

Day Twenty-Five

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; 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. 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. -James 5:14-16

Prayers For Healing Part 2

There are a myriad of possibilities when it comes to God's will and illnesses. It may be as James has stated in our verse for consideration today, sin in one's life. I cannot speak with authority on the subject of whether or not sin is the root of illness in the life of all who suffer. For it seems that a newborn child without sin cannot be sick from something it has no way of accountability of. But, James' words here do bear examining.

The phrase *'if he has sinned'* precludes that it is not a certainty that this is the case. But, if that person has sinned and confesses their sins, they will be forgiven. It has been a common belief that sin and stressors are often related to one's own physical well being.

A curious case occurs in the ministry of Jesus when a man, born blind, is healed. ***As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. -John 9:1-3.*** This raises a possibility that in God's will there may be a reason why an illness occurs that is for the glory of God. It may have been a common assumption then, as it is now, that illness is due to sin. Jesus dispels this myth and it may be wise for us to consider that something deeper underlies an illness for us to grasp. This might be akin to what Job endured. Certainly, Job did nothing worthy of his suffering, yet his story has declared the wisdom of the ages for millennia to those who read it.

Paul told Timothy concerning a stomach ailment he had, ***No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments. -1 Timothy 5:23.*** No

mention is made of Timothy's sins that need repentance of here. We find Epaphroditus was near death because of a sickness, but again no hint that it was due to sin. (Phil 4:25-27) Trophimus was left sick in Miletus by Paul. There apparently are times when the miraculous powers of the apostles did not produce a healing.

Some may ask, *"If I go to the doctor, does it mean my faith is weak?" "If we are ill, should we call the elders to the house before we go to a doctor?"* We will do well to listen to what Jesus said. ***But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. -Matthew 9:12.*** Paul called Luke, "the beloved physician" in Colossians 4:14. We do not find him chastised or rebuked by Paul for his profession. We may conclude from Jesus and Paul's remarks that the use of physicians is not prohibited. Interestingly enough, we find that when Hezekiah was ill and was told he would die that Isaiah was told to apply a fig to the boil to heal him.

This may beg the question, *"if doctors can heal, why pray?"* We may apply the same logic here that could equally be stated in many areas of life. *"I work with my own hands using tools I bought, why should I thank God for what I have earned?" "I travel in a car and use good judgment and driving skills, why should I thank God for arriving safely?"* Hear what Paul says concerning those who refuse to recognize God; ***For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. -Romans 1:20-21.*** Paul gives wise words that we, too, should heed. ***Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. -Philippians 4:6*** And again, ***always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; -Ephesians 5:20.***

Is our faith weak if we seek medical help? Remember, Jesus said the sick need a physician. However, is our faith completely in medicine for our healing? Do we view the doctors, nurses and other healthcare providers as the answer to our ills or as instruments of God's mercy? Do we give

thanks for the ability of those to work the works of healing in people? That thanks is rightly due to God's providence.

Solomon gives us the result of what surely all who live out this life will find in the final chapter of Ecclesiastes. We shall all wear out by and by.

Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near when you will say, "I have no delight in them"; before the sun, the light, the moon, and the stars are darkened, and clouds return after the rain; in the day that the watchmen of the house tremble, and mighty men stoop, the grinding ones stand idle because they are few, and those who look through windows grow dim; and the doors on the street are shut as the sound of the grinding mill is low, and one will arise at the sound of the bird, and all the daughters of song will sing softly.

-Ecclesiastes 12:1-4. Yes, three thousand years ago Solomon knew the maladies of the aged. One need not think that the aches and pains of life are due to a lack of faith when God has decreed that such is the fate of all who grow old to one degree or another. If we are privileged to receive relief as a result of the advancement of medicine, give thanks and use your mobility and newfound strength to further serve God.

Just as Jesus said "***the poor you will always have with you***" (***Matthew 26:11***), we can expect that the sick and infirmed will always be with us as well. For some, this will be discouraging. But, for others it presents opportunities for faith, growth, and a renewed sense of service to God in prayer. Yes, the obvious prayers will continue to be for relief. As faith grows, our prayers will also lean towards seeking wisdom, giving thanks in all things and a desire to be an instrument in the hands of Almighty God.

Prayerful Thoughts: Our Father, into Thy hands we commend our lives to use, even as clay in the Potter's divine hands.