

## SABBATH THOUGHT 2024-11-16—ANOINTINGS

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Anointings are very much a part of a believer's life. I imagine most everyone has been anointed by an elder for a physical disease or illness at one time or another. The elder will, upon request, lay hands on the person and anoint them with oil while praying for God to intervene and heal them. The oil represents the Holy Spirit, which is the power of God, coming upon the person. Oil is an integral part of this because to *anoint* literally means to 'smear or rub with oil.'

Interestingly, anointings have been around from the beginning of recorded history and have been used for many purposes aside from healing. After awakening from his dream of a ladder extending to the heavenly throne of God, Jacob made a memorial pillar out of the stone he used for a pillow and poured oil upon it. He did this to consecrate the place where he had his dream because God's presence was there (Gen. 28: 16-19). In fact, he called it the Gate of Heaven. Jacob repeated this another time when he was at Bethel. There, God spoke to him and confirmed the covenant of Abraham would continue with him (Gen. 35: 9-15). These anointings sanctified, or set apart, places where he had contact with God.

We also find that anointings were used to sanctify someone for service to God. Aaron was anointed as the high priest by Moses (Exo. 28: 41). This was a critically important role that God established to ensure the ancient Israelites maintained a proper worship of God by the people through sacrifices, offerings, and care of the tabernacle. God even commanded Moses to prepare special oil to be used for anointing Aaron and the fixtures of the tabernacle (Exo. 30: 23-30).

God also instituted anointing for the purpose of healing as in the case of a leper (Lev. 14: 18). What is most interesting is that the Bible says that the leper was *cleansed*, not healed. In the Hebrew, *taher* means to *make holy* or *purify*. While leprosy was certainly a physical disease, God does not see the healing as a purely physical issue. Have you ever wondered why?

It all began with Adam and Eve. Before they sinned, they never knew pain, suffering, or disease. It was only after they sinned that they became subject to the afflictions that can come upon a physical body. Sin brought about all of them. Just look at the promise of God to the ancient Israelites: **"If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you. ..."** (Exo. 15: 26). Obedience to God means He protects AND heals those who obey Him.

If we have this promise from God, then why is any believer afflicted with disease or illness? Does this mean he or she sinned? Not necessarily. There are three possible cases: first, we ourselves sinned; second, someone else sinned; and third, no one sinned.

The first one is obvious. Eating unclean foods can lead to sickness or being injured while performing a dangerous task because we failed to implement proper safety measures are both situations that could have been avoided. The fault lies with us. In the second case, perhaps it was someone else who sinned when they spread a disease to others. This is not our fault.

Finally, we can be afflicted even if no one sinned because believers are subject to trials whereby God tests our faith and obedience under duress<sup>1</sup>. This is, again, not our fault, but we must suffer at times for the sake of the kingdom of God and as a witness to the world. One example of this is the man who was born blind discussed in John 9. After healing him, Jesus tested him by asking if he believed in the “Son of God” (v35-39). But Jesus also used this healing to testify against the Pharisees (v40-41). What is so astounding is that the Pharisees never knew of anyone who was born blind and later healed by God (v32); still, they did not believe.

So, except in the case where someone is being tested or used by God as a witness to others, healing involves dealing with sin—of the world, of others, or of ourselves. If sin did not exist in the world, neither would disease or illness. When we are sick or ill, SOMEONE sinned. This is the reason that Jesus Christ said He forgave the sins of the paralytic instead of telling him that he was healed (Mat. 9:2-7).

That brings me to another point. There is a difference between disease and illness. A disease is something that causes sickness. Examples of disease include heart disease, cancer, viruses, infections, etc. Illness, on the other hand, is a more general condition or ailment that may or may not stem from a disease. For example, chronic pain can occur without any specific diagnosis; in other words, there is no known cause for it.

Whether it is disease or illness, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was for the SUFFERING of the world. In fact, Jesus did not just HEAL those who were sick but also those who were tormented, possessed, mentally ill, and paralyzed:

**MATTHEW 4:23-24** And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. 24 Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him **all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them.**

While we all understand disease and illness affect our physical wellbeing, anointings are also something to consider when there are, what I might call, spiritual weaknesses or afflictions. In other words, they are something that affects the heart, mind, and soul spiritually. These are what the Bible calls *infirmities*:

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. 2:21-24; 5:9-10.

MATTHEW 8:16-17 When evening had come, they brought to Him [*Jesus Christ*] many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, 17 that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “**He Himself took our infirmities** and bore *our* sicknesses.”

How did Jesus take upon Himself our infirmities and diseases? Through the terrible beatings before His crucifixion. Matthew was quoting Isaiah:

ISAIAH 53:4-5 Surely **He [*Jesus Christ*] has borne our griefs [*infirmities*]** and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But **He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities;** the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and **by His stripes we are healed.**

Now we have come full circle. Anointings are the means by which we call upon God who, through the stripes and beatings laid upon Jesus Christ, heals us. It is in the book of James that we find the ordinance of anointing for healing:

JAMES 5:14-15 Is anyone among you sick? **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.** 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

But what if an elder is too far away? Apparently, this apparently happened often enough to Paul who was limited in how far he could walk in a day. His solution was to send anointed cloths to those who asked for healing:

ACTS 19:11-12 Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that even **handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.**

Notice, in particular, that Paul also healed those who were possessed—a spiritual affliction. Again, anointings and healings are not just for disease. They can be for all manner of infirmities or illnesses. While it was common in the days of the apostles to deal with afflictions other than disease, that is not the case today. Many request anointings for disease (as they should); however, requests of anointing for spiritual afflictions are rare (but should not be).

Now I come to the heart of the matter. Even though we acknowledge that disease is usually the result of sin, do we assume it is always the sin of someone else? No one is ashamed if they suffer because someone else sinned, so asking to be anointed carries no shame. However, we live in a culture where we are ashamed to admit sin—sometimes even to ourselves. So, do we withhold asking for anointing because we fear others will judge us?

It is important to understand that confessing to sin is NOT required for an anointing. When someone asks to be anointed, the elder will anoint the person without regard to the cause of it. In other words, the elder is not concerned with whether or not there was sin involved or who committed it. He understands that

judgment belongs solely to God, which, by the way, includes forgiveness. John said, "If we confess our sins, He [*God*] is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9). No one should ever withhold asking for an anointing when they need it regardless of whether it is for a physical disease or spiritual condition. Both circumstances can be difficult matters for a believer; but, sometimes a spiritual weakness or inadequacy is a more important concern because it can affect our eternal lives. Getting anointed for spiritual conditions may be just what is required.

If we are reluctant to request an anointing for spiritual afflictions because sin may be involved, we should rethink our perspective because EVERYONE sins. I do and so do you—even if it is a fleeting thought, misspoken word, an offense, or something worse. Our lives belong to God and He knows our hearts and minds<sup>2</sup>. If Jesus Christ lives in us<sup>3</sup>, we are continually striving to overcome sin through His sacrifice and God's forgiveness. Being willing to admit our sins is the only way to receive forgiveness; however, confessing our sins is something each of us does PRIVATELY to God our Father.

NOTE: James 5:16 says "**Confess your faults [or trespasses] to one another**, so that you are healed." This is not a matter of disease, illness, or spiritual afflictions. James is referring to reconciling offenses. Refer to the booklet "[Offenses—Ordinance of God.](#)"

Sin is not something anyone needs to discuss with the elder when asking for an anointing. It can be helpful to do so because elders can also offer spiritual encouragement. Every anointing is special and "the **prayer of faith** will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven." (James 5:15). The oil invokes God's merciful power through His Holy Spirit to CLEANSE, FORGIVE, and HEAL. It is a special ceremony that formally petitions God to apply the stripes borne of Jesus Christ to heal disease or illness and forgive any sin. An elder will never assume guilt nor will he ever ask any questions unless the petitioner wants to discuss something more deeply. Simply speaking, anointings are a powerful spiritual connection to God the Father and Jesus Christ to overcome the world!

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings 8:39.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. 2:20.