

HELP! I'M IN TROUBLE / Sunday, January 25, 2015

Unifying Topic: WE PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER

Lesson Text

- I. *Pray In All Situations (James 5:13)*
- II. *Pray For The Sick (James 5:14-16)*
- III. *Pray For God's Provision (James 5:17-18)*

The Main Thought: Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (**James 5:16**, KJV).

Unifying Principle: Having illnesses is part of being human. How can believers overcome illness? The writer of James teaches that the prayer of faith brings healing and offers Elijah's prayer as an example of prayer's effectiveness.

Lesson Aim: To explore James' admonitions for prayer and its power to heal.

Life Aim: To affirm that prayer is powerful and yields good results.

HISTORY:

Chapter 5:1-6 introduces us to the rich person facing a fierce temptation so ferocious that it will consume him unless he lives ever so close to the Lord. It is the temptation to bank and hoard money instead of using it to meet the needs of the desperate and dying in the world. James, a servant of the Lord and Jesus' brother became the leader of the church in Jerusalem. This is James' fourth and strongest blast at the rich (*others 1:9-11; 2:1-13; 4:1-10*). There must have been a good many rich in the Judean church who were thoroughly unchristian in their deeds, who were bent on worldly pleasure instead of caring about the things of God. He warns all the rich who keep more than what they need; who keep and hoard their money as selfish gain. He tells them to "*weep and bowl*", meaning to burst into weeping and to bowl (howl; groan) with grief because their riches are corrupt; their garments are moth-eaten; their gold and silver are cankered and rusted and will bring miseries upon them. The point is this: if farm produce and building products sit unused, they rot. If textile garments sit unused, they are moth-eaten. If gold and silver sit unused, they become coated with filth and eventually corrode and waste away. If wealth—money or anything else is hoarded, it is useless. It does nothing but sit there and eventually it will be gone. What a terrible tragedy! It will become a witness against them causing it to eat their flesh as if it were fire; destroying their life like it was a cancer eating their gut. Treasures of wealth that are heaped up become treasures of wrath. What they piled up was for judgment (in the last days)! (**vv.1-3**).

James says to rich who cheat, steal, and defraud the field workers (poor laborers), hear their cries for judgment for their cries have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth (the Lord of Hosts—His Omnipotence)! The poor laborers were the ones who could not pay their debts and were thrown into prison or forced to sell all their possessions, and at times even sell their family members into slavery. The person who oppresses the worker shall face the judgment! They sought to live a life of pleasure and gratification of being recognized and known as being successful and powerful, as a person who can have and enjoy what this earth has to offer, and forgets God and the cries of the desperate and needy of the world. Therefore the rich have condemned and killed the righteous as they reject the message of self-denial and sacrificial giving that the righteous practice and teach. And the righteous do not resist them; they don't retaliate. They just keep on proclaiming the message of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. They continue to reach out to the desperate needs of the starving, poor and needy of the world (**vv.4-6**).

This begins the last section of the Book of James in which it discusses the temptations and trials that confront and attack us day by day. Temptations and trials must be combated step by step in order to conquer them. That's why James tells us and the brethren to be patient for the Lord is coming again. The word "*patient*" means longsuffering, bearing and suffering a long time; persevering, being constant, steadfast, and enduring. Be patient as the farmer waits for his crops to grow, for no crop appears overnight, except a crop of weeds. The husbandman or farmer is a good example of the kind of patient waiting believers must possess as they wait for the Lord's return. Don't live as if Christ will never come. Work faithfully to build His Kingdom for the King will come when the time is ripe! The coming of the Lord will bring an end to labors, and the believers a day of reaping to be enjoyed. They are to establish their hearts meaning to set their hearts upon; to fix upon; to make fast—looking for it everyday the Lord's coming, just as a farmer looks for his great day of harvest. It stirs us to patiently endure no matter the situation, and by patiently enduring we shall gain the victory over all. Don't complain, murmur,

or judge other believers for your troubles or the situation you're in. The warning is that if we complain, murmur, and grumble, we shall be condemned. Behold the judge stands at the door is an illustration of Christ as judge, about to open the doors to the courtroom and convene His court with a readiness to avenge all wrong (**vv.7-9**).

James gives them and us an example of the prophets' patience in suffering affliction, for they believed and spoke in the name of the Lord. Look at the prophets, for they faced all kinds of temptations and trials. They patiently endured; stood fast; held onto their faith in God; refused to give in to grumbling or complaining, but continued to proclaim the salvation and hope of God for the world. And they are counted as blessed because they stayed true. Acts 5:41 says *"And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worth to suffer shame for his name."* Then there's the patience of Job. He never gave in to the trials or temptations. He never forsook his faith in God. He didn't understand all that was happening to him, but he refused to turn against God. The *"end of the Lord"* may be rendered the "Lord's goal." Whatever the Lord allows is meant for our good. God brought it all together at the end for Job. Job was tremendously blessed by God for his persevering faith. God is full of tenderness and mercy! When heavily tried or tempted, do not swear or curse, neither by heaven, or by earth, or by any other oath. Just let your yes be yes and your no be no. Swearing and cursing is taking God's name in vain, for a man's word is a reflection of himself and there should be no need for oaths. Man should stand in awe of God, not curse Him (**vv.10-12**).

LESSON

Pray In All Situations (James 5:13)

5:13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. God honors unity in prayer, that is among the brethren; the believers in the body of Christ. When our experiences range from affliction and suffering to cheerfulness and joyousness, let us pray and sing praises. When we face troubles, we pray; when we are free of trouble, we praise. This means we pray and praise God all the time—through times of affliction and through times of joy. We seek Him in prayer for His power, deliverance, and for courage to be a great witness when facing trouble, while He walks us through it all. And then there is joy in the Lord and we show this to the world with assurance and confidence of the life Christ provides and the eternal future offered by God. This is the praise that should be flowing from our lips! Sing a song of praise, even in prayer!

Pray For The Sick (James 5:14-16)

5:14 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:— James continues to ask the question; Is any among you that are going through something, and he gives the answer with certainty! If sick, call for the elders of the church. They are to pray and anoint the sick with oil in the name of the Lord! The oil was both a medicine (in the parable of the Good Samaritan) and a symbol of the Holy Spirit's presence and power (as used in anointing kings). Thus oil can represent both the medical and the spiritual in the prayer of healing and deliverance. Both are to set the person's mind and heart upon the Lord's work. If they had to call for the elders (leaders of the church), that meant that they were shut-in; bedridden, and incapacitated and were not able to go to them. That's why leaders or elders and those that move in the spirit should be able to be called on for prayer. Know the members that are sick. Jesus Christ is Lord over both the body and the spirit, for all is done in His Name!

5:15 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. By following the above procedure, this would mean that the elders' prayer for the sick is offered in faith to the One who can heal. *"Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them"* Mark 11:24. That is the prayer of faith!; not hoping or trying to understand it, but just believing! Take away the limits. *"Without faith it is impossible to please Him for they that come to Him must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him"* Heb.11:6. When you operate in the Prayer of Faith, no sight is involved, meaning no physical senses are involved; no malice or unforgiveness in the heart. **...shall save the sick** meaning restore (to spiritual wholeness). All sickness is not due to a person's sin; we found that out in Job. However, sin can cause physical illness. The prayer of faith saves the sick, and **the Lord shall raise him up** (physical restoration) if sins have been committed (past sin committed by the believer that he has not repented of. This is persistent rebellion against God's Word. He is a person who refuses to confess and repent of his sin. He is in a state of rebellion against God). Sin is the cause of the spirit being defeated and the body wearied and wasting away.

5:16 Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. The Spirit of God will reveal your sin to you. We **confess** our faults one to another so we can **pray** for one another. Does this mean that believers are to go around confessing all their sins in all their intimacies and ugliness? No! This is not what this passage is talking about. It is referring to certain types of sins or to certain times when we are to confess our sins.

- When the sin has been a wrong or injustice done against someone else.
- When we have misled or lied to someone.
- When we have offended someone or caused someone to stumble and sin.
- When restitution should be made.
- When we have publicly committed some crime and public forgiveness is required.

Prayer is of critical importance for one reason. Why? Because, *"The effectual fervent prayer; the earnest working power of prayer avails much."* Temptations and trials afflict everyone upon this earth, such as temptations of worldliness, lust, and pride; trials that cause accidents, disappointments, unfaithfulness, bad times, and bad feelings strike us, and we are to combat them with prayer, asking for the courage to keep a clear conscious so guidance can come through. Our consistency in prayer avails. A righteous man (one that's in one accord; in right standing with God) avails. In verse 15, the Prayer of Faith saves a sick believer and the Lord raises him up, and now in this verse, the effectual fervent prayer; prayer that is really earnest works and heals a sin-sick soul when sin confession is made.

Pray For God's Provision (James 5:17-18)

5:17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. James cited Elijah as an example of a righteous man; a man living right, whose prayers released power. Elias was an excellent example of a man availing in the effectual fervent power of prayer. He was a man who had compassions and feelings just like us; who faced the same temptations and trials as we do, yet, Elijah earnestly prayed for it not to rain, and it did not rain; not a drop for three years and six months.

5:18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. Then he prayed again for it to rain, and it rained and the earth bore its fruit. The point is: the earnest fervent prayer is effective; it works! God hears and answers!

SUMMARY:

The suffering are to pray, the cheerful are to sing praises (**vv.13**).

¹"Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him" (James 5:14). The process begins when the sick person calls for the elders to come to him. The word "sick" is very broad. It includes any serious physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, or relational problem that has become too heavy to bear. There are many kinds of sickness, and when a believer is overwhelmed, he should feel free to call the elders to come to him. But why are the elders to come to him? First, because the sick person is too sick to come to the church, so the church comes to him. Second, because he is too sick to pray for himself, so the church comes to pray for him. The word "elders" is plural and they go together to the sick because there is strength in numbers. They pray in the name of the Lord and anoint with oil (a symbol of God's Spirit; that God's presence is there and is able to heal). And the prayer offered in faith, the Lord shall raise the sick person up. When the elders pray, they are to come to God with an attitude of complete trust that He can and will do what is needed in every situation. They are to ask the sick if they are conscious of any sin that is standing between them and God, blocking His healing power; for if committed sin is lying dormant, it has to be dealt with to be forgiven. Confession is good for the soul. Then the fervent effectual prayer of the righteous avails much. The real power is in the Name of the Lord (**vv.14-16**).

"Healing in the Bible is not becoming what we were, but becoming all that God intends us to be." Selah.

We are reminded of the value of fervent prayer by the righteous, using Elijah as an example of how God answers prayer providentially (conveniently; beneficially) (**vv.17-18**).

God is our very present help in times of trouble, but He uses man in the process. He doesn't have to, but He does!

¹ <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/praying-for-the-sick/>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sundayschool.html>