

The Gospel, Sickness and Healing

James 5:13-18

Read James 5:13-18 and pray that God would give you spiritual insight.

1. What is the first thing that you do when you become ill?
2. Can we expect that our prayer (or the prayers of the elders for us) will make us well? Take a look at V. 15
3. Are there occasions in the new Testament where prayers for the sick do not lead to their healing? (1 Tim. 5:3; 2 Corinthians 12:8)
4. What was the purpose of healing miracles in the ministry of Jesus (Luke 4:18, 7:18-23)? What was its purpose in the ministry of the apostles (Luke 9:2; 10:9)?
5. Should we expect the same kinds of healing ministries we find in the New Testament? Why or why not? Here is a quote to ponder from the Westminster Confession of Faith (5.3) on God's miraculous workings: "God, in His ordinary providence, makes use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at His pleasure."
6. What should we do when God does not heal our sickness (5:7-8)? Is there a beginning and end to sickness according to these verses? When does all sickness end?
7. V. 14 James mentions "oil" should be used by the elders on the sick person. Some people believe oil was used medicinally as in the ancient writings Philo (B.C. 20 - 50 A.D.), Pliny (24-79 A.D.) and Galen (129-210 A.D.) and Luke 10:34 (remember, Luke was a doctor). Others believe that the anointing with oil was a sign of God's presence and the work of God's Spirit (Leviticus 14:1-18). What do you think?
8. What is the relationship between taking medicine and praying for healing?
9. Why does James draw such a close connection between sickness, sin and the confession of sin (v. 15-16)? Can sin lead to physical sickness (1 Cor. 11:27-30; Acts 12:23)?
10. Are there occasions when sickness is not caused by our sin (John 9:1-3)?
11. What is God's purpose for us in sickness or in health according to Romans 8:28-29? What should our deliberate aim be in either (1 Corinthians 10:31)?
12. What is James' point by drawing our attention to Elijah – how are we similar and how are we different to him (v. 17-18)?