



Christian Life Fellowship
Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



Faith and Trouble

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By Rev. David Koch

Introduction:

This morning we conclude our series on the book of James. This has been a great study and I trust you have grown and have been challenged to walk in a deeper way in your faith walk.

Today we are going to talk about faith, healing, prayer, sin, and caring from James 5:13-20.

I. FAITH AND TROUBLE

There is a connection between faith and prayer. Just as faith without works is dead, so faith without prayer is also dead. Prayer is the place where we exercise our faith. Let me say it again – you need to have a devotional life with the Lord. There is so much that happens outside of this sanctuary each week. If you are not developing an intimacy with Christ personally in a devotional life of prayer and Bible reading, then I urge you to begin. Just as it is impossible to stay alive physically without rest and nourishment and exercise, so it is true spiritually. The life of the Spirit within us cannot be maintained long without contact with the Lord through prayer and His word.

James begins by asking is any one in trouble? The Greek word here means to undergo hardship.

Prayer is powerful in that we acknowledge our inability to fix everything. Prayer is an acknowledgment of my need for God's power in my life and situation. If you are not finding a place of prayer daily, then I would say you are trying to live life without God and your hardships will be harder. You will only be as strong and able to stand spiritually as the strength of your devotional life.

When we find ourselves in trouble we must pray! That should not be the only time we pray, but we

certainly should not abandon prayer when we have hardship. That is certainly a time when we must seek God.

If you are happy, sing songs of praise. Praise is a powerful response. Something powerful takes place when we choose to praise God in the circumstances of life. A perfect example of praise in hard situations is found in Acts where Paul and Silas had been beaten, and put in stocks in prison. God's response to their praises was to send an earthquake and an angel to free them from that place of imprisonment. You and I have so much to be joyful about and we should learn to sing, in every situation we find ourselves in.

II. FAITH AND HEALING

Is anyone of you sick? What do you do when you are sick? Most of us would seek the help of a physician. Nothing wrong with that but do we go to the great physician first? The word sick here means to be diseased, feeble, or weak.

Physicians were practicing back in Jesus day. Luke was a physician. They certainly did not have the medical technology that we have today, but James doesn't say, if you are sick, go to a doctor. He says; believe in Jesus as the great physician to heal. James also doesn't say, don't seek medical assistance. There has to be a balance!

Let me ask you a question. Is anything hard for God? Is there any disease that is beyond God's ability to make well? Is it harder for God to heal heart disease, or cancer, than to heal a headache? Is it harder for God to heal diabetes than to heal a cold?

James gives clear instruction as to what we need to do when we are sick. He tells us to call the elders together and have them pray over the person that is sick, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. Oil so often in the scripture holds the significance of the Holy Spirit. It is the anointing of the Holy Spirit that breaks yokes of bondage. It is the anointing of the Holy Spirit that brings healing. The work of the Holy Spirit is so needed in our lives and our fellowship.

Here is where faith comes into play when it comes to prayer. There will be a battle. Faith says I believe, even when I don't see. James is very emphatic because he says the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up.

According to this scripture, it is prayer, faith, obedience, and the power of God working together that brings healing.

If there is sin in that person's life, he will be forgiven. Wow! How awesome to think that God doesn't just heal the body, but He forgives the soul. He wants us to have unhindered relationship with Him.

Confess your faults to each other. In order to pray for one another and help support one another, we need to be able to know what to pray for. It is helpful to acknowledge our slips, shortcomings and failures. We should not try to cover those things up. What James is saying is we need a partner which we can tell those things to and have them pray for us, so we might have healing. Healing comes through dealing with what is making one sick.

When you go to a physician and you have an infection, what do they do? They say let me see it. Let me uncover it and expose it, so I might be able to treat it. The same is true with our shortcomings. We have to uncover the things that are hidden, those areas of infection, of sin, and the things that make us weak spiritually, and allow them to be treated.

James speaks of the prayer of the righteous being powerful and effective.

One of the most powerful tools we have as believers is the tool of prayer. Prayer brings us into the throne room of our King. Prayer instantly gives us access to the attention of God.

There are so many factual things that are recorded that have happened only because of prayer. We can not deny the truth that prayer is powerful. At times prayer is likened to warfare. A scripture that comes to mind about that is:

2 Cor. 10:4-5

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Sometimes we think that our prayers are not very powerful or effective. Those are lies from the enemy of our soul who desires to keep us from exercising this most powerful tool.

The King James Version speaks of the "effectual fervent prayer." The words mean with energy. Sometimes we pray with not much fervor, or energy or passion. The word "availed" means to have force, strength and to prevail.

Prayer is powerful. James uses the example of Elijah for us to consider when it comes to praying.

Elijah was just like us. He was human. He had flaws and places where he excelled. God answered his prayer and for 3 ½ years it did not rain anywhere on the land. Then he prayed and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

In I Kings 18, we read of the story of Elijah and his servant. Go seven times, and see if the rain is coming. At the last and 7th time, I see a cloud the size of a man's hand. Go and get the chariot ready, because there is going to be a powerful answer to prayer – the rain is coming.

God will answer prayer. Sometimes He says yes, sometimes no, but when He answers He will do what He says He will!

III. FAITH AND CARING

Finally James talks about how we should look out for one another.

It is the responsibility of the people of faith to look out for each other. If someone wanders from the truth, then we should make every attempt we can to bring that person back and turn them toward God.

James concludes his letter with this thought. Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

The people who are enslaved by sin are victims of the evil one who has taken them captive to do his will. If they are to be won at all they will be won by those who speak deeply and convincingly through love.

There is a time to speak up to someone about sin and help them deal with the contamination of their decisions and actions. If we love each other we will bring sin into the light rather than stand by while it works its harm on other people.

If it painful to confront others, but it is the loving thing to do. Faithful friends will wound if they must.

The issue is accountability. I am my brother's keeper. I am responsible for others, to watch out for them, instruct them, counsel them, and to admonish and be engaged with them in their struggle against sin, but I must do this in love and kindness.

The goal of this accountability and looking out for others is restoration.

Conclusion:

Let your faith be active. Stand in times of testing. Sing praises when you are happy. Call for the elders of the church when you are sick and have them anoint you and pray the prayer of faith over you for healing. Evaluate your faith.

Galatians 6:1

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.

We have to learn how to deal gently with the faults of others. here is always a way back to God. Beyond the bad news of our failure and frustration is grace – the incredible gift of God.

Grace means God forgives us, no matter what we have done, are doing, or will ever do. It means that our sins are gone forever. Grace is the unhindered, wondrous, boundless love of God poured out to us in a variety of ways.

Grace also means that God has given us resources to make a new start. The question is not can I make it, am I able, can I overcome my sin? The question is always, is He able? Can He transform me? He says He can, but it may take a while.

I Thes. 5:24

The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.

Before we were born, before we did anything good or bad, Jesus paid for our sins. His love covers a multitude of sins. God is continually working on us, conforming some small part of us to His likeness, making us His reproduction.

Philip. 1:6

...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

God will finish the work He has started.

So, James ends his book on this note – whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover a multitude of sins. This is the highest calling, the holiest calling.