

This past Sunday, I heard a preacher, (online) and I am sure there were more than one, who prayed for physical healing for everyone in the world with the Coronavirus.

But not only did he pray for a mass healing of all who had COVID-19; he also stated in his prayer that he BELIEVED that God was going to heal them, and....that God would eradicate the COVID-19 virus. But are we to pray and believe that God is going to work in ways in which He has not promised to work? Aren't we to pray according to the revealed will of God?

Let me just say that I don't want to see anyone get the Coronavirus; and it grieves me when I hear of so many who are dying from it. But my question tonight is: How we to pray for those that are gravely ill?

Look at our text: (V14-15): "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: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up"

I am not going to deal with the anointing oil this evening, mainly because I am not sure of the meaning of it or of how it applies to us; for now the Lord has hidden it from me, what I want to deal with is praying for the gravely ill or sick.

First thing: Anytime you are sick, you are in a time of bodily weakness because of an unseen virus or infection; THAT, in and of itself should bring you to a place of prayer!

Even a slight fever or common cold should awaken us to our own mortality!

But when sickness comes, how often do we hasten to call on a medical doctor, but we never think to call on our Heavenly Father in prayer?

And yes, as the text teaches us; call the preacher and ask for prayer! But when you do, be assured that my first prayer request for you is always going to be for the health of your soul; and SECONDLY, that God would raise you up again good health.

Times of sickness should bring us to the place of realizing that one day, some sickness/some disease or malady is going to overtake our bodies and we are going to die. But consider that it is FAR BETTER to be saved from your sins and to have eternal life, than to be healed physically; temporarily in this life; only to live a few more years and to die in your sins, and to perish eternally! Physical sickness should awaken us to our mortality; and tend to the condition and health of our souls!

Thomas Manton wrote: "Sickness is God's messenger to call us to meet with God"

And so EVERY TIME we get sick, and find ourselves lying on our backs in bed with a fever or cold, (when God has stopped us in our tracks), we ought to "give diligence to make our calling and election sure" and to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling". In times of sickness, God is teaching & instructing us; and He is calling our attention to the shortness of life:

James 4:14: "For what is your life?"

Christian, sickness should always bring you to the place of introspection & self-examination; and if need be repentance and confession of sin. In those times when you are physically weakened by sickness, it ought to be a time for the building up and strengthening of your faith in Christ:

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

I am not saying that when you are sick, you are so because of some sin in your life; what I am saying is, you're sick because you live in a fallen world, and that God is using your sickness to conform you to the image of Christ, and for your sanctification!

Romans 8:28.

But now, consider, when someone is terminally ill and they have something much more serious than a common cold: "James writes, the prayer of faith shall save the sick".

But even here; this passage does not teach us that every prayer of faith for the sick will be answered with healing! If that is what it did mean, than we are failing in it; what's wrong with our faith?

But there is a limitation in praying like this! What does the whole of scripture teach us about how we are to pray for someone who is terminally ill?

And then, don't fall into the trap that so many fall into who separate prayer from God, as if there is power in prayer apart from God! We don't put our faith in our prayer, we put our faith in our God to whom we pray!

The scriptures don't teach us to trust in prayer; they teach us to trust in God; that is why we pray!

But back to the prayer of faith shall save the sick; I would like you to consider what happened with David's first son of Bathsheba: *2 Samuel 12:15-23*

David was told that the child was going to die; but he still prayed! Was David praying in faith to God? He fasted and prayed for (7) days for the life of the child; but it was not the will of God that the child should live.

Did David fail in prayer; did the child die because his faith was too weak? NO! Listen again to 2 Samuel 12:22:

"Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live?"

In this instance, David teaches us a valuable lesson; He knew that God heard his prayers; but after the child died, he resigned himself to the will of God.

Trophimus: 2 Timothy 4:20; Ephaphroditus: Philippians 2:24-27, Timothy: 1 Timothy 5:23

Beloved, in all of the healings by the prophets, the Lord Jesus, and the apostles, these miracles were to validate the message of the gospel and point those that saw them to Christ. God does not promise to heal all who are sick; if He did, He would do so.

When someone does become gravely ill, and they are in danger of dying; God often grants them MORE PRECIOUS TIME in this life; oftentimes, God does not grant healing or recovery from terminal illnesses; but we thank the Lord for doctors and modern medicine by which the lives of the terminally ill are often prolonged; it is in that "precious extra time" that God is granting something far better than the healing of their sick bodies; if they're lost, He is giving them time to turn from their sins to Christ.

Understand therefore that prayer requests for the terminally sick must be sent up to the Lord, FIRST for the salvation of their souls, which is far more important than the healing of their bodies; and then, yes, we may bring our request to the Lord for healing for their bodies; but also willingly submitting to the will of the Lord.

That brings us the balance passage to our prayers for one that might be suffering from a terminal illness: *Matthew 6:9-13, 26:39, 1 John 5:14-15*

If you want to know how to pray rightly, than know what is the revealed will of God from the Holy Scriptures: Colossians 1:9-10