

“The Power of Prayer”

James 5: 7-20

Introduction: This is primarily a passage on prayer. James’ words are more than commands to pray. He offers instructions for making our prayer lives more effective.

I. Pray In Times of Trouble, vs. 13, “Is any among you afflicted?”

- The word for “afflicted” or “suffering” (kakopatheia) refers to the misfortunes of life. Literally the word means “to have difficult experiences,” “to suffer evil”, or “to come under pressure.” The implication is that there were some just like that.

-James does not imply that prayer always removes the problem but that communion with God in difficult times gives strength for the difficulties of life.

II. Pray In Times of Joy, “Is any merry?”

-The word for “merry” or “cheerful” is euthumeia. It implies the idea of being in good spirits or a happy mood.

-We sometimes forget to pray when all is well and in the “good times.”

-“Let him sing Psalms”, (psalleto), originally meant to play a stringed instrument. Like a harp, and sing. It conveyed the idea of praise. Prayer should not be just intercession and petition, but also praise.

-James has dealt with life’s extremes...difficulty and joy.

III. Pray in Times of Sickness, vs. 14-15, “Is any sick among you?” “Sick”, literally, “without strength,” implying a serious illness or injury

-“...call for the elders of the church...”, The leaders in the church

-“...anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” The practice of anointing with oil may have served two purposes...

A. Medicinal, i.e., oil and wine were used in this way, Luke 10: 29-37.

B. Symbolic, i.e., a picture of the power of the Holy Spirit. Thomas Manton said in his *An Exposition of the Epistle of James*, p. 447, that the oil was “a sign of extraordinary and miraculous care.”

Note: There are some who believe that this was the exercise of the spiritual gift of healing. There is no mention of the exercise of that special gift here and it would be unlikely that all the elders (leaders) of the church would have the gift of healing.

This passage does not mean that everyone who is going to be healed has to be anointed with oil. In Mark 7 and John 9, Jesus healed blind men, one time by putting saliva on the eyelid and another time by putting clay on the eyes, He did not use oil. Other times, He did not use anything at all.

This is not a “magic formula” whereby everyone is healed. Rather it is a portrait of earnest prayers in the name of the Lord for those who were ill.

- **vs. 15, “And the prayer of faith shall save the sick...”**. It was the “prayer of faith” that God blessed. During times of illness believers should enlist others to pray for them. This passage emphasizes both the physical and spiritual benefits of seeking God’s perfect will. The focus of these passages is that believers should pray during life’s difficult experiences. Some thought that sickness and sin were connected and for healing to take place there must be forgiveness.

-When we pray according to God’s will, and God wills it, there will be restoration. The prayer of faith is not something we produce; it is that which God gives us.

-**vs. 16, “Confess your faults one to another and pray for one another...”** This is within the context of praying for the sick, but it has larger application, i.e., bearing one another’s burdens, being accountable to each other, and being transparent in life. Note the link between confession and prayer. Confession without prayer can be harmful.

“...that you may be healed.” The verb (iathete) could refer to physical or spiritual restoration.

IV. Pray Explicitly and Expectantly, vss. 16b-18

-vs. 16b, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

-Elijah prayed with power because he was a man of great faith who had received a word from God. Life changing prayer...

1. Comes from a clean heart
2. Comes from a burdened heart
3. Comes from a committed heart

Note:

1. We can pray about anything and everything.
2. Common folks can pray with great power.
3. God delights in answering God-honoring prayer.

V. Pray For Restoration, vss. 19-20

James wanted believers to help others put their faith back to work. He wanted them to know...

1. Sometimes even believers "mess up." If there are those among you who have "wandered from the truth..."

2. We "mess up" when we "wander from the truth", vs. 19, "...err from the truth..." A picture of a straying sheep (planethe).

3. Vs. 20, God uses committed Believers to help restore those who have wandered. The word for "bring back" is epistrepse. This involves compassion, confrontation, and challenge.

4. Vs. 20, There is great blessing in the ministry of reconciliation.

- The restored escape the deadly consequences of sin.
- "...cover a multitude of sins." This is the joy of sins forgiven.

This is how faith works!