

ESF, Lord's day service message
4/23/2017

How to Receive God's Healing Grace

Mark 8:22-26

²²They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. ²³He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" ²⁴He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." ²⁵Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go into the village."

The Bible proclaims that God is the healer and He wants to heal the sick. In Exodus 15: 26, He said, *"If you listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, who heals you."*

Psalms 103:3 says, *The Lord is He "who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases."*

God sent Jesus to this world to dispense His healing grace. One of Jesus' main ministries was his healing ministry. Jesus healed the man at the pool, the official's son, the centurion's daughter, the boy with the evil spirit, lepers, paralytics, a bleeding woman, demon possessed man and so many other sick people. In this text, Jesus heals a blind man. With this story Jesus shows us how we can receive His healing grace.

Through intercessory prayer

God heals the sick through our intercessory prayer for them. This is what the Lord did when He healed a blind man. Some people brought a blind man to Jesus and begged Jesus to touch him. They had compassion for the blind man. They brought the blind man to Jesus with faith that Jesus could heal him. The blind man did not pray for himself, but others prayed for him. Jesus listened to their prayer and healed the blind man.

When we want to deliver God's blessings to a person, we must bring the person to God and pray for the person. In the story of Mark chapter 2, there was a paralytic who was unable to move at all by himself. While Jesus was preaching in a house, some men brought the paralytic to Jesus. And Jesus saw their faith and healed the paralytic.

We may not be able to perform healing miracles for the sick. But when we bring them to God and pray for them, God performs a healing miracle for them.

In his book *Stories for the Journey*, William White tells of a European seminary professor and his wife, Hans and Enid. During WW2 they escaped to America, where Hans began teaching in a seminary. Students loved this Bible teacher, and they enjoyed observing the tender love that Hans and Enid displayed as the couple often walked hand in hand around campus.

Enid's unexpected death send Hans into a pit of sorrow. The seminary president and 3 other friends began visiting Hans, but he remained lonely and depressed. "I am no longer able to pray to God," Hans confided to them, "In fact, I am not certain I believe in God anymore."

After an awkward moment of silence, the seminary president responded, "Then we will believe for you. We will pray for you."

In the following weeks, the 4 men met daily to pray with Hans, asking God to help Hans experience God's presence and healing. Months later, as the 4 men gathered again in Hans's living room, Hans greeted them with a smile. "It is no longer necessary for you to pray for me," he said. "Instead, I would like you to pray with me."

We can't provide everything to the needy people around us. But when we pray for them with compassionate hearts, the Lord brings His miraculous blessings to them through our intercessory prayers.

Through personal care

God brings His miraculous healing to us through His personal care. God seeks out us individually. We read in Genesis 6 that God was sorry that He had made man. So, He said in verse 7, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth...” But then God sought an individual to save the world. Verse 8 says, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”

When God was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He sought out one person, Lot and his family to save (Genesis chapter 19).

God still seeks after the lost individually today.

When Jesus healed the sick, in most cases, He did not heal all of them at once. He healed the sick one by one personally. Jesus healed the demon possessed man living in the tombs by going to him personally and talking with him individually (Mark 5:1-20). Jesus saved the woman at the well in Samaria by taking time with her personally and gave her individual counseling (John 4:4-26).

Here in this text, Jesus also treated the blind man personally. Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. He spat on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him. Then the blind man’s eyes were opened.

A couple of Chapters later Jesus healed another blind man, Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52). In that healing, there was no physical touch, no spitting, or anything. Jesus just spoke the words: “*What do you want me to do for you? Go, your faith has healed you.*”

With one blind man, there was a physical touch, with another, just the words out of Jesus’ mouth.

Jesus used diverse ways when He healed the sick. He healed the sick with a word (Mt. 8:8,13). He healed people by letting them touch Him (Mt. 9:20; 14:36). He healed people by laying on His hands (Mark 6:5). He healed people by simply saying they had already been healed (Mk 7:29, John 4:50).

Why does Jesus use diverse ways of healing?

First Jesus demonstrates that everybody must be treated personally. He did things according to what the situation demanded, and according to each person's personal need.

Although you are sitting here among many people, the Lord is interested in each one of you personally. God counts the number of the hairs on your head (Matthew 10:30). He knows you personally and cares for you personally. God brings His miraculous blessing to you personally. He uses what is necessary for your unique personal need.

When you notice that God does not bless you in the same way He blesses others, don't get discouraged. He has a special plan to take care of you which is different from His plans for others. Believe in God's personal care for you today and be thankful to Him for His personal care.

Second, Jesus demonstrates that the sick can be healed not only by some particular action, but merely by grace, or mercy, or faith in each healing. Had Jesus healed everybody in the same manner it would have caused men to trust in a particular way of healing rather than trusting in God. We tend to trust in certain patterns rather than trusting in God. And we stick with the patterns. By doing this we put God in a box. But our Lord does not work that way. He is too great to be limited to certain patterns. God chooses countless ways to bring about healing miracles. His ways are far above our ways and He uses ways that we cannot understand.

Don't trust in patterns on how God blesses people. Trust in God Himself and have an open mind to accept different patterns and ways through which God blesses you and others.

Through gradual progress

The Lord can heal a sick person at once. He healed many sick people instantly. He healed a deaf and mute right away (Mark 7:32-35). The deaf and mute man

who had never been able to speak a word spoke instantly. Jesus healed a woman who had been suffering from bleeding instantly (Mark 5:25-29).

But He also heals some sick people through a gradual progress. This is the way we see here in His healing of a blind man. The healing occurred not at once but gradually. After the first touch, Jesus asked him if he could see anything. He states in verse 24, "And he looked up and said, I see people; they look like trees walking around".

He could see, but not clearly. Then we read in verse 25 there was a second touch. Jesus put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everything clearly.

Here the Lord healed the blind man gradually.

The first touch reminds us of Salvation. When we receive Christ, our spiritual eyes are opened and we are saved. Some remain content in this stage. They consider the instant salvation as life insurance - Getting out of hell and being guaranteed to go to heaven. And that is as far as their faith goes. They never try to grow.

But this is not what God means by His salvation in Christ. God takes time to bring His blessings to our lives. Not because God can't do it all at once, but God wants us to grow gradually and constantly.

With a parable of a seed, Jesus teaches us well this truth of gradual growing in Mark 4:26-29:

"This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground....All by itself the soil produces grain--first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head."

To bring change and improvement to our lives, there must be the power of God. God initiates change. God's repeated sessions with us and our efforts to follow God will bring change. God saves a soul instantly, but He tells us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, which can take a lifetime.

So, we need that second touch. It is one thing to make Jesus your Savior but it may take that second touch for you to make Him Lord. That is to surrender to Him and let Him have complete control of your life.

Tony Campolo tells a story about being in a church in Oregon where he was asked to pray for a man who had cancer. Campolo prayed boldly for the man's healing.

That next week he got a telephone call from the man's wife. She said, "You prayed for my husband. He had cancer." Campolo thought when he heard her use the past tense verb that his cancer had been eradicated! But before he could think much about it she said, "He died." Campolo felt terrible.

But she continued, "Don't feel bad. When he came into that church that Sunday he was filled with anger. He knew he was going to be dead in a short period of time, and he hated God. He was 58 years old, and he wanted to see his children and grandchildren grow up. He was angry that this all-powerful God didn't take away his sickness and heal him. He would lie in bed and curse God. The more his anger grew towards God, the more miserable he was to everybody around him. It was an awful thing to be in his presence.

But the lady told Campolo, "After you prayed for him, a peace came over him and a joy came into him. Tony, the last three days have been the best days of our lives. We've sung. We've laughed. We've read Scripture. We prayed. Oh, they've been wonderful days. And I called to thank you for laying your hands on him and praying for healing."

And then she said something incredibly profound. She said, "He wasn't cured, but he was healed."

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:8-9

⁸He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

When things do not change or improve quickly although you come to God and ask His blessings, don't get discouraged. Wait for God's second touch. When God starts working for you He will not stop until He finishes His good work for you completely.