

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

Theme: “The Testing of Your Faith”

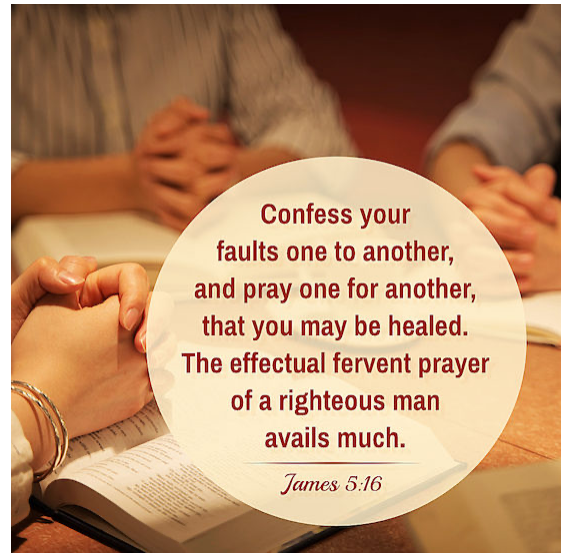
Lesson: 39 Text: 5:15-16a

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Trinity Lutheran Church

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Confess your
faults one to another,
and pray one for another,
that you may be healed.
The effectual fervent prayer
of a righteous man
avails much.

James 5:16

TEXT AND STUDY NOTES

(15) And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and **the Lord** will raise him up.

And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

**(Dt 28:58-62; Ps 30:2; Is 33:24;
Mt 9:2; Mk 2:5-9; Lk 5:20; 7:14; Jn 9:1-13;
Ac 3:1 – 4:22; James 1:6)**

(16a) Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

**(Gen 18:23-32; 20:17; Num 11:2; 1 Ki 13:6; 17:22; 2 Ki 4:33; 19:15-20;
Job 42:8; Prov 15:29; Ps 145:18;
Mt 3:6; 7:7; 18:15,16; Mk 1:5; Jn 9:31;
Ac 19:18; Heb 12:13; 1 Pet 2:24; 1 Jn 1:9)**

Commentary on James – “The Epistle of Faith” – Dr. David Scaer - CPH

James continues to develop thoughts for which he has already laid the groundwork. His phrase “the prayer of faith will save the sick” resembles the words of Jesus to the woman with the issue of blood, “Your faith has made you well” [or “saved you”]” (Matt. 9:22). There is no major theological problem in ascribing salvation to either faith or the prayer of faith. “Faith” here in James is used in a way not essentially different from that of Paul and Jesus. The faith acceptable to God places its trust solely in Him. This “prayer of faith” is offered in the full anticipation that God will answer it and grant its request. Her “prayer of faith” saved the woman with the issue of blood because her faith was directed to Jesus with the complete confidence that He would grant her request. Since faith places all its reliance on Jesus, such faith is always in a state of prayer. Faith is always at prayer.

person can be assured of salvation. The present sickness should not be interpreted by the afflicted as a sign of God's disfavor on the Last Day. There is no suggestion that his sickness is a result of his sin. The word for "raise" (*egeirō*) in raising the sick person is frequently used in the New Testament of the resurrection and is used by Paul of the general resurrection (1 Cor. 15:29, 32). Rather than being a promise for immediate healing, it can be understood as a promise that Jesus will grant the sick one the resurrection. James has been eschatological throughout his epistle. In the crisis of a sickness that might bring death, the sick person is to focus on the final salvation and resurrection wrought by Christ. Without cause some suggest that illness is the result of a specific sin and that the sick person should examine himself for secret sin.

Also forgiveness of sins is spoken of in the future tense: "And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven (*aphethēsetai*)." Certainly James is not speaking to the question of whether the justified person is now forgiven by God. Rather he is speaking of the Last Day, when God will find the righteous to be innocent of all sins. The same futuristic idea is present in the Lord's Prayer, in which the petitioner asks God to forgive sins (Matt. 6:12). Jesus provides His own explanation that the Father *will* forgive (*aphēsei*) their sins to those who forgive others (Matt. 5:14-15). The Father's forgiveness is the eschatological forgiveness of the Last Day.

The admonition to pray and confess sins seems to apply to the entire Christian life and not merely to one life-threatening moment: "Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed (*iathēte*)" (5:16). The Greek word for "confess" (*exomologeō*), is used of those who confessing their sins come to John the Baptist (Matt. 3:6) in order to avoid the final display of God's wrath. The prayer offered for others asks for God's forgiveness after the confession. It matters little whether the sins confessed are against God or against others, especially fellow Christians. Essential for James is that the offense of disregarding the poor expresses contempt for Christ. The problem for these Christians lies in recognizing that God is offended by disregarding others. The promise of healing coming after a confession of sins is best understood as a reference to the forgiveness wrought through Christ's atonement.

LIFE APPLICATIONk

"Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."

Note how there is a connection between physical and spiritual healing.

Why do we always need both?