

Lessons From James

A Healthy Prayer Life

(Ja 5:13-18)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Morning
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series of "Lessons From James."
 - a. We will be finishing up our study of James today.
 - b. This particular section has a lot of questions surrounding it.
3. For example:
 - a. Is it dealing with physical or spiritual?
 - b. Is it dealing with providential or miraculous?
 - c. Is it symbolic or literal?
4. Let us examine this great passage.

I. Pray When Suffering

- A. Difficulties will arise in our lives.
 1. Context of course is the suffering at the hands of the rich concerning the wages withheld.
 2. Suffering is simply a part of this world that no one righteous or unrighteous are immune from.
 - i. **Ec 9:11** "...time and chance happen to them all."¹
 3. Suffering will happen to faithful Christians.
 - i. **II Ti 3:12** "Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."
 - ii. **Jn 15:20** "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also."
- B. There is only two ways to cope with difficulties
 1. First put our full hope in God.
 - i. **Lk 10:27** "So he answered and said, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'""
 2. Second pray to Him.
 - i. **I Pt 5:7** "casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."
 3. If done righteously God will lift us up above the difficulties.
 - i. **Ja 4:10** "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."
 - ii. **Ph 4:13** "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
- C. Remember there is nothing wrong with asking that the suffering be removed
 1. When we suffer it is difficult and we can ask God to remove that suffering.
 - i. **II Co 12:8** "Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me."

¹ All Scriptures are taken from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

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2. We just must be ready to accept that the answer to our prayer might just be "my grace is sufficient."
 - i. **II Co 12:9** "And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."
 - a. In other words if all Christ did for us was die for our sins that would be sufficient to enable us to survive this world and prepare for the next.

II. Pray When Sick

- A. What kind of sickness are we dealing with here
 1. Many have suggested this is spiritual due to the forgiving of sins and the need to confess those sins.
 - i. **Ja 5:15-16** "And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, **he will be forgiven.** 16 **Confess your trespasses** to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." (emphasis mine)
 2. Many have suggested this is physical sickness due to the anointing with oil and the possibility of one having sin.
 - i. **Ja 5:14-15** "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 sick, and the Lord will raise him up. **And if** he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."
 3. It would appear to me to be dealing with physical illness based on spiritual illness.
 - i. Notice this would answer both questions and seems to fit most logically.
 - ii. Why is it most likely physical first?
 - a. Because the anointing of oil was a physical thing done.
 1. **Mk 6:13** "And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them."
 2. **Lk 7:46** "You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil."
 3. Even if the anointing was meant to represent the person as being saved it doesn't change the fact that the act is physical, though in context this cannot be "see next point."

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- b. Because the "saving" that took place was future and not immediate.
 - 1. **Ja 5:15** "And the prayer of faith **will save the sick...**" (emphasis mine)
 - 2. "Will save" is "verb, future, active, indicative, third person, singular."
 - i. Thus salvation from sickness was eventually going to happen.
- iii. Why is it most likely spiritual as well?
 - a. Simple it is dealing with sins and there need for forgiveness.
 - 1. Sin is spiritual in that it is the transgression of the law.
 - i. **I Jn 3:4** "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness."
 - 2. Sin therefore needs our prayers to be removed and the prayers of others can help us with this as well.
 - i. **I Jn 1:9** "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 - ii. **I Jn 5:16** "If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and **He will give him life** for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that."
 - iii. I'm not implying that we can pray for others sins to be removed and God will remove them. The sinner is the only one that can pray to have his/her sins removed (**He 6:4-6; I Jn 1:9**). We can pray they have a change of heart and open their heart and come back to God however (**Ro 9:3; I Jn 5:16**).
 - iv. How is it both spiritual and physical?
 - a. There is no doubt that spiritual illness can lead to physical illness.
 - 1. **Ps 6:2** "Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I am weak; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are troubled."
 - 2. **Ps 31:10** "For my life is spent with grief, And my years with sighing; My strength fails because of my iniquity, And my bones waste away."
 - 3. We see this in life all the time.
 - i. Contracting STD's due to fornication.
 - ii. Lung cancer due to smoking.
 - iii. Injury do to drunk driving...

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- b. With it being both it also answers the question of "and if" found in **Ja 5:15**.
 - 1. It very well could be that the Christian here has already asked God for forgiveness and therefore is only asking for the physical sickness now to leave.
 - c. It also answers the future tense of the statement "will save."
 - 1. If one has yet to ask God for forgiveness the elders coming and praying with him will help to lead him that direction, ie toward salvation.
 - i. **I Ti 4:16** "Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you."
- B. Is this the miraculous under consideration or providential
- 1. There are sound arguments for both sides of this one.
 - i. We could spend a lot of time looking at both but that would not really answer the question of which it is because both are plausible.
 - 2. However we do need to consider the idea that some are promoting and that is that elders today should anoint with oil the physically and spiritually sick.
 - i. This doesn't fit contextually for these reasons.
 - a. First if it was done as a means of miraculous healing of the physical body we cannot do this today, because miracles have ceased.
 - 1. **Mk 16:3** shows this connection with miraculous healing.
 - 2. We find that miracles have now ceased because (a) they were only temporary for the confirmation of the word and would end when the Word was completed (**Mk 16:20; I Co 13:9-10; Ja 1:25**).
 - b. Second if this was done because it was the custom of the day we don't need to do it because it is not our custom today.
 - 1. It was customary to use oil in this way for physical illness (**Is 6:1; Lk 10:34**).
 - 2. Scripture is clear customs do not make for blanked authority in that if it isn't the custom we don't have to follow it ie the "holy kiss" (**I Co 11:16; Ro 14:1-12**).
 - c. Third if this is required only elders are said to be able to perform this. That doesn't make since for those congregations that have no elders.
 - 1. If this was a requirement for all times it would limit a congregation with no elders and this is never seen in scriptures. A congregation with no elders can perform the same duties without all the qualifications as an eldership can.

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3. Thus we see that this could be miraculous or providential.
 - i. If miraculous we can only apply the non-miraculous aspects.
 - ii. If providential we must consider the lessons and authority and act accordingly.
- C. The prayer of the righteous avails much
 1. **Ja 5:16** "...The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."
 2. **Ja 5:16** "...The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working." (ESV)
 3. **Ja 5:16** "...The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." (NASB95)
 - i. In other words prayer can do amazing things in our lives and others we must be fervent prayer people, especially concerning those lost in sin.

III. Prays Are Answered

- A. What a great thing to know that our prayers can help those lost in sin.
 1. If we fervently pray for those that are not Christians to become Christians and those that have fallen away our prayers can have an effect.
- B. James says when one is brought back from sin there is a multitude of sins forgiven
 1. What does that mean though?
 - i. Some have suggested that it means that the one that has come back has their sins forgiven.
 - ii. Some have suggested that it means that the one that has prayed for the lost soul has his/her sins forgiven.
 2. I would suggest it is a combination of both of these.
 - i. In this since as Barkley put it, "To save another's soul is the surest way to save one's own soul." (from Coffman's Bible Commentary, Copyright © 1971-1993 by ACU Press, Abilene Christian University. All rights reserved.)
 - a. **I Ti 4:16** "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers." (ESV)
- C. Either way or both ways the point is to strive to save souls & the power of prayer in this endeavor
 1. Let us strive to have our prayers answered as we pray for souls to be saved and the wayward to come back.
 - a. Remember prayer is only effective if it is fervent and we are doing what we can to make it happen with "God's will" always in mind.

CONCLUSION

1. Malcolm Boyd is quoted as saying, "By my definition, prayer is consciously hanging out with God. Being with God in a deliberate way."
 - a. How true, let us deliberately and consciously pray to our great and awesome God.
2. Question: Do you have a healthy prayer life focused on yourself and others?
 - a. If so continue therein growing more abundantly.
 - b. If not correct it now and make it right before God.

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3. Invitation

- a. For those that are Christians but are not living for Christ repent by confessing your sins to God that He may forgive you and dedicate your life/time back to Him.
 - i. **I Jn 1:7, 9** "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin...9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
- b. For those that are not Christians or for those that think they are Christians and want to know for sure notice what is required to become a child of God or Christian according to God and God only.
 - i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Believe Jesus Is The Christ **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**