

WHEN Should You Be Anointed?

What is YOUR responsibility in asking to be anointed? What extremes should you avoid? How sick should you be before you ask? These—and many more—everyday questions are answered in this article.

by David Jon Hill

HAVE you ever wondered just how sick you should be before you call on the Elders for anointing and prayer to be healed? Have you ever thought you wouldn't "bother" your Elder because he was "too busy"?

How can you *know* when you should call on God to be forgiven of your physical sins and be healed? If you wonder whether you should ask, how can you *have faith* in asking? And what if an Elder *refuses to anoint you* after you have asked—should you go to another for anointing?

You need to understand the answers to these basic questions. You want to do what is right—it is basically a matter of balance and wisdom, a matter of knowing when and for what to apply the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

What Is Healing?

Healing is one of the great benefits from God. "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and *forget not* all his benefits: Who *forgiveth* all thine iniquities; who *healeth* all thy diseases" (Ps. 103:2-3).

Healing is also an office which God holds—an office He has mercifully exercised for thousands of years. "... for I am the LORD that *healeth thee*" (Ex. 15:26). And this office belongs EXCLUSIVELY TO GOD. "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I HEAL: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand" (Deut. 32:39).

The fakes and charlatans of history who have pretended to heal—who have

arrogated to themselves this office which belongs solely to the Creator—the priests and the lord of flies, and the staff entwined with snakes have been singled out for the vengeance of God and have been classified among the greatest of abominations. Our God is a jealous God and He jealously guards this office. "Heal me, O Lord, and I *shall be healed*; save me, and I *shall be saved*: for thou art my praise" (Jer. 17:14). God is the ONLY One who can provide TRUE HEALING—just as God is the *only* One who can provide *true salvation*.

God's true healing is not to be construed as a natural process of mending. It is an outright removal of the affliction—a direct miracle. While it is true that sometimes God heals a person over a period of time, nonetheless it is a direct intervention of God and not a natural, bodily, healing process.

Healing is the forgiveness of sin! "When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, *thy sins be forgiven thee*" (Mark 2:5). Jesus, the Son of God, who came to bear our every sin in His body as a sacrifice for us—Jesus who was so *willing* to bear our sins (Mark 1:41), made it very plain that the healing of our physical bodies involves the direct forgiveness of sins! "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth TO FORGIVE SINS" (Mark 2:10).

Although the healing of our bodies has a purely physical effect—even though it is a present and temporary thing (because no matter how many

times you are healed you must eventually die), this forgiveness of sin (which is spiritual) which has a direct and tangible physical effect leads us to see how our Loving God can also forgive our spiritual sins and grant us eternal spiritual health and life!

But the application of that forgiveness of sin is spiritual—it is *supernatural*. Nearly 2000 years ago the man, Jesus Christ, who had lived a perfect life, was beaten, punished and wounded and then immediately put to death on the stake. But that man was resurrected—the first-born Son of God—as a spirit being, of the God family, who sits at His Father's right hand now and still offers the sacrifice of His broken body to be applied for the forgiveness of our sins. Centuries have passed. There is no way other than through our Spiritual, Loving God that this sacrifice that Christ made so long ago could possibly apply to us today. Besides, there is no way within the limits of our physical understanding in which the suffering of one human being can erase the suffering of another. It is beyond natural, physical understanding—it is spiritual.

Healing Important to God's Church

Healing was always an integral part of the ministry of Jesus Christ—Matthew 4:23; Luke 9:11. It was an integral part of the ministry of the early church—Acts 4:7-12, 16-17; 10:38-43. It is a sign of the true ministry of Jesus Christ—Mark 16:15-20.

Although the Church of God today

certainly does not make any *show* of this benefit of healing—nonetheless, thousands are healed each year! Many are anointed and healed each day in the local church areas. Also, scores of letters come in each week from people who have been healed after using an anointed cloth sent to them from Headquarters.

I want to quote some of these thankful comments—these comments are never solicited, but they do show that our Merciful and Loving God-Healer is *ACTIVE in performing this office today!* Also, I want to show you that when it is necessary for you to request an anointed handkerchief rather than be anointed directly by one of God's ministers that it is *every bit as effectual*. Some have requested to be anointed personally and when they were asked if they had been anointed before for the particular illness they would state that they had not, that they had *only* received an anointed cloth! This is one facet of being anointed that you need to understand with proper balance.

The *oil* that a minister uses in anointing has no power to heal. There is no healing power resident within the *hands* of the physical individual who does the anointing—the healing power is not in the particular selection of the *audible syllables* of the words chosen for the prayer—nor is there any healing power within the *threads* of the anointed cloth.

God is the Healer! And He heals through the power of His Holy Spirit and by the direct application of the punishment that Jesus Christ suffered.

Extremes to Avoid

The two extremes regarding the use of an anointed cloth which must be avoided are: 1) Some refer to the anointed cloth as a "healing cloth." This is not true. The reason that Mr. Armstrong in his letter that goes with the anointed cloth requests that you burn the cloth after you have used it, is so that you will NOT IN ANY WAY *venerate the cloth!* The only reason we send a cloth at all is because of the Biblical example of the Apostle Paul. 2) The other extreme is that some feel the cloth is *not good enough*—that they must have the minister anoint

them directly, personally. This is not true either. The use of a cloth depends upon your inaccessibility to a minister at the time of your illness. Sometimes a minister has to send an anointed cloth even in a local area because he cannot be in many places at once.

If you are sent an anointed cloth, do not feel that you are being slighted, and on the other hand, do not venerate the cloth. Let's notice what God says about this means that He has honored for the healing of our bodies in Acts 19:11-12—and then read some of the comments from people who have been healed of various diseases by God through this means today! "And God wrought SPECIAL MIRACLES by the hands of Paul: so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them." Note that this is called a special miracle—that God in a sense has to go out of the way because of extenuating circumstances to apply the sacrifice of Christ in these cases.

Some Thankful Comments

"I thank God that my cataracts are gone. A year ago I was in the hospital to have them removed. They were going to take the right eye first and ten days later the left eye. But every morning when they were ready to operate I would be sick and they couldn't do so. They told me to go home for a month and I had you pray for my cataracts to be removed. Later the doctors checked and said my cataracts were gone, which surprised them beyond words. They told me cataracts just don't go without an operation. One doctor said a greater power was dealing with my eyes" (Woman from Detroit, Michigan).

"My husband and I just recently escaped miraculously from a terrible fire which destroyed our trailer home. Had it not been for God's intervention we would have lost our lives. My husband is in the hospital with his back, left arm and left shin quite badly burned. We sent to Mr. McNair and Mr. Quillen for prayer cloths and my husband is healing twice as fast as the doctor expected him to" (Woman from Utah).

"You prayed for my son and sent me

a prayer cloth. He couldn't walk by himself, but when we prayed he got up and walked for the first time in three months. He had been sick nearly 10 years" (Woman from Cross Plains, Texas).

"I thank God that the cancer in my ear has gone. The doctor who wanted to cut it out looked at my ear a few days ago and wanted to know what I had done to it. So I told him that I had changed doctors. He wanted to know who my doctor was, so I pointed upwards and told him that He was up there, but I don't think he believed me. But the proof is there for the world to see. Thank God the man who healed by the sea of Galilee heals today" (Man from Florida).

Not Just a Doctrine

The healing of our physical bodies is not just a doctrine of the Church of God—it is an actual, physical, real benefit and blessing. It is the way to health when we are sick. Don't be guilty along with some who have said, "My church doesn't allow me to go to doctors!" This church—the Church of God—DOES *allow you to go to doctors*—just as God *allows* you to go to doctors!

Don't blame the Church for your not going to doctors—it must be your own personal, real, faithful conviction that you as one individual are going to trust your Living Creator God to forgive your sins and heal your body! You YOURSELF as an individual before God—and apart from "the Church" must choose in faith to put your life in God's hands, not coerced or forced in any way but free as an individual to pursue *your* faith! You must realize that whether you live or whether you die—because death is always a possibility as long as we are physical—you belong to Jesus Christ, you are the Lord's! (Rom. 14:8).

You can go to doctors for your healing *if you want to*—the Church of God *advises you* that this is NOT the way to be healed. *It is just not within the power of another human being TO FORGIVE YOUR SIN AND HEAL YOUR BODY!* But this must be YOUR OWN PERSONAL DECISION—a matter of *your* exercising the faith of Jesus Christ—

not just something you feel you have to do because you belong to the Church and this is one of the doctrines of the Church.

An exact understanding of how this facet of the Truth should affect our lives has been a problem with God's people historically. "For he who eats and drinks *without a proper sense of the Body*, eats and drinks to his own condemnation. That is why many of you are ill and infirm, and a number even dead" (I Cor. 11:29-30, Moffatt Translation).

We partake of the Passover every year. We take the symbol of broken, unleavened bread to represent the broken, sinless body of Jesus Christ sacrificed for our physical sins—sacrificed for our physical healing. Each year as we take this symbol we should be *fully assured in OUR OWN MINDS as to its meaning and significance*. We should trust completely in God for our physical healing as we trust in Him for our spiritual salvation. We should fully understand the meaning of the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ!

Christ's Sacrifice for You

You need to understand what you are asking for when you ask to be anointed—so that you do not regard it lightly. You are asking for the pain and punishment, the beating that Jesus Christ suffered at the hands of Roman soldiers the night before His death to be applied for *YOUR physical sins*. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by *whose stripes ye were healed*" (I Pet. 2:24). "But he was *wounded* for OUR transgressions, he was *bruised* for OUR iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and *with his stripes we are healed*" (Isa. 53:5).

Basically from the waist up, the body of Jesus Christ was torn to shreds. Great chunks of flesh hung down in red ribbons of raw meat. In some places the white bones of the rib-cage could even be seen (read Ps. 22:16-17). As the metal pieces tied to the ends of leather thongs lashed around His body they whipped by His face

and tore at His lips and nose and cheeks leaving His face in such a state that He was no longer recognizable—"As many were astounded at thee; his visage [face] was so marred more than any man, and his form [whole body] more than the sons of men" (Isa. 52:14).

Let's note just briefly so we will realize fully what we're asking for when we are anointed, the description given in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* under the article, "Cross and Crucifixion," in volume 7, page 505 of the 11th edition: "The criminal [being crucified] was first of all usually stripped naked and bound to an upright stake and so cruelly scourged with an implement formed of strips of leather having pieces of iron or some other hard material at the ends that not merely was the *flesh often stripped from the bones*, but even the *entrails partly protruded* and the *anatomy of the body disclosed*. In this pitiable state he was reclothed, and if able to do so, was made to drag the stake to the place of execution where he was either fastened to it or impaled upon it and left to die."

This gives you *some* idea of what Jesus Christ went through that night for YOU! It was only because He was in excellent physical condition that He was even able to walk after receiving such a beating. *These* are the stripes by which YOU are healed! *These* are the stripes you ask to be applied to the bared back of Christ in YOUR stead when you ask to be anointed.

But You MUST Ask!

Once we begin to recognize the awesomeness of the sacrifice we're asking to be applied, we tend to go to the other extreme and suffer through our illnesses considering ourselves righteous because we're not asking to have the sacrifice of Christ applied to us.

But it is not a matter of *choice* once we are converted. It is only a matter of deciding *when* to call for this sacrifice. It is a DIRECT COMMAND—"Is any sick among you? *let him call for the elders of the church*; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith *shall save the sick*, and THE

LORD SHALL RAISE HIM UP; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Jas. 5:14-15). The expression "let him call" is not a suggestion, it is in the command form. The Goodspeed Translation makes it a little clearer "If anyone is sick, he SHOULD CALL in the elders of the church and have them pray over him . . ." (Jas. 5:14).

Some reason that they do not *deserve* this sacrifice. *This is absolutely true!* Neither do we deserve the sacrifice of the life of Jesus Christ to pay for our sins that we might inherit eternal life. Yet we are commanded to repent and be baptized—which means we MUST CLAIM *the death of Jesus Christ to be applied in our stead!*

Once that death has been claimed you no longer belong to yourself. You are purchased—paid for completely with a price beyond your conception. You are no longer responsible for just yourself—an individual apart. You are a member of the very Body of Jesus Christ. "What? know ye not that YOUR *body* is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (I Cor. 6:19).

You are no longer free to selfishly do with your body as you wish to do. You are now responsible to see to it that you are in health, strength and vigor to use even that human, bodily energy which you have, in the service of the whole Body of Jesus Christ—the Church!

"For ye are bought with a price: therefore *glorify God in your BODY*" (I Cor. 6:20). You glorify God by allowing Him to live His life in you. You repent of your sins, both spiritual and physical, and ask for the sacrifice of Christ to pay for both. Then you USE your cleansed body and mind to serve Him one-hundred per cent!

Some Pitfalls to Avoid!

I heard some say that they did not "bother the minister" unless they were *very* seriously ill. That they just prayed for themselves. These individuals felt that James 5:13 instructed this. "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray." But that is not what this verse says. The word "afflicted" does not refer in

this case to *physical* ailments, but to mental problems and trials. Again, it is better in the Goodspeed Translation—"If any one of you is in trouble, he should pray."

There are a number of instructions in the end of James 5. You have to be careful about where one instruction leaves off and another begins. The specific instruction of what to do when you are sick does not begin until Verse 14. You will notice that Verse 13 also tells you what to do if you are merry or happy!

Another common error that is honestly made, is to ask for anointing when you feel a cold or something else "coming on." If you feel something coming on, then you are not *yet* sick. What you need to do is immediately analyze your life to see what is causing this feeling of imminent sickness. Anointing is not a rabbit's foot—not a just-in-case, hocus-pocus—not an abracadabra or an "open sesame"—and as we have seen above, it should be applied only when it *must* be applied.

You must avoid using anointing carelessly. You should never be anointed *just in case you* MIGHT catch something. If some sickness is "going around" you need to be *aware* of it. Take every precaution you can so that you will not come down with it in the first place. If this fails and you do become *sick*, THEN is when you should ask for anointing.

This leads us to the next common error regarding anointing. This error has a tendency to crop up more often in those who have been in the Church longer, and those who have been reared in the Church. The error is to begin to consider anointing as a *mere ritual*. These individuals have been anointed before many times for many things, and rather than facing each situation of the application of the sacrifice of Christ in its individual seriousness it becomes a mere formalistic matter of conforming to Church doctrine and established habit. *Don't let this happen to YOU!*

Another pitfall to avoid—and we shouldn't even have to mention this one—is *planning ahead of time* to use the sacrifice of Christ! Taking that sacrifice for granted, and thinking

about it in a very careless and light vein, some individuals *anticipate* needing it—deliberately getting themselves sick, *knowingly* losing sleep, *knowingly* eating the wrong foods, *knowingly* getting in danger of bodily injury! Don't EVER plan on using the sacrifice of Christ in this way!

Another common error is being anointed as a *last resort*! Many seem to be trying to copy the pitiful example of the woman in Mark 5:25-26: "And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood *twelve years*, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse."

As you read on in this account you realize that Jesus Christ had compassion on the woman and healed her outright of this illness from which she had sought relief from every quarter for twelve years! But remember, this was the first time she had had opportunity to approach the One who made the sacrifice that makes healing possible! Don't *you* make the same mistake this *unconverted* woman made, and try everything else before you ask for anointing.

This leads automatically to two other common errors, which blend together. They are: 1) Using all the home remedies and old wives' tales that you have heard of and collected through your history. And, 2) immediately after you have been anointed, and the "ritual" has been accomplished, to ask what *physical* thing you can now do—as if we should *prescribe* something for you.

Here again it's a matter of balance. There are certain physical things that we can do for ourselves. You have heard Mr. Armstrong say many times that he advises people regarding the common-sense laws of physical health to help the individual find out what physical laws he is breaking so that he will *cease* breaking them. But this is IN NO WAY, SHAPE OR FORM *going to heal you of your illness*. And it is NOT in any way to be construed as a prescription of any sort. Any advice that is offered by your minister regarding such things as fasting or the beneficial values of certain foods should certainly

be regarded seriously by you. But do not make the TERRIBLE MISTAKE of getting your eyes *on the physical* and OFF the sacrifice of Jesus Christ!

Only that sacrifice of Jesus Christ can heal you. Its application is a spiritual thing that you cannot see. If you get your eyes and mind off Jesus, and on some physical thing—even if *that thing be right*—then you are missing the point of healing entirely! Read Mr. Ted Armstrong's article beginning on page three of the June issue of *The GOOD NEWS* regarding our knowledge of health laws as a sign of the True Church. Learn the balance which is taught in that article and live it in your life!

How to Tell When You Are "Sick"

There is *no absolute formula* which can apply—there is no special pulse-beat or exact degree of temperature at which you become "sick." However, there is a good general rule of thumb that can be applied to this question so that you can know when you should ask to be anointed. The word "sick" used in James 5:14 is from a Greek word which *Strong's Concordance* defines as "to be feeble in any way."

Since we are to serve God in *everything* we do—in the employment that we have, in the church activities, in the household duties of the wife—and even in the normal routine of children's work, play and study—then this rule of thumb can apply. If you (or your child) are rendered unable to carry out your normal, daily routine that life as a Christian requires of you, then you should consider yourself sick.

If you as a housewife cut your finger while preparing the family meal, you would probably just cleanse it, bandage it and continue with your daily routine. If there arose complications, however—say the cut were to become infected—so that your whole hand might be rendered useless, then you would be "sick." You would not be able to do the job that God called you to do. Now you must ask God to *intervene*, to *forgive* your carelessness, to *forgive*

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your sins, to *cleanse* you and make you *whole* and *well* and *strong* so that you can serve Him with that strength and health.

Or you might wake up in the morning with a headache that would bother you, but that may go away as soon as you eat breakfast, or exercise a little in the work you do. This could not be construed as being "sick." However, if that headache persisted to the extent that it impaired your ability to do the job you've been given to do—to the extent where it distracted you and perhaps *endangered* you or others if your job requires you to be physically alert—then you are *sick* and should be anointed!

Understand Responsibility

But what if you should ask to be anointed after having considered these points and the minister were to *refuse*?

This situation of calling on the elders to be anointed presents an excellent example of how we can understand authority and responsibility in God's Church. The first responsibility is **YOURS!** You must seriously stop and consider what you are asking God for, realizing at the same time that if you *really are sick* you **MUST ASK**—it is *your* responsibility to decide *when* to ask. As soon as you have performed this responsibility it becomes the responsibility of the elder whom you have asked.

Realizing more fully than you do the awesome responsibility of applying the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the elder must now make his decision based on the knowledge that you bring to him about the physical situation, and his knowledge of God's Word. *It is no longer YOUR responsibility.* Since he is God's representative and serves you in the name of Jesus Christ, you should not consider it a rebuke or in any way be offended, if an elder refuses to anoint you or your child. In all probability, unless there are unusual, extenuating circumstances—he will *explain* to you *why* he is not anointing you.

It would be good to mention here an express command from Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong that all of us elders have received regarding the anointing of children. In anointing, as you know, the minister must lay his hands on the head of the individual. Little children are not used to this—and their first reaction is to rebel! You should make it your duty as a parent to explain this to your child even before he becomes sick—to get him used to having hands on his head—to teach him ultimate respect for his elders in general and the ministry in particular. Mr. Armstrong's instruction to us was that we are to refuse to anoint a rebellious and unruly child. That we are to request the parent to bring the child under control so that all things can be done decently and in order—especially with such a *serious* request before the very throne of God in heaven!

Finally, when the elder in prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ, calls on God the Father in heaven and by the anointing with oil as a symbol of God's

Holy Spirit, it becomes God's responsibility! The elder, laying his hands upon the head of the individual to set him apart, puts the responsibility for your healing in God's very hands! Now it is up to Him to decide *whether* He will apply the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is up to Him to decide *when* He will apply that sacrifice—and *how*!

You just be sure that *you* perform *your* responsibility! The elder *will* perform his responsibility and God *will* perform His!

Ask in Faith

When you have applied the principles in this article you will be able to have absolute faith—the faith of Jesus Christ—that you **WILL BE HEALED!**

When you *do* call on God for that sacrifice of His Son's broken body—and when that sacrifice is applied, and you are healed—be *sure* that you **USE** that health and strength that you get by a divine miracle from a Merciful and Loving God, **TO SERVE HIM AND HIM ONLY!**