

James 5:13-20 - Pray for the Sick
First Southern Baptist Church - August 25, 2021

Train of Thought

Judgment is coming, be patient and hang in there
 To be patient when things get hard (7-12), we need to pray
 “Is any ___” then pray (verse 13), then “Is any sick” then pray (14)
 -pray anointing
 -pray with the Elders
 -pray confessing
 “Pray” is the idea (the theme of all these verses)
 Prayer will avail (16)
 Pray like Elijah, he was just like you (17-18)
 Work with the erring brother (19-20) - the spiritually sick

Verse 13 - Pray in All Circumstances

1. Instead of oaths or revenge spirit a Christian is to turn constantly to prayer
 -don't indulge in introspective self-pity “let him pray”
2. Pray -in distress
 -in elation
 -in sickness (14)
 -in sin (15-16)
 -with the spiritually sick (19-20)
 *affliction ought to stimulate us to pray
 *prosperity out stimulate us to praise
3. Singing songs is praying
4. “Afflicted” is broader than sickness
 -the word is used in verse 10 to summarize the numerous troubles and calamities that befell the Old Testament prophets
 -when Jesus was in “affliction” in Gethsemane He prayed “the more earnestly” (Luke 22:44)

Verses 14-16 - Prayer for the Sick

1. Elements/ problems within
 Who are the Elders? Do you have to have them?
 What is the anointing? Medicinal or spiritual
 What about the confessing? Do you have to have it? Did his sins make him sick?
 What is it that heals?
2. The elders
 Old Testament elders were the men who are older/ presumably more wise
 Probable that the elders were like today's pastors/ staff (since pastors are not mentioned here)
 Elders and pastors are equated at Titus 1:5-9
 At 1 Peter 5:1-4 - elders and pastors are almost equated
 The idea - call your shepherds who will intercede for you.
3. The anointing - medicinal or symbolic?
 - A. Two Greek words for anoint:

1. Chris - in the Septuagint the general meaning is to set apart (O.T.). New Testament is the same "Jesus" set apart (Lk.4:18; Acts 4:27; 10:38).
 2. Aleipho (used here) - 20 times in Septuagint. Frequently refers to rubbing of oil on face or body with a beautifying or hygienic purpose (9 times). For times it has ceremonial significance. Ex. 40:15 and Num.3:3 - anointing of priests. New Testament is the same - Cosmetic or hygienic anointing - Mt. 6:17; Mk.16:1; Luke 7:38, 46; Jn.11:2; 12:3.
- B. The word used in James 5:14 is Aleipho - used to rub or massage as medicine. There is another Greek word for sacred anointing.
But the calling of the elders doesn't sound like a visit to the doctor, but a prayer service
4. So, the anointing is medicinal?
 - A. Two problems with medicinal anointing:
 1. Why let elders (spiritual) be involved with a physician's job?
 2. Evidence that oil is used for any and all illnesses is not found (however, it was used for many).
 - B. A faith producer: no
 1. When Jesus used "props" it was appropriate to the illness - ex. Clay in a blind man's eyes (Mk.8:23-26)
 2. Finger in deaf man's ears (Mk.7:33)
 5. Oil as a "religious" act:
 1. Sacramental - as the Catholic church. Extreme unction. It is to remove sin and strengthen the soul. The oil serves as a vehicle to divine power. Just as many believe this re. the Lord's Supper. Catholic anointing at death.
 2. Symbolic - consecration for persons or things for God's service in O.T. Anointed sick persons as a sign they were "set apart" for God and his special care or attention. The broader idea is "blessing" - anointing is asking for a blessing.
 6. **Oil is secondary, prayer is primary** - what is it that heals anyway?
The passage is about prayer not oil, not confession, not about elders. God is not bound by our lack of oil. God is not bound to heal by our use of oil. God is not bound! God heals who He wants, when He wants. The power is not in the oil. The issue is not the oil, but the prayer. The issue with the prayer is the use of it,... but also the use of it by "righteous" people - see the atmosphere of confessing? We want God's healing, God's power, but we don't want to have to be "righteous" to get it. So, we'll just anoint em'. Prayer becomes for some a charm, say just the right words, use just the right techniques (oil, elders, Jesus' name). That totally leaves God out. It's not about what we want, it's about whether or not He says okay.
 7. "Shall save the sick"
 - A. There is nothing in the New Testament to justify the idea that it is always God's will for everyone to be healthy. Paul's thorn in the flesh wasn't taken away.
 - B. Even deep faith is not all-powerful. God alone knows whether His will is to heal in a given situation.
 8. Sin and sickness (15-16)

- A. Sin does cause sickness (1 Cor. 11:30)
- B. All sickness is not caused by sin (Job; Jn. 9:2-3)
- C. See Mt. 9:2 - healed and sin forgiven in one fell swoop
- D. The healing value of confession
 - 1) The rule for the Methodist small-group revivals was confession and prayer
 - 2) The verb here means to keep on confessing - an atmosphere of confession
 - 3) We have been made priests by Jesus - a kingdom of priests. So this is our office in action. Christ as the high priest.
 - 4) Sin is most dangerous when it is most secret. It is dangerous to an isolated believer. So God says, expose it and deal with it.

Verses 16-18 - Effective Prayer - Like Elijah

- 1. Prayer is effective (16)
 - A. To a righteous man (picks up the sin idea in 16)
 - B. If fervent
 - C. ***“Avails much” - does not say a righteous man always gets what he asks for
- 2. A man of “like passions” (17)
 - A. He was not some demi-god (he did more miracles than the other prophets) - subject to weaknesses/ temptations/ frailties
 - B. Prayed “earnestly” - lit. “prayed with prayer”
- 3. Do you believe in prayer? Really?

Verses 19-20 - Reclaiming the Backslider/ Restoration Ministries

- 1. “Err”
 - A. Go astray - sheep wandering at Mt. 18:12
 - B. Why do they “wander”
 - not really of the faith to begin with
 - seduced by the deceiver
 - C. “Strays” - is in the passive form showing this person has been deceived
 - D. Wander from what? - the “truth”
 - Wander into what? - the death of this world
- 2. “Convert”
 - A. Bring back (in this context)
 - B. Consequences in reclaiming
 - C. “Convert” is used by Jesus at Luke 22:32. He prays for Simon - and when you are “converted” (RSV - “when you have turned again”)
 - D. From “death” - not eternal death, but the death that goes with all sin
- 3. “Save a soul”
 - A. His spiritual life will be healed as in verse 15
 - B. In what sense save? - save from the “err” and from “death”
- 4. Sinful conduct in a brother makes us ignore or avoid him - the opposite of this treatment
- 5. Galatians 6:1 - what should be done with all those inactive folk on our lists?
 - Purge them? Send them a letter inviting them to find another church?
 - Restore them - in meekness