

James 5:13-20

Prayer

James has been very practical. He has been telling us how to respond to the things in life that happen to us. In this final section of the final chapter James gives us some key advice.

What does James say to do when facing trouble? Pray.

Why? Few things undergird perseverance more effectively than prayer. In the final analysis, a persevering life is also a prayerful life.

What are we supposed to do when we're happy? Sing songs of praise.

What are we supposed to do when we're sick? Call the elders.

What do these responses/remedies tell us about God? He wants to be brought into all the changing seasons of our lives, not just when the going gets tough. He wants us to enjoy and recognize Him when things are going well. (This is easy to forget.) He wants us to acknowledge that we are totally dependent on Him. *All these things involve communicating with God.*

Why bring in the elders? Do they have a special hotline to God? What's the point James is trying to convey? Verse 16 refers to the prayer of a righteous man. It refers to mature believers in a right relationship with God, not young Christians.

The Greek word for *sick* here can mean physical maladies, but in Acts and the Epistles it is also used to mean weak faith or a weak conscience. There can be moral or spiritual issues in the midst of sickness and suffering. Verse 15 says "if he has sinned" which suggests a need for confession and repentance. The Lord will raise him up (restore him) which implies spiritual healing as well as physical healing.

Now that the elders have arrived, what two things will they do? Pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

What kind of oil? Is canola OK? 10W30? What is the importance of oil? Does it do anything? What if we don't have or use any oil? Is God waiting for us to pour oil on before He heals? Oil can be medicinal in purpose—or symbolic of the Holy Spirit. Difficulties in deciding what exactly is meant by anointing should not cause us to overlook the main point of verses 13-18, which is prayer. It is prayer—not anointing alone—which leads to the healing of the sick person.

What will be the end result? Healing and forgiveness. Healing can be spiritual or physical.

What is the ultimate spiritual healing? To be in heaven with Christ

Is this formula a guaranteed prescription for healing? What if you do all this and there is no healing? Does that mean there was not enough faith in the prayer or we used the wrong kind of oil? What went wrong? What determines if healing occurs? Oil, earnestness, faith? God determines if and who and when He heals.

In Exodus 33:19 God states, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." God in His sovereignty makes that determination. Healing does not depend on us to have enough faith, be fervent enough, etc.

All healing has a spiritual element. When the aspirin works, it is the Lord who has made it work; when the surgeon sets the broken bone and the bone heals, it is the Lord who has made it heal. Getting well is always a God thing. Christians need to recognize this.

Application: Is all sickness bad? What possible value/purposes might sickness have?

Sickness can make you face your mortality, draw you close to God, give others a chance to minister/use their gifts, and the way Christians face sickness can be a godly witness to the world.

Verse 16 says we should confess our sins to each other. What would be the possible value of doing this? Accountability. Human reassurance of God's forgiveness.

Verse 16 also says we should pray for each other. The greatest assistance any believer can offer another is faithful prayer. Prayer is evidence of care.

Verse 16 refers to the prayer of a righteous man. Are you a righteous person? Yes! Do you qualify to pray for others? Yes! Romans 3:21-22 “But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.”

Abraham is a good example that being righteous is not about our performance. It doesn't mean being sinless. It is our position before God—a right standing. We are righteous in His sight.

Our prayers can move the hand of God. A righteous man's prayers can accomplish much in the spiritual and physical deliverance of someone else, as Elijah's praying illustrates in verses 17-18.

How was Elijah a man just like us? He was a sinner in need of a Savior. He was chosen by God to do a job which gave a great purpose to his life—but his life was not perfect. 1 Kings chapters 17–18 shows us a total lapse in Elijah's faith.

Application: What is the purpose of your life?

It is seed time for eternity. “Get to heaven and take as many people with you as possible.”

Why did Elijah's prayers work? They were an act of obedience. They aligned with God's will. They glorified God.

Elijah confidently made his audacious petitions to Jehovah because he was conscious that they were in harmony with the will of God. Knowing the will of God is the sure foundation for effective prayer

Verse 19

Who is the wanderer? A brother

Who has the responsibility to do something if a brother is wandering from the truth? Fellow Christians

What are some practical steps we can take if we see brothers wandering? Start praying for them. See them as a ministry. Invest some time in them. Devote effort to helping them. Show you care unconditionally.

Application: Are you capable of wandering? How can you prevent it?

Practical suggestions: Engage with other believers at each duty station immediately. Identify yourself early as a Christian.

What does it mean to cover a multitude of sins? The repentance of the reclaimed sinning believer results in the forgiveness (covering) of his or her sins.

In summary, James is all about developing maturity in the life of the believer. It is a road map. If we do what James says, we will overcome the temptation to live only for the present. We will walk by faith.

MEMORIZE: James 5:16