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GOD'S TRUTH ABOUT DIVINE HEALING

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES
NUMBER 43
JAMES 5:14-15

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JAMES 5:14-15 "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

Every believer has a choice to make. He can be happy God's way or he can seek to be happy his own way. If he chooses to be happy God's way, he takes the way of Bible doctrine, the way of the super grace life. If he goes into reversionism, then unhappiness comes. In this 14th verse we have before us for study, we have a reversionist who is about to die the sin unto death. We meet the sin unto death in this verse and then we will see it again right at the end of this 5th chapter.

God's Wish For You

God wants every believer to be happy with a fantastic happiness. In order to get on that happiness road, one must go the way of grace and doctrine. When by positive volition toward doctrine we show God we have capacity for this happiness, we discover that God has just been waiting to shower out his abundant blessings upon us. On the other hand, if we go negative toward Bible doctrine, then we move into reversionism and this leads to divine discipline. This can lead to physical illness and can eventually lead to the sin unto death. Here in verse 14 we see a reversionist facing the sin unto death. Down in verse 16 we will see the reversionist who is ill and hurting. In verses 17 and 18 we will see a nation in reversionism. The chapter ends in verses 19 and 20 with a picture of a noble person in super grace.

JAMES 5:14 "Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:" This is a prayer for a reversionist who is under the sin unto death. The sin unto death is one of the worst things that can happen to a believer. The sin unto death means a believer goes out of this life without dying grace and it is something horrible. It is a source of great tragedy and agony. This reversionist in verse 14 had negative volition toward Bible doctrine and this had caused a vacuum to form in his soul. Into this vacuum had been drawn false doctrine. This sent him on a frantic search for happiness, and as a result, scar tissue had formed on his soul.

Passed The Point Of Rebound

This may be a new thought for you, but it is a very important one. This reversionist had gone so far he had actually passed the point of rebound. He is in the sickness stage and is facing the sin unto death. So instead of rebound, this reversionist has to repent and go immediately from negative volition to positive volition.

Find The Right Pastor-Teacher

Every believer in the earth has a right pastor-teacher somewhere, and it behoves this reversionist in verse 14, or any other person who is in reversionism, to find the right pastor-teacher and get under that instruction at once. The pastor-teacher is made up of three things.

First, his life, the way he lives the Christian life. Second, his message, from the Word of God. Third, his authority, the authority which is his because of the nature of his office. Now the life of the pastor-teacher is his own private business and he must give an account to his Lord. If he is disobedient and unfaithful, then God disciplines him directly. But his message and his authority have a definite relationship to the church and to the people who make up the membership of the church. In order for his message to be accepted, his authority must be accepted. His authority comes as a result of the spiritual gift God gave him, and his message is based on his day by day diligent study of the Word of God.

One Way To Fall Under The Sin Unto Death

When the sheep rejects the authority of the Pastor-teacher and also rejects the message of the Pastor-teacher, quite often this leads to the condition we call the sin unto death. This happens far more often than you realize and is going on every day in almost every church in the land.

Look closely at verse 14. "Is sick" is a verb and it is a present, active, indicative of the word "astheneo." The word for "any" is "tis" and includes any in the congregation who have gone into reversionism and are facing the sin unto death. "En plus su" are the words for "among you" and word "su" is plural, referring to these Jews who would soon be facing the destruction which was coming to Jerusalem in 70 A.D. The word "astheneo" means to be weak, sick, under a condition of apostasy and reversionism. It means to be weak and getting weaker, but still alive, but under maximum discipline. The Lord is loudly knocking at the door, and the knock gets louder every day, just before the sin unto death strikes.

Next we have "Let him call" and this is an aorist, middle, imperative of "proskaleo" and means to summons, to call someone who has authority and ability. Here the one to be called is the spiritual leader. Please notice it says "presbuteros" and it is in the plural meaning pastor-teachers. Since many people are involved, many different elders are involved also. It doesn't mean the laymen in the church or the deacons, for the word "presbuteros" refers to the pastor-teacher. (We have an illustration of this in Acts 20, verses 17 and 28. Paul wanted to have a conference with the pastors around Ephesus so he called for the "elders" and the word is "presbuteros." He wanted to have a pastors' conference in Miletus before he went on to Jerusalem. In verse 28 Paul calls these "elders" by another name "episkopos" and this is the term which refers to the function of their work.)

The Dying Sheep

So this dying believer calls in his right pastor-teacher who is to pray for him. "Let them pray" is an aorist, middle, imperative of "proseuchomai." It means the pastor-teacher comes in and offers a specific prayer. The word "Them" is used here for many people from time to time find themselves in this very spot. Then it says "over him" and it means "offer prayer for this specific one."

Now Another Thing Is Mentioned

"Anointing" is an aorist, active, participle of "aleipho" and it has absolutely nothing to do with the pastor-teacher. This "aleipho" refers to the doctor who has already been there before and the pastor-teacher was called in. "Aleipho" means to use medication. The word

for "oil" is "elaion" and "elaion" is always used for medical practice. It is so used in Luke 10:34 and Mark 6:13 and it is used this way throughout Greek literature. This is the function of the medical man and is not the function of the pastor-teacher. If a preacher tries to take over what is supposed to be the doctor's task, then he just gets out of line and makes a fool of himself. (And preachers who are running around with a little vial of oil, anointing people and praying for them to be made well in this fashion, are doing exactly that--making fools of themselves.)

The pastor-teacher NEVER ANOINTS ANYONE WITH OIL. For this to be true here the word would have to be "chrio," and from this word we get the word Christos, meaning "The anointed one, The Christ." But here we have the word "aleipho" and it means medical practice.

Look Closely At This Picture

Here is a man who is dying. Dying, he called in the doctor and the doctor prescribed and gave him medication. But medicine didn't do him any good because this reversionist was under the discipline which brought illness from God. Such illness can come from God and then often there is demon induced illness. But medication did no good, because this reversionist was dying the sin unto death, and that's why the pastor-teacher was called in to offer prayer. But we have people all over this country running around anointing sick with oil and it just shows their ignorance of this passage. If this verse says anything, it says this--Let the doctor be the doctor and let the pastor be the pastor. One gives medicine and the other gives prayer. (And this doesn't mean that the Christian doctor isn't to pray. It means he is to major on what he knows is best for his patient.)

So this 14th verse says this--"And of you reversionists, sick, suffering from a hopeless disease, call for the pastor-teacher, and having already received medical therapy, begin to pray for him in the name of the Lord." In Isaiah 38 this is exactly what happened in the case of Hezekiah.

Summary

1. This verse emphasizes the function of prayer in redeeming time.
2. The medical approach to illness is not to be overlooked, and this verse doesn't even intimate divine healing. When this passage is accurately exegeted, it is quite clear that this illness was brought about by spiritual factors. The knocking at the door is God's warning for the person not to die the sin unto death but to repent and return from reversionism.
3. Please note that in this verse the medical attention does not heal the illness. Medicine is a bona fide method for the curing of many illnesses. There is a very definite place for medicine. But medicine can't solve spiritual problems and can't solve demon induced illness. This verse is not antagonistic toward medicine.
4. The next verse clearly indicates a serious spiritual illness beyond the scope of medical therapy. When the illness has spiritual connotation, it is prayer that cures and not medicine.

5. Therefore, look at our first conclusion--medicine is not to be neglected or rejected. But there is a place for prayer beyond medicine, but prayer will do no good when a person is dying according to God's plan. (Suppose you have cancer and you get frantic and start running to some fake healer. This is nothing but "mumbo jumbo." Even if you provided the oil I wouldn't anoint you. You could get the drum beaters and the lizzard gizzards and I still wouldn't do it.) Put your case in The Lord's hands and leave it there. No preacher should try to practice medicine and he shouldn't try to practice psychiatry either. Many preachers pose to be great professional counselors and they often do far more ill than good.
6. Please note that both medicine and prayer go together in this verse. When it is a spiritual issue, it is prayer that is needed. When it is a physical issue, it is medicine that is needed.
7. Therefore, in this verse we are studying, prayer is the thing needed and is the solution to the sin unto death, provided the sinner, the one in reversionism will repent and get back into fellowship with God.
8. This passage does not teach healing by divine healers. God pity anyone who turns to a healer. As far as being healed is concerned, you might as well turn to a stripper.
9. This passage teaches that God is the only healer.
10. The profession of medicine can function where certain illnesses are involved. But there are certain illnesses where only prayer and the power of God are effective.
11. Paul himself had the power of healing in ACTS 19:11 "And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul:" This healing was used to establish his apostleship. But once his apostleship was established, the gift of healing was removed. Later on we see that Paul could not heal Epaphroditus in PHILIPPIANS 2:27 "For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." Nor could he heal his friend Trophimus in 2 TIMOTHY 4:20 "Erastus abode at Corinth: but Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick."

Therefore, this sick reversionist in verse 14 can't be helped by medicine, but he never gets beyond the help of prayer. This passage does not reject medicine, but it shows there is a realm where medicine has no power.

JAMES 5:15 "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him." "And the prayer of faith" is not a correct translation. The word for prayer is "euche" and then we have the abative of source from "ho pistis" and it refers to Bible doctrine. So this should read

"The prayer from the source of the doctrinal one." Then we have "shall save" and this is a future, active, indicative of "sozo" and it means "to deliver." It is not talking about salvation here. This is a nomic future and it means a fact that can be expected under normal conditions. The word "sick" is a present, active, participle of "kamno" and it means one who is hopelessly sick.

Now please notice the next line very carefully---"And The Lord shall raise him up." It is not the pastor-teacher nor medicine which raises him up, but The Lord. It is the Lord who lifts up the reversionist and no one else. So this is a grace passage.

"Raise him up" is a future, active, indicative of "egeiro" and it is used of restoration from dying and for restoration to instant health. Next we have an "if" and it is a third class condition, but instead of the usual "kai ean" we have "kan" so this "if" refers to sins that come from his own free will. It doesn't say whether the sins were done deliberately or from ignorance, but these are sins from the will. Here is a principle--don't blame your sins on anyone, they come from your won free will and you are responsible to God for them. The word for "committed" is the perfect, active, participle of "poieo" and it has with it the present, active, subjunctive of "eimi" and this is a periphrastic and one of the strangest constructions in the Greek language. The next word is "hamartia" and it is singular and this is one of the reasons we know this is the sin unto death.

Then we have "it shall be forgiven" and this is a future, passive, indicative of "aphiemi." And there is one very important point not made clear in the way it is translated here. It doesn't say "it shall be forgiven him" but it says "it shall be forgiven by him" and this refers to God and God only.