



Prayer Resources

Online Articles

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How To Pray For The Sick

And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up... James 5:15a

James states that the prayer of faith shall save the sick. Sounds simple enough. Simply add the sick person's name to the church's prayer list, mention it during the request time at the corporate prayer meeting, and hope the prayer leader will remember to pray for the person. And if the prayer leader does ask God to "bless" or even "heal" the person, will this be the end of the matter? We would deny theoretically that praying for the sick is that simple. Yet our practice of praying for the sick is usually limited to those non-demanding activities. Then when the person is not healed, we wonder what went wrong? Several specific kinds of prayer are all integrally involved in the prayer of faith that heals the sick as described in James 5:13-18.

The unfeigned prayer of the sick: *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. (5:13a)*

The starting point in the healing process is the prayer of the one who needs the prayer. Perhaps he is not in any spiritual condition to pray himself. While all sickness is the result of sin and all sick persons are sinners, not all sick persons are any more sinful than those who are healthy. However, consequences of sin may be directly responsible for sickness and those who have chosen to follow the path of sin regardless of its consequences are seldom those who are prepared to pray for healing. Sickness is a clarion call to examine oneself and make any corrections needed to experience freedom in personal prayer (1 Corinthians 11:28-32).

The unmistakable prayer of the Psalms: *Is any merry? let him sing psalms. (5:13b)*

Praying through the comforting Psalms and applying the Word of God to the sick has great therapeutic value. Quality of voice or harmony of voices is not the focus here. The emphasis is upon the healthy administering the Word of God – specifically the Psalms – to the sick. As the Word is applied, the Holy Spirit has the greatest means available to bring healing (Matthew 8:16-17).

The unctioned prayer of the elders: *Is any sick among you? 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: (5:14)*

Once again the initiation of this action must be done by the sick person. The elders represent those who are not only spiritually minded and steeped in Scripture, but filled with the Spirit of God. They are in a position of spiritual authority over the sick person that gives them a foundation for discernment. While applying oil and laying on of hands can have a physically therapeutic value, they also give the symbolic communication that the elders through the Holy Spirit have discerned God's direction for the afflicted to be healed. An elder should not participate in this anointing without full conviction that healing is in God's will.

The unmovable prayer of faith: *And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up;* (5:15a)

Confident, believing prayer by all those involved will heal the sick. But the confidence does not come from voicing an empty request nor from repeating a magical formula. The prayer of faith that will save the sick is a prayer of certainty based on discernment that can only come through communion with the Father. The prayer of faith cannot be uttered unless it is preceded by the previous three prayers mentioned in this passage.

The unrepachable prayer of confession: *and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another,* (5:15b-16a)

Forgiveness is a stronger medication than any of man's known chemical inventions. The forgiveness that comes after self-examination gives freedom for the afflicted to confess the revealed cause of his sickness. James speaks further however. Confession should involve others confessing any complicity in the matter, such as an enabler for the afflicted's sins.

The unselfish prayer of intercession: *and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.* (5:16b)

Intercession is deeper than mere praying for one another on a Wednesday night. Intercession is prayer that identifies with the sin problem or crisis of another, in this case the sick person, and, after seeking insights from the Word of God to discern His will in the matter, sacrificially prays for the person's needs.

The untainted prayer of the righteous: The effectual fervent *prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* (5:16c)

Those who are righteous are those who are living a separate lifestyle from the world. They are set apart for God's special use, such as praying for those who are sick. The godly, righteous person can boldly intercede before God because he knows that there is nothing hindering God from hearing his prayers.

The unquenchable prayer of perseverance: *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.* (5:17-18)

For three and one half years Elijah was persistent in his prayer to hold back the rain. Space does not permit the wonderful examples that could be shared of the sick who have been sustained for years and even decades through the unquenchable prayers of God's persevering saints. Suffice it to say that because of this type of praying many sick have been saved through their diseases instead of from their diseases.

With so much time and effort in today's church given over to the prayer for the sick, perhaps it is time for us to re-examine what the Scripture teaches about this matter. And after re-examining the matter, determine if our praying for the sick aligns with the teachings of the Word of God or if they are no different than the vain, repetitious prayers of the heathen.