

BOOK OF JAMES
ARE YOU SICK?—CALL FOR PRAYER!-PT 2
JAMES 5:14-20

Introduction

We need to understand that James is **NOT giving us a blanket formula for healing the sick here.** While I have personally seen this work on at least one occasion, **I also know from the whole of Scripture that it is NOT always God's will for the sick to be healed!**

(e.g. The Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 12)

If we look closely at the context, **it appears from the context that James is describing sickness that is associated with special circumstances or characteristics!**

In fact, from the context we can see that **it is primarily describing when a person is sick because of sin in their life.** *(vs. 15b-16)*

The phrase that is translated into our English as ***"if he have committed sins"*** is in a tense that refers to the person having been constantly sinning. **(i.e. There is an ongoing sin that the person has not dealt with that has caused this.)**

We know, for instance, that **Paul indicated that there were those in the Corinthian Church who were weak and sickly and some had even died because of sins associated with folks eating and drinking at the Lord's Table in an unworthy manner.**

1 Corinthians 11:29-30 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."

The sins for some in that Church had become a sin unto weakness or sickness and the sins for others had become a sin unto death!

We can surmise that **James has primarily described here a Church member who is sick because he is being disciplined by the Church and by God.** (Someone may ask, how will we know? That person knows!)

This explains why **the elders of the assembly are called instead of the person just coming to Church.**

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Especially **if the person has been disciplined by being put out of the Church, it would stand to reason that they can't go to Church to confess sins!**

So he asks the spiritual leaders of the congregation to come to him. These leaders would be those in charge of the discipline of the congregation.

The person confesses his sins (vs. 16). "*Confess your faults [i.e. sins] therefore to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed*".

In the early Church, believers were also reluctant to practice Biblical Church discipline. **1 Corinthians 5** is a good example. Paul told the believers at Corinth to dismiss the sinning member from the assembly until he repented of his sins and made things right.

Now days things are mostly the same as then in most Churches! Folks prefer to have a ***"live and let live"*** attitude rather than exercise Biblical Church discipline! ***"Well we all have sin!"*** Yes we do! But not all sin is subject to Church Discipline!

"We should be more tolerant!" is the worldly cry of today and so much worldliness has crept into Churches that the Bible is largely ignored!

"Judge not that ye be not judged!" Someone that quotes that as a rebuttal against exercising Church discipline doesn't even know what that means! Study your Bible and you'll know that! Especially study just Matthew 7!

The word translated ***"faults"*** here is the same word translated as ***"sin"*** in **James 1:15**, where the subject is definitely sin. **Sins are faults, but not all faults are sin! But this IS talking about sins!**

The person here is healed by ***"the prayer of faith"*** (v. 15). It is not the ***anointing*** that heals the person, but the ***praying***.

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Some point to the word translated "*anointing*" and say that it is also a medicinal term indicating that James is suggesting using available means for healing along with asking the LORD for His divine touch!

I'm not going to dispute that, but I see the *anointing as symbolic of God's Holy Spirit* because the anointing is done "*in the name LORD!*"

The bottom line is that God can heal with or without mans means if He chooses to! If someone is healed, it is God Who does the healing! So give Him the glory! Amen!

But what is "*the prayer of faith*" that heals the sick? The answer is in *1 John 5:14-15*—"*And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.*"

The "*prayer of faith*" is a prayer offered when you know the will of God! The elders would seek the mind of God in the matter, and then pray according to His will. When we pray, we are to pray for God's will to be done!

We should want God's will to be done! Because God's will is best for those we are praying for and for us!

I'll be open with you and admit that **I do not always know how to pray for folks who are sick.** (Paul had the same problem)
Romans 8:26 26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

Is it God's will to heal? Is God planning to call His child home? I don't know; therefore, you will normally hear me pray, "*If it is Your will, heal Your child.*"

Those who claim that God heals every case, and that it is not His will for His children to be sick, are denying both Scripture and experience!

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But where we have the inner conviction from both the Word and the Spirit that it is God's will to heal, then we can pray "*the prayer of faith*" and expect God to work.

Keep in mind that it is **not** one individual who is praying: it is these elders, these spiritual men of God—who seek God's will and pray.

James does not instruct us to send for a faith healer or go to where a faith healer is performing. This is NOT a side show! No, the matter is in the hands of the leaders of the local Church.

There are several things we need to understand here:

I. DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD CAN LEAD TO SICKNESS!

David found that out when he tried to hide his sins! (*Psalms 32*)

II. SIN IN A MEMBER AFFECTS THE WHOLE CHURCH BODY!

1 Corinthians 12:26 "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."

Sin has a way of growing and infecting others!

1 Corinthians 5:6 Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?

In the same way false doctrine has a way of growing and infecting others! *Galatians 5:9 "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."*

When one has sinned against the Church (e.g. by living in open sin), the Church needs to take action to place such a one outside the Church.
1 Corinthians 5:5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

To get back right with the Church, that person needs to confess their sins first to God...to the Church and then repent!(i.e. Forsake their sin!)

III. **THERE CAN ONLY BE HEALING (BOTH PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL) WHEN SIN IS DEALT WITH PROPERLY!**

Proverbs 28:13 "13 He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."

That is why James wrote what he did there in *verse 16* about confessing our faults one to another, and praying one for another.

It's talking about making this a habit! i.e. We are not to hide sin or delay confession. Keep short accounts with God and each other!

The "*confessing*" that James wrote about is done among the saints. He was not suggesting here that we confess our sins to a preacher or priest.

We confess our sins first of all to the Lord (1 John 1:9), but we must also confess them to those who have been affected by them.

We should never confess sin beyond the circle of that sin's influence.

1. **Private sin requires private confession!**

2. **Public sin requires public confession!**

It is wrong for Christians to **publically confess** specifics of things that aren't known or only privately known, because such confessing might do more harm than the original sin.

IV. **WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO PRAY ONE FOR ANOTHER! (Vs 16b)**

Those who have affected others with their sin are to pray!

Those who are sinned against are to pray!

The members that make up the Church are to pray!

V. **THE EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN AVAILETH MUCH! (Vs 16c-18)**

A little more than a year ago I taught a series on this matter of "**Praying Effectual Prayers**" in Sunday School!

(It was a 6 part series taught over 7 weeks in January, February, and the first week in March of 2017)

For those of you who weren't with us, those audio messages and my notes are on **sermonaudio.com**. I'm not going to spend a lot of time here because it was so recent. If you don't have the ability to access those messages on **sermonaudio.com**, I can print out the notes and/or provide the messages on CD if needed.

In those messages we dealt with this VERY THOROUGHLY!

It is in the LAST MESSAGE (Part 6) that I actually deal with these three verses here after laying a foundation from other Scripture and other Scriptural examples.

Here we see **James cites Elijah as an example of a "righteous man" whose prayers were effectual fervent and availed much!**

i.e. They were powerful and effective!

Elijah was not perfect; in fact, right after his victory on Mt. Carmel, Elijah became afraid and discouraged and ran away. But he was a "*righteous man,*" that is, He was obedient to the Lord and trusting Him through this particular confrontation!

God's promises of answered prayer are for all His children, not just for the ones we might call super believers or the spiritual elite!

Elijah prayed in faith, for God told him He would send the rain!

(1 Kings 18:1)

You cannot separate the Word of God and prayer, for in His Word He gives us the promises that we can claim when we pray!

Elijah was not only believing in his praying, but he was persistent. "*He prayed*" (vs 17) and "*he prayed again*" (Vs 18).

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On Mt. Carmel, Elijah continued to pray for rain until his servant reported "*a cloud like a man's hand.*" Too many times we fail to get what God promises because we stop praying!

It is true that we are not heard "*for our much praying*" (Matthew 6:7); but there is a difference between vain repetitions and true believing persistence in prayer!

Our Lord prayed three times in the Garden of Gethsemane, and Paul prayed three times that his thorn in the flesh might be taken from him.

Elijah was determined and concerned in his praying. "*He prayed earnestly*" (James 5:17). Many people do not pray earnestly in their prayers. They just lazily say religious sounding words, and their hearts really aren't in their prayers!

Prayer power is one of the greatest powers in the world today. Let's put it to use! Amen!

VI. WE ARE TO PRAY FOR THE STRAYING! (James 5:19-20)

While James did not specifically name prayer in these verses, the implication is there. **If we pray for the afflicted and the sick, surely we must pray for the brother who wanders from the truth!**

These verses deal with our ministry to a fellow believer who strays from the truth and gets into sin. The verb *err* means "*to wander,*" and suggests a gradual moving away from the will of God! Spiritual drift! The Old Testament term for this is "*backsliding.*" It is sad to say, but we are seeing this tragedy occurring more and more in our Churches!

Sometimes a brother is "*overtaken in a fault*" (Galatians 6:1); but usually the sin is the result of slow, gradual, spiritual decline!

A *backslidden* condition is, of course, very dangerous!
It is dangerous to the offender because he may be disciplined by the Lord. (Hebrews 12)

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He also faces the danger of committing "*sin unto death*"! (1 John 5:16-17). (God disciplined the sinning members of the Corinthian church, even to the point of taking some of them to heaven! 1 Corinthians 11:30)

But this backsliding is also dangerous to the Church!

A wandering offender can influence others and lead them astray. Ecclesiastes 9:18 "*...one sinner destroyeth much good.*"

This is why the spiritual members of the Church must step in and help those who have wandered away!

The origin of this problem is found in the statement "*err from the truth*" (James 5:19). The *truth* means, of course, the Word of God. "*Thy Word is truth*" (John 17:17).

Unless the believer stays close to the truth, he will start to drift away. Hebrews 2:1 *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.*

Jesus warned Peter that Satan was wanted to tempt him, and Peter refused to believe the Word. He even argued with the Lord! When he should have been praying, Peter was sleeping. No wonder he denied three times.

The outcome of this wandering is "*sin*" and possible "*death*" (James 5:20).

The sinner here is speaking of a believer, not an unbeliever; and sin in the life of a Believer is worse than sin in the life of an unbeliever.

We expect unsaved people to sin, but God expects His children to obey His Word. What are we to do when we see a fellow believer wandering from the truth? We should pray for him, to be sure; but we must also seek to help him.

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He needs to be "*converted*"—turned back into the right path again. Do believers need to be converted? Yes, they do! Jesus said to Peter, "*When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*" (*Luke 22:32*).

It is important that we seek to win the lost, but it is also important to win the saved. If a brother has sinned against us, we should talk to him privately and seek to settle the matter. If he listens, then we have "*gained*" our brother (*Matthew 18:15*). That word gained means "*won*." It is the same word translated "*get gain*" in *James 4:13*. It is important to win the saved as well as the lost.

If we are going to help an erring brother, we must have an attitude of love, for "*charity* [love] *shall cover the multitude of sins*" (*1 Peter 4:8*).

Both James and Peter learned this principle from *Proverbs 10:12*—"Hate stirreth up strife: but love covereth all sins."

This does not mean that love "sweeps the dirt under the carpet." Where there is love, there must also be truth ("*speaking the truth in love*" says Paul in *Ephesians 4:15*); and where there is truth, there is honest confession of sin and cleansing from God.

Love not only helps the offender to face his sins and deal with them, but love also assures the offender that those sins, once forgiven, are remembered no more.

This brings us to the end of our study of James. His emphasis has been spiritual maturity. This would be a good time for us to examine our own hearts to see how mature we really are and where we need some work!