John 11:4 a man came to Jesus who was ill and blind. The disciples said, "Lord, who's sinned, him or his parents?" Jesus said, "Nobody's sinned, this

is a sickness for the glory of God." Then he healed the guy and it brought glory to God.

There are three kinds of sickness: sickness for death, sickness for discipline, sickness for the glory of God. The last is the kind God wants to heal.

That being said: The leadership of ECC believes in divine healing but not in divine healers.

Five Views of Divine healing

There are approximately five different attitudes toward healing. There are a lot of different divisions about healing.

1. The sensationalist. These are the guys you see on TV. They come into town and hold giant meetings in large auditoriums, advertise miracles. There's bright lights, TV cameras rolling. Often the healer is flamboyant. He shouts at the people, slaps them on the head. It is often a highly charged emotional atmosphere. The guy might say, "Do you feel warm?" and he's standing before 20,000 people, rolling TV cameras and spotlights! Of course he would! There is psychological motivation in all of this. Be careful of this. Be discerning. I don't see Jesus doing this. He did the exact opposite in His healing. In all of Jesus' healing He took them aside from the crowd, where they are out of the glare of

the public, talked with them on a one on one basis, healed them there and then it was reported to the crowd. Jesus never manipulated people and never used them for show. He always cared about their needs more than He did about making an impression on the crowds. He healed people quietly. By the way, just because something is a miracle doesn't mean it's from God. Remember when Moses laid down his stick and it became a serpent. What did those priests do? The exact same thing. Just because something is done in the name of the Lord doesn't mean it's of God.

2. The confessionalists. The confessionalists say that it is always God's will for everybody to be healed. This is the Name It and Claim It group. Sickness is a result of sin and all you need to do is claim your healing and God will heal. If you're not healed you lack faith. The result of that is if there's no healing there's an awful lot of guilt. "Maybe I just didn't believe enough." False doctrine always creates false guilt. Always. That's one of the problems with legalism. When you make up all of these rules and regulations, it takes the joy of knowing Jesus out of your life. The Bible says, "*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.*" These confessionalists say it's just the way you talk, you'll get it. I claim I have a Cadillac and I get a Cadillac. The problem with this is, it makes God a genie. All of a sudden God is serving me, my needs, my whims rather than me serving Him.

What about the verse in I Peter 5:19 "*Those who suffer according to the will of God.*"

Sometimes suffering is the will of God.

4. Rationalists. These are the people who say it's just all in your mind. If you're ill it's because you think you're ill. Just deny it and you'll be OK.

This is the Christian Science cult and scientology among others. Just deny it's happening and it will go away.

5. I think James would be a Realist. This recognizes two facts. One, the fact that God still does heal, but it's not the divine power of one person. He does heal but not everybody gets healed. That is also a fact of life. God does heal people today, but two, He doesn't heal everybody. I think life is an example of that. So what does James say to do when you are sick? You should call the elders of the church. I Peter 5, Acts 20, Titus 2 tells of the structure of the church. James says you call the spiritual leaders of your church to pray for you. These guys aren't professional healers who go around holding healing meetings.

WE at ECC believe in Divine Healing but not Divine Healers

Miraculous Apostles

Miracles Purpose

Miracles by definition Interrupt God's design

Perhaps, Henri Nouwen, the Roman Catholic theologian, has said this better than anyone else. The author of many books, Nouwen speaks of Christians as "wounded healers" who have compassion.

Compassion is not pity. Pity lets us stay at a distance. It is condescending.

Compassion is not sympathy. Sympathy is for superiors over inferiors.

Compassion is not charity. Charity is for the rich to continue in their status over the poor.

Compassion is born of God. It means entering into the other person's problems. It means taking on the burdens of the other. It means standing in the other person's shoes. It is the opposite of professionalism. It is the humanizing way to deal with people. "Just as bread without love can bring war instead of peace, professionalism without compassion will turn forgiveness into a gimmick."

Jesus was compassionate. He entered into fellowship with people. They knew that he knew how they felt. That's the task of the **healing** community. The great illusion of leadership is to think that man can be led out of the desert by someone who has never been there. The world needs wounded healers:

Wounded healers - who suffer themselves;

Wounded healers - who are willing to pay the price of entering into others' lives, instead of just giving advice;

Wounded healers - who are aware of the loneliness of suffering because they have been there;

Wounded healers - making their own wounds into a source of **healing** by helping people share;

Wounded healers - dividing and sharing the pain of others.

"Wounds and pains can become openings and occasions for a new vision," Nouwen says. The people who suffer long to be touched by people who really care, people with compassion, wounded healers. Jesus was such a person. We, the people called "Church," are called to be like him. Hebrews

Now, after I have said all of that let me reaffirm God performs miracles today, just not through the divine healers.

What the Prayer Ministry at ECC will look like

1. Look to Jesus

Our example of an effective prayer ministry comes from Jesus. If anybody

had the right to hold

mass meetings, He could have. In the New Testament, healing was a

private matter. I find it strange that people who claim to have the gift of healing always insist that the sick people come to them, rather than them going to the sick.

2. Call the Elders

And it says "*He should call the elders*". Who's doing the calling? The sick person. James is talking about a house call. If you're so sick you can't get out of bed, you call the spiritual leaders to come to your house and you ask them to pray for you.

This implies support for belonging to a local church. Every Christian needs to identify himself with a particular body of believers. Why? One good reason is that when you get sick, you know who to call on. In the New Testament there was no such thing as a free-floating Christian who would just float around, listen to Christian radio and TV, bounce around from this church to that church. There was no such thing in the New Testament.

Every person was a member of a specific local church. Because it says you are the body and each of you are members of it. The value of it is when you're in need there is somebody there to care for you.

The sick person takes the initiative. If you don't call the elders of the church, how will they know about it? The word "sick" is talking about a life-threatening illness.

2. Focus on the Holy Spirit's Power

"Call for the elders of the church to pray over him..." The guy is probably in bed, so they are praying over him. He is seriously ill. *"...and anoint him with oil"* . Oil is a symbol of the Holy spirit, like many symbols in Scripture.

When we baptize with water, water is a symbol of the burial. When we take communion, the juice is a symbol of blood. All through Scripture, oil is used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Some interpreters believe that this oil means the best modern medicines of the time were to be used. In New Testament times they did use oil to rub on to people, to massage, use as a salve. There was a medicinal value in that. Remember the Good Samaritan when he found the man at the side of the road. He took the man and applied oil and wine to his wounds (sounds more like a salad dressing!) and then bandaged him up. Oil was used for medicinal purposes. But I think the emphasis here is the anointing. It was of symbolic

value of the Holy Spirit -- an aide to faith.

"...in the name of the Lord..." God is the healer, not any person. The name represents the character of the Lord. All healing is based on God's character.

3. The results:

"... And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven." We do this in our church, but it is a low key ministry.

We don't practice having healing wines with big emotional campaigns. We try to do what the Bible says. Many times some of our people have called for the pastors, the elders, and we have gone to the person's home in a time of long-term illness. We've prayed for them and anointed them with oil. In the years we've been a church we've seen some real miracles. On the other hand, sometimes we've prayed for people and the Lord's taken them on home. We humbly accept the will of the Lord in that matter. But it is scriptural. The Bible says when I'm hurting emotionally I ought to pray, when I'm hurting physically, when I've got a major illness, I call for the spiritual leaders of the church to pray in a private ceremony. Why private? In private people can feel loved not used. They don't feel put on display. If you put someone on

display in front of a bunch of other people, they think, "If I'm not healed it will make the pastors look bad". But it's not us anyway, it's the Lord. We're just praying.

Focus on Mutual confession

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."

Dr. Granger Westberg, the founder of Wholistic Medicine, Inc., Chicago, Illinois, asks this question when he talks to nurses, doctors, and pastors: "What is the healthiest hour of the week?" How would you answer that question? Dr. Westberg surprises many people by answering, "The hour of worship on Sunday morning." Why is that true? In order to answer that question we need to consider two other questions which Dr. Westberg often puts to his audiences: (1) What is the major factor in sickness? and (2) What is the major factor in health? How would you answer those questions?

One medical study shows that the major cause of sickness is revenge. Dr. Westberg quotes a survey of stroke patients most of whom admitted that there was someone against whom they felt a significant amount of revenge. In many cases, that revenge is a repressed feeling, an attitude instead of an expressed action. That same medical study shows that the major factor in staying healthy is gratitude. The ancient psalmists had the right idea: "Praise is comely for the upright."

Worship at its best offers the opportunity to resolve conflict through forgiveness and to express feelings of gratitude through praising God for his acts of grace and mercy. At its best, the church is a **healing** community. James is teaching that the church becomes a healing process through the process of confession.

In the New Testament the Christians confessed to each other. During the Dark Ages, they confessed to the priests, Freud said confess to the counselor, Protestants said, we're not going to confess to anybody. As a result we've got a lot of problems and hang-ups.

Humans are a whole -- physical, emotional, spiritual. When the spiritual is out of kilter it affects your emotions. When your emotions are out of kilter

it affects your body. We talk about psychosomatic illnesses. They are real

but they come from within ourselves.

Why isn't everybody healed? I don't know. God has the power but it isn't His purpose in different situations. It is always in God's power to heal but it is not always in God's purpose to heal. A clear example of this is Paul, in 1 Corinthians. It said Paul prayed three times for God to heal a problem in His life but three times God said "No, I've got a better plan for you."

What's the condition for healing? Confess. We'd rather conceal and camouflage our sins and flaws, than confess them. It is a liberating and healing experience to confess your sins and get them out and share them, not just with the Lord but with each other. Revealing your feeling is the beginning of healing. Many people come to me in counseling and begin by saying, "I've never told this to anyone else in the world." Once they say that, I know that something great is going to happen. I know what a relief it is to not carry a burden anymore, to get it out and share it with somebody else so you can be loved and accepted for who you are without having to pretend you're perfect and wear a mask.

Conclusion: There is a story about a young pastor visiting a very old and very sick woman in

the hospital. At the conclusion of the visit he asked her, "Is there anything special that you would like me to pray for?" With all the strength that she had left, she said, "Of course. I want you to pray for me to be healed."

Now he was an educated pastor, been to seminary, or cementary depending on your view. He knows how to pray an intellectually acceptable prayer. So his prayer went like this. "Lord, if it be thy will, we pray that this sick sister might be healed. On the other hand, if it not be thy will, we pray that she might be given a positive attitude and a willingness to accept her situation. Amen."

As soon as he finished the prayer, the woman opened her eyes, threw back the covers, put her feet over the side of the bed, stood up, and said, "I'm well! I'm well!" She bounded out the door of the room, went down the corridor of the hospital, dancing, saying, "Look at me! I'm well! I'm healed!"

Dumbfounded by this, the young pastor left the room, went to the parking garage, stood by his car for a moment, looked up into heaven, and said, "Don't you ever do that to me again." *I*

According to James, the Church ought to be praying. There are two reasons. First, because we know what will happen. If we pray, we'll change. We'll be renewed. And secondly, we ought to pray because we have no idea at all what will happen.

I A Fred Craddock story through Bill Ritter No matter what it is-as God's Children we must pray.