

December 2018 Newsletter - Health and Healing

And when you get down to it, that's about all we can do. If we're like everybody else, we probably have tried everything else we can think of and to no avail: doctors, medicine, self-help books, positive thinking, alternative healing, health regimens, other people's advice and they all may be helpful to some degree, but somehow don't solve the problem.

And lastly, because God commands us to do it. He would never command us to do this, if he didn't know for sure that it is the answer for feeling down. God never commands us to do something that we can't do; and he never commands us to do something if it will not benefit us in some way!

3. "Is anyone happy?" - *euthumei tis*

The word for **happiness** here is *euthumeo*, and it comes from the *thumos* word group which speaks about the feelings and passions of the soul. *Epithumeo*, the word for lusts or desires, also comes from this word group, but refers to sinful desires. But we have the word *eu* prefixed to it, the word for well or good, making it *euthumeo*, so it refers to good feelings. **What it actually meant in those days was to be cheerful, to be in good spirits, to be in a good mood.**

Obviously we can see the contrast between these **two opposing emotional moods**, where one is feeling down due to negative feelings and the other where one is feeling up because of positive feelings; feeling down versus feeling up; **being in a bad mood versus being in a good mood.** But this word also has the same idea that *kakopatheo* did **where the feelings can spring up all by themselves and not necessarily because of something that we had said, thought or did, or a decision;** not everything is volitional. Are you feeling down at this moment? Try this; choose not to. You see the problem.

Good feelings versus bad feelings, being in a good mood versus being in a down mood; we want the one and not the other. We seek after the one and not the other, but are unsuccessful. That's the problem with our emotions; we don't have the control over them that we think we do and would like to have. I know there are those out there, who think they have the answer for everything, that would disagree with this statement, that it's not always a matter of the mind or the will and it isn't true that all this can be controlled if we just want to bad enough. **You can make a choice to do something about feeling down, to pursue a course of action to find relief, but you just can't choose to turn it off like a light switch. Look at what Job went through.** He could have chosen and wanted all he liked, but it still wasn't going to change his situation. All he could do was endure it until the Lord turned it around for him.

There are plenty of people out there who are like Job's comforters. They're either trying to dig up some sin that you have done; or they're telling you just to "cheer up", (what a novel thought, too bad we hadn't thought of it before); or to just "snap out of it", after all, you can if you really wanted to. These people do not help, all they do is impose an additional burden on us.

While it is true that we do have some control over our emotions by utilizing faith in the Word, having a positive mental attitude, etc., and some things we may be able to figure out, like, say, watching a sad movie or a funny comedy, or maybe getting down around the holidays or someone that you love passed away and it's the time of their birthday once again and you're down, you can see that, but as so often is

the case, we don't know why we're in a mood! Trying to figure them out can also be exhausting and futile, that's why we're to apply God's solution by going to him in prayer, or singing as the case may be.

So here we have a case where the believer is in a good mood; he's happy or feeling cheerful for some reason. He may not even know why he is; he just is. You see, in a local church you will find believers going through all sorts of things and not everyone is experiencing the same phenomenon. Some may very down and depressed over something, or for no apparent reason at all. While others may be cheerful! We need to rejoice with the ones who are rejoicing and be compassionate, loving, comforting and understanding to those who are feeling down, not take some legalistic approach to presume that you know what's wrong with them, or have the answers for them. **And we need to be ever mindful that we may be next!!**

4. "Let him sing songs" - psalleteo

Psallo referred to the singing of an hymn, a psalm, sacred song, or hymn of praise. The noun psalmos referred to the actual hymn that was sung. Originally, psalmos referred to the sound made by a musical instrument, usually a plucked instrument such as a harp.

Psallo and *psalmos* had two basic meanings. The first meaning dealt with one of the OT psalms in the Bible, whether sung or chanted, accepted sacred songs, or NT quotes which were sung or chanted. The second meaning would be any spiritual song of praise or thanksgiving to God sung by the believer to the Lord. Context would determine which one would be used. The former in a formal church setting, which would also sung by Christians outside of church. The latter by believers from all walks and places, who could break forth in song at any moment, even making up their own melodies and words.

Again we have this in a form of a **command**. God is commanding us what he wants us to do in this situation. **If we're down, then pray! If we're in a cheerful mood, then sing songs of praise to him with thanksgiving!** What a fantastic concept this would be to see if all Christians obeyed God in this way. Why we would see the entire church on earth doing one of these two things all the time - praying or singing! Think of what it would be like to live in your town with thousands and thousands of Christians praying and singing all the time! What a testimony to Christ that would be.

The middle voice is not used here, just the active, perhaps to emphasize our volitional responsibility to obey God in this situation by singing, while in the matter of praying when feeling down it was to emphasize that prayer is really beneficial in those times. If we're in a cheerful mood, we already are being benefited.

Singing is perhaps more important to the life and soul than we know. It appears that it is a vital aspect of, and part of our existence. Namely that God created man to sing along with the other aspects of his humanity. Man is able to modulate his voice, compose lyrics and melodies, sing in harmony, even understand the mathematics of music. All people and cultures have music, play music or sing songs. It is not a cultural phenomenon, but a human phenomenon expressed in culture.

History shows that it has been this way since the beginning showing that it is a concept put there in man by God, and seeing that it is a part of our humanity it should be there on a daily basis. David sang songs of praise and thanksgiving, both formally in the great assembly and in his privacy. All the men of the books of Psalms sang; the nation of Israel sang and Israel's national choir sang. The early church sang; Christ sings songs of praise right now to the Father, Hebrews 2:12, even the NT has songs that were sang or chanted.

Basically, singing is an expression of happiness. Some think if you sing it'll make you happy. But it's the other way around in this passage. But singing is also an expression of **being thankful, of love and of praise to God.** And sometimes singing comes about just **because we're in a good mood, cheerful, in good spirits.** And did we mention the angels? All the unfallen angels, who are obviously always happy, cheerful, in a good mood, sing all the time!

Heaven is not only a place of peace and joy, a place where everybody, God, man and angels are in "good spirits", but a place where music, harmony and singing occur all the time. Perfect music, perfect harmony, perfect melody, music that is mathematically and doctrinally perfect, and with music, melody and singing that fit the occasion and the soul.

To have music, melody with singing, there has to be words that are true, positive and uplifting; and the sound of the music has to be soothing and beneficial to body body and soul. If these things aren't there, then all you have is irritating noise. (Does that sound like much of the stuff we here today?) Anyway, if we find ourselves in a cheerful mood, for whatever the reason, God commands us to sing songs of praise and thanksgiving.

N. The Impact of the Feelings on the Spiritual Life.

"We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange- I speak to you as to my children- open wide your hearts also."

2 Corinthians 6:11-13

To set the context **it was the communication ministry of the Apostle Paul, as he was filled with the Holy Spirit and operating in his new nature, that established a spiritual connection or conduit for the flow of spiritual phenomenon to the Corinthian church.** It not only established a spiritual connection to them, but was to be the basis for the inner working of spiritual phenomenon in their souls.

Think of it like a mother bird flying home with food for her chicks. She has the food in her mouth and from her mouth she transfers the food to her chick's mouths. Once they eat and swallow it they will have the nourishment to provide their physical needs. **But if their necks have some kind of binding device around them that cuts of the flow of the food, then the entire physical dynamic soon breaks down and comes to a halt; sickness then ensues.**

Paul said that they were being restrained - not by them, (he and the other Apostles) - but by something of their own doing. There was something going on inside of them that not only choked off the spiritual flow of the Word into them, but the spiritual flow inside of them!

To explain what's going on Paul uses the word, *stenochoria*, to describe the dynamic that takes place inside the soul that causes the shutting down of the spiritual flow. *Stenochoria* meant to restrain, to constrain; it has the idea of restraining something, a narrowing or constricting of something, like a boa constrictor would do, or like pinching off a garden hose so that the water can't flow through.

When we talk about "spiritual flow" we're talking about the filling of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual phenomenon that occurs when faith is combined with the teaching of the Word of God. The Apostle Peter put it as, *"partaking in the divine nature"*, **which is we being able to experience for ourselves**

the wonder of wonders - God's very own spiritual dynamic! This is where the peace, the calm, the clarity, the love, the hope, the joy and all the other wonderful things that can be found in his spiritual state can actually be experienced in **our** souls!

But there is something going on inside of us that cuts this off; it restrains it from going on. There's something that is taking place inside of us that constricts the flow of this wonderful spiritual dynamic, and it is our feelings! **It is our emotions that are constricting around our spiritual pipe, so to speak, that prevent the flow of the spiritual dynamic inside of us.**

The problem with our feelings is that they not only choke off the flow of spiritual energy, but that they can also make us miserable both in our souls and our bodies. Who has not been decimated by fear; made miserable by guilt; choked by worry; overcome by grief and plagued by hurtful feelings out of the past? And what happens to God's peace, love and joy in our hearts when these feelings are there? It's choked off; not allowed to course through our souls. **The emotions act in such a way that they constrict the spiritual dynamic.** The activity of sin in the flesh creates severe negative agitation in the emotions resulting in severe negative feelings. The filling of the Holy Spirit, though, renders the sin nature inactive, thereby ceasing its destructive influence on the emotional center.

The verb *stenochoreo* is in the present passive indicative telling us that this was something that was currently going on; thankfully it was not a condition, something of a more permanent nature, but something that was currently going on in their souls, which tells us that it could stop! The indicative mood stresses the reality of it. In the passive voice it tells us that they were receiving the action; something was acting upon them to close off the spiritual dynamic inside them, to constrict it, and it was their feelings or emotions that was the thing doing it.

When studying out the effect that the emotional life has on the body, we have seen that there is a direct cause and effect. Many books have been written on this subject, some going into great detail specifying even what emotions can affect the different parts of the body and the different maladies they produce.

Fear and anger do all kinds of detrimental things to the body. One of the things they do, especially anger, is tighten up the muscles, not all the muscles in the body, but muscles involved along their meridian lines. It's very common, natural, when experiencing a negative feeling, (and who knows what it is), to find an area in your back, or hamstrings tighten up, or get into knots because of that feeling. Or we may get stressed out over our job and find that our neck and shoulders get very tight. And as they get tighter and tighter, the next thing we know is that our backs are pulled out of alignment. It isn't a physical injury that is causing our problem, nor working hard on the job, although that can happen, it's our emotions that are doing it to us! Who hasn't had their stomach hurt them, when they've been worried about things?

Well the emotions can and do have an affect on our physical life and they can and do have an affect on our spiritual life. They tighten things up, constrict it as Paul has it here, so that the flow of spiritual energy is stopped inside us. But they can be rectified by confession of sins, claiming the promises of God, being filled with the Holy Spirit and operating in the new nature.

O. Solutions Continued.

“Is anyone of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.” James 5:14

1. *“Is anyone of you sick? - Asthenei tis humin?”*

Astheneo speaks of weakness, infirmity, disease and sickness. **It is the opposite of strength and of being healthy**. It can refer to moral weakness, economic weakness, even military weakness, but here it refers to physical weakness. It is not to be thought of in the sense of being strong or weak in the area of muscle strength, although that could apply, but in **the area of one's health**. So it would cover everything from actually being sick, as we would say, to diseases, infection, all the way to having a **weakened immune system**.

Having a weakened immune system is so prevalent today in America due primarily to the toxicity of the environment. The **air** we breathe is polluted; the **water** we drink has chemicals in it; the **food** we eat has chemical pesticides, fungicides and fertilizers in it, to mention being deficient in minerals and the things our bodies need. Then there is the electronic pollution of cell phones, TV's, radio transmitters, microwaves, the electronic devices we can't seem to do without, high voltage lines, satellites that sweep through us every moment, not to mention the moral pollution of our society. **And we wonder why we feel weak, sick, tired and run down!**

Our bodies, as excellent as they are from God, are constantly having to fight to rid themselves of this toxicity, to the place that **most people's immune system are weak and compromised!** What this results in is weakness; weakness of the immune system to fight off sickness and disease.

Weakness leads to sickness and is just the opposite of strength and health. *“Is anyone of you (in the church) sick?”* It is describing an actual sickness without a presupposition of a weakened immune system. The present indicative indicates a present reality in their lives; they were sick at the present time. What's interesting, though, is the scriptural approach to sickness. The Apostle James is telling them to call for the elders of the church, which indicates that they were familiar with this area of dealing with sickness in their society.

2. *“He should call for the elders of the church” - proskalesastho tous presbuteros tes ekklesias*

To **call** is the arist imperative of *proskaleo*, which is a command to do something which they were not doing. They had not called for the elders of the church and are commanded to do so. It doesn't tell us if they had sought “medical” help or not. I imagine that they, like any of us, would have done what they had to do to get better and it didn't work, if that was the case.

What this apparently indicates is that whatever steps they had taken to get better, if any, were not working, so James tells them to call for the elders of the church. There are three possible concepts that come into view here. **One**, that one's sickness is due to personal sin in his life and by calling for the elders is a sign that the heart wants to get right with God, which could be the case because of the reference to sin later on in the passage. **Two**, the second reason could be due to a failure concept. In other words, they had tried this thing and that thing and nothing had worked, so call for the elders. And **three**, this could have been an established procedure in the local church, where the church was not only interested in the believer's spiritual health, but their physical health as well.

An **elder**, *presbuteros*, was a male believer who had spiritual maturity and held a leadership position in the church under the authority of the Pastor-Teacher. To **call**, *proskaleomai*, in the middle voice meant to call to oneself, or to bid someone to come to you. In this case James is commanding them to ask for the elders to come to them.

If they are sick, it's obvious that they haven't become well. And if that's the case, then there is something they don't know; something that they're not applying; something they're lacking the wisdom in, or a lack of faith. Elders are to be men who have wisdom, who have had to apply the Word of God in their lives; men who don't have all the answers, but have more answers than the other believers, and men who were to have more faith, or exercise faith more than the others. So we can see why the believer in the church was to call for them. But they have to call! It's not our place to stick our nose in other people's business, unless they request us.

3. *“To pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord” - kai proseuxasthosan ep'auton aleipsantes auton elaio en to onomati tou kuriou*

The action of the aorist participle, to anoint, precedes the action of the main verb, to pray. Which is to say that they were to anoint him with oil before they prayed over him.

The two words used for anointing are *chrío*, from which we get Christ, and *aleipho*. *Chrío* was used in the symbolic ritual sense in a religious setting, such as **the anointing of prophets, priests, kings and Christ** who was anointed by God, who was anointed, not by water but by the Holy Spirit. While *aleipho* was used outside of the religious setting for a variety of purposes: **cosmetics, medicine, purification, bodily hygiene, the treatment of wounds and the healing of diseases.**

Anointing with oil could be done in the sense of *aleipho* by **smearing, daubing, or salve**, or in the case of *chrío* by **pouring the oil on**. Oil was used because of its deep penetrating qualities into the body and was thought to impart strength, health, joy and beauty. In addition to healing the sick anointing with oil was used for honoring a guest, honoring the dead and accompanied the casting out of demons.

The ointments that they used were **olive oil**, and the more expensive **myrrh** and balsam. **Myrrh was believed to have tremendous healing qualities including cancer.** The word used for oil is *elaio* and was the word for olive oil, which was used for just about everything.

Now what they did when they used **olive oil for perfume**, they would take certain **spices**, crush them and then put it into the oil giving it a pleasant aroma when applied. But if it was used for **“medicinal” purposes**, a variety of **herbs** having their own healing properties for certain, different ailments, would be **crushed up into the ointment then applied by daubing or smearing.**

So there was a certain medicinal, therapeutic, healing benefit to apply “herbally treated” oils to injuries, wounds, illnesses, diseases, etc; maybe not a perfect solution, but one that had been tested over time and found to be effective. **And in this passage, where we have the oil applied first, then prayer; we note that the “medical” approach was used first to start the healing, then the believer was prayed over.**

The root or fruit of trees and plants were used for food and the body's nutritional needs, while the leaves were used for healing. In a pharmaceutical controlled nation talking about using herbs to treat people's health problems sounds to most people as hocus pocus, witchcraft, primitive superstitions, even illegal to some. But the Chinese, Japanese and other oriental cultures use herbs and far healthier than we are! Part of it is due to their better diets and the rest due to their approaches on treating sickness and disease using nothing but herbs!

They use the plants, herbs and leaves of the field for the healing of their bodies, **just as God had**

provided for us in the Bible. We have the scriptural endorsement by God in his Word where he said that the leaves of the plants are for healing. Then there is also the pharmaceutical industry which derives half of its drugs from plants. The plants could be used, but then there would be no profit in that, and they can't patent plants that are growing in the wild.

Now healing herbs could be applied in a poultice, in a tea, in a broth, or crushed up to release the oils in them, mixed with olive oil, then smeared or daubed on to various places on the body for absorption.

Essential oils today are a take off and improvement on that concept producing a more pure and concentrated oil from the herb, thus making it much more effective. They are being used more and more today for health and wellness.

So when the elders of the church came with oil to anoint the believer who was sick, it was **not a religious ritual, because the word *chrío* was not used.** By the use of the word *aleipho* we know that they came out to see the man, not to perform some religious ritual over him and pour oil on him, which was what *chrío* would indicate, **but they came out there to daub or smear an oil that had crushed up herbs or spices in it that could help in healing the sickness, or whatever the problem was.**

What this shows is that there was an accepted cultural practice that the elders of the church were adept at, that is, **they were familiar with the use of herbs and essential oils in healing**, what kinds for what problems; and that they had a reasonable confidence that they were effective and could help the situation. But they did not rely on them totally, hence the employment of prayer. Ultimately, they knew, like us, that only God can heal.

By the use of prayer over the believer they were saying in effect that it was ultimately God who heals us and they were asking him to heal the man. “*In the name of the Lord*” is used here because Christ told them and us that we are to go to the Father with our requests in the name of the Lord and he will grant them.

What this tells us is that **there is a place for both applications in the Christian life**, for the medical, herbal or natural approach in dealing with our sicknesses, and there is the approach of faith and prayer. **It tells us that both concepts are to be used when dealing with our problems; medical or herbs, (that choice is the individual's), and the utilizing of faith and prayer**, even calling in other believers to pray. It also tells us that, even though the prime function of elders was in spiritual matters, they also had a responsibility to also use effective, natural concepts found in the natural world.

And we note here the order of things; first the natural means used in society were to be applied first, then the spiritual approach of prayer. Seek the remedy; apply the remedy, then pray over the matter. It's sort of like taking aspirin for the headache, then praying.

To pray over him, *ep' auton*, *epi* with the accusative, is used to denote the recipients of various spiritual blessings. Here they are praying for someone and he will receive the blessing of healing. *Epi* also has the idea, at least it's implicated here, of having power or taking control over a situation or condition. The implication is that by calling for the elders, who have more knowledge, faith and maturity, who then come out with healing essential oils, and beseeching God to intervene in the matter, they are taking control over the problem of the sickness, which up to that time, has had the control!

Ancient people, including Israel and the Church, and even today believed that maladies, sickness were

caused to a large part by demons, fallen angels, evil spirits, so by employing the spiritual solution alongside the practical, they would be dealing with that element and the physical problem would go away. But either way both the spiritual and physical approaches were used by the elders in dealing with physical problems including the power and authority of Christ.