

FRIDAY 09 September 2022 "God Guarantees" (James 5:13-15)

Good morning to you my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

All of us deal with frustrations in life, problems and maybe even conflict almost every day. That's the world we live in, but may I ask HOW do you deal with those difficult aspects of life, here on planet earth, as a member of the human race in 2022? Where do you turn for answers and help? How do you keep from wounding others?

Again, we join the apostle James as he is writing his letter to Jewish Christians around the Roman Empire in the middle of the first century. Of course, James, and all other Bible authors, did not write whatever they felt like writing. The apostle Paul explains the miracle of Biblical authorship this way: **"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."** (2 Tim. 3:16,17) Therefore James wrote what he sensed the Holy Spirit was dictating into his heart and mind.

James picks up his stylus and parchments once again to continue writing: **"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray! Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise! Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well, the Lord will raise them up..."** (James 5:13-15) I suspect James paused here, putting down his stylus to ponder what he had just written. Those are powerful words, aren't they?

We understand the urging to pray when we are in trouble. Yes! *The throne room of God is open to EVERYONE and ANYONE at any time, in any language known to mankind, from anyplace on the face of the planet, without appointment.* Please think about that a moment.

For the people in the world who have been redeemed by Jesus and born again by the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, when we pray, we are welcomed as God's family, sons and daughters of God, known and loved by our heavenly Father. Hebrews 4:14-16 & 10:19-23 are two of many Scriptures which make this very clear. As we enter that throne room, as God's people, the risen Jesus Himself is there to welcome us, as He is our advocate, interceding for us, according to Romans 8:34. The Holy Spirit then helps us and guides us in our praying. (Romans 8:26,27)

For everyone else, human beings who have NOT trusted Jesus to be their Savior, when THEY pray, it is quite different, for Almighty God is NOT their heavenly Father since they have not been adopted by God into His family. They are NOT born again by the Holy Spirit since they have not trusted in Jesus' death to pay for their sins. Thus, they come as strangers, even intruders into the holy presence of God.

Jesus is in some ways the guardian of the sacred presence of God and is prepared to be their advocate with God if they come prepared to repent of their sin, according to 1 Timothy 2:3-6. But their potential of entrance into God's throne room is very, very different from that of a Jesus redeemed son or daughter of God coming to God in prayer. So, when James speaks of "**anyone among you in trouble, let them pray**", we must remember James is writing this letter to Jewish Christians, Jewish men and women who have claimed Jesus as their Messiah and Savior. *Because Gentile believers in Jesus have an equal acceptance into God's presence on the basis of the blood of Jesus, we can apply James' words to all Gentile Jesus followers as well.*

Again, James's admonition to sing songs of praise to God if you are happy, is obviously an encouragement to these Jewish Christians to acknowledge that whatever is causing their happiness is from God and thus God alone deserves their celebration and praise. Of course, for those people who have no relationship with God, we cannot expect them to give God great praise when they are happy. But what about this matter of those who are sick calling for the prayers of the elders and expecting they will be healed? What do you suppose James and those in his little house that day understood from these words, and what do you and I, no matter where we are in the world, understand in these words?

Again, we remind ourselves James is writing to born again, Jewish Jesus followers who have a deep faith in the miracle working power of God. Throughout their Jewish history and Old Testament are the celebrated stories of God's miracles in response to the faith prayers of His people. So, there is no question in their minds that God has more than enough power to heal someone from any sickness, even death! Nor do they doubt God's love of doing great miracles among His people for His glory. These who will receive James' letter and had been privileged to be among those who saw Jesus perform great miracles, they too had great faith in the truthfulness of what James was writing.

But should these words of James be taken as a blanket promise, even a guarantee, that any Jewish Jesus follower who is sick will absolutely be immediately healed if they call for the elders of their church and those elders come and anoint the sick person with oil and pray requesting God to heal them? And should any Gentile Jesus follower claim the same guarantee? That was the question James knew the people who received his letter would ask. So... what is your answer to that question today my friends?

May I give you these important perspectives to consider?

1. *Sometimes God allows illness or injury or tragedy into our lives for HIS greater purposes.*

Do you believe that? Do you remember the blind man whom Jesus healed, as recorded in John 9?

Jesus' disciples asked why he'd been born and lived his whole life blind; he was 40 years old! Jesus' response was: **"This happened so the works of God might be displayed in his life."** (John 9:3) I have no doubt this man and his parents had hundreds of times cried out to God asking for a miracle healing, but no, he remained blind, until the day Jesus healed him! *God had allowed this man to be born blind in part because in his adult years Jesus would heal him, proving once again that Jesus was God incarnate!*

2. *Sometimes God allows us to remain in our illness so that God can provide His sustaining strength enabling one of His dear children to prove the loving power of God while living with contentment in the pain or paralysis for a very long time.*

May I suggest Joni Erickson Tada might be a good example of this in our generation. Next month Joni will be 74 years old and has lived as a quadriplegic since at age 17 when she dove into the water and hit her head on the bottom breaking her neck. She has lived a very public life dealing with her challenges of life in a wheelchair with great disabilities. *Yet with God's sustaining strength she lives content with Jesus and God has opened a worldwide platform for giving God great glory through Joni in her paralysis!*

3. *Sometimes God does heal in amazing, remarkable ways!!*

I'm sure you know people who've been healed by God's power. I sure do! I've seen it with my own eyes, in fact I'm married to woman who was healed by God! We celebrate these glorious miracles, don't we? *But we are very careful to always trust God to be Sovereign in every situation and God has full authority, full freedom to do whatever He wants, in any situation, for His great glory.* Do you agree?

So, James here is giving us great advice. When we are in trouble or troubled in heart, go into the throne room of God and spend some time there with Jesus your Savior, God your Father, and the Holy Spirit who will guide you there. When we are happy, praise God, sing, rejoice, give God glory! When we are sick, invite others, especially spiritual elders to pray for us, and then in great faith fully trust God to do whatever God knows will bring HIM the greatest glory and lead to the accomplishment of His purposes on earth.

IF you are suddenly healed, rise up from your sick bed and praise God and tell your story of God's healing, for the rest of your life, to as many people as will hear you. If you remain sick, withstand the sickness in the power and strength God's gives you, even if you remain sick the rest of your life. And if that sickness ends in what some people call death, rejoice as you see the time of your 'departure' approaching, for you, if Jesus is your Savior, will then see Jesus a few seconds after you breathe your last, and that is the ultimate healing!

I think James is over at the window again looking out a busy Jerusalem street. Everyone out there, everyone in his little house, and everyone who has ever read his letter faces the painful, frustrating stuff of life. Oh, what a difference it could make if we could see that first of all *EVERYTHING that we face in life has been permitted by the sovereignty of God as He watches over a world which has rejected Him.* And that God would like to strengthen His people and guide us through those painful times for His glory and for our growth.

I leave you therefore with this powerful Scripture: ***"The eyes of the LORD roam to and fro across the whole earth looking to strengthen those whose hearts are fully devoted to Him."*** (2 Chronicles 16:9) And my friends today I am including a very powerful song that I hope encourages you and me to see the potential God invites us into when we pray, especially when we pray for others who need God's powerful touch....

Today's Scripture is James 5:13-15.