



SERMON NOTES

From In Touch With Dr. Charles Stanley

THE PROMISE TO HEAL

KEY PASSAGE: James 5:13-18 | **SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE:** Genesis 20:17-18 | Exodus 23:25 | Psalm 106:13-15; 107:20
Isaiah 53:4-5 | Jeremiah 30:17 | Matthew 8:14-15; 13:58; 14:34-36 | Mark 2:1-5, 11; 10:47-52 | Luke 18:35-43
Acts 3:2, 6-7; 5:15; 10:38; 28:7-8 | 1 Corinthians 1:14-17; 12:9 | 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 | 2 Timothy 4:19-20

► SUMMARY

Of all the promises in the Bible, those concerning healing are the most difficult for us to understand.

Our confusion is often caused by the sadness we feel if someone doesn't recover. However, our unbelief in God's ability, an ignorance of biblical teaching on the subject, and others' false claims of healing also add to our misunderstanding. Perhaps that's why many people immediately respond to sickness by seeking medical help instead of turning to God first. This doesn't mean going to the doctor isn't essential, but the Lord should never be our last resort when all else fails. Since He's the Great Physician, why don't we seek Him to begin with?

God is still in the healing business, but He does it according to His will and timing. When the Lord delays, it's because He's focused on something more important than a healthy body. His goal is to help us learn to listen to Him, and sickness has a way of grabbing our attention. Through it, we learn what He wants to teach us.

► SERMON POINTS

The Lord never changes, and His purposes and ways remain consistent throughout the Bible.

By examining Old Testament teachings, Jesus' ministry, and the apostles' role in healing, we can come to a greater understanding of God's willingness to intervene in our struggles.

Healing in the Old Testament

The first mention of the Lord's healing power is found in Genesis 20:17-18 when He answered Abraham's prayer and healed Abimelech's household. Many years later when Abraham's descendants became a nation, God promised to remove sickness from their midst if they served Him (Ex. 23:25). From that point, their wellness as a people depended on their obedience to the Lord. When they rebelled, God disciplined them with illness (Ps. 106:13-15), but whenever they cried out to Him, He "sent His word and healed them" (Ps. 107:20). They were restored when they believed and heeded His Word.

In Isaiah 53:5, God told His people about the healing that would come through the Messiah's atonement for sin: "By His scourging we are healed." Even though this promise is ours as a result of Christ's sacrifice, it doesn't guarantee that the Lord will restore our health every time we ask. All the benefits of redemption don't come to us in this life—some are reserved for us in heaven. The biggest accomplishment of the cross was the healing of our separation from the Lord, which was caused by our sin.

Christ's Ministry of Healing

Even though Jesus came to earth primarily to die for our sins, a major part of His ministry involved healing the sick. When teaching or traveling, He stopped to meet individual needs. Wherever He went, crowds of sick people formed around Him, and He took the time to heal many of them (Matt. 14:34-36). In order to understand this promise, we must recognize:

- **His purpose.** Although Christ's love for mankind was a powerful motivation, the primary reason for His healing miracles was to demonstrate that He was the Son of God.
- **His priority.** Jesus' main focus was always on the heart. When a paralytic was lowered through the roof, instead of immediately healing him, Christ said, "Your sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5). The Lord dealt with his soul before restoring his body.
- **His present activity.** Although Christ has ascended to the Father, He's still healing people from heaven. Today, there are astonishing recoveries doctors can't explain. The Lord is still answering our prayers about health issues and has never stopped performing miracles.
- **Our role.** Despite His power, Jesus didn't heal every sick person in Israel. For example, when He visited His hometown, He couldn't perform many miracles because of the people's unbelief (Matt. 13:58).

Like them, we also live in a society that doubts Jesus' ability to heal. Instead of following this line of negative thinking, Christians should expect God to do the unusual and wait for Him to act on our behalf.

The Apostles' Role in Healing

After the ascension, the apostles carried on Christ's work, and curing people was part of their witness. For example, when Peter and John met a lame beggar at the temple, they both encouraged him to believe that Christ could do the impossible, and He did (Acts 3:6-7). The apostle Paul's life also teaches us a great deal about how and why God restores us:

- **Paul's Experience with Healing.** Since Paul was such a prominent apostle, we'd expect him to play a major role in restoring the sick, but there is only one account of him doing so (Acts 28:8). Perhaps this is because Paul

was called by God primarily to proclaim the gospel, not to heal people.

- **Paul's Teaching about Healing.** Because he was appointed to teach and explain divine truth, Paul's writings are our guide to understanding what God has to say about spiritual gifts and healing. The Lord has gifted some believers with faith to pray for the restoration of others (1 Cor. 12:9). The intercessors cannot heal anyone—only God can do that—but because of their great faith, the Lord answers their prayers and gives a gift of health to those who are sick.
- **Paul's Experience with Illness.** Being an apostle didn't guarantee Paul's prayers for wellness were always answered. At one point in his travels, he left a sick friend in another city (2 Tim. 4:20). He also struggled with his own health issues, so Luke, who was a physician, accompanied him. In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Paul described a trial that he called "a thorn in the flesh." Despite his entreaties and prayers, God didn't heal him, but He did explain the reason for his illness. Its purpose was to keep Paul from exalting himself. Also, God promised His grace was sufficient, and He gave the apostle both the strength to endure hardships and be content with his situation.

► RESPONSE

- Whenever you experience sickness, your first thought should be to ask the Lord how He wants you to respond. He may tell you to trust Him for healing or lead you to get medical help. Paul did both. He sought healing from the Lord, trusted God's choice for his life, and relied on Luke's aid in times of suffering. The goal is to be God-conscious and realize that the One who saved you is walking with you through every illness. He will direct your steps if you set your mind on Him.

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