

# PROVISION THROUGH PRAYER

1997 by Mark Beard

Text: James 5:13-18

■ Joni Eareckson dove into the Chesapeake Bay a strong, athletic young girl. A split second later she was paralyzed from the neck down, completely helpless, and still under water. Though rescued from drowning by her sister, the doctors could not rescue Joni from the paralysis that swept over her body.

Medically, Joni came to accept the fact that she couldn't be healed. But what about God? Didn't Christ heal all kinds of paralysis and sickness? The more Joni thought and prayed about these things, the more she became convinced God would heal her too. So, she brought together a group of friends and church leaders and set up a private healing service. The week before that service, she publicly confessed her faith by telling people, "Watch for me standing on your doorstep soon; I'm going to be healed." On the scheduled day the group read Scriptures, anointed her with oil and prayed in fervent faith. Today, fifteen years later, she is still a quadri-plegic... [She] did everything right and seemed to have met all the conditions, yet she was not healed. (Swindoll, 178)

Some would have us to believe that Joni was not healed because she lacked faith or because she had sin in her life. Some might tell us that the problem was that she did not use the right words or method.

What do you say?

Before you answer and before we go any further, let's look at a few points concerning the relationship between sin, sickness and healing.

1. There are two classifications of sin—original and personal.

Original sin is the root, personal sin is the fruit.

2. Original sin introduced sickness and death to the human race.

■ Romans 5:12 states: "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned."

3. Sometimes there is a direct relationship between personal sin and sickness.

Remember the story of David and Bathsheba in II Samuel 11 and 12? David committed adultery with Bathsheba, arranged for her husband to be killed, then refused to acknowledge his sin for some time. Finally, after a rebuke from the prophet Nathan, David confessed and repented.

■ Psalm 32 is David's journal of this period. It reveals the physical sufferings he experienced while refusing to acknowledge his sin.

“When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away  
Through my groaning all day long.  
For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me;  
My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer” (vv. 3-4).

4. Sometimes there is no relationship between personal sin and sickness.

Once when the disciples and Jesus passed by a blind man, they asked: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was in order that the works of God might be displayed in him” (John 9:2b-3).

5. It is not God's will that everyone be healed.

(This does not mean that healing is for a select few. It does mean that God has a purpose sometimes in not healing a person. Perhaps Joni Eareckson would never had achieved the recognition or won the souls to God that she has if not for that horrible accident. What is the price of a soul compared to an easy life here on earth? God is a sovereign God and He does as he sees fit, even if we do not understand.)

Paul had the gift of healing (see Acts 20:7-12; 28:7-9), yet he left Trophimus sick in Miletus (II Timothy 4:20). Epaphroditus almost died while ministering to Paul (Philippians 2:25-27). Timothy, Paul's spiritual son, had a stomach problem and “frequent ailments” (I Timothy 5:23). Paul asked God three times to remove his “thorn in the flesh,” but God said, “My grace is sufficient for you” (II Corinthians 12:9b), in other words, “No.” (Swindoll, 183-84)

So what do we do? We should never stop believing and confessing that God heals, just like we should never stop believing that He forgives, loves or saves. Unless God tells you or shows you that it is not His will to heal someone, you should pray in faith, believing for a miracle.

It is not for us to judge the heart of our brother. If he needs healing but has sinned, there are provisions made for him. If he simply needs healing, there are (again) provisions made for him that he or anyone in need can ask boldly and confidently for healing.

## **I. JAMES POINTS OUT GOD'S PROVISIONS FOR THOSE IN NEED (vv.13-16).**

A. God has provided for every need.

For those afflicted, suffering, or in distress, there is prayer.  
For those not in distress but cheerful, there is praise.  
There is a time for everything.

B. Is anyone among you sick?

There are 3 things we should do.

1. The sick person should call for the elders.
2. The elders are to anoint with oil "in the name of the Lord."
3. They are to pray—usually with laying on of hands.

Notice, they not only anoint in the name of the Lord, but they pray in the name of the Lord. Therefore, the results are in the hands of the Lord.

C. There are also 3 results of the prayer of faith.

1. They will be restored (or saved) physically.
2. They will be raised up—given new strength.
3. They will be forgiven, if necessary.

■ The statement, "*If he has sinned,*" tells us that all sickness is not related to sin.

D. God has also provided someone to help bear your burdens—our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

He says, (1) confess your sins one to another for the purpose of intercession, and (2) pray one for another that you may be healed.

The result will be that the righteous man (the man who has confessed and been forgiven) will be able to pray and his prayers will accomplish much.

## **II. JAMES POINTS TO THE LIFE OF ELIJAH AS EVIDENCE OF GOD'S PROVISIONS (vv.17-18).**

A. Elijah was a man just like us in nature. But was he like us in practice?

At times, the only thing that separates us from men like Elijah is sincerity or the lack of it.

B. He prayed earnestly.

■ Clarence E. Macartney wrote, "What is the word that unites far separated souls around one common mercy seat? What is the word that brings man's storm-driven ship into the haven of safety and peace? What is the word that turns back the shadow of death on the face of life's dial? What is the word that gives songs in the night and that lifts the load of guilt from the conscience-smitten heart? What is the word that puts a sword in our hand when we face temptation? What is the word that gives strength to bear our daily burdens?...What is the word that makes us co-workers with God in the coming of His kingdom?...

...What is the word that companions the soul in its hours of loneliness and that comforts it in the day of sorrow? What is the word that sets a lamp of forgiveness and reconciliation in the window for the prodigal and the wanderer? What is the word that brings the eternal world to view?...What is the word that makes the angels rejoice when they hear it on the lips of a contrite sinner?...

That mighty, all prevailing, God-conquering word is prayer. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (5:16). (Swindoll, 192)

C. His prayer was answered.

■ R. A. Torrey said, “Prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of God's infinite grace and power. All that God is, and all that God has, is at the disposal of prayer.” (Hewett, 424)

## CONCLUSION

Looking back over our text I hope we can see that God's provisions are for each one of us, not for an elite group. So when you have a need I hope you will remember that God wants to help you.

■ Bill Hybels writes, “You don't have to pester God to get his attention. You don't have to grovel. You don't have to flail yourself. You don't have to bite your lip and groan and moan and all of these kinds of things people do to show God they really mean business.

If one of my kids ever called me and said, "Daddy, please, please, please, I beg of you, I petition you, I'm pleading with you to listen to my need."

I'd say, "Time out. I don't like the underlying assumption here. You don't have to go through all those gymnastics. What can I do for you? Nothing in my life is more important than you." What gives me greater pleasure in life than meeting the needs of my children? What?"

-- Bill Hybels, "God's Attitude Toward Prayer," Preaching Today, Tape No. 97.

When you have a need there's no need to panic. God has made provisions for you and me. All we need to do is pray.

### References

Hewett, James S. (Ed.). (1988). *Illustrations unlimited*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House.

Swindoll, Charles R. (1991). *James: Practical and authentic living*. Dallas, TX: Word Publishing.