

SERMON OUTLINE James 5:13-18

How to Avoid Practical Atheism

IS ANYONE SUFFERING? (13)

IS ANYONE CHEERFUL? (13)

IS ANYONE SICK? (14-18)

1. *There is nothing special about the prayers of an elder.*
2. *Verse 15 is not a promise that every time an elder prays and anoints that sickness will be healed.*
3. *The end of verse 15 is not a promise that elder prayers have the power to impart forgiveness.*
4. *There is a grace connection between confession of sin, the prayers of the saints, and physical healing.*

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

MAIN POINT

James forms these six verses around three questions. All of them point to the same basic principle: God is a good god over our every suffering, cheerfulness, and sickness, and prayer is the most appropriate way to acknowledge that.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What were your thoughts on the text/sermon? What most stood out? How was it helpful? Confusing?
2. Prior to this sermon, had you ever heard of "Practical Atheism" before? How would you define it in your own words? Where have you seen it show up in your life?
3. What do you usually do when you are sick or suffering? Where do you find the most hope? Where do you mainly turn for help? What would be different if you were to heed James's prescribed response (prayer)?
4. What usually makes you cheerful? What do you tend to do when you are cheerful? How consistently does your mind and heart draw a straight line to the good thing that made you glad and God as the giver of that thing? How often does that lead you to sing?
5. How do you understand James's words on sickness and elder prayers/anointing? Have you ever had an elder pray over you in your sickness? Why/not? Has God ever used that to bring comfort or healing?
6. What do you make of James's connection between sin and sickness? Have you ever encountered a situation where that was the case? How did it work out?
7. In what way do you most clearly see the greatness of God in this passage?

AREAS OF APPLICATION

8. If you suffer this week, pray.
9. If you find yourself cheerful this week, remember that it is a gift from God and sing a song of thanksgiving to Him.
10. If you become sick this week, confess your sins and ask an elder to pray over you.
11. Share the good news that the God of James 5:13-18 offers to forgive and free anyone who will trust in His Son, Jesus.
12. Find one area where you've fallen into practical atheism and ask for God's and another Christian's help to root it out.
13. Try to visually, musically, or otherwise artistically depict some aspect of the goodness of God described in this passage.
14. What is one specific thing you mean to do differently in the power of the Spirit as a result of the things you saw or heard in this text or sermon?

PRAYER POINTS

15. Adoration. Praise God for being sovereign over suffering, cheerfulness, and sickness. Praise God that He is mighty to save. Praise God for being entirely good. Praise God for being gracious and merciful.
16. Confession. Confess any practical atheism that you find in your life. Confess any lack of prayer. Confess any ways that you've failed to rightly look to God in times of gladness and difficulty. Confess any evangelistic apathy.
17. Thanksgiving. Thank God for whatever help, goodness, or healing He's given. Thank God for giving clear ways to honor Him in our response to the circumstances we encounter. Thank God for a church that will pray for you in your sin and suffering.
18. Supplication. Ask God to heal anyone you know to be sick. Ask God to grant repentance and forgiveness to someone who is stuck in sin. Ask God to help our church grow in love, purity, and unity. Ask God to drive out every ounce of practical atheism that exists at Grace Church, and especially among the leaders.