

Study 9 – Praying in Faith

Some Study Questions to consider.

A. James 5:12 Oaths

1. Why might people swear an oath and why do you think James forbids us from so doing? Note that he echoes the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5:34-37. Does this include making vows to God to carry out a duty or in response to Him saving us from a disaster? What about swearing on a Bible when testifying in court? [Note one of the Anglican 39 Articles expressly permits a Christian person to declare an oath in a court of law but there remain differing opinions amongst different Christian traditions]
2. Compare oaths made to protect or save our good name and prayers to God for his will to be carried out.

B. 5:13-18 The Prayer of Faith

1. Reflect on specific times when you have been afflicted by trouble. Was prayer your natural first port of call? How does prayer help us to trust God in times of difficulty, stress and turmoil?
2. Why might we neglect prayer when things are going well for us? Reflect on the following statement: 'God is at the heart of our times of happiness and pleasure and it is right to acknowledge him in thankful praise'.
3. Serious illness requires a special response according to James 5:14. What are some of the conditions in this passage that need to be met in ministering to a sick person? List them and discuss.
4. Is there a connection between serious illness and sin? What does it mean to confess your sins to one another? To whom should I confess and does that person have the authority to pronounce forgiveness over me?
5. What does "the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" mean? In what senses are we righteous? Does righteousness require any effort at all on our part?
6. In what ways was Elijah a human being like us? Does God make exceptional cases for being special as a pray-er or do we operate on a level playing field with no special advantages over others? Compare Elijah to Jesus.

C. 5:19-20 Wandering from the Truth

1. Why is giving up on your faith such a serious problem?
2. What are the benefits for the person who brings a sinner back?
3. What happens when a 'wanderer' returns?
4. Discuss the following statement. Is this true and why? Is it as serious as Moo suggests?

'These last two verses are an appropriate conclusion. Not only should the readers of James "do" the words he has written; they should be deeply concerned to see that others "do" them also. It is by sharing with James the conviction that there is indeed an eternal death, to which the way of sin leads, that we shall be motivated to deal with sin in our lives and in the lives of others' (Douglas Moo, *James*, p.319)

Conclusion

What have you learned in the James series? Share any particular insights you have had and how they have influenced your behaviour.