

Sunday School Lesson for the Month of January 2021

Proper Prayer

James 5:13-18

(Sunday, January 3, 2021)

James' sequence of thoughts here is easy to follow. He describes when you pray; Why you pray and then how you pray.

I. Pray Always.

- A. Verse 13 is a picture of the early church at it's best. In times of sickness, they healed against a pagan world that offered only a bleak hopelessness, these Christians operated with expectation and power. They loved to sing; a clear sign of joy is evident in someone's singing, whistling or humming. When the occasion was less joyous, they prayed for help and acted on their requests as far as they could.
- B. The point is that they drew together to pray and do what they could to help remedy the situation. They asked God to take their efforts and perform healing, but they were not prone, as we often are, to ask God to do the miraculous while we passively do nothing.

(Sundays, January 10, 17, 2021)

II. What Prayer accomplishes.

James' enthusiasm regarding prayer came from high expectations of what Prayer could accomplish.

- A. First, the prayer of faith will save! The fact that the promise is stated in unqualified terms raises a problem. Not even the Apostles believed that prayer always resulted in healing. This statement, then, must not be taken as a guarantee that every prayer offered in sufficient faith will be answered positively. It is mainly intended to show that every possible need of the Christian can be brought to God in Prayer.
- B. Secondly, the Lord will raise him up (vs. 15). Note here, James' emphasis that it is the Lord who raises him up. The elders, the oil, the prayer- these are simply instruments that the Lord uses to restore one's health. It is the Lord who does the healing.

- C. Thirdly, if he has committed sin, they will be forgiven (vs. 15). No one can know real health of soul, mind, or body until he or she is first right with God. A right relationship with God is a prerequisite for total good health.

(Sundays, January 24, 31, 2021)

III. How to Pray.

How can we pray best? James gives two answers:

- A. First, there is a need for the confession of sin, not just to God but to each other. It is sometimes easier to confess sin to God than it is to confess to other people. Yet in sin two barriers are often created. One is between us and God; the other is between us and our fellow humans. To remove both barriers, both types of confession must be made. This principle is clearly one that must be used with caution. It is quite true that there may well be cases where confession of sin to each other may do infinitely more harm than good. Only when a two-way barrier has been erected because of a wrong doing should one feel the necessity to confess to the other. Otherwise, just work to remedy the problem and do not cause more trouble than necessary.
- B. Secondly, James says to pray for one another. Here we see the mark of pure unselfish intercession. Saturating oneself in prayer for others is a wonderful spiritual experience. A Prayer may be quiet and private, but it avails much.

Prayer is both necessary and helpful. We should develop the habit of being prayerful. Talking to God in praise and petition should be second nature to us. We can know God intimately through prayer. Let us not only develop the habit, but persevere in it.