



Daily Verse and Comment

James 5:14-15

(14) Is any sick among you? 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:
(15) And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

King James Version

Most churches believe in divine healing—at least on paper. It seems only the more charismatic congregations, however, announce their belief in God's power to heal. In the twenty-first century, it is far more "reasonable" for mainstream denominations to sing the praises of medical, technical, and scientific advances in health-related areas than to promote the more "primitive" practice of trusting in [God](#). Healing is just too low-tech and passé.

Of course, healing takes [faith](#), which is not a characteristic of the present culture. Faith is on the outs, with doubt, skepticism, and disbelief in the majority. Most people would give the same credence to divine healing as they would shamanism, transcendental meditation, feng shui, astrology, or magic beans. In a word, the typical, secular individual would call healing through faith in God "superstition." At best, they would consider it a sometimes-effective placebo or mind over matter. For, to admit to healing is to admit the existence and intervention of Almighty God.

Christians are by definition followers of Jesus Christ—and how unpopular that is even among those who profess Christianity! Any reader of the gospels cannot help but be struck by the number of accounts of healings done by Jesus during His ministry. He freely healed lepers, the blind, the lame, women with female problems, children with deathly fevers—in fact, just about anyone who asked! He even raised a few people from the dead! Yet, in

a way, He really did not heal all these people Himself, but His Father in heaven did these [merciful](#) works through Him ([John 14:10](#)). Divine healing works the same way today.

Jesus asks in [Luke 18:8](#), "When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" This is obviously part of the problem why more healings do not take place among us, but it is certainly not all of it. Many faithful Christians have died trusting in God to heal them, and whether or not they availed themselves of medical help during their illness does not seem to be all that much of a factor—or whether they chose to follow a "natural" cure or some new, experimental treatment. Something other than human remedies for disease is *the* factor that decides the life or death of the ailing faithful.

The "missing" dimension in healing is God, of course. Too many of us—in our pain, grief, and confusion—look at divine healing far too simplistically and carnally, and this is understandable under such trying circumstances. We know God desires to heal us, and He promises to do so (see [Exodus 15:26](#); [Psalm 103:3](#); [Matthew 8:1-3](#); [James 5:14-15](#)). We know we can claim God's application of the stripes of [Jesus Christ](#) for our healing ([Isaiah 53:5](#); [1 Peter 2:24](#)). However, we often forget that these promises are not unconditional; God is not bound, like some genie in a bottle, to fulfill them automatically once they are claimed.

As a loving and caring Father, He would like to heal us every time, but sometimes it is better that He does not. Three overriding factors—His sovereignty, His [love](#), and His purpose—take precedence, and He considers these when He decides our petitions for healing. The bottom line is that He will do for the sick child of God what is ultimately best for him ([Romans 8:28](#)). Period. Sometimes, He decides that physical death is best. He made such a decision concerning His own Son (see [Luke 22:41-44](#))!

We can be thankful that God is not constrained by death; Jesus Christ put that enemy down ([1 Corinthians 15:50-55](#); [Hebrews 2:14-15](#)). Even so, our emotions and our human points of view frequently do not agree that death is sometimes best. We deeply feel our loss. But faith must do its work here too. We must believe that God's care of His children is absolutely loving and that His promise of eternal life is sure—that death is only temporary rest before a vibrant and abundant life in His Kingdom.

As mature Christians, we must come to understand healing in a more perfect way. We need to come to the conclusion Job does: "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD. . . . Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" ([Job 1:21](#); [2:10](#)). Jesus Himself echoes this attitude in [Luke 22:42](#), "Father, if it is Your will, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." Finally, God gives us hope, reminding us that our sorrow is not the end of the matter: "Though He causes grief, yet He will show compassion according to the multitude of His mercies" ([Lamentations 3:32](#)).

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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