**IF/THEN – Healing**

**9-5-21**

I don’t know about you, but over the last several weeks I have received or seen many, many notes or posts asking that we pray for people who are hospitalized.

* The majority of these are people who are fighting Covid-19, with some in really serious condition.
  + The Andersons have two friends in the hospital.
  + We know the Alliance pastor in Hamilton was hospitalized a few weeks ago.
  + Just this week Karen Tweedy’s brother passed due to COVID complications.
  + But it hasn’t all been COIVID
    - Betty Newton had surgery last week for blood clots.
    - Cindy Schmillen’s husband, Mike, had hip-replacement surgery.
* But something they have all had in common has been an appeal to their brothers and sisters in Christ to pray for healing.
  + But where do we get this idea that we have the right to go to God and seek healing for those that we love?
    - Granted, Jesus healed a lot of people when He was on earth…
    - But what makes us believe that such healing might still take place today or that we can take part in that privilege?
* Well, believe it or not, part of the reason we can take that privilege to the bank is found in that amazing IF/THEN statement we have been studying from 2 Chronicles 7:14.

*14 if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*

* Over the last six weeks we have been examining this passage and, for many of us, what we have found has been eye-opening if not transformational.
  + If you have missed any of these messages since July 25th, I strongly encourage you to go back in the Rock app or on our Youtube page and listen to these messages.
  + They speak to some of the most foundational issues of how we relate to God as the people who bear His name.
* Well, last week we began talking about the THEN portion of this great IF/THEN statement and discovered that it promises the revival of God’s people.
  + What Isaiah 58 describes as…

*Our light breaking forth like the dawn*

*Our righteousness going before us*

*Our God defending our flank*

*Our becoming like a Spring of water that does not fail*

*Our being called the repairer of the breach*

*And the restorer of streets.*

* + - There is a lot there to unpack, and we will do so in coming weeks.
* But today, because it is Elder Communion Sunday, when we come together around the table and go before the Lord together seeking healing for both our bodies and spirits...
  + I want to take a few moments to look at that idea of “healing” that is found not only in the 2 Chronicles passage – *Then I will hear from heaven and forgive their sin and* ***heal*** *their land.*
  + But is also found in Isaiah 58:8 where we read:

*8 Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,*

*and your* ***healing*** *shall spring up speedily;*

* + It is clear that there is a connection between the IF statement...

*IF my people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways…*

* + And “healing”, which is found prominently in the THEN of revival.
    - After all, isn’t healing what revival is all about?

Today’s Scripture reading from James 5 is a New Testament expression of the same truth.

* Note how, just as in 2 Chronicles 7 and Isaiah 58, prayer, forgiveness and healing are all integral parts of what is being taught.
  + But what exactly do they mean – especially when it speaks of healing?
* In this section, James, the son of Mary and Joseph and half-brother of Jesus, asks three questions that he then answers himself.
  + *Is anyone among you suffering?*
  + *Is anyone cheerful?*
  + And, *Is anyone among you sick?*
* The suffering are those who are being oppressed by something outside.
  + These are the persecuted or the downtrodden or the poor.
  + James had just address those who are suffering in vss. 7-11.
    - He had compared them to Job in his suffering from affliction, rejection, disaster and chronic pain.
    - There he had encouraged the suffering to be patient and trust in the Lord’s sovereign timing and grace.
    - Here, he encourages them to pray.
* But while some suffer, others in the church are enjoying blessings and good times – these are the “cheerful” that he speaks of in vs. 13.
  + And to the cheerful – to those for whom life is going well – James calls on them to sing songs of praise.
    - He wants them to remember that their circumstances are just as much under the sovereign grace of God as is those who are suffering.
    - That the good they experience is not because they are smarter than the suffering nor because they deserve better things.
    - Rather it arises from the grace and goodness of God.
  + So they are to give credit where credit is due and sing songs of praise to the One who has given them every good and perfect gift.
    - Earlier in the chapter he had addressed the wealthy who did not see their wealth as being from God’s hand, but rather was from their own cleverness.
    - He spoke of them as being self-centered and stingy and of treating their employees with contempt, defrauding them of their due wages (something you may remember that we also saw in Isaiah 58).
    - Such self-indulgent believers he said in vs. 1 should *weep and howl for the miseries that [would be] coming upon them.*
    - Rather than sing praises to God and treat their wealth as a tool placed in their hands by their creator to in order to bless those around them, they expended it all on themselves and sought only more of the same.
  + Here James exhorts them to sing praises to the giver of all good things, remembering that it comes from Him in order to glorify Him.
* Then James comes to the people we want to look at more carefully this morning – *Are any among you sick?*
  + It should be noted here that once again the Scriptures are addressing the Church as a whole here, not just individuals.
    - This “among you” is consistent throughout this passage and indicates that we are always seen by God not just as individuals but as a community of faith that bears responsibility to one another.
    - The solution to being “sick”, you will note, is also a corporate one.

*Let him call for the elders (plural) of the church (community), and let them (plural) pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*

* + - The sick are encouraged to call upon the leaders of the faith community to come and pray over them to ask for God’s grace and healing.
      * This is not to be seen as a last resort, but rather a first step.
      * It is not considered an unusual step, but the normal mode of operation.
  + But before we get any further down that road, I want to go back and consider something else about this encouragement – who are the “sick”?
    - The Greek word James uses that is here translated “sick”, *astheneo,* is not the common word used for illness, but rather is a general word for “weakness”.
      * In the New Testament it is used 19 times to describe illness, but 14 times to describe just a general weakness.
        + Be it a weakness of faith (as in the “weaker brother”) or of body (not as in being sick, but in being worn out) or of spirit (like Elijah of the Old Testament who was “weary” spiritually and ran away from Jezabel).
      * So the word itself is more broad than just physical illness and includes any kind of weariness or weakness that debilitates a believer.
    - Now there are some in the church who take James’ use of this word to confirm their belief that all miracles and healings were of a previous dispensation or time and that God does not do those kinds of things any more.
      * So they interpret this passage purely in the sense of “weakness” or “weariness” and deny that James was speaking of physical illness at all.
      * Thus, for them James is “merely” suggesting that the weary might be encouraged and built up through the prayers of the Elders.
        + As if, somehow this being less visible is any less a miracle.
    - But even if the word were limited only to weariness and weakness, the result of the prayers is no less a miracle of grace.
      * For note that the healing of their broken spirit comes directly from Christ.
        + For the text tells us that it is *the Lord [who] raises them up.*
      * Now they will note that James compares this whole situation to that of Elijah in the Old Testament who was not sick, but became VERY weary and ran away from Queen Jezebel after defeating the prophets of Baal.
        + In that instance, God said to Elijah that his journey was “too much for him”.
        + But what did God do? God sent an angel to him to refresh and restore him!

Encouraging him to rest, giving him water and cooking him food.

And then later God demonstrated His glory to Him in silence spoke words of encouragement directly to him on Mount Horeb.

* + - * + He might not have been physically ill, but the whole event was just as miraculous as any physical healing – just not as visible.
  + The truth is that the word, *astheneo,* encompasses physical, emotional and spiritual weakness.
    - So, we can conclude that “the one who is sick” described here by James is any believer who is weakened or wearied; be it by illness or weariness of the body or illness or weariness of the soul.
    - But in either case, the same recourse is recommended by James.
  + Are you sick or weary, discouraged or faithless, burnt out or broken?
    - Then call upon the Elders of the church to come and pray for you.
      * “Well, I’m not THAT sick.”
      * “I’m just a little run down”
      * “I wouldn’t want anyone to know that I’m struggling”
      * “I can work it out on my own”
      * “I don’t want other people knowing about my business”.
    - What do all of these excuses have in common?
      * They all have in common that which is the enemy of all prayer – pride.
      * Which brings us all the way back to our great IF/THEN statement in 2 Chronicles 7:14.

*IF my people who are called by my name HUMBLE themselves (plural) and pray (plural) and seek MY face and turn from their wicked ways.*

* + - All prayer requires humility – for prayer by its very nature is an act of humility.
      * It declares in no uncertain terms that we are not enough.
        + That we don’t understand all that’s going on.
        + That we don’t control all that’s going on.
        + And that we don’t even know what is needed for all that’s going on.
    - But asking for the Elders to come to pray over us takes that humility to the next level.
      * For it means that we are acknowledging our inadequacy before others in the body.
      * We are confessing our helplessness to others (as if they didn’t already know).
      * And we are asking them for a hand in bringing it before the Lord.
    - But why do we have to do this?
      * Why can’t I just work it through in prayer by myself?
        + Why can’t God and I do it in private?
  + Simple. Because pride is the enemy of prayer.
    - And that drive to “keep it private” to “work it out yourself”; to only bring it to another believer as a last resort arises out of pride.

*Is anyone among you sick (weary, weakened)? Let him (or her) call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him (or her), anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*

* So what is with the “anointing with oil?”
  + Anointing with oil was practiced in James’ day for at least three different purposes.
  + First, there was a ceremonial anointing that would be done at the coronation of Kings or the ordination of prophets or priests.
    - This was to signify the blessing and commissioning of God on the life of the individual – they were set apart for service.
      * This is the kind of anointing that Jesus referred to when he quoted the prophet Isaiah and said, *the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.*
    - But the Greek word for this ceremonial anointing is NOT the word James uses here in this text.
      * Meaning that this anointing was not a part of some ceremony or ritual, but rather was more practical in nature.
    - Thus the second and third types of “anointing” had practical applications.
  + The second type of anointing was an act meant to provide refreshment and renewal to someone.
    - We see this practiced in the Gospels when a guest entered a home and they were “anointed” with oil.
      * That is, a servant would pour out some oil onto the head and/or feet of the guest.
      * It had the practical affect of both providing a moist cool sensation to the guest in a hot and arid land.
      * As well as providing a sweet deodorizer in a room filled with sweaty people without the benefit of air conditioning.
    - Thus we can see how such anointing could be a symbol of the Elders brining emotional or spiritual refreshment to the weary soul that they are praying for.
  + Now the third kind of anointing with oil actually was for medicinal purposes.
    - Olive oil was widely used as a form of medicine in the ancient world and would be rubbed into the person’s hands or arms for the purpose of bringing healing.
      * In fact, the Greek word translated “anoint” here in James has as its first meaning “to rub” the oil on someone.
    - In the case of prayers for healing, this might indicate that the Elders were supposed to both pray for healing and apply the “medicine of Olive oil” at the same time.
      * That prayers for healing and the use of medicines are not antithetical to one another but can be used in combination with one another.
  + No matter what the use of the oil, however, it is clear that whatever effect all of this had was not the result of a ritual or the oil, but rather was the result of the prayer.

*15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.*

* + - This Greek word, “save”, means to rescue or heal and is an appropriate description whether one is praying for physical healing for emotional healing.
    - But in the end, it is *the Lord who will raise him up.*

Here we have a picture of personal revival.

* Revival of spirit, revival of physical health, revival of emotional health.
  + The great IF/THEN statement that we find across the Scriptures is that if the people of God will humble themselves and pray, turning from their self-indulgent pride and wickedness, and instead turn toward the will of God – praying His will and His Kingdom will on earth as it is in heaven…
  + THEN God will bring revival:
    - Revival of the body.
    - Revival of emotional health.
    - Revival of our spirit.
  + All in keeping with His sovereign will and plan.
    - Thus while the Apostle Paul was healed of blindness and of a poisonous viper’s bite…
    - He was not healed of His thorn in the flesh that God chose to have remain with Him so as to help shape and mold him as His apostle.
* When we come to Him in our weakness, we are, in the end, not praying for any particular outcome other than the gracious, loving, sovereign will of God in our lives.
  + Sometimes we don’t know that will, so we ask for what we desire with the same caveat that Jesus prayed (not my will, but thy will be done).
  + Other times God may make very clear to us just what we are to pray for, so we pray with great boldness –
    - Not because our boldness convinces Him, but because we are convinced that He is calling us to pray with such boldness.

But in any event – when we are weak or sick, we are called to pray for our revival.

* We are called to humble ourselves and invite others to pray over us – specifically the Elders of the church.
* And if, in those prayers it is clear that we have sinned against someone else in the body, we are called to humbly confess our sin to them – so that the whole body of Christ may be healed as well.
  + For revival is not just revival of me, it is revival of us.

Watch this video of God’s working of revival in the life of a man in Africa through both physical and spiritual healing.

* Pay attention to how his attitude changed as he came to understand the sovereign choices that God made in his life in order to accomplish His will on Earth as it is in Heaven.
* And then we will go to prayer for the revival of those among us who are weak and weary – maybe even sick – as we will invite you to come to the altar and have the Elders pray over you.

Video