

February 21, 2010 – Names of God – YHWH RAPHA

We're continuing today with our corporate worship focus on the "Names of God" and how God reveals Himself through His different Biblical names. So far, we've looked at the names YHWH, ELOHIM, ADONAI, & EL SHADDAI.

Today, we're going to focus on the name YHWH RAPHA. Obviously, this is a compound name, a "two-part" name for God. YHWH, as we've already seen, is God's most personal name. It has its roots in a Hebrew verb that means "to be" or "I Am."

RAPHA is a Hebrew word that means "to heal, repair, or restore." YHWH RAPHA is translated in our English Bibles as "the LORD your **healer**."

Now, I have a feeling that, when we hear "the LORD your **healer**," we *immediately* think about *physical* healing. That's the *first* place our minds go. Physical healing. And I'm not saying that's *incorrect*, I just think that's *incomplete*. There is far more implied by the name YHWH RAPHA than *just* physical healing.

And I think the fact that our minds tend to gravitate towards physical healing betrays the influence that our culture has on us.

Because it seems to me that, in our culture, physical health has been elevated nearly to the status of a "god!"

Most people seem to live as if *this* body & *this* lifetime... that's all there *is*!

Even believers – if you get a group of Christians together and ask for prayer requests, at least 90% of those prayer requests will revolve around *health* issues!

Now, our bodies are a gift from God, and we have a stewardship to take care of them. And the Bible clearly *instructs* us to pray for physical healing. Definitely. I'm just saying - that's not the *only* thing worth praying about!

For me, it's helpful to remember... even in the clearest instances of supernatural healing from God – even people Jesus healed Himself! – those people are all dead now... right? Their healing was only temporary.

Every one of them eventually got sick and died of something else.

Even Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead... he died again, sometime later on.

Now, is miraculous physical healing in this lifetime a gift from God that He has performed and still performs today, according to His will? Yes, absolutely. But it's not the *ultimate* gift! It's not the greatest miracle I could ever hope for.

In reality, God has already promised us something much greater!
ALL Christians will be healed! And not just temporarily, but completely & permanently! All pain, all sickness, all death... GONE. Forever and ever!
In the New Heavens and the New Earth, the Bible tells us that:

Revelation 21:4

Death will exist no longer; grief, crying, and pain will exist no longer!

That's a *magnificent* promise.

And the fact that we sometimes seem to find temporary healing in this life, right now, to be more valuable, more attractive, more desirable...

I think it betrays our lack of perspective, really our lack of maturity.

We - and I'm including myself in this - we are often a lot like a toddler asking his mommy for an Oreo. ("Mommy, can I please have an Oreo!")

And the Mom says, "It's almost 5 o'clock, I'm already cooking supper. We're having lasagna and homemade bread and ice cream sundaes for dessert.

So no, I'm not going to give you an Oreo right now, because it will ruin your supper."

Now... how happy is the typical toddler going to be with that response? Not very. Most toddlers are going to keep begging, maybe start whining, maybe even throw a big fit trying to get that Oreo.

Because, for a toddler, an Oreo in my hand right now is way better than the promise of a meal sometime later on. Now, that's immature and short-sighted. But you *expect* that from toddler. They're not going to understand all their parents' purposes.

The thing is, sometimes, you and I are similarly short-sighted - towards GOD.

We all need to keep maturing and growing and learning to value what *GOD* values.

We need to gain more of *His* perspective.

Everyone who is a believer has a great and wonderful promise from YHWH RAPHA - a *guarantee* of ultimate, complete, and permanent physical healing.

But... YHWH RAPHA goes beyond physical healing alone.

The word RAPHA is also used in the Bible to refer to *emotional* healing.

Psalm 147 says that God:

Psalm 147:3

He **heals** (that's our word, RAPHA) the **brokenhearted** & binds up their wounds.

So, YHWH RAPHA provides *emotional* healing.

RAPHA can also refer to *spiritual* healing. In Jeremiah chapter three, God says:

Jeremiah 3:22

“Return, O faithless children, I will **heal** (I will RAPHA) your **faithlessness**.”

In Psalm 41, David cries out to God:

Psalm 41:4

“**Heal** RAPHA my **soul**, for I have sinned against You.”

RAPHA is also used in the Bible to refer to the **rebuilding** of a stone altar that had been torn down, the **purifying** of bad water, and the **repair** of broken pottery.

RAPHA is the healing of what is diseased...
the mending of what is torn...
the repair of what is shattered...
the cleansing of what is contaminated...
the restoration of what is broken.

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This name YHWH RAPHA originates in Exodus chapter 15.

This is immediately after God has parted the Red Sea, the nation of Israel has miraculously walked across on dry land, and Pharoah & his army have been destroyed when the sea closed back over the top of them.

That’s Exodus chapter fourteen. Chapter fifteen begins with 21 verses of praise – they’re worshipping God with tambourines and dancing, and Moses and the people are praising God, singing:

Exodus 15:21

“I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted;
He has thrown the horse and its rider into the sea.”

The *very next verse*, what happens *immediately* after their deliverance and their worship celebration is this:

Exodus 15:22-27

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea and they went into the wilderness of Shur. For 3 days they traveled in the desert without finding water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water, because it was bitter...

So, with a song in their mouths and tambourines in their hands, Moses leads them straight into the wilderness. They travel for 3 days without finding any water. They're hot, they're tired, they're thirsty, & probably becoming *very* concerned. It's a relief when they arrive at Marah and find water there. But their hopes are dashed when they taste the water and it's bitter, undrinkable. How will they respond? The Bible says:

So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What are we going to drink?"

On the one hand, you sort of understand. 3 days in the burning desert with no water could make it easy to forget what YHWH has done.

On the other hand, it was only 3 days ago that they were enthusiastically worshipping God for His miraculous deliverance.

Just 3 days earlier, they were dancing and singing songs of praise.

But now?... Their worship has vanished into thin air.

Really, this would be very surprising & disappointing, except that quite often, we aren't much different. (Are we?)

(There's so much for us to learn about worship here!)

Can I only praise God when things are comfortable and convenient in my life?

Do I have any heart to worship Him when things get tough?

Bitter circumstances are a real **test** of the genuineness of my worship.

Because, you know... if my worship on Sunday is not relevant to my circumstances on Monday, then there's something *very* wrong with my worship.

I mean... if this God is Who we claim He is with our songs of praise, then He is relevant to *every* circumstance!

The Israelites, however, did *not* worship in this situation.

They apparently didn't find God relevant to their bitter circumstances.

They didn't bring their need for fresh water to God *at all*.

They just grumbled at Moses.

(Which is an easy trap to fall into – forgetting about God and running to other so-called “solutions” for our lives.)

But notice the contrast:

the people grumbled at Moses, but Moses cried out to YHWH!

The people's eyes were on their circumstances. Moses' eyes were on God.

MOSES is the genuine worshipper in this story.

Then Moses cried out to the LORD. and the LORD showed him a tree.

He threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

This is God performing a miracle. Through the means of this “tree,” God supernaturally “heals” this water, changes it from bitter to sweet (so they can drink it.) Once again YHWH is faithful to deliver His people.

Then the Bible says:

There the LORD made a decree & a law for them, and **there He tested them.**

Don't miss this. The *reason* these people are at Ma-rah is because God has *led* them there. So, when the people were grumbling against Moses, they were actually grumbling against God!

In fact, Exodus chapter 13 tells us that God was leading them (day after day) with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

YHWH had supernaturally *guided* them straight to this place with bitter waters!

Why? Why would a “good God” do such a thing?

Don't you think YHWH could have avoided 3 days without water if He wanted to?

Of course He could! He *created* that desert – He knows where all the water is!

Or, He could have given them rain from above, water from a rock!...

The Bible says explicitly that YHWH led them to Marah for a purpose - to test them.

God uses our bitter circumstances to test us.

And (at least part of) the test is: Can I praise GOD when life gets hard?

Are my eyes on God, or are they on my circumstances?

Difficulties in life reveal the truth about what is in our hearts.

God often uses the wilderness (of bitter circumstances) as a place to test us and refine us and teach us to trust Him. (and to obey Him)

(God) said, “If you will carefully obey the LORD your God, do what is right in His eyes, pay attention to His commands, and keep all His statutes, I will *not* bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD your healer.” (literally YHWH RAPHA)

More important than the people's need for fresh water was their need to know God as YHWH RAPHA – the Lord their healer.

It's important for us not to *waste* our pain, not to *waste* our hardships, not to *waste* our bitter circumstances - but to *learn* from them, use them to grow in our love & our trust for YHWH RAPHA.

That's the *purpose* of our testing! The Bible says:

James 1:3

...the **testing** of your faith **produces endurance**.

Hebrews 12:10

God **disciplines** us **for our good**, that we may share in His holiness.

God has a *purpose* for our difficult circumstances! The apostle Paul described the purpose of God in his own (personal) suffering like this:

2 Corinthians 1:8-9

...we were completely overwhelmed—beyond our strength—so that we even despaired of life itself.

Now remember, this is a man who endured multiple beatings, shipwrecks, imprisonments. Paul must have been experiencing some *extraordinary* suffering to despair of life itself! But then he identifies the *purpose* of his suffering, when he says:

But this happened that we might **not trust in ourselves but in God**, who raises the dead.

That's the purpose of testing. Learning to *trust* in YHWH RAPHA. The Bible says:

1 Peter 2:21-25

You were called for this **purpose**, because **Christ** also **suffered** for you, leaving you an **example**, so that **you** should **follow in His steps**.

Christians should NOT be surprised by suffering.
Suffering is a part of following in the steps of Christ!
And look at *how* Christ endured His suffering...

He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth.
When reviled, He did not revile in return; when suffering, He did not threaten,
but **entrusted** Himself to the One who judges justly.

Jesus *responded* to suffering by **entrusting** Himself to God,
trusting in God's good purposes. The Bible says:

(Christ) Himself bore our sins in His body on the **tree**,
that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.
By His wounds **you have been healed**.

So, once again, we have God using a tree as a means to heal His people.
What YHWH RAPHA was to Israel, so Jesus Christ is to all who will trust Him.
Jesus is our healer. YHWH RAPHA is beautifully, perfectly fulfilled in Him.

If your circumstances are bitter today, don't respond by grumbling.
Maybe you're *exactly* where God *wants* you to be.
There is healing – physical healing, emotional healing, spiritual healing – available in Christ.
Take your eyes off your circumstances, and focus them (in worship) on Jesus as YHWH RAPHA, the Lord your healer.

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, we want to be genuine worshippers.
Tested worshippers.
People who have our eyes fixed on you, regardless of our circumstances.

We trust in You as YHWH RAPHA – to heal our bodies, to heal our relationships, to heal our minds, to heal our souls.

Restore what is broken in our lives, mend what is torn, heal what is diseased.
You are a great and powerful and loving God.
Wherever You lead us, we trust You, Jesus. We worship You.