

From Preaching the Word: James—Faith That Works ...

Amy Carmichael, the turn-of-the-century missionary to India, described the attempted healing of one of her treasured coworkers, a woman named Ponnammal, who contracted cancer in 1913. Amy was, of course, aware of James' prescription to call for the elders of the church to anoint the ill and offer the prayer of faith, but she and her fellowship were not sure what to do. So they sought a sign asking that, if it was God's will, he would send someone to them who was earnest about James' prescription for healing. The person came—an old friend of hers from Madras. As her biographer Elisabeth Elliot describes it:

It was a solemn meeting around the sickbed, the women dressed as usual in their handloomed saris, but white ones for this occasion. They laid a palm branch across Ponnammal's bed as a sign of victory and accepted whatever answer God might give, certain that whether it was to be physical healing or not, He would give victory and peace. It sounds like a simple formula. It was an act of faith, but certainly accompanied by the anguish of doubt and desire which had to be brought again and again under the authority of the Master.... From that very day Ponnammal grew ... worse. The pain increased, and her eyes grew dull as she lingered for days in misery until she reached her limit and her "warfare was accomplished."¹

Prima facie James' directions did not "work" for Ponnammal, the faithful servant of Christ. Honesty demands that we admit that such is often the case when Christians attempt to follow this Scripture. Why is this so? How is it that two believers become ill and both call for the elders of the church, both are anointed, both are prayed over, yet one dies and the other is healed?² Are we all to follow James' prescription? How are we to apply this Scripture in the church today? We hope to answer these and similar questions as we consider The Divine Prescription for Healing in the church.

[Hughes, R. K. (1991). James: faith that works (pp. 253–254). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.]

What a Friend We Have in Jesus!

What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear,
What a privilege to carry, Everything to God in prayer.

THE PRAYER OF FAITH! JAMES 5:13-20

