

**DISCOVERING GOD'S WILL (11)**  
**THE IMPLICIT WILL OF GOD- PART SEVEN**  
**“WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU'RE SICK?”**  
**Sermon 8/19/18**

Over the past several months we have been on a journey to discover the explicit and implicit will of God. Though we have been narrowing it down, the implicit will of God can be found in almost every verse of the Bible, particularly in the New Testament. In essence, any command God gives to His people that has not been overridden by grace, and any instruction Paul or the other apostles and New Testament writers placed in His word, is the implicit will of God.

These verses speak of the behavior and thought patterns which God requires of His people. For instance, we are told we can get angry but we are not to sin while we are angry. We are also told not to be anxious for anything but instead pray about everything and let our requests be made known to God so that we might experience God's peace in the midst of our difficulties. We are instructed to think about good things - things that are pure and lovely and right - rather than the evil things which we participated in before coming to faith in Christ. We are also told to keep our eyes focused on heaven and what awaits us there rather than what we experience here on earth.

In a few weeks I will wrap up this series of sermons on God's will. But before then I want to share a few more Scripture verses which give direction as to what the will of God is for each of us. The first (the one I want to speak on today) is found in James chapter 5.

**JAMES 5:14-16a**

*“Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up...*

*And if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.*

James is instructing us on how to deal with those in the church who are sick. The sick are to call for the elders of the church who are then to pray for the sick, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. James also says that if we have sinned we are to confess our sins to one another and pray for one another so that we may be healed.

Now why would James say this? Why would he relate sickness to sin? James does so from what He has seen Jesus do and from his knowledge of Scripture. We have two recorded instances in Scripture where Jesus related sin to sickness. The first concerns a man who had been ill for thirty-nine years. After Jesus healed the man he said to him, *“Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you”* (John 5:14). The second instance concerns a paralytic man whom Jesus healed. As part of his healing Jesus said to the man, *“Take courage son; your sins are forgiven.”* He then told the man to *“Get up, pick up your bed and go home. And he got up and went home.”* Jesus identified the source of his man's infirmity as sin and forgave the

man so that healing could occur (Matthew 9:2-8); so personal sin was the cause of these men's infirmities.

But Jesus did not always relate personal sin to sickness which is why James says, "IF any man has sinned." It is conditional and dependent on the person coming for healing. James knew that Jesus had healed two blind men whose personal sin was not the cause of their blindness. One was caused by an evil spirit (Matthew 12:22-28), the other from simply being born into a sinful world full of death, disease, and decay (John 9:1-3). Unlike the previous men, personal sin was NOT the cause of these men's infirmities.

The sick person coming for healing may or may not have unconfessed sin. But if they do they are to confess it so that they may be healed. Since all Scripture is inspired by God we must acknowledge that unconfessed sin may cause some sickness to occur. But not everyone coming for healing is sick because of their sin. We must deal with each person individually and deal with them accordingly.

After speaking of unconfessed sin in relation to healing James goes on to say this:

JAMES 5:16b-18

*"The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit."*

It is generally understood that the "James" who wrote this letter was the brother of Jesus who became the leader of the church in Jerusalem after Peter's arrest and departure from Jerusalem. He was not one of the twelve disciples and in fact did not believe his brother Jesus was the Messiah while He was still alive. But after His resurrection Jesus made a special appearance to his brother James which caused him to turn from doubt to faith in His brother as God's only Begotten Son.

James understood what it meant to doubt and to have your doubt turned to faith. He is the one who penned the words *"the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double minded man, unstable in all his ways."* He wrote these words from personal experience. So James is warning the elders and those that are coming for healing not to doubt what God is capable of doing. He reminds us that the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much and we have Elijah as an example of what faith in the hands of a righteous man can do.

Now what is a righteous man? A righteous man is anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and lives according to that belief. Why do I say that? Because Jesus is our righteousness. The Scriptures say, *"By His doing (what Christ did on the cross for us) you are in Christ Jesus who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption"* (1 Corinthians 1:30). The Scriptures also say, *"He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Corinthians 5:21). Through Christ we have become righteous men and women.

Concerning faith Paul tells us in Romans, “*For in it (in the gospel of Jesus Christ) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, ‘But the righteous man shall live by faith’*” (Romans 1:17). A righteous man lives by faith. When he prays he prays the prayer of faith. He is like Elijah. When he prays God listens and when he prays things happen. But you may say, if that is so, if I am a righteous person according to Scripture, then why aren’t all my prayers answered? Here is what James tells us about that.

JAMES 4:2b-3

*“You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.”*

The first thing James says about not receiving answers to our prayers is that we do not even bother to ask. How can we expect to receive something for which we have not prayed? Asking comes first. The granting of the request comes after. This is an important first concept because if you do not believe God heals today then you will not ask for it. You will not call the elders to pray for you when you are sick. The same holds true for the elders of churches. If they do not believe God heals or would use their prayers to heal, then they will not respond to the request for prayer from those who are sick.

I once knew a young mother of two who was diagnosed with cancer. She called the elders of her church and asked if they would anoint her with oil and pray for her as instructed by James that she might be healed. The elders could not do so because they did not believe God still healed today. Their response shocked her. She was deeply hurt and extremely disappointed in her church leadership. She believed God was able to heal but her elders did not even have the faith to pray.

This young mother eventually succumbed to the cancer and left behind a husband and two young children. I no longer remember how old she was when she died but she was somewhere in her mid-thirties. I do not know if she would have been healed if she had sought after others who did believe God heals today. All I know is that she was denied an opportunity for healing which the Bible explicitly directs those in need of healing to pursue. The leaders of her church, because of their unbelief, could not pray the prayer of faith for one of their own.

The second point James makes about unanswered prayer is that our motives are wrong. We ask for something so that we may enhance our connection with the world rather than with our Creator. We want to spend our prayer currency on ourselves and what we want rather than the things God desires for us. God will resist our pride when we pray this way. But when we humble ourselves he will grant us the grace to receive whatsoever He wills for us in any given situation. When we surrender to His will we are able to receive His will. When we ask in faith we receive by faith all that He has for us. Praying for the sick was something that Jesus did so we know this is the will of God, for Jesus said He did nothing that was not the Father’s will.

Before we move on there is something that needs to be said on this issue of faith and healing. There were times in Scripture when the person being healed had little or no faith at all. It was the faith of Jesus or His disciples that allowed the healing to occur. I am thinking about Lazarus and the widow’s son who were both dead when Jesus called to them and they came back to life. I am also thinking about the man who said to Jesus, “*I believe; help my unbelief*”

(Matthew 9:24). The act of presenting ourselves or our loved ones to Jesus for healing may be all the faith we can muster. But God can use the faith of the one who prays to bring healing to the sick.

There are many churches who have taught that God does not heal today – that the miraculous things of God done through human vessels has passed away. You may have attended one of these churches as I once did and as many of my relatives do. But after searching the Scriptures for myself I have come to the opposite conclusion. I firmly believe God does do miraculous things today and I believe healing is one of those miracles that God has not just made available to us in Heaven but has also made it available to us here and now on earth.

Does that mean that all will be healed all the time? No. Ecclesiastes says, *“There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven – A time to be born and a time to die”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2). We will all die of something, whether sickness or disease or simply old age. Even those whom God raised from the dead died a second time. Hebrews 9:27 says, *“It is appointed once for men to die.”* God has an appointed time for each of us to leave this life and enter into the next.

There are two people in all of Scripture who did not die but passed directly into heaven. Their names were Enoch and Elijah. But these two were exceptions to the rule. Everyone else died of something – war, famine, disease, sickness, old age, etc. Even David who was known as “a man after God’s own heart” suffered from a lack of circulation before he died. So there will come a point in time where all our prayers and the prayers of others will not prevent the angel of death from visiting us or our loved ones. The gospel singer Aretha Franklin died last Thursday after a long bout with cancer. The members of her church asked prayer for her that she might overcome this disease and return to health. She believed in the power of God to heal as did those who were praying. But it was not to be. The appointed time had come for her to enter into the presence of her Savior.

I’m sure many of us here have prayed for our loved ones to regain their health and live longer lives but they too have passed into eternity. My mother was seriously ill back in 1976. I prayed earnestly for God to heal her and bring her out of surgery with no ill effects. God answered my prayer. She recovered fully and lived another twenty-two years in good health. But she got ill again and died at the age of 69 in spite of my prayers for her healing. I was heartbroken and disappointed in the death of my mother but I was not disappointed in my God. I understood that the appointed time for her death had finally come.

The Apostle John says, *“I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers”* (3 John 1:2). John is letting us know that we should always pray for the health of others but as we pray we should keep in mind that a time to die is appointed for each one of us. At some point God will override our prayers and take His beloved children home to be with Him.

We look at death from the perspective of earth. We see the immediate loss. God does not look at death as we look at it. He sees it from the perspective of heaven. He sees the immediate gain of eternal life. Psalm 116 says, *“Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His*

*saints/godly ones*” (Psalm 116:15). God sees the death of those who love Him as a re-uniting of Himself with His creation. He sees it as a door to the final reward awaiting those who trusted in the blood of Christ for their redemption. He grants this reward in His appointed time. When we see death as God sees it we are able, as Paul says, not to grieve as those who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13); for we know that those who have died in the Lord are now in the presence of the Lord and Savior and that we will one day be reunited with them. So our grief does not overwhelm us but rather gives us hope.

There is much we do not know about the ways of God whether that concerns His decision to heal or His decision to take His loved ones home. Isaiah reminds us that God’s ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. Yet God has revealed what He requires of us in His word. As we have seen today, one of the things He has revealed is that when we are sick we are to call for the elders of the church and have them pray for us. And if we are an elder in a church we are told to pray the prayer of faith for the sick that they may be well. God is the one who heals. All healing power flows from Him. But He has asked us to participate with Him in the healing process. So out of obedience we should call for the elders of a church to come and pray for us when we are sick; and if we are elders in a church, when asked we should pray the prayer of faith for those who are sick. God has instructed us to do so. To do any less would be disobedient.

So the implicit will of God as revealed by James in the Scriptures we looked at today is this:

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GOD’S IMPLICIT WILL IS THAT:

- \* We call for the elders of the church when we are sick
- \* The elders are to anoint with oil and pray the prayer of faith for those who are sick
- \* We are confess our sins one to another and pray for one another so that we may be healed

Before I conclude I want to comment on the use of elders. The elders of the New Testament church were the most knowledgeable concerning Scripture. They were handpicked by the Apostles as they established churches in the various regions they visited. They were also taught directly by the Apostles how to minister to the sick. This was passed down to them by Jesus Himself. So it behooved those who were sick to call for the elders to pray. And I believe this same principle holds true today. But there are some elders today whose Scripture knowledge is limited and who do not have the faith to pray for the sick to recover as instructed by James. The good news is that I believe that Jesus gave, not only to the elders but to all believers in Christ, the authority to pray the prayer of faith those who are sick. That is a discussion for another day but the point I want to make is this. If the elders you know do not believe God heals today then search out those who do. It is the prayer of faith that accomplishes much. So seek out those who have the faith to pray for your healing.

If you want to know more about healing from a Biblical perspective and why I have concluded that believers can pray for one another with authority I have written a book entitled “Surprised By His Healing Power”. It documents my journey into the ministry of Christian healing starting with my total disbelief in God’s willingness to heal today to a place where my wife and I now both participate with God in His healing process. The book is free to anyone who wants it. I

only have a few copies today but I can print more if there is a need. I can also print up a large print edition if someone needs that.

I am aware that some have used their stance on the doctrine of healing to divide and separate people of faith from one another. This is neither my goal nor my objective today. I believe that all who are united by faith in Christ should strive to maintain that unity and not allow differences in non-essential doctrine such as healing to keep them from enjoying the fellowship that God intended. We are united by our mutual faith in the death and resurrection of Christ and our faith in the forgiveness of sin found in Him. The Scriptures tell us, *“If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved”* (Romans 10:9). Salvation is not a matter of whether one believes miracles died out centuries ago or still occur today. Salvation is a matter of confession and heart belief. It is through the atoning blood of Christ that we find unity of faith and we should not allow the enemy of our souls to use our disagreement over the doctrine of healing to divide us.

We may not all believe God heals today but I believe, regardless of our doctrinal positions, that we can all agree with Paul when he says that now we see in a mirror dimly but one day we will see face to face what we have believed in our hearts to be true; now we know in part but one day we will know fully just as we also have been fully known (1 Corinthians 12:12). While on earth we can only know a part and only see dimly the things God has revealed in Scripture. We will not know fully until we see Him face to face. So let us love one another as Jesus commanded regardless of our doctrinal viewpoint regarding the miraculous (John 15:12). After all, when all is said and done on this earth we will all stand before the throne united in worship of our Creator, and it will not matter what we believed about the non-essential matters of our faith that divided us on earth.

*“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’*

*And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, saying, ‘Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen’* (Revelation 7:9-12).

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