

JAMES

James 5:1-6

Theme: ▶ **Jesus' Ownership, Your Stewardship**



» Stewardship is the responsible overseeing and protection of something worth caring for.

» Godly stewardship is really about all the things that He entrusts to us. Our time, our talent, our treasure, the totality of our life and how we invest it to God's glory and others' good.

4 Categories of Wealth in the Bible:

1. GODLY POOR	2. GODLY RICH
3. UNGODLY POOR	4. UNGODLY RICH

Examples

1. Godly poor: Jesus, Jesus' Family, Ruth, widows and orphans
2. Godly rich: Job, Abraham, King David and Joseph of Arimathea
3. Ungodly poor: The lazy, people who chase "get rich quick" schemes, wasteful gambler and drunkards.
- 4: Ungodly rich: Pharaoh, Herod, and Nebuchadnezzar

Hoarding - a supply or accumulation that is hidden or carefully guarded for preservation, future use, etc.

1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you.

- James turns his attention from Godly businesspeople to wealthy ungodly landowners who controlled Galilee and indeed much of the Roman Empire.
- The "miseries that are coming" refers to the final judgement of the Lord. (Revelation 20:11-15)

2 Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. 3 Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days.

- Verse two reveals that the landowners have acquired and hoarded so much it has started to decay.
- Riches, garments, and gold sum up the grand materialistic lifestyle of these ungodly landowners.
- Their hoarded "riches" will not only be lost forever in eternity but will be incriminating evidence at their final trial and judgement before God.
- Jesus said "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth" (Matt. 6:19-24)

Defrauding - illegally obtain money from (someone) by deception.

4 Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.

- The landowners have cheated their field workers of wages to support their own lavish lifestyle.
- The "Lord of hosts" or God of heavens armies has heard the cries of the cheated workers. (1 Sam 17:45)

5 You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. (1 Tim 6:6-10)

- The rich gorge themselves on luxuries and fail to realize that they are headed for final judgement.

6 You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.

- By withholding full payment of the workers the rich landowners have condemned the workers to poverty, starvation and death.
- A righteous person does not avenge himself. (Matt. 5:39-42)
- As Godly stewards we are to stop loving money and using people and start using money to love people.

» James is not condemning wealth, he is however rebuking self-reliance and self-indulgence.

Q: Are we comforting ourselves with worldly things while our fellow Christians and the poor are suffering?

OWNERSHIP -

Ungodly world view of possessions

1. I do not belong to the Lord
2. Nothing I have belongs to the Lord
3. I deserve all that I have
4. I only answer to myself

- » God made everything therefore He owns everything. (Gen. 1:1) (Hag. 2:8) (Psalms 24:1)
- » Everything we have is a gift from God. (1 Cor. 4:7)
- » 11 of 39 parables Jesus talk about money.
- » 1 of every 7 verses in the Gospel of Luke talks about money.
- » Jesus talked about money a lot because our hearts are connected to our treasures. (Luke 12:32-34)
- » God has asked us to return of the tithe. (Lev. 27:30) (Malachi 3:10) What does tithe mean? _____ %
- » Jesus believed and encouraged faithful hearts to tithing. (Matt. 23:23)
- » God loves generous hearts and cheerful givers. (2 Cor. 9:7)

GOD CALLS US TO GIVE AND LOVE:

- His church: a local fellowship of people living life together and bringing glory to God. (Heb 10:25, 13:17)
- The nations: God desires to use us in order to spread the Gospel around the world. (Mark 16:15)
- The poor: God has extreme compassion on those who by have less material goods. (Pro 19:17)

JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS - Luke 19:1-10

- » Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus is an example of Godly use of money and possessions.
- » Zacchaeus is an example of one who brought forth evidence of true repentance, by giving.
- » **Zacchaeus' faith was the root of the tree that brought forth the fruit of his works, mainly giving.**
- » Christians are to obey God's commands by returning the tithe and reflect God's heart as they give willingly & cheerfully of there time, talent, effort, energy, offering, resources and ultimately their life.
- » The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a giving gospel. (John 3:16) (Acts 20:35)

GROUP READING

Matt 6:19-24 // 19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 22 "The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, 23 but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! 24 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

Matthew 5:39-42 // 39 But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

Luke 12:32-34 // 32 "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Matthew 23:23 // 23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.

2 Cor. 9:7 // 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Acts 20:35 // 35 In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

JAMES

James 5:7-12

Theme: ▶ **Faith and Patience in Suffering**

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- » What is Faith? - an endless hope in the existence and promise of God. (Hebrews 11:1,6)
- » What is Patience? - the capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset.
- » Biblical Patience - Patience is not simply the ability to wait - it's how we behave while we're waiting.
- » God is not slow, He is patient. (2 Peter 3:9)

7 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. 8 You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

- Rather than avenging themselves, the suffering and oppressed Christians are called to endurance and to trust in God to sustain, provide and uphold them. (Romans 12:12)
- God is like a patient gardener, feeding and pruning us for growth in Christ. (Jn. 15)
- Christians are to establish their hearts in the Word of God. (Matt. 7:24-27)
- God's word will establish faith and patience in our hearts during suffering. (Rom. 5:1-5)

9 Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.

- We are not to complain, divide or speak evil against anyone. (Lev. 19:16-18) (Matt. 5:9) (James 4:11)
- We will be judged by God for every careless word. (Matt. 12:36-37)
- It is not helpful in times of suffering when people explode in frustration and turn on one other.
- Jesus will judge every evil act that has even been committed. (Col. 3:24-25) (Matt. 25:31-46)

10 As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

- The "prophets" are the men of God in the old testament that suffered & died for speaking in the name of the Lord. (Heb. 11:32-38) (Matt 5:11-12)

11 Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

- James returns to the theme of enduring trials. (Jas. 1:2-4, 12)

Q: What are trials? The testing of our faith.

- Our trials and suffering have a purpose. (Jn. 9:3)

Q: What is steadfastness? Relentless endurance, perseverance or fortitude.

- We are to remain steadfast in our faith being sanctified and purified for the coming of Jesus.
- Do not give up during trials and suffering! (Gal. 6:9)

12 But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.

- James is again advising Christians to be slow to speak and always speak the truth. (Jas. 1:19)
- Dishonesty in human relationships is prohibited. (Exodus 20:16) (Leviticus 19:12)

» What are the causes of suffering?

- Suffering is possible because of sin. (Romans 5:12)
- Sin causes suffering indirectly (because of sin this earth is corrupted, decaying, painful and evil. (Genesis 3:14-19; 4:1-15) The whole creation groans and travails in pain. (Romans 8:20-22)
- Sin in our lives can cause some suffering directly (lying, anger, drugs, crime, etc.).
- All Christians suffer. Either you have, you are, or you will. (Acts 14:22)

» The Godly view of suffering.

- A high view of God is essential for understand suffering. (Ps. 103:19)
 - A strong belief in God's sovereignty, glory, goodness and grace.
- A humble view of mankind.
 - Suffering is the fruit of our sin. We are sinful beings with a limited perspective. (Rom. 3:23)
- The ultimate reason for suffering is to exalt the glory of God and the sacrifice of His Son for our sin.
 - Jesus was crucified and suffered for our sins to free the those who believe in Him so that they may have eternal life with Him.. (John 9:3) (Jn. 3:16)
- Sometimes God uses suffering to build our faith and sanctify us. (Rom. 5:3-5)
 - "Suffering will drive us like a nail into the love of God." - Tim Keller
- The Great Commission will be accomplished through suffering, and it will all be eternally worth it.
 - Missionaries are going all over the world into hostile environments where Christianity is prohibited, most of which give up their whole lives and become martyrs.
- God does not delight in our suffering, but weeps with us. (Jn.11:1-4) (Jn. 11:32:-35)

» The hope we have in Jesus. (Romans 8)

- God is working all things for our good. This includes our suffering. (Romans 8:28)
- Our suffering is nothing compared to what God has for us in eternity. (Romans 8:18)
- Death will be replaced by life. There will be no more; sin, sorrow, sickness or separation. Corruption will be replaced by purity, curses will be replaced by blessing. (Rev 21:4)
- We will see Jesus and be made like Him, pure and sinless. (1 John 3:2) (Rev. 22:4)
- We will live in the presence of the glory of God with infinite joy and satisfaction. Not even the most creative minds on the planet can even begin to conceive what God has for His children. (1 Corinthians 2:9)

» The Christian response to suffering.

1. Remember that God loves me unconditionally, relentlessly and passionately.
2. Pray to God. Talk to God. Encounter God. Ask for help.
3. Spend time in God's Word, He speaks to us through it.
4. Remind yourself that God is always with you. (Psalm 23)
5. Remember what God has already done for.
6. Set your heart and mind on eternity and heaven.
7. Remember that this life is all about God. Everything was created to make much of him whose ways are higher than my ways. I may not understand how, but God is doing something bigger with my life than I can possibly see. My suffering is never senseless; it will not be wasted. He will ultimately use every struggle for my good and His glory.

2 Peter 3:9 // The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Romans 12:12 // Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.

Matthew 7:24-27 // Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

Romans 5:1-5 // Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Matthew 12:36-37 // I tell you, on the day of judgement people will give account for every careless word they speak, 37 for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Hebrews 11:32–38 // And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets— 33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. 35 Women received back their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, so that they might rise again to a better life. 36 Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— 38 of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.

Matthew 5:11-12 // Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

James 1:2-4 // Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

James 1:12 // Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

John 9:3 // Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

Galatians 6:9 // And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.

Romans 5:12 // Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

Acts 14:22 // strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

Psalm. 103:19 // The Lord has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.

John 9:3 // Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

Romans. 5:3-5 // Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

John 11:1-4 // Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. 3 So the sisters sent to him, saying, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” 4 But when Jesus heard it he said, “This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”

John 11:32-35 // Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet, saying to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved[a] in his spirit and greatly troubled. 34 And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” 35 Jesus wept.

Romans 8:28 // And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,[a] for those who are called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:18 // For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Revelation 21:4 // He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

1 John 3:2 // Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

Revelations 22:4 // They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

1 Corinthians 2:9 // But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him”—

JAMES

James 5:13-20

Theme: ▶ Prayer, Faith and the “Prayer of Faith”



» What is Faith? - an endless hope and trust in the existence and promises of God. (Heb. 11:1)

- Biblical faith is not a vague hope or wishful thinking.
- Biblical faith is confidence that something in the future, that is not yet seen but has been promised by God, will actually come to pass because God will bring it about.
- Biblical faith is a confident trust in the eternal God who is all-powerful, infinitely wise, eternally trustworthy and has revealed Himself in his word and in the person of Jesus Christ, whose promises have proven true from generation to generation, and who will “never leave nor forsake” His own (Hebrews. 13:5).
- God has given to each of us a measure of faith. (Romans. 12:3)
- Faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Romans. 10:17)
- Faith is a spiritual gift given by the Spirit of God for His glory and the good of others. (1 Cor. 12:9)
- We are saved by grace through faith. (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- Without faith it is impossible to please God. (Hebrews. 11:6)

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.

- The first kind of prayer is praying for yourself.
- Our suffering can be emotional, physical, mental, spiritual, relational or financial.
- When Jesus suffered He went to the Father in prayer. (Matt. 26:36-46)
 - It is biblical and right to ask God to remove your suffering.
 - If I must continue to suffer it is biblical and right to pray that God’s will be done.
- James restates some of the letter’s key themes, including trials and misuse of the tongue.
- The ultimate way to “tame” the tongue is to bless God and pray for anothers.
- James is directing all Christians to prayer and joyful praise.
- Prayer changes our will (hearts, minds and plans), not God’s will.
- The aim of prayer is that the Father be glorified through Jesus. (John. 14:13-14) (John. 9:3)
- Christians are to remain in prayer and full of joy during trials and suffering, and praise God through it, ultimately our hope is in God. (Psalm 62:5-8) (2 Corinthians 6:10) (James 1:2)

14 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.

- The second kind of prayer is the praying of the elders over the sick.
- The “anointing” of God is the consecrating (appointing) of people by His Spirit for God’s use and service. (Ex. 28:41) (Ex. 33:22-38) (Luke 4:18) (Acts 4:27; 10:38) (2 Cor. 1:21) (Heb. 1:9).
- The “anointing oil” is best seen as a symbol representing the Holy Spirit and His power to heal.
- Christians pray this prayer in the name of the Lord because God is the healer, not the oil. (Ps. 30:2)
- The disciples “anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.” (Mark 6:7-13)

15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Q: What is the prayer of Faith? The “prayer of faith” is prayer with the special gift of faith from the Holy Spirit for something extraordinary. (1 Cor. 12:9)

- The spiritual gift of faith from the Holy Spirit is certain because God’s will is revealed and we pray for it.
- Jesus did, does and will continue to heal, until He returns. (Ex. 23:25) (Matt. 9:35) (Heb.13:8)
- God’s is the healer and His nature is to heal everyone. (Psalm. 147:3) (Matt. 9:35)

Q: Why doesn’t God heal everyone. (no faith, unconfessed sin, lack of desire, lack of prayer, demonic influences, divine providence or something better is going to be accomplished.)

- God the healer has sovereignly decided who will and who won’t be healed. We are commanded to pray for our healing and the healing of others in faith. (2 Corinthians 12:8-10)

• God heals some people in this life, and for Christians, God heals all of His people at the end of this life and at His return. (2 Corinthians 5:6-9) (Revelation 21:4)

• God always answers our prayers with either yes, no or later.

Q: How do you know if you have faith in the healing power of prayer? You pray

• When healing comes, it is always a gift from God, who is sovereign over all circumstances, including sickness and health.

• Sin directly causes some sickness, sin indirectly cause all sickness. (Romans 5:12)

• Our spiritual sin can affect our physical body.

• Jesus heals both physically and spiritually. (Matthew 9:1-8)

16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

• The third kind of prayer is praying for each other.

• Sometimes confession in the community is needed before healing can take place.

- Pray on behalf of each other.

- Christians are to hold each other accountable to God's word.

• James does not limit powerful prayer for divine healing to the elders.

17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. 18 Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

• James uses Elijah as a model to imitate.

• Elijah illustrates how a man like us can have the powerful prayer life of "a righteous person."

• All of us should be praying for each other and our goal in prayer should be to live and pray in a way that would have the same kind of miraculous and healing effects as Elijah had when he prayed.

19 My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, 20 let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

• Christians are to walk through life together.

• James calls the community to action in helping those who have fallen into sin.

• God loves, cares for and maintains His children through the work of the others in the church.

(Phil. 2:13)

The secrets to effective and powerful prayer.

1) Make your wants God's wants.

2) Ask for whatever you want.

3) Pray for yourself.

4) Allow your pastor to pray over you.

5) Pray for each other.

6) Express and submit your desires to God.

7) Pray with faith.

» Christian are to pray for those who are suffering, we pray that God would take it from them or give them the grace to endure it and become more like Jesus as a result, we are to pray for those who are sick, if it is in part or in full because of sin, we pray for them to repent of that sin, confess that sin, then hand that sin to Jesus because He died for it, that He would put that sin to death, and free their soul, and heal their body in Jesus' name.

» Prayer, Faith and the "Prayer of Faith" are ultimately aimed toward proclaiming and demonstrating the great glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

» Christian are to love one another and live life together, accomplishing the work of God on earth.

Hebrews 11:1 // Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

Romans 10:17 // So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Ephesians 2:8-9 // For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Hebrews 11:6 // And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

Matthew 26:36-46 // Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, **“Sit here, while I go over there and pray.”** 37 And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, **“My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.”** 39 And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, **“My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”** 40 And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, **“So, could you not watch with me one hour? 41 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”** 42 Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, **“My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.”** 43 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 44 So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. 45 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, **“Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”**

John 14:13-14 // **Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.**

John 9:3 // Jesus answered, **“It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.”**

Psalms 30:2 // O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me.

Psalms 147:3 // He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Matthew 9:35 // And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.

2 Corinthians 12:8-10 // Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. 9 But he said to me, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”** Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 5:6-9 // So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

Revelation 21:4 // He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Romans 5:12 // Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

Philippians 2:13 // for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

WHY DOESN'T GOD ALWAYS HEAL THE SICK?

“Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this [thorn], that it should leave me. But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’” 2 Corinthians 12:8–9

God loved the Apostle Paul. Yet God sovereignly orchestrated Paul’s painful thorn in the flesh and then declined to remove it, notwithstanding Paul’s passionate prayer that he be healed.

We are not apostles. Yet, God loves us as his children no less than he loved Paul. We don’t know the nature of Paul’s thorn, but each of us has undoubtedly suffered in a similar way, and some considerably worse.

We, like Paul, have prayed incessantly to be healed. Or perhaps knowing of a loved one’s “thorn,” we have prayed for him or her. And again, as with Paul, God declined to remove it.

Why?

It’s hard to imagine a more difficult, confusing, and controversial topic than why God chooses not to heal in response to the intercessory pleas of his people. I don’t profess to have all the answers, but I think I’ve got a few.

1. FAITH

Occasionally healing does not occur because of the absence of that sort of faith that God delights to honor. This does not mean that every time a person isn’t healed, it is because of a defective faith, as if healing inevitably follows a robust and doubt-free faith. But it does mean that faith is very important.

How can we conclude otherwise in view of the many texts that closely link healing to someone’s faith? I hope you’ll take the time to pause and read these passages: Matthew 9:22, 28–29; 15:28; Mark 2:5, 11; 5:34; 9:17–24; Mark 10:52; Luke 17:19; Acts 3:16; 14:8–10; James 5:14–16.

2. UNCONFESSED SIN

Sometimes healing does not occur because of the presence of sin for which there has been no confession or repentance. James 5:15–16 clearly instructs us to confess our sins to one another and pray for one another that we may be healed.

Again, please do not conclude from this that each time a person isn’t healed it is because he or she has committed but not repented of some specific sin. But in some cases (not necessarily all) this is undoubtedly true.

3. LACK OF DESIRE

Odd as it may sound to hear it, healing may not happen because the sick don't want it to happen. Jesus asked the paralyzed man in John 5:6, "Do you want to be healed?" What on the surface may appear to be a ridiculous question is, on further examination, found to be profoundly insightful.

Some people who suffer from a chronic affliction become accustomed to their illness and to the pattern of life it requires. Their identity is to a large extent wrapped up in their physical disability.

4. LACK OF PRAYER

We must also consider the principle articulated in James 4:2, where we are told, "You do not have, because you do not ask." The simple fact is that some are not healed because they do not pray. Perhaps they pray once or twice, and then allow discouragement to paralyze their petitions. Prayer for healing often must be prolonged, sustained, persevering, and combined with fasting.

5. Demonic influences not addressed

Some are not healed because the demonic cause of the affliction has not been addressed. Please do not jump to unwarranted conclusions. I am not suggesting that all physical disease is demonically induced.

It is interesting, is it not, that in Paul's case God used "a messenger of Satan" to inflict the thorn? There is also the case of the woman in Luke 13, who had "a disabling spirit [or, a spirit of infirmity] for 18 years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself" (Luke 13:11). According to Jesus, "Satan" had "bound" her (Luke 13:16; see also Acts 10:38).

6. Divine providence

We must also consider the mystery of divine providence. There are undoubtedly times and seasons in the purposes of God during which his healing power is withdrawn or at least largely diminished. God may have any number of reasons for this to which we are not privy, whether to discipline a wayward and rebellious church or to create a greater desperation for his power or to wean us off excessive dependence on physical comfort and convenience or any number of other possibilities. If this leaves you confused, that's why it's called a mystery!

7. A BETTER THING

Oftentimes there are dimensions of spiritual growth and moral development and increase in the knowledge of God in us that he desires more than our physical health, experiences that in his wisdom God has determined can only be attained by means or in the midst of or in response to less-than-perfect physical health. In other words, healing the sick is a good thing (and we should never cease to pray for it), but often there is a better thing that can be attained only by means of physical weakness.

PERSEVERE IN PRAYER

We may never know why a person isn't healed. What, then, ought to be our response?

In the first place, don't stop praying! Some people find this difficult to swallow. Many times I've been asked, why should Paul bother to pray for release from something that God wills to inflict? The answer is that Paul didn't know what God's will was in this particular case until such time as God chose to make it known. And neither do you or I with regard to any particular illness we may suffer.

If, like Paul, you are able to discern, through some prophetic disclosure or other legitimate biblical means, that it is not God's will now or ever to heal you, you may cease asking him to do so. Otherwise, short of death itself, you must persevere in prayer.

I'm sure there are other ways to account for why God chooses not to heal, but I trust that these have proved helpful. There is much I do not know about this matter, but of this I'm quite certain: God's grace is sufficient in all circumstances so that we, "for the sake of Christ" (2 Cor. 12:10), might learn that in our weakness his power is made perfect!