

## Prayer in Suffering

11.22.09

*13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 14 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 one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. 18 Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.*

*James 5:13-18 ESV*

Introduction and Overview: Despite its number of interpretive questions, this passage is basically about prayer. We need to be careful to not miss the forest for the trees.

*“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.”* James has been addressing suffering throughout the book and in v.7-12.

**P: Whatever situation we find ourselves in, we should direct our response back to God.**

*What is your response when something happens, good or bad? What needs to change?*

Start With the Heart:

**Pride is the enemy of prayer.**

We don't just 'get over' our pride. The way that we deal with it is by living in continual confession and repentance.

*“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.”* Lit. translated “weak.” Significant debate here about whether or not this means physical illness or weariness from persecution. In either case, the point is the same.

**P: Believers in serious situations should call for serious prayer from their elders.**

Elders” or “Pastors” are a group of biblically qualified, faithful men called to lead and shepherd God's church. “*Anointing...*” Could be referring to oil as medicine, ceremonial honoring as in the OT, symbolic reminder of the presence of the Holy Spirit at work. What is clear is that it is not sacramental (no extreme unction as in Catholic Theology) and that there is nothing “magical” about the oil.

*“And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.”* The prayer of the elders. ‘Save/raise him up’ means to restore (either physically or spiritually).

Why Don't We Do This?

1. We don't want to bother the elders (This could be a noble reason).
2. Pride—(Likely not so noble.)
  - a. We don't want to admit that we need someone else's help.
  - b. We need to repent and ask for help.

*“And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”*

**P: Though infirmity is not always a result of sin, there can be a connection.**

**P: Confession of sin and prayer for one another are integral parts of living in community and lead to healing.**

*Is the confession of sin and prayer for one another part of my spiritual experience?*

*“The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”* Two Dimensions of Righteousness: Positional righteousness (Gospel Identity) and Practical righteousness (“Putting off” sin and “putting on” Christ).

**P: Our personal righteousness affects our effectiveness in prayer.**

*“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.”* Elijah is a ‘just a man’ – not a superhero.

**P: God can use our passionate prayers to do powerful things.**

Putting Feet On It:

1. Pray for those who don't yet know Jesus.
2. Pray that we would see more people converted through our ministry.
3. Pray for us as your pastors—within and beyond this church.
4. Pray for our search for a facility.

**The Gospel is our only hope for praying rightly.**

**Works Consulted:** *Expositor's Commentary, MacArthur Study Bible, ESV Study Bible, MacArthur Commentary on James, The Bible Exposition Commentary, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, A Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Old and New Testaments, New Bible Commentary, The Outline Bible, Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary, Wilmington's Bible Handbook, Word Pictures of the New Testament*