

Diligently Seeking God (Hebrews 11:6)

PRAIRIE VILLAGE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Church Bulletin Articles from July 17, 2011

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Scripture of the Week



James 5:16

“Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”

This has to be the most famous Bible verse concerning the value and power of prayer. We often quote this verse to struggling friends to encourage them to pray and take comfort in knowing that others are praying for them.

James went on to write that Elijah’s prayers stopped the rains from falling for 3½ years (verse 17). Then he prayed and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit (verse 18). Prayer is powerful medicine for healing our greatest illness—the spiritual sickness of sin. But we usually overlook the first part of verse 16 where James tells us to confess our sins to one another. When we pray without confessing our sins, we only employ half the power and take only half the dose of God’s prescription for recovery. We often struggle with problems, weaknesses and sins, and most of the time we choose to keep them all to ourselves. But part of the healing benefit from the prayer of a righteous person comes from knowing the prob-

lem that needs to be prayed for. If we don’t confess our sins to one another, how in the world can we expect our brethren to pray for us in an effective way? Confession also blows the lid off of the secrecy of sin. The power of sin lies in its secrecy. As long as no one else knows the nature of the sins that plague us, it is unlikely we’ll ever turn from them. When we keep our sins all to ourselves, the guilt and the shame are present, but the motivation to stop often is not. When other people know the truth, then we can get the help we need. Then our brethren can pray their most effective prayers. Then we’ll have loved ones to hold us accountable for our actions. If you’re struggling with sin today, pray, and confide in a trusted friend in Christ for help.

Final Exhortations from James

The letter of James has been referred to as “the Proverbs of the New Testament” and “the Gospel of Common Sense”. In this epistle, the Lord’s brother encourages us to be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger (1:19). He urges us to be doers of the word and not merely hearers (1:22). He tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves, control our tongues, and be humble, along with a number other practical admonitions to live life daily according to the will of God. But in James 5:7-20 he issues his final exhortations wherein he impresses upon our minds biblical imperatives of the greatest importance. He reminds us in verse 7 of the importance of patience

in the life of a Christian when undergoing trials and temptations. He wrote that when the farmer plants he must wait patiently for God to send the rain and for the precious produce of the ground to grow. We must learn to wait bravely for the Lord to ease our suffering when we’re enduring affliction. In verse 9 he urged us to not complain against our brothers and sisters in Christ. During times of difficulty and stress, one of the easy things to do is complain about our problems. What we must really be careful to not do is take out our frustrations on our loved ones. So often we lash out at the ones who treat us the best, when things aren’t going our way. James said this

will bring God’s judgment upon us. Verse 12 is the focal point of these final few verses. He said there, “above all brethren, do not swear.” “Above all” means give particular attention to this matter. James isn’t saying it is never appropriate to make an oath. He is encouraging us to be people of our word and just tell the truth at all times. Our “yes” is to be “yes” and our “no” is to be “no”. In other words, if we always tell the truth we won’t have to swear on a stack of Bibles to get people to believe us. In verse 14 he said to pray when we are suffering and sing praises when we are cheerful. No matter what condition you find yourself in, share it with Almighty God.

Please Come Visit Us At...

Prairie Village Church of Christ

4616 Valley Station Rd., Louisville, KY 40272

Preacher – Louie Taylor

Phone Number – 502.807.3211

www.pvchurchofchrist.com

Times of Services

Sunday Morning Bible Study.....9:30

Sunday Morning Worship Service.....10:30

Sunday Evening Worship Service.....6:30

Wednesday Evening Bible Study.....7:30



Final Exhortations Continued

James wrote in James 5:14 that if anyone is sick, he is to call the elders of the church and they are to pray over him and anoint him with oil. Verse 15 says that the prayer offered in faith will restore the sick person. Most scholarly sources share the view that this is referring to physical illness. While this may be true, we must understand that God does not guarantee us that prayer will heal all our ailments. Even godly people acquire incurable illnesses sometimes and unfortunately that's just the way life works on planet earth. The Apostle Paul had a "thorn in the flesh" that he prayed repeatedly for the Lord to remove, and the Lord said "No" (2 Corinthians 12:7-9). Timothy had an intestinal disorder and other ailments that required the regular usage of medicinal wine for treatment (1 Tim-

thy 5:23). That having been said, when I am sick, I can think of no people I'd rather have praying for me than a group of godly elders. Even so, I am of the opinion that the sickness James refers to here is spiritual sickness or sin. He went on to write in verse 15 that the sick person will be forgiven. In verse 16 James said we are to pray for one another and confess our sins to one another so that we will be healed. Sin is the deadliest of all poisons, and if not treated it is spiritually fatal. It appears to me that the context is spiritual sickness and spiritual healing. As far as the anointing with oil is concerned, olive oil was used for its medicinal qualities by the people James wrote to, but it also had great symbolic significance. I believe the anointing is more symbolic than therapeutic. Notice that it is

said in verse 15 that the prayer offered in faith will restore the sick, not the oil. James went on to write about the awesome power of prayer in verses 17-18. To further hone in on the theme of the sickness of sin and its deadly consequences, James wrote in verse 19-20, "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins." There is not a passage in all the Bible which more clearly states that a saved child of God can lose his salvation after he has obtained it. James is talking about brethren in Christ who stray from the truth and whose souls will die if they don't turn back. "Once saved, always saved" is nowhere taught in the Bible.

GOSPEL MEETING AUGUST 15-17 WITH GERRY SANDUSKY — Please mark your calendars and make early plans to attend every day of this short, three day meeting with Gerry Sandusky of Madison Indiana. Brother Gerry has entitled this series of studies, "There's A Great Day Coming!". Each lesson will be taken from the New Testament book of 1 Thessalonians, and the goal of this meeting will be to motivate each one of us to live every day of our lives on planet earth as if it might be our last.