

Help for the Discouraged Pt.2

James 5:13-18

James 5:13–18 (NKJV)

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? 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. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

Introduction:

There are times in life when it seems that the sky is falling and the world is against you. There are times even when it seems that all the kings men and all the kings horses can't put you back together again.... There are times when you're ridiculed and criticized, judged and evaluated by those who do not know your heart. Your sails that were once full of wind and could carry you through raging seas are now torn and tattered, ripped and deflated. The wind can blow but there is no movement any longer. You're tossed to and fro by the waves of sadness, sorrow and darkness continues to grow as the sun sinks behind the dark clouds. It's hard at times, just to put one foot in front of the other, or even to desire to put one foot in front of the other.

If you're privileged by God's grace to be born into a loving christian home, you are blessed beyond what the mind can comprehend. You are already given a great benefit in life that can bring you the greatest of rewards. If you are surrounded by people who love you and care for you and want the best for you, you are miles ahead of the majority of humanity. But even with this, those clouds are just over the horizon, waiting to fill your life with darkness.

And if you are of the unfortunate ones that are raised in a family like the majority are, that is broken, dysfunctional, disconnected and abusive in some way, whether, emotionally, mentally, spiritually or physically or all four at one time, you are already well on your way do times of deep discouragement.

We live in a fallen world of unimaginable pain and suffering that comes just because we are sinners. Then add to that the ingredient of a life of committed Christianity in a hostile environment, and now we are a powder keg of persecution just waiting to happen.

The Bible says that man is born unto trouble just as the sparks fly upward. That is so true. As soon as a baby takes it's first breath, the fuse is lit... and before long, it will be raging fire with sparks littering the sky.

The Bible predicts that things will grow worse and worse and that in the last days perilous times are coming. Epochs and seasons of distress will fill the world as the population of sinners continues to grow.

The Bible says in Luke 21:25–27 (NKJV)

²⁵ “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring;

²⁶ men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.
²⁷ Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

distress **συνοχή, ἥς** *f*: a state of mental distress, involving acute anxiety—‘distress.’ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς συνοχή ἐθνῶν ‘and upon the earth great distress of nations’ **Lk 21:25**; ἐκ γὰρ πολλῆς θλίψεως καὶ συνοχῆς καρδίας ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ‘for out of great trouble and distress of heart, I wrote to you’ 2 Cor 2:4.

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 314). United Bible Societies.

perplexity

ἀπορέω; ἀπορία, ας *f*: to be in perplexity, with the implication of serious anxiety—‘to be at a loss, to be uncertain, to be anxious, to be in doubt, consternation.’

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 380). United Bible Societies.

men's hearts failing them from fear

ἀποψύχω *apopsúchō*; fut. *apopsúchō*, from *apó* (575) denoting privation, and *psúchō* (5594), to breathe, wax cold. In the NT, to be faint of heart due to fear or terror as in Luke 21:26 (cf. Matt. 28:4).

Syn.: *kámnō* (2577), to faint or be weary as a result of continuous labor.

Zodhiates, S. (2000). In [The complete word study dictionary: New Testament](#) (electronic ed.). AMG Publishers.

Lk 21:26 refers primarily to a psychological experience rather than a physiological one. Some scholars, however, have interpreted ἀποψύχω in this context as meaning ‘to die.’ For another interpretation of ἀποψύχω in Lk 21:26

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 273). United Bible Societies.

ἀποψύχω^b: (a figurative extension of meaning of ἀποψύχω^a ‘to faint,’ 23.184) to become totally disheartened and thus ready to give up—‘to be totally disheartened, to be completely discouraged, to lose heart

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 319). United Bible Societies.

This time that is coming to this planet as we draw close to the return of Christ will be like no other

time in the history of the world. In fact if your job is looking a little sketchy or you would just like a career change, Counseling people with anxiety, depression and fear will be a great place to have job security.

But even if the Lord delays His coming, I can assure you that the abyss of depression is opened wide and is swallowing up more and more people.

It should come as no surprise to us that people in the world struggle with this. I mean, after all, look at this place. It is a mess.

Even our nursery Rhymes are messed up.

**Rock a bye baby, on the tree top,
When the wind blows the cradle will rock.
When the bough breaks the cradle will fall,
And down will come baby, cradle and all.**

Or

Common British versions include:

Ring-a-ring o' roses,
A pocket full of [posies](#).
A-tishoo! A-tishoo!
We all fall down!^[2]

Common American versions include:

Ring around the rosie,
A pocket full of posies.

Ashes! Ashes!
We all fall down!^[2]

Since after the [Second World War](#), the rhyme has often been associated with the [Great Plague](#) which happened in [England](#) in 1665, or with earlier outbreaks of the [bubonic plague](#) in England. Interpreters of the rhyme before World War II make no mention of this;^[29] by 1951, however, it seems to have become [well established as an explanation](#) for the form of the rhyme that had become standard in the United Kingdom. [Peter and Iona Opie](#), the leading authorities on [nursery rhymes](#), remarked:

The invariable sneezing and falling down in modern English versions have given would-be origin finders the opportunity to say that the rhyme dates back to the Great Plague. A rosy rash, they allege, was a symptom of the plague, and [posies](#) of herbs were carried as protection and to ward off the smell of the disease. [Sneezing](#) or [coughing](#) was a final fatal symptom, and "all fall down" was exactly what happened.^{[30][31]}

The line *Ashes, Ashes* in colonial versions of the rhyme is claimed to refer variously to [cremation](#) of the bodies, the burning of victims' houses, or blackening of their skin, and the theory has been adapted to be applied to other versions of the rhyme.^[32]

I mean, we can't even get out of the nursery good before we are singing about death, disease, and falling out of trees.

That may be a humorous way of thinking about a very serious problem that many of us face.

But the shocker of all shockers is that there are multitudes of Christians that face this problem every day.

But you would think that for those who have been redeemed it would not be so.

We are the forgiven of all of our sin

We are the ones that are no longer condemned

We are the ones that are loved from all eternity

We are the ones that Jesus Died for.

We are the ones that are exempt from the wrath to come

We are the ones delivered from the penalty and power of sin and soon to be delivered from the presence of sin

We are the ones that have heaven to look forward to.

We are the ones who have an inheritance that is incorruptible, undefiled and that does not fade away.

We are the chosen

We are the saved

We are HIS

But with all this known and believed, living in this fallen world with these fallen bodies can be very difficult. As a Christian, you have the added

conviction of the Holy Spirit for sin, and the discipline of the Father that can come to the wayward saint. You have the battle that rages within with Old man that you once were that wants to get up out the grave and bring chaos in your life.

Then you have people,

People you live with, work with, go to church with and associate with and this can be an added feature to drive you down.

The people you are around can have a great propensity to encourage you and help you, but also in some cases they can be a great discouragement to you.

There are certain people who can with righteous intent cut you with a knife and leave you the depths of discouragement

And there are others would can make you fell like you can climb Mount Everest. Sadly though, the ones that have a tendency to discourage us have the sway more times than they should.

This kind of mental suffering is so prevalent, there is no need to give any statistics on it. It would be like giving stats on how many people breath. That is why the Bible is filled with words of encouragement and commands for us to encourage one another.

Listen to some of these

The 59 “One Others” of the New Testament*

1. “...Be at peace with each other.” (Mark 9:50)
2. “...Wash one another’s feet.” (John 13:14)
3. “...Love one another...” (John 13:34)
4. “...Love one another...” (John 13:34)
5. “...Love one another...” (John 13:35)
6. “...Love one another...” (John 15:12)
7. “...Love one another” (John 15:17)
8. “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love...” (Romans 12:10)
9. “...Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)
10. “Live in harmony with one another...” (Romans 12:16)
11. “...Love one another...” (Romans 13:8)
12. “...Stop passing judgment on one another.” (Romans 14:13)
13. “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you...” (Romans 15:7)
14. “...Instruct one another.” (Romans 15:14)
15. “Greet one another with a holy kiss...” (Romans 16:16)
16. “...When you come together to eat, wait for each other.” (I Cor. 11:33)
17. “...Have equal concern for each other.” (I Corinthians 12:25)
18. “...Greet one another with a holy kiss.” (I Corinthians 16:20)

19. "Greet one another with a holy kiss." (II Corinthians 13:12)
20. "...Serve one another in love." (Galatians 5:13)
21. "If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you will be destroyed by each other."
(Galatians 5:15)
22. "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other." (Galatians 5:26)
23. "Carry each other's burdens..." (Galatians 6:2)
24. "...Be patient, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2)
25. "Be kind and compassionate to one another..." (Ephesians 4:32)
26. "...Forgiving each other..." (Ephesians 4:32)
27. "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." (Ephesians 5:19)
28. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."
(Ephesians 5:21)
29. "...In humility consider others better than yourselves."
(Philippians 2:3)
30. "Do not lie to each other..." (Colossians 3:9)
31. "Bear with each other..." (Colossians 3:13)
32. "...Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another." (Colossians 3:13)
33. "Teach...[one another]" (Colossians 3:16)
34. "...Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)

35. "...Make your love increase and overflow for each other." (I Thessalonians 3:12)
36. "...Love each other." (I Thessalonians 4:9)
37. "...Encourage each other..."(I Thessalonians 4:18)
38. "...Encourage each other..." I Thessalonians 5:11)
39. "...Build each other up..." (I Thessalonians 5:11)
40. "Encourage one another daily..." Hebrews 3:13)
41. "...Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:24)
42. "...Encourage one another." (Hebrews 10:25)
43. "...Do not slander one another." (James 4:11)
44. "Don't grumble against each other..." (James 5:9)
45. "Confess your sins to each other..." (James 5:16)
46. "...Pray for each other." (James 5:16)
47. "...Love one another deeply, from the heart." (I Peter 3:8)
48. "...Live in harmony with one another..." (I Peter 3:8)
49. "...Love each other deeply..." (I Peter 4:8)
50. "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." (I Peter 4:9)
51. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others..." (I Peter 4:10)
52. "...Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another..."(I Peter 5:5)
53. "Greet one another with a kiss of love." (I Peter 5:14)

54. "...Love one another." (I John 3:11)

55. "...Love one another." (I John 3:23)

56. "...Love one another." (I John 4:7)

57. "...Love one another." (I John 4:11)

58. "...Love one another." (I John 4:12)

59. "...Love one another." (II John 5)

James 5:13–18 (NKJV)

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? 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. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

- I. The Power of Prayer and Praise
- II. The Place of Forgiveness
- III. The Prayer of Elijah

I. The Power of Prayer

¹³ Is anyone among you **suffering?**

P.A.I

κακοπαθέω *kakopathéō*; contracted *kakopathō*, fut. *kakopathēsō*, from *kakopathēs* (n.f.), suffering ill, which is from *kakós* (2556), evil, and *páthos* (3806), passion. To suffer evil or afflictions, to be afflicted (2 Tim. 2:9; James 5:13 [cf. 2 Tim. 1:8]). To endure, sustain afflictions (2 Tim. 2:3; 4:5), endure hardships (Sept.: Jon. 4:10).

Michaelis suggests that the term here denotes “not so much the distressing situation as such, but the spiritual burden which it brings with it.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, pp. 292–293). BMH Books.

the word refers to enduring evil treatment by people—not physical illness

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 275). Moody Press.

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering?
Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let
him sing psalms.

Those who manage to maintain a **cheerful** attitude in their suffering are **to sing praises**. **Cheerful** is from *euthumeō* and describes those well in spirit, or having a joyful attitude—not those who are physically well.

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Those who manage to maintain a **cheerful** attitude in their suffering are **to sing praises**. **Cheerful** is from *euthumeō* and describes those well in spirit, or having a joyful attitude—not those who are physically well.

14 Is anyone among you sick? 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. ¹⁵ And

the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up.

Here is the most misunderstood and disputed portion of this passage. At first glance it appears to be teaching that sick believers can expect physical healing through the prayers of the elders. But such an interpretation is out of harmony with the context. And as noted in the previous point, the suffering James has in view is evil treatment, not physical illness.

It is true that, apart from the present verse, *astheneō* is translated **sick** eighteen times in the New Testament (e.g., Matt. 10:8; 25:36, 39; Mark 6:56; Luke 4:40; John 4:46; Acts 9:37). But it is also used fourteen times to refer to emotional or spiritual weakness (Acts 20:35; Rom. 4:19; 8:3; 14:1–2; 1 Cor. 8:11–12; 2 Cor. 11:21, 29; 12:10; 13:3–4, 9). Significantly, in all but three (Phil. 2:26–27; 2 Tim. 4:20) of *astheneō*'s appearances in the epistles it does not refer to physical sickness. Paul's use of *astheneō* in 2 Corinthians 12:10 is especially noteworthy, since it there describes weakness produced by the sufferings of life—in a similar context as its usage in the present verse.

Translating *astheneō* “weak” here in keeping with its predominant usage in the epistles allows us to

view this verse in a different light. James moves beyond the suffering believers of the previous point to address specifically those who have become weak by that suffering. The weak are those who have been defeated in the spiritual battle, who have lost the ability to endure their suffering. They are the fallen spiritual warriors, the exhausted, weary, depressed, defeated Christians. They have tried to draw on God's power through prayer, but have lost motivation, even falling into sinful attitudes. Having hit bottom, they are not able to pray effectively on their own. In that condition, the spiritually weak need the help of the spiritually strong (cf. 1 Thess. 5:14).

That help, James says, is to be found in **the elders of the church**. They are the spiritually strong, the spiritually mature, the spiritually victorious. Weak, defeated believers are to go to them and draw on their strength. They are to **call** (from *proskaleō*, "to call alongside") the elders to come and lift them up.

It is the same thought that the apostle Paul expressed in Galatians 6:1: "Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness." The wounded, exhausted, broken sheep are to go to their shepherds, who will

intercede for them and ask God for renewed spiritual strength on their behalf.

This is an important—and largely neglected—ministry of the church’s pastors and elders. The apostles acknowledged its priority when they said, “We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). But in today’s church, weak, struggling believers are often handed over to so-called expert professional counselors—who often have little power in prayer. Those who have been defeated in the spiritual battle do not need to hear opinions of human wisdom; they need to be strengthened by the power of God through their leaders’ prayers.

The **anointing with oil in the name of the Lord** done by the elders is not a reference to some symbolic ceremony. *Aleiphō* (the root form of the verb translated **anointing**) is not used in the New Testament to refer to a ceremonial anointing.

Noted Greek scholar A. T. Robertson comments, “It is by no means certain that *aleiphō* here ... means ‘anoint’ in a ceremonial fashion rather than ‘rub’ as it commonly does in medical treatises” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament* [reprint, 1933; Grand Rapids: Baker, n.d.], 6:65). Richard C. Trench agrees: “[*aleiphō*] is the mundane and profane, [*chriō*] the sacred and religious, word” (*Synonyms of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids:

Eerdmans, 1983], 136–37). *Aleiphō* in the New Testament describes anointing one's head with oil (Matt. 6:17; cf. Luke 7:46), the women's anointing of Jesus' body (Mark 16:1), Mary's anointing of the Lord's feet (John 11:2; 12:3), and anointing the sick with oil (Mark 6:13). Perhaps the best way to translate the phrase would be "rubbing him with oil in the name of the Lord"; it literally reads "after having oiled him."

It may well have been that the elders literally rubbed oil on believers who had suffered physical injuries to their bodies from the persecution (cf. Luke 10:34). Medical science was certainly in a primitive state and there were few trustworthy doctors. It would have been a gracious, kind act on the part of the elders to rub oil on the wounds of those who had been beaten, or into the sore muscles of those made to work long hours under harsh treatment.

Metaphorically, the elders' **anointing** of weak, defeated believers **with oil** conveys the responsibility for elders to stimulate, encourage, strengthen, and refresh (cf. Luke 7:46) these people. Speaking of Israel, Isaiah wrote, "From the sole of the foot even to the head there is nothing sound in it, only bruises, welts and raw wounds, not pressed out or bandaged, nor softened with oil" (Isa. 1:6). Lacking godly leaders, the people of the nation had not had their spiritual wounds treated. David

expressed God's gracious, compassionate, spiritual restoration of him in these familiar words: "You have anointed my head with oil" (Ps. 23:5).

The elders' ministry of intercession and restoration is to be done **in the name of the Lord**. Any truly biblical encouragement must be consistent with who God is (which is what His name represents). To do something in the name of Christ is to do what He would have done in the situation; to pray in the name of Christ is to ask what He would want; to minister in the name of Christ is to serve others on His behalf (cf. John 14:13–14).

The blessed result of the elders' comfort and ministry of intercession is that their **prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick**. Again, **sick** is misleading and not the best translation of *kamnō*, which in its only other New Testament usage (Heb. 12:3) clearly does not refer to physical illness. As has been noted, James speaks here of a spiritual restoration of weak, defeated believers. Nor does *sozō* (**restore**) necessarily refer to physical healing; it is most commonly translated "save" in the New Testament. The idea here is that the elders' prayers will deliver weak, defeated believers from their spiritual weakness and **restore** them to spiritual wholeness. Those prayers, of course, are but a channel for God's power; it is the **Lord** who **will**

raise up the weak. *Egeirō* (**raise up**) can also mean “to awaken” or “to arouse.” Through the righteous prayers of godly men, God will restore His battered sheep’s enthusiasm.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 276–278). Moody Press.

I. The Power of Prayer and Praise

II. The Place of Forgiveness

James’s note that **if** one of the spiritually weak believers **has committed sins, they will be forgiven him** provides further evidence that this passage does not refer to physical healing. The Bible nowhere teaches that all sickness is the direct result of an individual’s sins. Spiritual defeat, however, is often both the cause and result of sin.

When that is the case, the antidote is to confess those sins to God and obtain His forgiveness. “I acknowledged my sin to You,” wrote David, “and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’; and You forgave the guilt of my sin” (Ps. 32:5).

David’s son Solomon echoed that comforting truth: “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them

will find compassion” (Prov. 28:13). In the familiar words of 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

If sin has contributed to or resulted from the spiritual weakness and defeat of a fallen believer, that sin **will be forgiven him** when he cries out to God for forgiveness. The elders can encourage him to confess, help him discern his sins, and join their prayers for his forgiveness to his. That is an essential element of their ministry of restoration.

¹⁶ Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.
(5:16a)

Therefore marks a transition in the flow of thought. Turning his attention from the sins of those believers who have been defeated in the spiritual battle, James addressed the congregation as a whole, exhorting believers to continually **confess** their **sins to one another** and not wait until those sins dragged them into the depths of utter spiritual

defeat. The inspired writer was well aware that sin is most dangerous to an isolated believer. Sin seeks to remain private and secret, but God wants it exposed and dealt with in the loving fellowship of other believers. Therefore James called for mutual honesty and mutual confession as believers **pray for one another**.

Maintaining open, sharing, and praying relationships with other Christians will help keep believers from bottoming out in their spiritual lives. Such relationships help give the spiritual strength that provides victory over sin. And they also provide godly pressure to confess and forsake sins before they become overwhelming to the point of total spiritual defeat.

The purpose for the mutual prayer that James called for is that believers may **be healed**. *laomai* (**healed**) does not necessarily refer to physical healing. In Matthew 13:15 it symbolized God's withheld forgiveness of Israel's sins (cf. John 12:40; Acts 28:27). The writer of Hebrews also used it metaphorically to speak of spiritual restoration (Heb. 12:12–13), while Peter used it to describe the healing from sin Christ purchased for believers on the cross (1 Pet. 2:24). James uses it to refer to God's forgiveness, making the repentant believer spiritually whole again.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 278–280). Moody Press.

I. The Power of Prayer and Praise

II. The Place of Forgiveness

III. The Prayer of Elijah

By way of encouraging both elders and Christians to this kind of intercession for those in spiritual weakness, James reminds them that such **prayer is effective**. **Effective** translates *energeō*, from which our English word “energy” derives. The **prayer** of a **righteous man** (cf. 4:3; Ps. 66:18; Prov. 15:8; 28:9), James notes, **can accomplish much** (literally “is very strong”). Weak prayers come from weak people; strong prayers come from strong people. The energetic prayers of a righteous man are a potent force in calling down the power of God for restoring weak, struggling believers to spiritual health.

To further demonstrate the power of righteous prayer and provide an illustration that captures the essence of his discussion, James turns to one of the most popular Old Testament figures. **Elijah**, he reminds his readers, though a prophet and man of

God, **was a man with a nature like ours.** The Bible records that he was hungry (1 Kings 17:11), afraid (1 Kings 19:3), and depressed (1 Kings 19:3, 9–14). Yet when **he prayed earnestly** (lit. “he prayed with prayer”), incredible things happened: **It did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.** Elijah’s prayers both created and ended a devastating three-and-one-half-year drought (cf. Luke 4:25). While 1 Kings 17 records the drought, only James gives its duration and links it to the prayers of Elijah.

The story of Elijah and the drought would certainly be a strange illustration if James had physical illness and healing in view throughout this passage. Certainly there are numerous clear biblical illustrations of healing he could have drawn from. But the picture of rain pouring down on parched ground perfectly illustrates God’s outpouring of spiritual blessings on the dry and parched souls of struggling believers. And He does both in response to the righteous prayers of godly people.

Terry Powell who was one of my professors in Bible College has through out his life battled with long bouts of depression and he has wrote extensively on it.

Preaching God's Word To Myself

When Satan says, "God does not care!"
I see the cross: Christ's blood stains there.
When I'm tempted by what is wrong,
God's promises of help prove strong.

When guilt nags and I'm overwhelmed,
His Word insists, "You aren't condemned!"
When I fear taking my last breath,
Christ asserts, "I defeated death!"

When my body throbs with piercing pain,
I remember the new one I'll gain.
When my heart breaks and tears outpour,
He says, "One day you'll weep no more!"

When false beliefs vie for control,
preaching God's Word strengthens my soul.
When Satan whispers, I reply
with God's truth, to refute the lie.

One of the sons of Korah talked back to depression by pointing himself to a brighter future stemming from faith in God: “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation” (Psalm 42:5).

In a psalm prompted by an experience of treachery and opposition, David addressed himself concerning God’s character: “For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken” (Psalm 62:5-6).

In Psalm 73:26, Asaph, after acknowledging his own weakness and failure, reminded himself that God is his source of strength: “My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

Though many psalms were written as prayers to God, or lyrics to sing during corporate worship, the samples I gave show three different authors preaching to themselves. In their time of need, they focused on God in what they said to themselves. They reminded themselves of who He is, what He has done and what He has pledged to do for His people. We, too, must fight discouragement, temptations and negative thoughts that roil around in

our minds by continually reminding ourselves of the promises and truths in Scripture.

A prerequisite for effectively “peaching to yourself” is consistent time delving into God’s Word. Memorizing key verses or longer passages prepares you for such preaching. By sheer necessity due to my weaknesses, I’ve memorized scores of Bible texts over the years. Hiding God’s Word in my heart allows me to retrieve His truth at the precise moment I need it, giving the Holy Spirit fuel to work with in my mind.

When I fall into the abyss of depression, that’s when false beliefs most viciously vie for my attention. I tend to tell myself lies that keep me from reveling in the gospel and which thwart motivation for ministry. I doubt God’s personal concern for me, question His goodness and don’t sense His presence. I start doubting that my teaching and writing are making any eternal impact. I know better in the cognitive realm, yet what I say I believe doesn’t always seep into the realm of emotions—not when a dark mood envelops me. When I’m despondent, the typical stressors and setbacks that everyone experiences trigger an almost endless cycle of oppressive thoughts and feelings. I’m more prone to mutter this to myself: “Why do I keep fighting against

despondency? Despair always returns. I'll never be happy again!"

To combat such hopelessness, I quote pertinent Bible verses back to God and plead with Him to instill more joy and hope within me: Here are a few texts I most often preach to myself:

Psalm 3:3 "You, O Lord, are a shield about me, my glory, and the One who lifts my head."

Micah 7:8 "Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy. Though I fall, I will rise; though I dwell in darkness, the Lord is a light for me."

Isaiah 41:10 "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

Lamentations 3:22-25 "The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul; 'therefore I have hope in Him.' The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him."

Psalm 50:15 "And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."

In Psalm 50:15, there's a direct grammatical link between calling on God in times of trouble, and the promise that God will receive glory through His

answer. I plead, “Father, strengthen me in this time of weakness. Assuage this hopelessness so I teach and write and relate to others in a way that honors You. Though people may view me as weak, may they see You as strong and capable by how You sustain and use me.”

I tell myself that the content of those verses are either true, or a flat-out lie. Then I cry out to God, saying, “I choose to believe those verses are true. My faith may be weak and limited, yet You, the object of my faith, are strong and unlimited.”

A Realistic Perspective

I don't want to give the impression that quoting Scripture to myself is a panacea that suddenly ends all depressive episodes. No, it's a hard struggle, a fight! Yet my meditation on what such verses say about God and His promises instills a measure of hope that assuages the despair, and sustains me through the responsibilities of the day.

God's Word doesn't cure me of despondency, but its truths empower me to keep going, to believe that God will redeem the pain and work within it or through it for my good and for His glory. Truths within verses I preach to myself replace the negative, oppressive tape that has been playing in my mind. It's a way to fight for belief when I'm on the cusp of

losing heart. Preaching to myself doesn't prevent the onset of depression as much as it helps me respond to it in a way that shortens its stay and moderates its effects.

Paul Tripp on “Preaching to Yourself”

I'll put a wrap on this post with a summary of a podcast by Paul Tripp, titled “Preach the Gospel to Yourself.”

No one is more influential in your life than you are, because no one talks to you more than you do.

In our sin, we constantly find our responses to life in our fallen world to be disconnected from the theology that we confess. Anger, fear, panic, and discouragement stalk our hearts and whisper a false gospel that will lure our lives away from what we say we believe.

The battleground is meditation. What is it that is capturing your idle thoughts? What fear or frustration is filling your spare moments? Will you just listen to yourself, or will you start talking to yourself? No, preaching to yourself! Not letting your concerns shape you but forming your concerns by the gospel. Preaching the gospel to ourselves is a spiritual discipline that is both proactive and reactive. It's reactive as we encounter temptation and frustration and seek to restock in the moment, or as we reflect

back on our sin and circumstances and try to evaluate them with a gospel lens. But it's also proactive. It goes on the offense when we feed our souls in some regular rhythm before the events and tasks and disappointments of daily life begin streaming our way.

There is a difference between merely reminding ourselves of truth and preaching to ourselves the truth of the gospel. The latter is self-consciously and intentionally reminding ourselves of the person and presence and provisions of our Redeemer. But while gospel self-preaching is not the same thing as Bible reading, the connections and interdependences are profound. The Scriptures provide the inerrant material for preaching to ourselves the gospel of grace. They are the content to be taken up and applied to our lives in view of Jesus's person and work.