
Sermon Notes

October 2, 2016

First Congregational Church of Pomfret

Pray For One Another

James 5:13-18

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.

¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

911

- ❖ When do you call for help?
- ❖ When do you not call for help?
- ❖ Why is it second nature for us to seek emergency medical attention for physical symptoms, yet we completely ignore the path and the plan God offers us for our spiritual struggles?

Are You Suffering?

- ❖ What kind of suffering is James referring to in v. 13?
 - physical pain, illness, loss?
 - emotional pain, mental distress, anxiety?
 - spiritual suffering?
- ❖ Earlier in the chapter James takes up the case of
 - people who are being oppressed, taken advantage of and unfairly treated
 - the OT prophets
 - Job
- ❖ Taken together, these examples give us the picture of someone who is
 - spiritually exhausted
 - completely overwhelmed
 - weak, weary, carrying an unbearable load
- ❖ Are you suffering in any of these ways?
 - if you are, what does the Bible call you to do about it?
 - John Bunyan: "You can do more than pray after you've prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you've prayed."
 - prayer is the emergency 911 call you need to make when trouble comes

Are You Cheerful?

- ❖ If you are on the mountain top and not in the valley, what does the Bible call you to do?
- ❖ There are times when those who are spent, spiritually dry and struggling need to be sustained and carried along by the praises of others
 - the ministry of praise is basic to spiritual comfort
 - a person who is empty can be encouraged and nourished by being in the company of people who are praising the Lord
- ❖ If things are going badly in your life, you need to come running to the company of God's people
- ❖ If things are going well in your life, you need to be among God's people and give praise to God for the benefit of the person standing next to, in front of, or behind you

Are You Sick?

- ❖ Those who simply can't get up and get out in order to be engaged in corporate worship need to call for prayer
 - make a 911 call to the Elders (in our case, Deacons)
 - ask for prayer and for the anointing with oil
- ❖ Oil
 - in Bible times, used to soothe and heal wounds
 - a picture of fullness, richness, wholeness, fruitfulness

- ❖ God hears the prayer offered in faith
 - faith that God hears and answers prayer
 - faith that God has power to accomplish His perfect will
- ❖ In addition to church leaders, we have a shared responsibility to do this for each other
- ❖ *Confess your sins to one another* (v. 16)
 - if you are physically/spiritually/emotionally weak, what sorts of sins are you most susceptible to?
 - the entire body needs to get involved in defeating and destroying the invasion the virus of sin brings into it
- ❖ The example of Elijah
 - Elijah's prayer brought rain to a parched land
 - our prayer is meant to bring spiritual wholeness, health, blessing, and productivity to a parched soul

Personal Reflection

1. At this particular time, which of the 3 categories in this text fits you best: suffering, cheerful, or sick? Will you follow the Bible's instruction to pray, praise, or "call in the troops for help"? Why or why not?
2. If you would call 911 for a physical emergency, why would you not dial God's "spiritual 911" for a "soul problem"? Shame? Pride? Fear? Ignorance?
3. Think about "the prayer of faith" mentioned in v. 15. Are your prayers offered to God with the faith that He hears, cares, and has the power to accomplish His perfect will?