

A STUDY OF JAMES ⁽¹⁹⁾

Prayer and Singing
James 5:13-18

The Book of James

- We are approaching the conclusion of this letter. We have addressed numerous practical applications.
- His audience was primarily Jewish converts who were scattered abroad, but the lessons apply to each of us, even today.
- Our last lesson appealed to believers encouraging patience, even as we face troubles.
- Today, we examine praying and singing.

Is anyone suffering? **5:13**

- *Suffering* was something the audience of James would have been familiar with. Whether dealing with the ungodly of the world or brethren misbehaving.
- In the first century church, persecutions were real. Peter dealt with this also – **1 Peter 4:12-16**, as did Paul.

Is anyone suffering? **5:13**

- *We may deal with suffering as well.*
- Physical ailments, hardships of life, broken and strained relationships, and even suffering for our faith.
- There are many who work to make genuine Christian faith more difficult. Many respond negatively – lost friendships, economic consequences, being ridiculed and even maligned because we stand true.

Is anyone suffering? **5:13**

- *We may deal with suffering as well.*
- More hurtful is the mistreatment by brethren.
- When churches stand true to uncomfortable and socially charged moral and doctrinal issues – some may leave the faith.
- Others refuse to repent and face discipline.
- **1 Peter 4** applies to us as well.

Is anyone suffering? **5:13**

- *So what do we do when suffering?*
- Pray! But for what?
- That God's will be done – **Matthew 6:10, 26:39**
- The removal of suffering IF it is according to His will – **2 Corinthians 12:8**. God is able!
- If it is not removed, pray for strength to endure and overcome. **Cf. James 1:2-6**.
1 Corinthians 10:13 – He will make the way of escape from temptations.
- Pray for your enemies – **Matthew 5:43-44**
- Pray with faith! **James 1:5-6, 1 John 5:14**

Is anyone cheerful? **5:13**

- Life is filled with ups and downs. We often focus on the bad times, but what about the good times?
- Is rejoicing our default disposition?
- **Philippians 4:4**
Romans 12:12
1 Peter 4:13 – even in our sufferings
cf. Acts 16:25, Matthew 5:12

Is anyone cheerful? **5:13**

- *Let him sing!*
- Typically associated with rejoicing.
Even when we are down, singing can sometimes lift us up.
- When we are blessed, we ought to be praising God!
- **Psalm 95:1-2**, etc.
- It is an act of worship designed to build us up –
Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16 – throughout our week and when we gather – **1 Cor. 14:15**

Is anyone cheerful? **5:13**

- *Let him sing!*
- Note that we may include other acts associated with cheerful times - sharing with others, working to cheer up those who are struggling, smiling and trying to brighten up a room. AND even praying – being thankful.
- Do you keep your joy to yourself? Our world desperately needs to see more genuine and wholesome joy. AND so do our brethren!
Be the one people want to be around.

Is anyone among you sick? **5:14-18**

- *Is anyone among you sick?*
- This is a challenging text to understand and interpret:
 - Is the sickness physical or spiritual (or both)?
 - Why do the elders pray for them? Do they have miraculous abilities, or is it spiritual?
 - Is the anointing oil medicinal or spiritual?
 - How does the prayer of faith save?
 - If physical, is the healing miraculous or providential?

Is anyone among you sick? **5:14-18**

- *Is anyone among you sick?*
- Textually, this could be both physical and spiritual.
- As Christians we all pray for one another –
James 5:16, Ephesians 6:18, etc.
- BUT if our prayers are for physical ailments, we can only do so much – pray and encourage. We then leave it in the hands of those more skilled.
- Spiritually, we OUGHT to be praying for each other.
Do we include this in our public prayers?
(What do we typically announce?)

Is anyone among you sick? **5:14-18**

- *Is anyone among you sick?*
- Sometimes, sickness is both physical and spiritual. Sin is often unhealthy
 - alcohol and drugs
 - social addictions – gambling, pornography, uncontrolled anger, excessive worrying, etc. – have physical and psychological effects.
- Let us be praying for BOTH the physical and spiritual struggles.

Is anyone among you sick? **5:14-18**

- *Let him call for the elders*
- Why the elders? Because they are proven for their faithfulness and are spiritual leaders.
Godly elders are living faithful lives and close to God –
cf. Hebrews 13:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13
- Because this sickness is calling on the elders, I lean that James' primary concern in spiritual sickness. BUT that is not to say they do not pray for physical ailments as well.

Is anyone among you sick? **5:14-18**

- *Let him call for the elders – let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*
- Oils (here it is olive oil) were often associated with physical relief.
If elders were medical specialists or all endowed with the powers of healing (NEITHER is implied in scripture) this would physically help someone.
- But oils were also used for spiritual purposes – e.g., anointing kings and priests, demonstrating God's approval.

Is anyone among you sick? **5:14-18**

- *Let him call for the elders – let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*
- Perhaps in our text, the anointing with oil was symbolic for doing whatever they could as Christians and within their role to help the one with their sickness.
- It MIGHT include applying oil to soothe a wound (cf. **Luke 10:34**) but could also be the soothing encouragement and help to overcome whatever they might be facing. Like all Christians, they are willing to help them (**Galatians 6:2, Philippians 2:4**, etc.). MORE on this in our final lesson from James.

Is anyone among you sick? **5:14-18**

- *And the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise him up*
- This is why I lean toward this being primarily about spiritual sickness. Such needs spiritual help and prayers. This is where the experience of elders shines forth.
- *And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.*
- ONLY God can forgive sins, but the godly can and should be praying with those who are striving to make themselves right with Him.

Is anyone among you sick? **5:14-18**

- *Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another.*
- When we think of confession, we realize that first we must confess to God
 - **1 John 1:9, Acts 8:22, etc.**
- But sometimes our sins involve others (directly or indirectly). They need to know that you have repented. Confession here would be a part of repentance – **2 Corinthians 7:10-11**

Is anyone among you sick? **5:14-18**

- *Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another.*
- But sometimes we are just struggling, and we want others to pray with us and for us.
- Confession may be a cry for help to overcome.
- ALSO, such confessions make it know (to those who know) that you are repenting and seeking restoration.
- Note: That you may be healed – of what?

Cf. Matthew 5:22-24

Is anyone among you sick? **5:14-18**

- *Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another.*
- Thought: How open should you be in your confessions? And to WHOM should you be confessing?
“One another” does not always mean everyone.
- There are some things you need to be careful about making known publicly. Choose your “one another” wisely, but also in a godly way. Do you have a faithful friend in whom you can confide?

Is anyone among you sick? **5:14-18**

- *The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much*
- This factors into how and what you confess.
- Whatever your struggles – spiritual, physical, mental, emotional or otherwise, you want GODLY people praying for you.
- We should all be praying for one another. BUT it is the prayer of the righteous that God hears –
1 Peter 3:12, Proverbs 15:8

Is anyone among you sick? **5:14-18**

- *Elijah was a man of prayer with a nature like ours*
- James appeals to another OT example. He has addressed Abraham, Rahab and Job.
- Now he appeals to Elijah – who faithfully served God
- The focus is on how he prayed -
1 Kings 17:1, 18:41-46 – this prayer was during the rule of Ahab. Between the 2 occasions, he challenged the prophets of Baal (**17:20-40**)

Is anyone among you sick? **5:14-18**

- *Elijah was a man of prayer with a nature like ours*
- BUT he was just a man, like you and me.
This righteous man used prayer as a powerful tool.
And so should we.
- Many of the faithful recorded in scripture were given to prayer – Abraham, Job, Moses, David, Paul and even Jesus Himself

Concluding thoughts:

- Throughout our study of James we have established that we need each other.
- In a world hostile to God, Jesus and our faith, we need the church (which is us).
- God created her perfectly, but as humans we are imperfect, flawed and sometimes broken.
- But we try and strive toward the ideal. Would it not be wonderful if we, as His body, would all apply EVERYTHING James has addressed. There is no greater example of genuine trust than the ability to openly confess and request prayers and help with the confidence it will be handled in a godly way.

As you face life, can you depend on others?
AND can they depend on you?