



Defining Truths of the Assemblies of God: Divine Healing

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The Council Today will feature an article each day by General Superintendent Trask focusing on one of the four cardinal doctrines of the AG. These articles are currently part of a series appearing in the minister's publication, Enrichment journal.

In this series on the four cardinal doctrines of the Assemblies of God, I turn our attention to the subject of divine healing, a wonderful provision the Lord has given us.

In Mark 2, Jesus healed a man who was lowered through the roof. Jesus said to the man: "Thy sins be forgiven thee" (verse 5).¹ The scribes and Pharisees murmured in their hearts. Jesus exposed their murmuring and their faultfinding: "Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?" (verse 9). The point is: There are not two kinds of faith; there is one faith. The faith a person needs to be saved is the same faith a person needs to be healed.

In the Book of James, James wrote, "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray" (5:13). We can pray when we are afflicted. But then James continued, "Is any sick among you? 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: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up" (verses 14,15). We are instructed to lay hands on the sick, anoint them with oil, and pray the prayer of faith. I do not heal; you do not heal.

The sovereignty of God is difficult to understand. Why does He heal some and not heal others? I do not know. But this is not for me to figure out or question. My responsibility is to do what I have been instructed to do as a minister of the gospel: pray for the sick, anoint them with oil, and leave the results in the hands of the Lord.

Years ago I was studying divine healing. At that time, evangelists were telling people they were healed, but those who were supposedly healed later died. The Lord showed me something that was liberating: No Scripture instructs a minister to tell people they are healed. I only need to pray the prayer of faith. There are times when God gives the pastor a word of knowledge. Then he can proclaim with confidence that a person has been healed. But to tell everyone you pray for they are healed is a mistake because of God's sovereignty.

Someone might say, "When God doesn't heal, it shakes my faith." On the contrary, it should ground us in our trust in Him. Scripture says: "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:9).

Suppose I said to the infinite God, "God, You've got to do it my way."

God might reply, "No, I know what's best, and I will do what is best in this situation."

The power of prayer and of divine healing is marvelous. As a pastor I regularly had prayer for the sick. At times, people came who did not even belong to our church, but people do not need to be members to be prayed for. Give people opportunity to be prayed for. Pray the prayer of faith and the Lord will raise them up. That is His responsibility.

Divine healing was provided for in the Atonement. When Jesus died on Calvary, the provision for healing was made. Scripture says, "With his stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). A pastor does not need to question or wonder about that. God has already made this provision possible. Our responsibility is to come in faith and pray, believing that the Lord will raise them up, and that He will perform the miraculous. As a result, He gets the glory.

Years ago when my father was a board member at the Assembly of God in Brainerd, Minnesota, there was a man named Wally Johnstone who had a hideous cancer on his lip. The cancer had been removed but had grown back. The doctors told Wally that the cancer would progress down his throat to his jugular vein and then he would die.

Johnstone, a new Christian, was reading James 5:14. He called the pastor and said, "Pastor, get the deacons over here and pray for me."

The pastor called my father and said, "Waldo, I want you to get the deacon board together and meet me at Johnstone's house."

When they arrived Wally said, "I was reading in James that if anyone is sick he needs to call for the elders of the church who are to anoint him with oil, pray the prayer of faith, and the Lord will raise him up. I've done what the Lord told me to do; I called for the elders. Now, you men are going to anoint me with oil, lay hands on me, pray the prayer of faith, and the Lord is going to heal me."

So they gathered around him, anointed him with oil, and began to pray. While they were praying, the cancer fell off Johnstone's lip onto the floor. He lived to be 92 years old.

Johnstone acted on the Word, and the Lord confirmed His Word with signs following as Mark's gospel confirms. God expects us to obey His Word. Pastors are to pray the prayer of faith, give opportunity for people to be prayed for, and the Lord will heal.

ENDNOTE

1. Scriptures are KJV.

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