

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn about the practical life of the Christian community. Two teachers will teach from the Bible about Church building ministries. Today's teaching is: SICKNESS AND HEALING. We will discover the various reasons why people get sick and the biblical view concerning healing. We will consider the means of healing and especially the place of faith in healing.

(S) **POINT 1. THE BIBLICAL VIEW OF SICKNESS AND HEALING**

**First. The Bible clearly teaches that all sickness is due to the fall of man in sin.**

In Genesis 3 we read how man fell into sin. God punished man's sin by *greatly increasing the pain* of women at childbirth, by cursing the earth so that it would be *very hard for man to live on earth* and by *physical death*. Physical death is only the final end of the breakdown of the physical body due to sin. Thus the general reason of sickness in the world is due to the fall of man into sin (Rom 5:12-18).

(T) **Second. The Bible clearly teaches that all healing is divine healing!**

Christians should not approach the special things, like God's miracles and gifts of healing in such a way as to think little or less of his general and providential blessings. Not only the special and remarkable, the unique and the miraculous, are the works of God, but James 2:17 teaches that every good endowment and every perfect gift comes from God the Father in heaven! Acts 14:17 and Isaiah 28:23-29 teach that all agricultural blessings come from God. Exodus 31:1-11 teaches that all craftsmen receive their artistic skills from God. Hosea 11:3 and Jeremiah 17:14 teach that all healing is done by God. Thus, all the medical and surgical techniques of today are part of God's providential goodness and care of people on earth.

James insists that Christians should deliberately refer all of life's experiences to God, from whom they come. Christians should praise God in a time of well-being and they should pray in a time of difficulty. When Christians do this, they acknowledge that God's sovereign hand is over all and everything on earth. Even when Christians go to the doctor, their eyes should be on God. God alone can heal. When the medicines work, it is because God made them work. When the surgeon sets the broken limb and the bone knits, it is because God made it knit.

(S) **Third. The Bible clearly teaches that all healing on earth before the second coming of Christ is temporary healing.**

Hebrews 9:27 teaches that man is destined to die. Acts 3:21 teaches that the restoration of everything will only take place at the second coming of Jesus Christ. Revelation 21:3-5 teaches that only *then* will God wipe every tear from the eyes of people. Only *then* will there be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain. Only *then* will the old order of things have passed away and will God make all things new! Christians may be healed temporary on earth now, but permanent healing only comes after the resurrection!

(T) **Fourth. The Bible clearly teaches that all healing is mysterious: it is dependent on God's sovereign will.**

There are certain laws and methods of healing, but none of them are universal. Any particular method or experience may not be expanded into a universal method or experience. For example, the following two methods are unbiblical:

One. There is a tendency with some Christians to treat all sicknesses as cases of demonic oppression and to treat them by casting out the demons. This causes other intelligent onlookers to become sceptical about Christian prayers for healing.

Two. There is a practice among other Christians "to claim your healing", that is, to accept the fact that you have been healed after people have prayed for your healing. These two methods of healing turn the legitimate ministry of the church into a ministry of wounding and condemnation. Christians may not erroneously change particular healing experiences or practices into universal laws of healing, because by doing so, they turn God's *grace* into universal *laws* all over again. God's grace cannot be captured into a system. Sickness and healing will always remain a mystery of God's unrevealed will. God has sovereign reasons why he heals one person and not another person (Eph 1:11). Therefore, Christians cannot and may not demand or command God to do what they as humans desire.

(S) **Fifth. The Bible clearly teaches that Christians should approach God with confidence when they pray for anything, including healing.**

Isaiah 53:5 teaches that Christians are only healed because Jesus Christ died on the cross in order to make atonement for their sins. That is why Christians are taught to pray in the name of Jesus Christ. To pray in the name of Jesus Christ means "to pray on basis of the merit of the completed work of salvation of Jesus Christ". God hears our prayers only because Jesus Christ is our Mediator. Philippians 4:6-7 teaches that a Christian may present all his requests to God

when he prays. And God will answer his prayer in such a way that the “peace of God which passes all understanding” will guard his thoughts and feelings in Christ Jesus. Hebrews 4:16 teaches that Christians may approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that they may receive mercy and find grace to help them in their time of need. In his infinite wisdom, love, faithfulness and power, God knows best the time and the place and the way in which he will answer their prayers. Therefore, if a person seems not to be healed after prayer, Christians should not be alarmed, provided they have done what they could in following the Bible and have prayed in childlike faith to God.

**(T) POINT 2. THE REASONS WHY SOME PEOPLE DO NOT GET HEALED.**

There is *more than one reason* why people do not get healed! John 5:14 says that it may be personal sin. God might allow sickness as a punishment or as a warning. Another frequent reason why some people are not healed is that they neglect to live a healthy and balanced life. Some people do not care for their bodies: They get severe headaches, because they worry too much. Or they get hypertension, because they work up to their breaking point. Or they eat unhealthy food or too much food. Often a person needs to change his life-style before healing will take place. Another reason why some people are not healed is that they neglect to change their bad relationships with their neighbours, their family and even with God. A healing of relationships often brings about inner healing as well as physical healing!

1 Peter 4:13 and 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 teach two reasons why God does not heal some Christians. Sometimes God calls certain Christians to participate in the sufferings of Christ. At other times God does not heal certain Christians, because he has another higher purpose for these people’s lives. Paul accepted God’s sovereign and holy reason and said, “That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

**(S) POINT 3. THE MEANS OF HEALING. First. God uses different means of healing.**

One. Natural healing. In spite of the consequences of the fall of man into sin, God still remains the Creator of man’s body. God has created in the human body a wonderful power of recovery of physical disorders. Many sicknesses, infections and wounds recover spontaneously, even if it takes time.

Two. Doctors and medicines as means of healing. Some extreme faith healers sometimes say, “Now that we have prayed for you, you must believe that your prayer has been answered and that you are now already healed”. They say, “You can disregard any symptoms of your sickness you may still have”. And they say, “As a sign of your faith, stop taking your medicine, or throw away your crutches, etc.” These faith healers are not speaking according to God’s Word, because according to the Bible, *medicine and prayer are not opposites.*

Mark 6:12-13 and Luke 10:33-34 show that the anointing of sick people with oil was the basic medical treatment in the days of Jesus Christ. The disciples anointed sick people with oil and healed them. The Good Samaritan bandaged his patient’s wounds, pouring on oil and wine. The oil was used to soothe the wound (Isa 1:6) and the wine was used to cleanse the wound. Then he put the man on his donkey and took him to an inn where he took care of him. Jesus praised him for the medical care he gave to his neighbour. Paul and many other people must have enjoyed the medical services provided by Luke, because in Colossians 4:14, Paul calls him “the beloved doctor”! (1 Tim 5:23).

Although Paul had healing powers, he left Trophimus behind in Miletus, because he was sick, presumably *to rest* until the medicines of that day or the recuperative powers of his body did their work.

**(T) Three. Miraculous healing.** 1 Corinthians 12:28 teaches that God has given to certain Christians a variety of spiritual gifts of healing. These are abilities to promote the healing of either body or spirit of people. God uses people as his instruments to bring healing to others. The plural shows that God uses different kinds of means to heal people: God heals people by means of medical doctors and therapists, or he heals people by means of pastors and counsellors, or he heals people by means of the prayers of faith of Christians. All healing is therefore *divine healing*. And all healing is essentially *miraculous healing*!

Four. Ultimate healing.

1 Corinthians 15:50 says that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God”. On this earth, all healing is temporary healing, and ultimate healing takes place only after we have died and have been taken into heaven. Only in heaven and after the second coming of Christ, in the new heaven and new earth will there be ultimate healing. Then only will sickness, disabilities and death be destroyed for ever!

**(S) Second. Prayer and anointing by the elders as a means of healing.**

One. The healing ministry normally belongs to the elders. James 5:14-15 teaches, “Is anyone sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. 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.” James does not tell us that

prayer and anointing with oil is a supplement to the doctor. He also does not disapprove of medical doctors or modern medicines. Christians may not assume that James disapproves of something he simply does not mention. *There is always a spiritual dimension in healing and James emphasises that in this passage. On no occasion should a Christian approach a doctor without also approaching God.*

But there are times when approaching God first or alone is also right. James associates the healing ministry of prayer and anointing with the local elders of the church. The healing ministry does not belong to any special gifted person - such as a person who claims to have received "the gift of healing" mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:30. Nor does it belong to any unique and bygone order of ministry such as the apostles. The healing ministry normally belongs to the elders as a group.

**Two. The activities associated with the healing ministry.** James is not speaking of public healing services, but of a ministry in the privacy of the sick person's home. The elders have two specific tasks: to pray over the sick person and to anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. It is important to notice that *the sick person* is not called to pray or to exercise faith to be healed. It is *the elders* who are called to pray and to exercise faith needed for healing.

In Mark 6:13, Jesus Christ did not actually command the practice of anointing with *oil*, but he surely approved of it. In the New Testament times, oil was used as a medicine. Jesus also used his *saliva* in his ministry to the deaf and blind (Mk 7:31-37; 8:22-26; Jn 9:6-7). Because ordinary communication with deaf and blind people was difficult, he used it as a tangible way of assuring the sick person that he intended to heal him. Likewise, the elders use *oil as a visible expression and token* of the descent of the healing authority and efficacy of the Name of Jesus Christ. It should be noted that there is no reference to the elders laying on hands. There is also no necessity to think that the sick person should first confess his sins publicly in the presence of the elders. It would however be perfectly proper for the elders to ask if there was any sin which needed to be confessed and forgiven. A time of *quiet prayer*, confessing of sin and receiving of forgiveness by everybody is quite in order.

**(T) Third. The prayer of faith and its outcome.**

**One. The purpose of the promises concerning prayer.** James 5:15 promises that *the prayer of faith* will restore the sick person to health and the Lord will raise him up. If the phrase *prayer of faith* is taken by itself, then faith is the conviction that it is the will of God to perform this healing. Jesus included this kind of prayer among many other teachings about prayer. In Mark 11:24 he says, "Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours." (Jn 14:13; Mt 18:19). The statement *the prayer of faith* is obviously an important matter, but also a matter with complications and dangers. Unless God gives Christians a very specific revelation that it is his will to heal this sick person, Christians are often misled by their own convictions of what God will or will not do. Without such a special revelation, praying for the healing of sick people with an attitude that "God will and must heal", is an unwarranted assumption and only damages the tender spirit of the sick person (Ps 56:8).

The Bible *does not say that we can pray only when we possess this special certainty of faith regarding what we ask.* In Mark 9:21-24, Jesus responded in power to a faith which was by its own confession far from certain. The man said, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" Neither does the Bible intend to say that God's response to our prayers will go *only as far as our faith stretches.* In Ephesians 3:20, Paul says that God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. And the Bible certainly does not say that we should try to whip up a believing spirit, or pretend that we have this faith when we do not. What Jesus, Paul and James seem to teach is that we should always be alert in our prayers to the fact that God *may* wish to give us a particular gift of faith in relation to something we ask.

**(S)** These Bible passages about *the prayer of faith* are not the whole truth about prayer. The majority of Christian prayers are *prayers of trustful rest.* And rightly so, because we often do not know what to ask either for ourselves or for others. We often lack wisdom to know what is right or lack knowledge to know what is needed and therefore we pray, "Lord, please bless this person or situation". When we ask the Lord *to bless*, we consciously admit that we do not know what to ask, but that the Lord knows what is needed. Prayer is therefore a commitment to the sovereign will of God. All true prayer exercises its truest faith by patiently waiting to see what the sovereign God has determined to do.

The unqualified statement "the prayer of faith will save or heal the sick" stands alongside many similar affirmations regarding prayer. In Mark 11:22-24, Jesus says, that *God can* do absolutely anything he wishes and we can trust him absolutely, no matter if the problem is as great as moving a mountain. In Matthew 18:19 he promises, "If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you." And in John 14:13 he promises, "I will do whatever you ask in my name." *Such promises are intended to bring Christians with confidence into the place of prayer.* Christians need courage and encouragement to pray, especially for healing. These promises speak of a God who hears all our prayers, who can do all things, and who is so generous that he will withhold nothing from us that is good! But the one thing these promises do not encourage or allow is that we should pray with a stubborn insistence that we know what is right and that our will must be done!

(T) Two. The essence of prayer is to trustfully rest in God's sovereign will.

James 4:15 teaches that the essence of life and of prayer is "Not my will, but your will be done" (Lk 22:42). Jesus teaches that *this attitude is essential in all our prayers*, when he teaches in the Lord's prayer that all people should always pray, "Hallowed be your name; Your kingdom come; *Your will be done*" (Mt 6:9-10)!

Therefore, in the prayer of faith, our *faith* is not that the promises of God will be fulfilled automatically (just like that). Our faith is rather that faith which rests trustfully in the will of a sovereign, faithful and loving God. Neither the sick person nor any of the elders may insist that his or her will be done. They are gathered together *to put the sick person within the total, eternal security of the unchangeable and gracious will of God*. The perfect will of God may be to restore the sick person's health. This is the lesser benefit! Or the perfect will of God may be to take the sick person into his presence in heaven where he will enjoy fullness of life. This is the supreme benefit! It is for this reason that Christians must say in all their prayers, and not only in their prayers concerned with healing, "Your will be done!" The effect of this petition is to remove all limitations from our prayers. Our knowledge of the sickness, our proposed solutions and our understanding of God's will are always limited. Sometimes we impose a limitation on our prayers by our knowledge of what needs to be done, by our proposals of what will meet our needs or by our sense of what is the best for us. To pray, "Your will be done" is not imposing a restriction on our prayer. It rather lifts our prayer above all earthly restrictions! It places us unreservedly into the hands of God and his infinite wisdom, love and power. There is no safer place to leave a sick person than to place him in the hands of God. And there is no solution of his plight that is more fitting, more beneficial and more glorious than *the solution God has in mind* for the sick person!

(S) ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK.

First. Teach new believers what the Bible teaches about sickness and healing.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on [www.dota.net](http://www.dota.net).

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".