

Series: James  
Title: Praying in Prayer  
Text: James 5: 14-18  
Date: April 4, 2010  
Place: SGBC, Princeton, NJ

## I. A WORD TO THE SICK

### **James 5: 14: Is any sick among you?**

God's people suffer many infirmities: bodily sickness, spiritual sickness, sorrow from many trials.

Our infirmities are a reminder to us that all we are in ourselves is sin. James said before: **What is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.**

### **James 5: 14:...let him call for the elders of the church;**

The Elder is the Pastor, but it also may mean mature believers. It is interesting that James makes no mention of physicians. Not that we shouldn't seek medical attention. But we have a Great Physician.

Jeremiah 8: 22: Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

Psalms 103: 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: 3: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; 4: Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; 5: Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Matthew 8:...he cast out the spirits with *his* word, and healed all that were sick: 17: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.

Christ took upon himself and bore the sins of his people in his own body--the sins that cause our sickness. He made satisfaction to God for the sins of his people that he might save us from our sins. When he healed bodily sickness in this earth--it was an emblem of his power and ability to put away our sin by the sacrifice of himself.

But also, he bare our sickness, by way of sympathy

Hebrews 4: 15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16: Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Why then would we call the elders? So they can help you to seek the great Physician.

### **James 5: 14:...and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:**

Note: James is not saying that only the preacher can pray for you, he began by saying, **Is any afflicted? Let HIM pray.** But God gives me, your pastor, and these, your fellow brethren, to be helpers with you.

## II. A WORD TO THE ELDERS

### **James 5: 14:...and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:**

The apostles anointed with oil and they had special gifts to heal.

Some think by "oil" it means to comfort your sick brethren. Some say it may include medical attention. Some say it means pray for the Holy Spirit--the Comforter. Perhaps all three can be applied. It is certainly not any notion as the papists give it. But our prayer and our comforting--whatever it may be--is to be done 'IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.' But staying with the context of the whole epistle, let me point out what I have shown you before.

James may mean this is what the elders are to do as opposed to the things he has been warning us against.

If a brother is afflicted in trial, or in bodily sickness, or in both as was Job, rather than coming to him, grieving him with your words--use your tongue to pray for him and your words to comfort him. You might say, "No one would be so cruel to someone sick." Job was sick in great trial as well as bodily sickness and his friends did. **Job 16:2...miserable comforters are ye all.**

The kind of comfort they showed gives no glory to the Lord, it divides brethren, it adds to affliction and sickness and it comforts no one. Instead:

**James 5: 14: 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:**

This is the oil: **Isaiah 40: 2:...warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins.**

**James 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.**

## II. TRUE PRAYER

**James 5: 16: The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**

Effectual, fervent prayer means "inwrought" prayer in one who is truly a child of God--righteous in Christ--who is praying to God with a true heart, in a true spirit.

James contrasts the nature of grace with that of the flesh throughout this book:

- Heart of faith---double minded man
- Brother of low degree exalted--rich made low
- Poor of this world rich in faith--rich in this world who have not faith
- Spirit of wisdom from above--earthly, sensual, devilish spirit
- Submissive, humble spirit toward God---self-willed, "We will", condemning spirit
- I can't help but take note that this true heart of faith may be in contrast to that haughty, condemning spirit
- **the prayer of faith shall save the sick,...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much--perhaps as opposed to the other kind of prayer James has mentioned.**

The prayer of faith is the opposite of that double mindedness which James has been cautioning us against.

James 1: 6: But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. 7: For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8: A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

He spoke of *envy and strife in the heart* of those who desire to be masters.

James 4: 3: Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts...8: Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. 9: Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. 10: Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

**James 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.**

What is the spirit of one who "prays in faith?"

1. It is believing God is able to raise up.
2. It is submitting and acknowledging that God alone can do so.
3. It is asking the Lord to raise up
4. It is to ask the Lord to forgive sins.

Matthew Henry: When you are sick and in pain, it is most common to pray and cry, "O give me ease! O restore me to health!" But your prayer should rather and chiefly be, "O that God would pardon my sins!"

5. And fifthly, it is believing the Lord *shall* raise him up and *shall* forgive him. If it is affliction or sickness of spirit--the Lord shall raise him up and cause his chastening hand to yield the fruit of righteousness thereby--if it is bodily disease--we know that the Lord shall raise the brother up--either by healing physically or he may raise him up altogether whole in glory with our Lord--the prayer of faith is rejoicing the Lord shall save and forgive our sins, either way.

Prayer of faith, effectual, inwrought prayer, is from a spirit which acknowledges our own sins.

**James 5: 16: Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.**

Note: This is not confessing faults like men do to a so-called earthly priest. What is the spirit of "confessing of our faults?"

1. It confessing our Lord is our only Righteousness.
2. It is acknowledging our sins and our own inabilities--I can not raise up, either turning you in the heart from your sin or from bodily sickness.
3. It is submission to one another, acknowledging not one of us is different from our brethren--we are sinners saved by grace.

Note: We could pray for one another but if in our hearts we are double minded rather than believing, if we have no spirit of forgiveness, God will not hear and we only make the affliction worse.

Inwrought prayer is of the Lord.

1. It is this spirit of faith which God puts within us.
2. It is the Holy Spirit making intercession.

**Romans 8:26: 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.**

3. And Christ the Righteous God-Man, our Advocate with the Father, Intercedes for us.

The example given is of Elias

**James 5: 17: Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are,**

It is interesting that the illustrations that James gives throughout this epistle--Abraham, Rahab, Job, now Elijah--each one particularly, were dependent upon God in the midst of great trial and infirmities of their flesh--they each fit the theme of the whole epistle:

Elijah hungered and grew weary--the Lord fed him by ravens, and by the widow, and by an angel. He was charged by Ahab as a trouble-maker in Israel because of his gospel. He was persecuted by Jezebel who sought his life. He was not free from sinful passions: impatience, fear, and unbelief. But here is why James sets him forth as an illustration in this instance:

**James 5: 17:....and he prayed earnestly [in prayer he prayed] that it might not rain:**

Here we see the power of our Lord--the effectiveness of prayer is not in us--but in the one to whom we pray.

**and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18: And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.**

God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ his Son, through the Power of the Holy Spirit he is able to raise up, to forgive sins. We are not. We are absolutely dependent upon him.

V13: Is any afflicted? Let him pray (personal prayer)

V14: elders pray over the sick (social, pray together)

V16: pray for one another (private prayer)

True, inwrought, prayer of a righteous man availeth much because our Righteous God is able.