

THE POWER OF PRAYER **(James 5:13-18)**

I. The exhortations (vs. 13).

- A. James first exhorts his readers to pray when suffering.
 - 1. The word for suffering indicates physical or mental anguish.
 - 2. Any time there is an affliction of any kind, one should take it to the Father in prayer.
 - 3. This shows that the one suffering truly leans on God.
 - 4. God calls us to cast our cares on Him and we do that by means of prayer.
- B. James secondly exhorts his readers to sing when cheerful or merry.
 - 1. The one who is merry is one who is free of care and without problems.
 - 2. This is a call to praise God.
 - 3. When things are going well, we tend to forget God.
 - 4. He should be praised and thanked in those good times.
- C. The idea may very well be that the one who is suffering should pray and when he is comforted, praise God for the comfort.
- D. Sadly, some have tried to use this verse to condone instrumental music.
 - 1. It is obvious that singing is the only thing under consideration in this verse.
 - 2. There is no hint of instrumental accompaniment.
- E. James exhorts us in times of sadness or cheer, that there should be prayer and praise to God.

II. A declaration (vs. 14-16).

- A. James now declares what he was discussing in verse 13.
- B. He gives two reasons for prayer in this section.
- C. The first reason for prayer is for healing from sickness.
 - 1. Sickness is a part of life and is a part of the Christian life.
 - 2. Being sick does not make one a sinner.
 - 3. It is something with which we all deal.
- D. We should realize from this text that the miraculous is being discussed here.
 - 1. The apostles anointed with oil when they healed according to Matthew 6.
 - 2. This was simply a sign of the healing that was to take place.
- E. The one sick was to have the elders called.
 - 1. These men would come, pray and anoint with oil by the authority of Jesus.
 - 2. When this took place, God would heal the individual because of the prayer of faith offered up by the elders.
 - 3. It was a prayer offered by men who believed in what they were doing and in God who would do the healing.
 - 4. Notice that it was the Lord who would raise them up.
- F. This ability is not possessed by elders today.

1. They do have the ability, and desire, to pray for the sick.
 2. They do not have the ability to perform miracles.
- G. If the one healed had sin in his/her life, those sins would be forgiven.
1. The only way God can forgive sins is if one repents of them.
 2. Thus, the one being healed would first repent of their sins and then be healed.
- H. One thing that is important to note is that this has nothing to do with the Catholic doctrine of extreme unction.
1. This is when a priest comes in and anoints someone at the verge of death in order to save his/her soul.
 2. This doctrine is false and has no basis in this passage or any other for several reasons:
 - a. The end for the one who is sick in this passage is a return to health; in extreme unction it is death.
 - b. The elders are to be called not a priest.
 - c. It is bodily recovery that would take place, not the salvation of the sick person's soul.
- I. God heals people today through various means.
1. God healed people in the time of James through a miraculous means at times.
 2. Today, God heals people through means of medicine, treatments and things such as this.
 3. God is involved today as much as He was then, only through different means.
- J. The second reason for prayer in this section is the forgiveness of sins.
1. You and I are to confess our sins to one another, not to a priest.
 2. The Catholic doctrine of Auricular Confession, or in the ear confession, is based on this passage.
 3. The words "one to another" show the falseness of this doctrine.
 4. If such were the case, the priest is to confess his sins to the one making confession, which we know doesn't happen.
- K. The tense in which the phrase "confess your faults one to another" is written indicates we confess a sin as widely as it is known.
1. The reason for the confession is so we can pray.
 2. We should want those who know about the sin to know about the repentance as well, thus we confess as publicly as the sin is known.
- L. The idea of being healed here may mean be healed from sin, but probably refers to verses 14-15.
1. One would not call the elders if he was not penitent.
 2. If he did, the elders would not attempt to heal him as long as sin was present.
- M. The reason for prayer is that much is accomplished when righteous people pray.
1. When one who is right with God goes to pray, there is great power being accessed.

2. As br. Woods summarized this verse, “The effect of a prayer by a good man is great.”

III. An illustration (vs. 17-18).

- A. To illustrate the power of prayer by a righteous man, James pointed his readers back to an Old Testament prophet, Elijah.
 1. Wicked King Ahab was in power and Elijah told him that it would not rain but by his word and he then prayed for no rain.
 2. Great famine took place and over the course of three years it did not rain at all.
 3. Finally, God told Elijah it was time for it to rain and he prayed and it rained again.
- B. James was letting his readers and us know the power of prayer.
- C. Elijah was a man, a human, like us and he prayed and God answered his prayer, and God will answer our prayer as well if we are righteous.