

...Biopsy Results?”

(No Fear, pt.3)

(Luke 4:38-44)

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October 25, 2009

I. Introduction

A. The death of Madeline

1. Three weeks ago Dale and Leilani Neumann were sentenced for the death of their 11 year old daughter, Madeline
 - a. They'll serve 6 months in jail and 10 years probation
2. What was their crime?
 - a. Prosecutors contended the Neumanns recklessly killed their child by ignoring obvious symptoms of severe illness as she became too weak to speak, eat, drink or walk. The girl died on the floor of the family's rural Wisconsin home as people surrounded her and prayed. Someone finally called 911 after she stopped breathing.
 - b. The parents said they believe healing comes from God and that they never expected their daughter to die.
3. The mother testified, *"I do not regret trusting truly in the Lord for my daughter's health,"* she said. *"Did we know she had a fatal illness? No. Did we act to the best of our knowledge? Yes."*
4. The father read from the Bible and told the judge, *"I am guilty of trusting my Lord's wisdom completely...Guilty of asking for heavenly intervention. Guilty of following Jesus Christ when the whole world does not understand. Guilty of obeying my God. We live by faith. We are completely content with what the Lord has allowed to come down, but he is not done yet."*
5. Madeline died of a very treatable form of diabetes

B. The death of 15-month-old Ava Worthington (in Oregon)

1. Died while the people of the "Followers of Christ" church anointed her with oil and prayed in accordance with **James 5:14-15**

(14) 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. (15) And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up

2. Ava died from Pneumonia
3. A simple antibiotic would have saved her

C. This raises some tough questions

- 1. Does God still heal?**
- 2. Is God obligated to answer our prayers for healing?**

- a. James 5:15

(15) And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up

- b. Is this an unconditional promise?

3. What's happening when it doesn't work?

- a. And we all know examples
 1. Miraculous healings appear to be very rare
- b. Was their faith too small?
- c. Was God incapable of healing?

- 4. Should we pray for people to be healed?**
- 5. Should we get flu shots?**
- 6. Should you take your kids to the doctor?**

D. The importance of addressing this issue

1. The last time I preached on James 5
 - a. One man's reaction
 - b. Yet, most were relieved

- c. Removed a heavy burden
- 2. How are we to pray?

E. But first some background....Luke 4

- 1. Luke is the author of the Gospel
 - a.and a medical doctor
 - b. Just a clue where I'm going
- 2. Luke is building a case for Jesus
 - a. Has already shown that Jesus was the promised one

F. No Fear...the power of Jesus over the supernatural

- 1. His power over the demons (Luke 4:31-37)
- 2. His power over death
- 3. Now...His power over disease

II. Text...Luke 4:38-44

A. The Healing (Luke 4:38-40)

(38) Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon (Peter). Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. (39) So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

- 1. Yes, Peter was married
 - a. That's how you get a mother-in-law!
 - b. At Peter's home in Capernaum
- 2. She appears to have been seriously ill
 - a. Jesus healed her

An honest look at divine healing

1. Seven characteristics of Jesus' healing

a. Instantaneous

1. The healings of Jesus were not a process of recovery
2. She didn't have to wait for improvement

b. With a word or a touch

1. Jesus bent over her and rebuked the fever and it left her

c. Complete

(Luke 4:39) *“She got up at once and began to wait on them.”*

1. No recuperation

d. Everyone

(Luke 4:40) *“When the sun was setting, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them.”*

1. Proving power over disease
2. He healed “each one”
3. Matthew 4:23

(23) *Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.*

e. Organic

(Matthew 4:24) *“News about him spread all over Syria, the people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them.*

1. More than “lower back pain” or a “headache”
2. Organic healing included
 - a. The paralyzed
 - b. He made the blind to see

- c. Those crippled from birth
- d. A body covered with leprosy

f. Raised the dead

g. Publicly

- 1. He did it everywhere in every setting in every circumstance, in public areas, in large crowds in all kinds of places
- 2. Matthew 4:25

(25) Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him,

2. Do people have the same power today?

a. A short history of healing

1. From Adam and Abraham

- a. 2200 years
- b. No healings are recorded

2. From Abraham to Isaiah

- a. 1500 years
 - 1. Only 20 healings recorded
- b. From 2200 to 750 BC

3. From Isaiah to Jesus

- a. 750 years
- b. No healings recorded

4. During the time of Jesus

- a. Lots and lots of healings!

5. After Christ returned to heaven and the death of the disciples

- a. And the death of his disciples
- b. The cessation of healing as the norm
 - b. As the New Testament ends...Paul is sick, Timothy is sick, Epaphroditus is sick, Trophimus is sick
 - c. Paul prayed earnestly on three separate occasions for God to heal him...and he didn't
- b. How should we then pray?
 - 1. Should we pray for healing?
 - 2. Does God still heal?
 - a. Yes!
 - b. Deb's email

3. But what about James 5:14?

- a. Called to the bedside of Wayne
 - 1. A dad with three young children
 - 2. Terminal cancer
- b. We did everything by the "Book"
 - 1. Along with other elders
 - 2. We anointed him with oil
 - 3. We read from James 5:14-15

"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. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up."

- 4. We had faith
- c. And yet Wayne died and I did his funeral
- d. What went wrong...Or did it?

4. The meaning of James 5:14-15

- a. The context is addressing sin and spiritual weariness...not sickness

(13) Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.

(14) Is any one of you sick (or weak)? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. (15) And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick (or weary) person well; the Lord will raise him up.”

(16) Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other to that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

- b. The Greek is not referring to sickness

- 1. Actually the word in Greek is “asthenéō” in verse 14

- a. The word literally means “to be weak.” Though it is used in the four Gospels and the Book of Acts for physical sickness, it is generally used in the rest of the New Testament to refer to a weak faith or a weak conscience

- b. I Thes. 5:14—And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, **help the weak**, be patient with everyone.

- a. Same root...*Astheness*

- 2. Same thing with verse 15

- a. A different Greek word is used

- 1. “*kamnonta*”

- 2. It literally means “to be weary or exhausted”

- b. Only used two other times in the New Testament

- 1. Hebrews 12:3

- “*Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not **grow weary** and lose heart.*”

- 2. Revelation 2:3

*“You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not **grown weary**.”*

c. What experts say

1. Walvoord and Zuck (Dallas Theological Seminary)

James was not referring to the bedfast, the diseased, or the ill. Instead he wrote to those who had grown weary, who had become weak both morally and spiritually in the midst of suffering. These are the ones who should call for the help of the elders of the church. The early church leaders were instructed (I Thes. 5:14) to “encourage the timid” and “help the weak” (*asthenōn*).

2. Raymond A. Oehm

Astheneo in James 5:14 tends to mean sick in the Gospels and Acts (about 17 occurrences) but weak in the epistles (about 18 occurrences). This fact, coupled with the fact that kamno and astheneo refer to the same person in James 5:14, 15, suggest that the most accurate translation of astheneo in James 5:14 is weak rather than sick.

Therefore the person described in James 5:14-15 is weak and weary rather than explicitly diseased. Especially note that the most explicit Greek word for disease, kakos, is not used at all in this passage.

d. Why this is important

1. Fear your faith is too weak
2. Fear God can't answer prayer

e. Then what does the “spiritually weary” Christian need?

1. ***“Call for the elders of the church”***

- a. Call for backup
- b. The role of elders

1. Spiritual leaders of the church

- c. Job description in Acts 6:4

“But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the Word!”

e. Elders will pray with the weak and weary

f. Gal. 6:1

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

g. Prop up the wounded warrior

h. Two elements

1. The key is prayer (v. 15)

2. Yet note the anointing

2. “Anointing him with oil”

a. Two words for “anoint” are used in Bible (Walvoord & Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 834 & 835)

James said that the elders should pray over him and anoint him with oil. It is significant that the word “anoint” is *aleipsantes* (“rub with oil”) not *chrīo* (“ceremonially anoint”). The former is the mundane word and the latter is “the sacred and religious word” (Richard Chenevix Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, ninth ed. Reprint. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950, pp. 136-7). **“Therefore James is not suggesting a ceremonial or ritual anointing as a means of divine healing; instead, he is referring to the common practice of using oil as a means of bestowing honor, refreshment, and grooming”** (Daniel R. Hayden, “Calling the Elders to Pray,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 138. July-September 1981:264). The woman “poured” (*aleiphō*) perfume on Jesus’ feet (Luke 7:38). A host “put oil” (*aleiphō*) on the head of his guest (Luke 7:46). A person who is fasting should not be sad and ungroomed, but should “put oil” (*aleiphō*) on his head, and wash his face (Matt. 6:17). Thus James’ point is that the “weak” (*asthenei*) and “weary” (*kamnōnta*) would be refreshed, encouraged, and uplifted by the elders who rubbed oil on the despondents’ heads and prayed for them.

b. Medicinal

1. The Good Samaritan

f. Best reading of James 5:14-16

(14) Is any one of you weak? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. (15) And the prayer offered in faith will make the wearry person well; the Lord will raise him up.”

(16) Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other to that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

5. What we know...

1. God can and does still heal

- a. Email from Deb
- b. His power is not lessened
- c. He can do as he pleases
- d. I have...and will pray over you

2. Divine healing is not the norm in our age

- a. The method and purpose when Jesus healed
- b. The problem with modern faith-healers
 - 1. They fail to meet the 7 characteristics of biblical healing
 - 2. How they set-back the faith of people
- c. But...as the end times draw nearer

3. You don't have to choose between a pastor and a doctor

- a. Between pastor and penicillin
 - 1. The answer is “both”
 - 2. I got my flu shot Thursday
- b. We are told to pray for those who are sick
 - 1. Paul prayed three times for his own healing
- c. God wants us to seek wise medical solutions

1. Paul traveled with his own personal doctor...Luke
2. Paul told Timothy to take something for a stomach problem
3. We are to take good care of our bodies

4. *God can use illness to show his glory*

- a. Christians get cancer just like non-Christians
- b. How we go through it can be a tremendous testimony

5. *God's answer might be different than your request*

- a. He may not always answer it the way you want it answered, but he will answer it according to his will.
- b. The death of James Montgomery Boise

1. The pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia discovered cancer and died within 70 days

2. His people were asking him, "What do we ...how do we pray for you? Can we pray for God to heal you?"

"Certainly you can pray for God to heal me, but I believe the same God who can heal me could have prevented me from ever having cancer."

B. The Demons (Luke 4:41-42)

(41) Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Christ.

C. The Mission (Luke 4:42-44)

(42) At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. (43) But he said, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." (44) And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

III. Summary

A. The mystery of prayer

1. We have pretty clear instruction

- a. We are told to plead with God
- b. We are told to pray without ceasing
- c. We are told to petition God
- d. We are told to pester God with our prayers

2. When we pray

I Thessalonians 5:16-18

“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”