



James 5:13-20 Part 1 A Biblical Perspective on Healing

April 3, 2016

Text: James 5:13-20

Over the last few years, many of the precious saints at CRCC have lost loved ones, endured personal sickness, or walked with friends and family through sickness. We've experienced sudden deaths, sudden and unexpected illnesses, accidents, emotional turmoil, and other maladies out of what to us, seemed like the clear blue sky.

For additional encouragement, please listen to our message from March 13, [Suffering with Patience](#).

For even the most ardent lover of Christ, the most fervent prayer warrior, or the most mature faith-filled disciple, it can seem overwhelming. "Lord, why is this happening? Why are you allowing this? Did I do something wrong?" These are questions I KNOW I HAVE ASKED. Maybe you have too?

As I've mentioned before, one of my favorite commentators on the Bible is William MacDonald. As I often do when getting prepared to teach, I'll quickly scan certain commentaries written by trusted teachers to see "If I'm in the ball park" with my approach. :) This time however, when I looked at MacDonald's *Believer's Bible Commentary*, it became more than a quick check. I sat down and was MINISTERED to by his words...so much so that I'm going to use his outline as the outline for our thoughts today. I cannot do any better than what he wrote, and frankly, I want to go through it again. I need the ministry myself. :)

Given the various sicknesses, hospital stays, doctors reports, deaths, mental illnesses, and thankfully, present healings (for some) that we've experienced recently, I think CRCC needs the ministry as well. :)

MacDonald's Opening Words on this Text

"The theme of the closing verses of this Epistle is **prayer**. The word occurs seven times, either as a noun or a verb.

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. (Jam 5:13)

In every circumstance of life, we should go to the Lord in prayer. When in trouble, we should approach Him with earnest entreaties. In times of rejoicing, we should lift our hearts to him and praise. He wants to be brought into all the change moods of our lives.

We should see God as the first great Cause of all that comes to us in life. We should not look into what Rutherford called the 'confused rolling of the wheels of second causes.' It is defeat to allow ourselves to be victims of circumstances, or wait for our circumstances to change. We should see no hand but His.

This is one of the most disputed portions of the Epistle, and perhaps the entire NT. It brings us face-to-face with the place of healing in the life of the believer today. But before looking at the verses in detail, it should be helpful to review what the Bible teaches about sickness and healing."

A Biblical Perspective on Healing

1. All sickness is, in a general way, the result of **sin in the world.**

- At the Fall (Gen 3), sin and death entered the world, as did sickness and every other form of pain and suffering.

- *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... (Rom 5:12)*
- This is an important point; it is foundational to a biblical perspective. It also points us forward to a day where, *"He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."* (Rev 21:4) Hallelujah!

2. Sometimes sickness is a direct result of **sin** in a person's life.

- In 1 Corinthians 11:28-30, we read:

Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.

- Apparently, certain Corinthians were "weak and ill, and some have died" because of not "confessing and forsaking" the sin in their own lives.
- There is certainly OT precedent for this...plagues, sicknesses, and death due to the sin of the people.

3. However, not **all** sickness is a direct result of sin in a person's life.

- Recall our review of Job last month. It wasn't Job's sin that caused all the calamity. God Himself said, "Have you considered my servant Job?" (Job 1:8, 2:3)
- MacDonald points out that the man born blind in John 9:2-3, suffered not due to sin, but "that the works of God might be displayed in him."
- Also, Paul's friend Epaphroditus was sick, near death, due to his tireless work on the behalf of Christ! (Php 2:25-30)
- In other words, sometimes there is a divine **purpose** for and in sickness we cannot see.

4. Sometimes sickness is a result of **satanic** activity.

- Again, Satan caused Job's terrible illness: *"So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head."* (Job 2:7)
- Remember the crippled woman in Luke 13:10-17?

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him. (Emphasis mine)

- Paul's "thorn in the flesh" is called a "messenger of Satan." (2 Cor 12:7)

- Hence the continued need for us to “submit to God and resist the devil!” (Jam 4:7) May we not open the devil door through our disobedience (Eph 4:27)!

5. The good news is that God can and does heal! In a very real sense, all healing is divine.

- God is our healer! (Jehovah Rapha, or the variant Ropheka, Ex 15:26)
- As creator, God engineered our bodies to heal. It’s actually quite amazing how if taken care of, our bodies will heal “naturally” through processes God designed.
- God also heals through medicines. Paul told Timothy for example, to drink a little wine for his frequent stomach and other ailments.
- Sometimes God uses physicians. Jesus taught they would be needed (Matt 9:12). Luke was a doctor (Col 4:14).

6. And yes, God also heals miraculously!

- We don’t have enough time to list the references! Just in Christ’s earthy ministry alone we could teach for months if not years!
- We don’t believe there is anything in Scripture that prevents God from healing miraculously today. We believe in divine healing.
- The issue is whether or not we can demand or command Him to do so...

7. Yet, we must also be clear that it is not always God's will to heal.

- This is where it can get difficult for us to understand James 5, and we’ll work through it.
- But it is clear from Scripture that God’s plan, sometimes, is not to heal on earth, but in heaven.
- Paul’s thorn was not healed. He eventually had his head removed in Rome for His faith in Jesus. Trophimus was left sick at Miletus (2 Tim 4:20). Most of the Apostles were martyred.
- Saints, if God always chose to heal, we’d never die. Yet, that day is appointed to all unless he returns.
- In understanding divine healing, we run almost immediately into God’s loving sovereignty. This is why when suffering we must pray (James 5:13). God, in His mercy, often helps us understand His plan, or at a minimum, rest in His sufficient grace. Indeed...

...this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. (1 John 5:14)

8. God has not promised to heal in every case; therefore, healing is not something we can demand from Him.

- Amen. This is contrary to some hyper-faith streams, but the evidence of this truth is all around us. Frankly, I’m fearful to demand anything of God. Who am I? A sinner. The kind of “praying” that tells God what He’s going to do (In Jesus’ Name of course) borders on blasphemy.
- Going back to Epaphroditus, Scripture says *“Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.”*
- “Healing is spoken of as a mercy, not something which we have a right to expect.” —MacDonald
- God can and does mercifully heal our bodies. He also sometimes mercifully allows suffering, and even at times, mercifully takes us home into His bosom.

- In modern times, we confuse “praying with expectation” with “God is going to do what I say!!”
- But faith does three things: faith **asks**, faith **believes**, and faith **trusts**. The trust part is the difficult part because the answer isn’t up to us, but Him.

9. While it is true in a general sense that healing is in the Atonement, yet not all the blessings that are in the atonement have been given to us yet.

- This is important! Are we healed by Christ’s suffering? Yes! But the purpose for His Atoning sacrifice is for the forgiveness of sin: (Isaiah 53:5)

Wounded for—> Our transgressions (sin)

Crushed for—> Our iniquities (sin)

His Chastisement for—> Our peace (with God, needed because of sin)

By His Stripes—> He purchased our redemption, or our spiritual healing

- Matthew 8:17 shows the fulfillment of Isa 53:4:

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. (Isa 53:4)

This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: “He took our illnesses and bore our diseases.” (Matt 8:17)

- His Atonement also purchased our glorified, sin-free, totally healed bodies (1 Cor 15)! They are yet to come!
- My point is that God can and does heal...praise Him! However He often makes decision contrary to our wishes. Thank you, LORD, for your sovereign grace and merciful hand.

10. As we have seen, it is not true that failure to be healed indicates a lack of **faith.**

- As a pastor, this is where I really take issue with hyper-faith folks. There may be other spiritual realities!
- Oh, friends, the number of precious believers who beat themselves into an emotional wreck because some preacher said a lack of healing was caused by a lack of faith!
- We are NOT commending doubt; we are lifting up true faith in our loving God!

Final Thoughts:

Ask, believe, then trust dear friends. If you are a child of Jesus, He loves you. He has your best in mind. In this world, we will have tribulation, but He has overcome the world. Sometimes, we pray in accordance to His will, and He heals. Sometimes, we make our petitions known to Him in faith, and He is glorified, but has a different plan. He is sovereign. He is Lord. He is perfect and never errs. Trust Him, and walk by faith.

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matt 6:10)

Amen.