

Church Membership Series (8)

Supplemental: The Prayer of Faith

Discussion Questions:

(Summary) – The Book of James encourages us to pray and ask God for healing when we are sick (James 5:14-15). In his exhortation, James makes the following challenges/claims:

1. The sick should call for the elders of the church who will minister with both prayer and medicine (anointing them with oil).
2. The sick are restored by the “prayer offered in faith.”
3. If sin happens to be the cause of the person’s sickness, then whatever sins have been committed will be forgiven in the healing.

(Points 1-3) – James puts a great deal of emphasis on the effectiveness of prayer offered in faith. In the NT, three characteristics of faith-filled prayer can be observed in the healing miracles of Jesus: confidence in God’s *ability* to heal, respect for God’s *authority* to heal and *audacity* to request healing from God.

- *Do believe in God’s ability to grant your requests for healing (or anything else for that matter)? If yes, do you take your requests to God? If no, why not?*
- *Have you even been encouraged to “claim” or “demand” things in the Name of Jesus? If yes, what was the rationale behind it?*
- *Do you ever not ask because you expect the answer to be “no?” Can you think of a situation where you received a “no” but now you are glad that you did?*

(Intro 3) – (V. 15) of the text strongly implies that sometimes, sin is the cause of our sicknesses (though this is not always the case).

- “and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.” (James 5:15)

This is not the only place we see sin as a cause of sickness in the NT. There are two other notable examples:

- There is Jesus’ healing at the Pool of Bethesda – “Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, ‘Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.’” (John 5:14)
- There is also Paul’s warning to the Corinthians against taking communion in an unworthy manner – “But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. ³⁰ For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.” (1 Corinthians 11:28-30)

This latter example is particularly troubling as it indicated that sickness resulting from sin can lead to death. With this in mind...

- *Is it possible that people who embrace this might slip into some counterproductive behaviors? (For example: assuming those who are sick have sin in their life or becoming paranoid that you have sinned every time you are sick.) How do we apply the truth in this text in a balanced and productive way?*
- *Have you ever experienced/witnessed sickness as a result of sin? Describe.*