

Wednesday in the Word

Digging Deeper

September 23, 2020

James 5:12-20

When To Pray

James, our brother and the brother of our Lord Jesus, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit has related to us 5 chapters of vignettes to clarify the simple truths of living the Christian life. It's really not that difficult to comprehend the basic principles. Matthew 7:12, Colossians 3:23. Now in verse 12 he reminds us of the rudiments of Christ's teachings. Matthew 5:33-42. Folks have argued and resisted many of these beautiful statements but obviously James here, having sat at Jesus' feet, feels that his closing statements ought to restate the simplicity of our required behavior. In our representing Christ and His gospel to a fallen world, we ought to above all speak truth and be men and women of our word. If you speak it, do it. Promises go empty very quickly but a person who faithfully states an intention and then performs it will gain the trust and integrity that God demands of His people. You are the arm of Christ and the living Word of God to all whom the Lord introduces you. If He gives you 15 minutes or 15 years to interact with someone, consider whether you spoke life to them or death. Did you leave them better off than they were? Joyfully do the work of the Father as Jesus did. John 14:10-12.

Prayer comes in many forms. Praise, song, intercession, private, community, confession, calling of elders, in the anointing of oil, in the Name of the Lord, the prayer of faith, for salvation, for forgiveness, for healing and unceasing fellowship. Prayer is communication with the Creator of the Universe. Did you catch that? Consider who He is and contrast that to who you are! Why should God listen or care about you? Matthew 6:25-33, 1 Peter 5:7, Psalm 8:3-6. Many other scriptures tell us of God's intimate love for us. Accept this and rejoice!

But now the question comes up. When should we pray and for what? Answer; pray once a day. Begin when you wake up and end when you fall asleep. Our daily walk with Jesus should be just that. Imagine every day of your life being laid out as a leisurely walk and He waits at your door each morning to greet you and to turn down the path and unite with you in conversation. Thoughts may drift, silence may arrive but the talk begins again picking up right where it left off. Enter in to communication with Him and never let it fade. Isaiah 1:18, Exodus 33:11.

As we search verses 13-20 we can begin to see that prayer has no limits. No issues too large or small. One dear Saint among us prays for every parking space she seeks and is always graciously accommodated by her Heavenly Father. What does James tell us? Pray during seasons of affliction, joy, sickness, salvation, resuscitation, sin, forgiveness, faults, needs for self, needs for others, drought, rain, famine, harvest, error, conversion, life, death and the hiding or covering of sin. In our hearts we may harbor self pride or condemnation of others but we are urged to cover others and stand in the gap for them. Exodus 32:7-14. Beg God to forgive others and not to destroy them. Luke 23:32-37.

Digging in to these final verses in James we find some interesting nuggets. The word 'afflicted' in verse 13 is *kakopatheō* in the Greek, meaning undergoing hardship. Are you? Imagine it to mean whatever you wish. Life can be hard. We all go there. Pray! The word for 'pray' by the way is *proseuchomai*. It means to wish toward God. Give Him your dreams, wishes and desires, always asking in His will. Psalm 50:15. The word 'merry' here is *euthumeō*. It means cheerful. Give the Lord your gladness as well as your sadness. Let's put two of these in

to a verse. Proverbs 15:15. Our emotions and their expression are most usually a choice. Why be afflicted when God enables you to be merry? In verse 14, 'Sick' is *astheneō* or to be feeble or weak. Our weakness needs the comfort of our fellow believers. All of us share in this malady. 2 Corinthians 1:4. Folks today are excited about the medical value of oils. If they work, wonderful! Understand here though the oil of anointing holds no special power. It is a sign or symbol of the prayers of the Holy Spirit. He is our Power. 'Faith' in verse 15 is *pistis* or credible persuasion. Is faith in Christ persuasive and credible? You bet! He heals our sickness and forgives our sin. Isaiah 53:4-5. In verse 16 the Greek for 'faults' is *paraptōma* which is a side slip or deviation. These are accidental sins. "Oops! Did I say that?" Yes we can slip sometimes and thank the Holy Spirit for helping us recognize it. Confession by the way is agreement with our brothers and sisters over our failures. We all have them. If a fellow believer cannot agree to joining in your guilt they may be dishonest. Fellowship starts with trust. Why was Elias or Elijah brought in as an example in verse 17? These "like passions" mentioned here simply say that he was a sinner too and God listened to him. The more accurate statement though, is that Elias listened to God. Hear God. Know His will. Then you will respond to life with truth and conviction. Your prayers will be effective. The phrase in verse 19, to err from the truth, '*planeo apo tes aletheis*' speaks of roaming or wandering from the unconcealed or revealed truth. Our Lord is clear and readable. Easy to understand. Truth is not debatable, disguised or ambiguous. Roaming and wandering are rebellion. They are the decisive actions of rejection. Our walk with Christ is one of choice. Constant, repentant choice. Save a soul from death! Hide someone's sins in Jesus! Please!