

ACCURATELY HANDLING THE WORD OF TRUTH

jkroberts_us@yahoo.com
www.pacolethillsbaptist.org

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Mark 7:31-37, 8:22-26

1. The title of this message comes from a word of admonition the Apostle Paul gave to Timothy. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15
2. Accurately handling the word of truth requires work on our part.
3. Many prefer to selectively take verses and passages, often out of context, to support a particular point-of-view, belief system or doctrinal position.
4. Nothing is wrong with topical sermons provided they are supported by the whole counsel, or purpose of God. (Acts 20:27)
5. With that said let's look at the passage before us.
6. Several weeks ago we saw that Jesus left Galilee for a short mission trip to Tyre where He healed the daughter of a Syrophenician woman who was demon possessed.
NOTE: Are we willing to go out of our way to be God's instrument in the lives of individuals?
7. Here Jesus, after returning to Galilee, healed a deaf man and a blind man, and in both instances He used His own spit as part of the process.
8. We see a similar approach in John 9:1-7.
As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. 4 "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. 5 "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." 6 When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, 7 and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent). So he went away and washed, and came back seeing.
9. In spite of what Jesus did on three occasions I personally have never heard a sermon on using human spit or mud as an aid to healing.
10. On the other hand there is no record of Jesus using oil, although He may have, as an aid to healing, but His disciples did. Mark 6:7-13
And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits; 8 and He instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a mere staff — no bread, no bag, no money in their belt — 9 but to wear sandals; and He added, "Do not put on two tunics." 10 And He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town. 11 "Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them." 12 They went out and preached that men should repent. 13 And they were casting out many demons and **were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.**
11. Because of James 5:13-18, a passage we will reference shortly, some pastors and churches put a great emphasis on anointing sick people with oil even though many miracles of healing are recorded in the Bible where oil was not a factor.
12. We should not build an all-encompassing doctrine based on a single verse of Scripture unless that verse is clearly shown to be all-encompassing.
13. So what helpful things can we learn from the passages that have been referred to so far.

I. We must believe that Jesus is God's answer to man's need.

- A. In two of the three incidents needy men were brought to Jesus by people who believed that He could help them.
- B. What are you believing God for in relationship to your own life, the lives of others, and the life of this church as well as other churches?
- C. What we are believing God for will be reflected in our prayer life and in our interactions with others.

II. We must pray in faith. James 5:13-18

Is anyone among you suffering? **Then he must pray.** Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. 14 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; 15 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. 16 Therefore, **confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.** 17 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. 18 Then **he prayed again**, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

- A. The overriding emphasis in this passage is prayer, while the reference to oil is incidental.
 - B. Throughout the Scripture we are constantly admonished and commanded to be people of prayer.
 - C. At times various means and methods were used, but they were not presented as absolutes. EXAMPLE: During Paul's ministry in Corinth we read the following. Acts 19:11-12
God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.
 - D. The great constant throughout the Scriptures is, **"the prayer offered in faith."**
 - E. However, the prayer offered in faith is not always answered exactly in keeping with what we want or think needs to be done.
 - F. Even Paul, who as an apostle had the gift of healing, could not always heal unless it was in keeping with the plan and purpose of God.
 - 1. When Epaphroditus was sick to the point of death Paul was not able to immediately heal him. Philippians 2:27
 - 2. On another occasion he had to leave a man named Trophimus sick at Miletus. 2 Timothy 4:20
 - 3. Also Paul was told that his prayer for personal healing would not be answered because, "his thorn in the flesh," had a spiritual purpose. 2 Corinthians 12:7-9
- NOTE: Nowhere in Paul's letters does he teach the necessity of using oil when praying for the sick.

III. We must focus on our relationship with the Lord because, **"The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."** James 5:16

NOTE: In reference to prayer James taught we must ask in faith without doubting, (James 1:6) and with pure motives. (James 4:3)

IV. We must be adaptable and not dogmatic.

A. G. Campbell Morgan wrote, "If we are really going to deal with men in the name of Christ...we cannot deal with all men the same way...the Lord never did a thing twice in (exactly) the same way."

B. We love formulas; this plus this will accomplish or result in this.

C. We serve a sovereign God whose ways are as varied as they are wonderful.

D. Obeying God's Word, praying in the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit will result in our being used by God in the lives of others, often times in unexpected ways.

APPLICATION

1. There is an important side-note here, and that is people of faith are to involve mature Christians in their lives not only where sickness is involved, but also where sin is an issue.
2. Being used of God in the lives of others should be a priority in our lives.
3. For that to happen we must be prayerful, available, expectant, and prepared.
4. Also, we must be part of, and accountable to, a local body of believers along with its leaders.