

## The Prayer of Faith (James 5:16-20)

By Pastor Jeff (3/29/2015)

### Introduction

1. In the last chapter of his letter, James prepared the believers for the return of Christ.
2. The condition to be avoided was spiritual weakness that left them vulnerable to sin; thus, James exhorted—
  - a. Those spiritually afflicted to pray
  - b. Those spiritually victorious to worship
3. Building on instructions to the spiritually afflicted (sick), James instructed them to summon the elders (the spiritually mature leaders) to minister at the side of the afflicted, (1) praying for him, (2) and anointing with oil in the Lord's name.
4. James followed the instruction with great promises: the prayer of faith would (1) *save* the weak brother, (2) the Lord would *raise* him up—restore him from discouragement and spiritual defeat, (3) and his *sins* would be forgiven.
5. In today's message we want to look into this ministry to weak saints.

### I. The Principle (v. 16a).

1. Who are those James refers to as *sick* (vv. 14, 15)?
  - a. In verse 14, the word *asthenei* literally means “to be weak” (Rom. 6:19, 14:1).
  - b. In verse 15, the word *kamnonta* means to be *weary* from affliction (Heb. 12:3).
  - c. The reference is to *weakness* that can be either physical or spiritual.
2. How was the ministering to be done (v. 14b)?
  - a. The spiritually mature (elders) were come to the weak one and pray for him (1 Thess. 5:14).
  - b. They were also to anoint him with oil.
3. Verse 16 summarizes the ministry described in verse 15, only in reverse order.
  - a. The elders were to encourage the weak by *confessing* their own *sinfulness*—openly and joyfully acknowledging the truth and praising the Lord for their own victory. The issue here is *sharing* to combat discouragement and downfall, “that you may be healed” *spiritually* (Heb. 12:13).
  - b. They were also to enlist divine aid through *praying*. The prayer of faith (v. 15) refers to praying with confidence that your requests are in keeping with the will of God (Matt. 21:22; John 15:7).  
Self-reliance and selfish desires will not gain God's ear (4:1-4). James had already warned about *double mindedness*—being undecided about whether you will be devoted to God or your own selfish interests (1:6).

### II. The power (v. 16b-18).

Here is great encouragement in the heat of trials and afflictions—the *powerful* and *effective* prayer of a righteous person brings the needed cure from God.

1. The character of the prayer offered.

- a. It is an effectual prayer and powerful in working.
  - b. The actual statement of James is difficult and has resulted in various interpretations.
2. The character of the praying one.
- a. A man right with God and with men—righteous.
  - b. He is heard in heaven because He wears Christ's righteousness and he pursues holiness (personal righteousness, Heb. 12:14).
  - c. The righteous man is not one with a passive or theoretical righteousness but one that turns on actuality—one that derives from living faith in the living God.
3. The example of Elijah (vv. 17, 18)
- a. He, like James's readers, was a fellow sufferer—a man of like feeling.  
He lived at a time of great apostasy in Israel like that of his readers (1 Kings 17:1; 18:41–46).
  - b. He prayed with a prayer, and God answered.
  - c. The result was revival in his day.

### **III. The proceeds (v. 19, 20).**

Ministry is difficult and dangerous, but its rewards and blessings are great; thus, as he closes the book, James encourages us—

- 1. The work to rescue straying sheep who have left the path and are hopelessly lost is difficult.
- 2. But it is rewarded when the sheep are returned to the fold, saved from death (being torn by wild beasts), and sins are covered.

### **Conclusion**

Jesus is coming. We must live as if we really believe it.

The clear and demonstrable mark of a genuine saint is steadfast endurance.

There is hope for distraught and sinning souls, disillusioned and depressed—the loving counsel and prayerful support of mature saints in the assembly.

The powerful prayers of righteous saints result in the revival and return of the erring sheep.