

Healing the Sick

Sermon by Andy Sochor

Text: James 5:13-20

This lesson is the tenth and final in a series on the book of James. In this passage, James talked about healing the sick – both physical and spiritual sickness.

The Importance of Prayer (v. 13-18)

- Most of this passage addresses the topic of prayer – many reasons to pray; however, in this passage, the emphasis is on prayer for the sick (physically and spiritually)
- We offer prayers to God when we are suffering (v. 13; cf. Philippians 4:6-7)
- We pray for others when they are sick (v. 14-15)
- We pray for those who confess sins (v. 16; cf. Acts 8:24)
- Prayer is a necessary practice – “The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much” (v. 16); James used the example of Elijah to illustrate this (v. 17-18; cf. 1 Kings 17-18); Elijah and James lived in the miracle age, but the point is the same that prayer is effective because of God; pray that God’s will be done (cf. Matthew 26:39) because it will be (1 John 5:14-15); James mentioned a similar idea earlier (4:15)

When We Are Sick (v. 13-14)

- Again, we are to pray to God (v. 13) – example of Hezekiah (2 Kings 20:1-2)
- James also mentioned calling for the elders of the church (v. 14) – this is part of the elders’ role as shepherds of the flock (1 Peter 5:2); we have a responsibility to call upon others
- This means we must be willing to let others help us – we should mutually benefit one another (2 Corinthians 8:14); one of the characteristics of Jesus’ disciples is their love for one another (John 13:35)

When We Have Sinned (v. 16)

- Immediately when we recognize our sin we are to repent and pray (Acts 8:22)
- James also said we are to confess our sins to one another (v. 16) – not every sin (note the context); we are to confess every sin to God (1 John 1:9) in conjunction with repentance and prayer; James was talking about confessing sins from which we want to “be healed”; more than just forgiveness
- This is about sins that we struggle with – not just a one-time failing, but an ongoing battle; may or may not be public; could just be a private sin; but this is when we need encouragement/accountability from our brethren (Hebrews 3:12-13)

When Others Have Sinned (v. 19-20)

- There will be times when brethren stray from the truth (v. 19) – a Christian can fall away (Hebrews 3:12; Galatians 5:4; 1 Corinthians 9:27)
- We should want to help turn a wayward brother back to the Lord – remember the lesson on the prodigal son
- By turning them from sin we help them avoid eternal death (Romans 6:23)
- This will “cover a multitude of sins” (v. 20) – by leading him to repentance, he receives forgiveness; helping to correct someone is an act of love (1 Peter 4:8; cf. Revelation 3:19)

Conclusion

- The world around us is filled with sickness – physical and spiritual sickness
- When it is our own sickness (physical or spiritual), we need to look to God and seek help from our brethren
- When it is others’ sickness (physical or spiritual), we need to be ready to help and pray on their behalf