

Chapter 1:

Is Anyone Sick Among You?

Open your Bibles with me to James, chapter five. I think it is very important that you have your own Bible open as we examine these passages. Don't just read what I have written. Remember, my words are not inspired or infallible; it is the Bible that holds that authority.

This passage stands out among all the Old and New Testament passages that speak of healing. I encourage you to take notes as we go along.

James 5:13-18

"Is anyone of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is anyone of you sick? You should call for 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. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three years and a half. And he prayed again and the heavens gave rain and the earth produced its crops."

The Question

James asks a very simple question: "Is anyone sick among you?" It's almost laughable. Is there anyone sick among you? Let me ask you. Are any of you reading this book suffering from a sickness or disease? Are any of you battling with weakness or aches and pains? Are any of you struggling with persistent infirmities? Is this sickness hindering you in any way? Does it prevent you from serving God? Is it absorbing all your energy and attention day after day? Are you unable to do the things you used to do? Is it hindering your victory in Jesus?

James asked, "Is anyone sick among you?"

Maybe you are young or a college student and currently unaffected by illnesses. But I can assure you there is coming a day when you will battle with some sickness, injury or disease. Your body is under attack. It is deteriorating. You're going to get older. You're going to have friends that are going to get sick and some of them are going to die. Others will have accidents or become chronically ill. I am sure you are going to pray for them. You will ask God to heal them. It is good to pray for one another's healing. Maybe God will answer and heal them, and maybe He won't. Whoever you are, whatever your age, you or someone you love will suffer physical

infirmities that medicine can't cure. On that day, you will wonder where God's healing power is today.

So the question James brings to us is for all of us. "Is anyone sick among you?" He is laying the foundation for how to pray for yourself when you are sick, and how to pray for others. He gives us instructions on what to do when we are sick.

My Struggle With Healing

It was back in 1973. I had just begun my pastoral ministry. I was pastor of a little church of about 40 people. One topic I preached on was healing and how we can trust Christ for our healing in our bodies. Our daughter, Aimee, had chronic asthma. Often she would have asthma attacks and not be able to breathe. It would come on suddenly. This was long before we had many of the medications that we have today. We would frequently rush her to the hospital not knowing if she would make it, and really fearing that she was going to die in the car before we got there.

The situation was far from pleasant. It was life-threatening. It was frightening. On many occasions, we battled that sickness. We taught Aimee to pray and trust the Lord for her body. We wanted to encourage her to trust the Lord for health and healing. I remember one particular night I had preached on prayer, healing, and miracles. We went home and as we went to bed, I knelt beside Aimee's bed to pray with her. I reminded her to pray for Grandma and Pop-pop and then I said, "Remember to pray for your asthma and let's ask God to heal that." I bowed my head and said, "You pray first." There was silence. I thought maybe she didn't hear me and so I said, "Aimee, you pray first. I'll pray afterwards."

There was silence again. I looked up at Aimee, and she was lying on her bed with tears streaming down her face. I asked what was wrong. She replied through her tears, "Daddy, I don't think Jesus is going to heal my asthma. I don't think God hears me."

Even as I tell the story after all these years, my heart breaks. My little Aimee loved the Lord with all her heart, but had a disease. She had cried to Him, and He did not answer. We had anointed and prayed for her in church, and God did not heal her. There she lay in despair, saying, "I don't think God hears me, because He didn't answer my prayer." After talking with Aimee, I went back to my bedroom and shared with my wife what Aimee had said. We both sobbed. We cried, and we prayed.

Even today as I write this, my heart is sobbing because over the years, I have heard many believers say the same thing, "I don't think God hears me. I don't think He wants to heal me." How sad! If they hadn't said it out loud, they lived it. They had given up on God caring about their sicknesses, hearing their prayers, and healing their bodies. Let's be honest, healing in our churches is the exception rather than the rule. Be honest. Isn't the number one church prayer request for someone who is physically sick?. Yet, how many of them actually get healed? Do we even keep track? Though we pray much for people to be healed, we see very few miraculously healed. Is it any wonder we have lowered our expectations?

You may have asked, "Where's God when I hurt? Why isn't God hearing my cries? Where are all the miracles the Bible tells us about? Has God forgotten us? Is He not listening?" Recently, I did a study of the Psalms looking for all the questions David asked. I found that David often complained to God about his sicknesses, his pain, his suffering and asked many of the questions we ask. "Where are you, God? Don't you hear me? Why are you so far from me? Have you forgotten to be gracious? Have you rejected me? How long do I have to wait until you answer? When will you answer my cry?" He asked why, when, where, who, what, how and how long. David was the apple of God's eye, yet he experienced pain and suffering. Or maybe like Jeremiah, you cry, *"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?"* (Jeremiah 8:22)

It leaves us all with a lot of questions.

Surprised By a Healing

A few months later, I visited with a family that had quit coming to church many years before. They'd been away from the church for about 10 years, long before I ever came there. They were angry with someone in the church, so they quit coming. I had visited them on several occasions, trying to encourage them to come back to church. But they didn't want to be bothered.

I remember what they said to me on my first visit when I encouraged them to attend church. They looked at me and said, "Pastor LaFountain, we don't need to come to church. We have Rex Humbard on the TV and he preaches a lot better than you do." (How would they know? They had never heard me preach?)

I responded to them, saying, "Well, I don't doubt that Rex Humbard preaches better than me, but God didn't say listen to preachers. He said, *"Gather yourselves together and forsake it not as the manner of some is and do it even more when you see the day of the Lord approaching."* (Hebrews 10:25) They were unmoved by my exhortation.

One day, a few weeks after praying for Aimee's healing, I was still wrestling with the Lord about this whole healing matter because God still had not answered our prayer for Aimee. I received a phone call from the wife of this wayward couple. She was frantic. She said, "Pastor LaFountain, you need to come right now. My husband has had a stroke. I don't know what has happened, but he's paralyzed from his neck down and he won't let me call an ambulance. He says, 'Call the preacher!'"

I wanted to say, "Do you have Rex Humbard's phone number?" I didn't, but I was thinking in my heart, "Why are you calling me? You are wayward. You are not walking with God. You are disobedient to the Holy Spirit. My daughter loves Jesus with all her heart and is godly, but her disease has not been healed. What right do you have to ask me to come and pray for you?" Well, I buttoned my lip. I didn't say it. But I thought about it.

The woman pleaded with me, but I told her she needed to call an ambulance and get him to the hospital immediately. She insisted, "I can't. He won't let me. He's paralyzed, lying on the floor and he says you've got to call Reverend LaFountain. God said, 'Call Pastor LaFountain.'"

What could I say? I rolled my eyes and responded, "I'll be right over."

I was struggling on the way over to their house. I didn't want to pray for this guy. I didn't believe for a moment that God was going to heal him. He didn't deserve to be healed. I had been questioning whether God would heal anybody, and certainly not through me. As I drove to their house, I struggled with my lack of faith.

While I drove there the Holy Spirit whispered to me and said, "Speak to him about his spiritual condition." In that moment, the Lord gave me the Scripture, Hebrews 10:25, *"Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is."*

When I arrived, he was still lying on the floor. He hadn't moved. He couldn't move anything from his neck down. Despite being paralyzed, he could speak.

He told me how desperate he was and he didn't know what to do. He said, "Pastor, God told me to call you and have you pray for me." And then he added, "The Lord said, 'Pastor LaFountain has a word for you.'"

I thought, "Good! Do I have a word for you!" I knew God was in this. I spoke to him about his sin. I was blunt. I didn't pull any punches. I said, "Here is the word the Lord gave to me on the way over here. You are disobedient to the Holy Spirit. You know the word of God. You've disobeyed for 10 years. You haven't gathered together with other believers. You're angry at a brother in Christ. You are unforgiving and you're bitter. God is holding that against you. This has been God's judgment against you!"

Sometimes I just lose patience with people. I was not merciful with that man. I had no mercy. I just told him what God put on my heart. The guy was still lying on the floor paralyzed from the neck down. He started to cry. He was obviously under conviction. He said, "Pastor, you are right. God spoke to my heart about that. That is exactly what the Lord has been saying to me. I'm wrong. I'm bitter. I'm angry and I have forsaken the Lord in His house. I need God's forgiveness. Pastor, pray with me!"

I prayed with and for him. He confessed his sins and asked the Lord to forgive him and wash away those sins. After I finished that prayer, he said, "Okay. Pastor, now you can pray for me to be healed. Now you can pray for my body."

I wanted to say, "I will not pray for your healing. You don't deserve it." But the Lord doesn't say if you deserve it, call for the elders of the church to pray over you and anoint you with oil. He says do it in the name of the Lord, which I believe means, in the authority of Jesus Christ.

So I knelt down next to him on the floor, anointed him with oil, and prayed, "Lord Jesus, you are stronger than any disease. You are the God of all of our health and our strength. I ask that, if it be your will, you would touch this man and heal his body in Jesus' name. Amen."

My intent was to finish the prayer and then tell his wife to call for an ambulance. When I finished my prayer and he said, "Wow. Something just happened." He started moving his arms. Soon he moved his legs. A little later, he sat up. Then he got to his knees, and he stood up. He started moving around the room. This guy was in his 80s. He did exercises. He started doing push-ups on the floor. By the time he finished with that, he got up and started running around the room shouting, "Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! I'm healed."

I was standing there in shock. I was thinking, "This is not right. My poor little daughter is at home still sick with asthma. She loves the Lord, is pure in heart, simple in faith, and not disobedient to God. And here's this 'son of a gun' who, in a moment of conviction, confesses his sins and the Lord forgives him and heals him. This is not fair!"

I had an issue with that. Of course, I rejoiced in seeing a miracle. But I had an issue with that. This was not right. It was all wrong. It's not the way it is supposed to be.

To complete the story, I have to tell you that this brother and his wife showed up for church the next Sunday morning. They were faithful to their promise. God had forgiven them and gave him a miraculous healing. They followed through and they came to church. But when they saw the other family they were angry with, the bitterness came back and they refused to ever come back to church. Regardless, he remained healed.

As I looked at that event back then, I had a thousand questions. I still have a lot of questions about it. As I preach the word of God, it is not with some theological theory. I'm speaking from firsthand experience. I have seen strange things. I have seen miracles. I have seen things that seem unjust and make little sense to me. I have seen unusual things that I don't understand.

Sometimes God does things His way, and we need to let God be God. I don't want you to be discouraged in trusting the Lord for your health just because you can't understand it all. God sometimes heals one person and not another. That's His sovereign choice. I can't explain it. I accept it. It's a fact of life.

The fact remains, amid all our questions, God still heals. He has a treasure chest of power and promises available to each one of us. The greatest problem is not

whether God can heal. It is whether He is willing to heal. Too often, we let our doubts dampen our faith. We are shell-shocked because of unanswered prayers. We have become careful, even skittish, about claiming the promises of God. We are tempted to think that healing must be based on our merit or worth. We think we are not worthy to be healed. We are right; we are not worthy. No one is. But if that stiff-necked, angry, bitter, cantankerous, and rebellious old guy back in 1973 can get healed, so can you. Healing is God's gift of mercy and grace poured out to glorify His Son Jesus Christ.

We All Have Questions About Healing.

Everyone wants to be healed. I am almost certain all of us have struggled with healing. Throughout this book we will try to address many of those questions and thoroughly research the subject. By God's grace, we will explore this carefully and prayerfully, seeking understanding from both the Old and New Testaments, as well as the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles, to fully comprehend it.

1. Is healing for us today?
2. Does God still heal today?
3. Who does He heal? Only special people?
4. When does He heal?
5. How does He heal?
6. Where does He heal?
7. What does He heal?
8. Why doesn't He always heal?
9. Why does He heal some and not others?
10. Are we practicing it properly?
11. Is healing for everyone, everywhere, all the time?
12. Through whom does he heal?
13. How often does God heal?
14. Can we believe God for healing in every situation?
15. When should we call for the elders, when not?
16. Are there diseases God heals, and others he doesn't?
17. How do you know when God doesn't want to heal you?
18. Can you claim healing for all your ills?
19. Are any or all sicknesses of the devil?
20. Is there healing in the atonement?
21. Is there healing on demand?
22. Can enough faith heal anyone and anything?
23. Should we seek out faith healers?
24. Do some people have a gift to heal with their hands?
25. Will God answer if we get a 1,000 people praying?
26. Do people still have gifts of healing?
27. Should you refuse medicine, doctors, treatment, hospitals, etc?
28. When should you give up on believing God for healing?

Be assured, what you are going through matters to God.

As we go through these studies, I want you to search the Scriptures to make sure these things are so, because they are so. I want you to be like the New Testament church, the Bereans, that made sure what Paul was saying was true. So, look up the Scriptures. Mark it in your Bibles. Then search the Scriptures and make sure these things are true. Once you are convinced that God loves to heal, has not changed, is able and willing to heal, then trust Him with your situation.

Think About It

Chapter 1: Is Anyone Sick Among You?

Have you ever been healed?

Have you ever witnessed a healing? A miracle?

Have you been disappointed not being healed?

