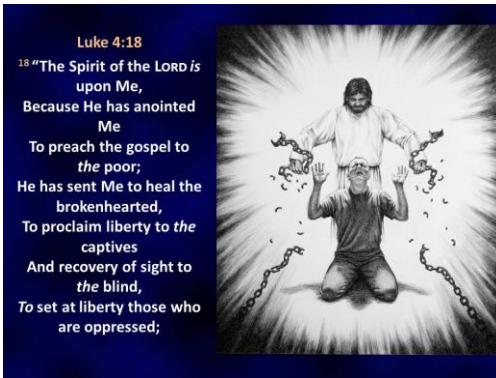


HEALING



“Is anyone among you sick? 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 will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (James 5:14-15).

One of the great prophetic themes of the Old Testament concerning the promised messiah is that the Father would send His Son ***“to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind”*** (Luke 4:1; see also Is. 49:8 Is. 61:10). The ministry of Christ was one of numerous healings of ***“all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease”*** (Mt. 4:23). In addition, Jesus healed darkened hearts and minds as He released people from demonic oppression.

Like their Master before them, the early apostles participated in God’s Work of healing as well, attributing their miracles to the risen and ascended Christ. ***“Jesus the Christ heals you”***, Peter told a newly restored man who had been bedridden for eight years (Acts 9:34). St. Paul identified healing as a gift of the Holy Spirit (1Co. 12:9). Thus, the New Testament foundation was established for **the healing ministry to be a part of the sacramental life of the Church** (James 5:14,15).

*** Healings throughout history**

The Orthodox Church has never believed or behaved as though the gifts of the Spirit or the healing miracles of Christ have somehow passed away. Did not Jesus promise, ***“He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father”*** (John 14:12)?

St. Ireneaus, writing at the close of the second century, speaks of miracles in his day: ***“Some drive out devils... some have foreknowledge of the future... others heal the sick through the laying on of hands... and even the dead have been raised up before now and have remained with us for many years.”*** The writings of other Church Fathers speak often of miracles within the church.

*** The practice of the Church today**

To this day, the Orthodox practice of prayer for the sick follows the New Testament instruction of St. James. The Orthodox Church has a special service of healing, which may be performed at any time. The presbyter prays for the ill person, anointing him with oil and saying, ***“O Lord Almighty, Healer of our souls and bodies, who put down and raise up, who chastise and heal also, visit now in your mercy our brother or sister, N., who is ill. Stretch forth your arm, which is full of healing and health, and raise (him/her) up from his bed, and cure this illness. Put away the spirit of disease and every malady and pain and fever. And if (he/she) has committed sins and transgressions, grant remission and forgiveness, because You love mankind”***

As Orthodox Christians we pray, neither commanding God to heal nor doubting His ability to heal, but pleading for his promised mercy on all who are ill.

(From the Orthodox Study Bible - Page 1679)