

Healing Through Anointing with Oil



Walking Through the Land of God's Promises (Part 15)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, sharing with you some of the Keys to Successful Living that God has placed in my hand through many years of personal experience and Christian ministry.

Yesterday I focused on the area of healing and health. I explained that the great basic foundation for healing and health is provided by God's own Word, the Scriptures.

Today I'm going to deal with another provision of God within this area of healing and health, another way in which God makes healing available to His people. This way is not familiar to all of God's people as it should be and yet it's very important and it's very clearly stated in the Scripture. We'll turn now to the epistle of James 5:13-16:

> "Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord." (NIV)

James envisages three different kinds of situations in which we find ourselves: in trouble, the answer is pray; happy, the answer is sing songs of praise; sick, what's the answer? Call for the doctor. That's not what the Scripture says. Scripture says, "call for the elders of the church." I wonder how many thousands and thousands of people of God there are who, when they get sick, are not even aware there's a Scripture that says, "Call for the elders of the church."

Now let me say, I strongly believe in the service that doctors provide to humanity and there's absolutely nothing wrong with calling for the doctor. I thank God for the ministry of doctors, nurses and hospitals and all who are genuinely caring for the needs of sick humanity. It's not wrong to call for the doctor, but it is wrong not to call for the elders of the church. Because it's so clearly stated in Scripture, "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord."

You might say, "Well, perhaps that's out of date." But that's really inconsistent because there are three things we're told to do: in trouble, we pray; if we're happy, we sing songs of praise; if we're sick, we call the elders of the church. Are the other two out of date? Is it out of date to pray? Is it out of date to sing songs of praise? If the answer to that is "No," then why should it be out of date to call for the elders of the church?

All right. The elders of the church are to come and anoint the sick person with oil in the name of the Lord. What will happen? What's the promise?

> "And 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." (NIV)

Where it says, "the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well," the literal words are, "the prayer of faith will save the sick." It's important to see the word "save" is used in the New Testament for all the provisions of God's blessing that come to us through faith in Jesus Christ. It's used for the deliverance of our souls from sin, for the deliverance of our bodies from sickness, and for many other provisions of God's mercy. So salvation is the all-inclusive word which includes making the sick person well. Of course, to make the sick person well is a legitimate translation but it's important to see that it's just one of the different ways that we translate the original word "to save."

All right. What's the promise in that passage that I've been reading? That prayer on the right basis and out of faith will bring healing to any believer who needs it. There's no limitation as to how many believers or what kind of believers, just, "Is any of you sick?" Nothing more than that is stated. There's no limitation as to whether the sickness is severe or slight or whether it's gone on a long while. If we meet the conditions, God will raise up the sick person. That's the promise.

Now, what are the conditions? Well, there's quite a number and we need to look at them rather carefully. First of all, the sick person is obligated to call for the elders of the church. Secondly, the elders are obligated to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And they're obligated to pray the prayer of faith. Behind this we see other implications. For instance, it's assumed that the sick believer will be a member of an assembly or a church that has recognized elders. Many people don't fulfill that condition but all through the New Testament it's assumed that in normal circumstances every believer will be associated with a church or a fellowship or an assembly and that that assembly will have in it elders who are capable of fulfilling this function.

Secondly, it's implied that the elders will be familiar with their scriptural responsibility and capable of praying in faith. That's assumed. But of course, it has to be in being in order for the conditions to be met. So we see that the sick person is to call for the elders of the church. The elders of the church are to anoint the sick person with oil in the name of the Lord Jesus and pray over the sick person.

Now you might say, "Well, why do they anoint with oil?" Let me just point out two things. First of all, anointing with oil was an established practice for God's people that went back many centuries. It was not something new, it was something that was carried over from the Old Testament into the New. It's always been a part of the inheritance of God's people. Why oil? Of course, the word is olive oil in the original and olive oil is always a type or a picture of the Holy Spirit. So what is meant is that by anointing with oil the elders are claiming God's promise that the Holy Spirit will minister life and health to the body of the sick child of God. This is in accordance with what Paul says in Romans 8:11:

> "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you." (NAS)

One of the great ministries of the Holy Spirit is giving life to the mortal bodies of God's people and that's why the sick person is anointed with oil. The oil is a type or a picture of the Holy Spirit. That act of obedience and faith is a way by which we release the power of the Holy Spirit in that believer to minister life to his body, to drive out sickness and replace sickness with health.

Then we see that if the believer who is sick has confessed sin, he's required also to confess his sins, presumably to the elders who are going to pray for him. Why does such a person have to confess his sins? The answer is that unconfessed sin can be a barrier to answered prayer, a hindrance to the working of God's mercy in the life of the believer. In Psalm 66:18-19, the psalmist says:

> "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer." (NIV)

In order for our voice to be heard in prayer, we have to be careful that we do not cherish sin in our heart. If there is something in our heart and life that should not be there, before we ask for prayer and for healing, we should confess our sin or our problem whatever it may be, to those who are going to pray for us and be assured as they stand with us in faith and in prayer that God has forgiven us. Then we know that God will listen and hear our voices in prayer just as the psalmist said. Again it says in 1 John 3:21-22:

> "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God, and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight." (NAS)

So we see that if there's condemnation in our heart, again it takes away our confidence that God will answer our prayers. So if there's any question of sin in our life, we need to confess that sin and be assured of God's forgiveness before we go through the procedure for claiming healing through anointing with oil in the name of the Lord.

Now, how can the elders fulfill their part? How can they pray the prayer of faith? I suggest that there's a threefold basis for their faith. First of all, they've acted in obedience to the Word of God, they've done what God requires and obedience always opens the way for the blessings of God to flow. As long as we're disobedient, it's hard for us to pray in faith.

Secondly, the elders need to recognize the provision which God has already made through the death of Jesus. For instance, in 1 Peter 2:24, Peter tells us:

> "...He Himself [that's Jesus] bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." (NAS)

In a certain sense, healing has already been provided through the substitutionary death of Jesus on the cross. We're not asking God to do something new or strange, we're simply laying claim on that which God has already provided through the atonement of Jesus.

Thirdly, by anointing with oil, the elders are releasing the Holy Spirit to do what only the Holy Spirit can do. Man, in that sense, does not heal. God is the healer. He's always been the healer of His people. But God heals when we do what He requires of us.

We may put it this way: We do the possible, God does the impossible. We do the simple, God does the difficult. The simple is to anoint with oil and pray. When we do that in simple faith, then God does the difficult. We do the possible, God does the impossible.

All right. Our time is up for today but I'll be back with you again next week at this same time Monday through Friday. Next week I'll be moving onto a new and exciting theme, one that will open up for you a fuller understanding of God's provision for His people.

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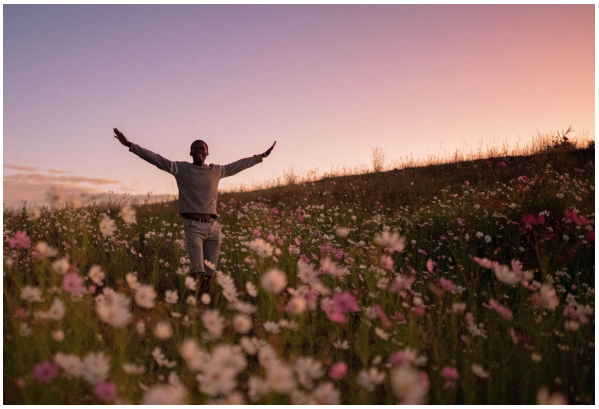

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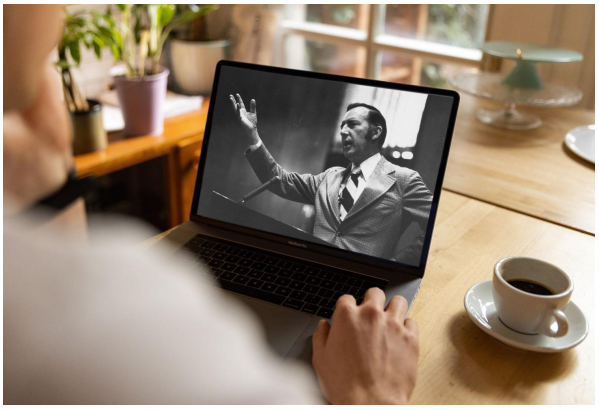

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