

## **Pt 16 James Series (Faith Made Perfect) – Prayer**

A sermon series by Pastor Byron Chesney 05-23-2018

### ‡ **James 5:13-20**

As we wrap up this final message in the Book of James, we come to the very important Bible teaching on prayer among believers. I want you to notice two very important phrases: “among you,” and “one to another.” This teaching is not solely for individuals but is for the Church body as a whole.

We realize that these Church members are scattered, but that doesn't mean they are no longer a Church body. They are interconnected and share things in common. James is placing the importance of helping your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ through the power of prayer.

Outside of the Word of God, prayer is the believer's greatest asset. In the New Testament there are 90 separate instances of the word “pray” in some form.

### **13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.**

**Is any among you:** Here is our first usage of that phrase. He's talking to the collective Church body. May I say to you that the Bible teaches that believers spend time together. For those people that claim they are just fine staying at home and never going to Church and being around other believers, let me say they are not living in accordance to God's Word. All throughout the Scriptures we find believers come together. How can you be “among” people if you aren't “among” them?

So, believers are there for each other. There is strength in numbers. It encourages you to know that others are with you and fighting for the same cause. You just don't know how it helps me to be able to congregare with my Church after having to be out in the world all week among unbelievers. Coming to Church is like a safe haven and place of encouragement.

**Afflicted** – that word encompasses a wide range of troubles. Albert Barnes in his notes says this: *sickness, bereavement, disappointment, persecutions, loss of health or property. The word used here refers to suffering evil of any kind.*

While we may not be facing the persecution of Rome or unbelieving Jews, we certainly are facing afflictions. Just take a look at our prayer list. I dare say there's not a single member of this Church that isn't afflicted with some kind of problem. And, just like James tells these early believers, the answer for our afflictions is to **pray**.

**Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray.** Prayer should be the very first thought in our mind whenever we are faced with trouble; sickness, pain, or whatever it may be. Your first thought should not be Google. I know Google can help us discover a lot of things but Google is no substitute for prayer.

Do you not think the LORD wants you to come to him first? Sure he does. He loves you and cares for you. Peter tells us **1 Peter 5:7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.**

Next, James says **Is any merry? let him sing psalms.**

When we see that word merry we think of things such as Eat, Drink, and be Merry! Or Merry Christmas! It seems to be more related to celebrations and overindulgence. But that word in the Bible has more of the meaning of “**having a trouble free mind.**” It is the opposite of being “**afflicted.**” James encourages those that are free from affliction to “**sing psalms.**”

From the Old Testament all the way through the New Testament, singing psalms has always been the mark of believers. God loves singing and music.

The Apostle Paul teaching the Church at Ephesus what they are supposed to do when they congregare together says this: **Ephesians 5:19-21 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; 20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; 21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.**

I grew up in a home of singing. I used to play outside in the backyard and listen to my mother singing away with the WKXV radio broadcasts as she would work away in the kitchen with the windows up.

There wasn't a day that went by in our home where there wasn't some kind of music or singing. Our family get togethers were more like Church services and we would break out the Red Back Church Hymnal and sing for hours.

### **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:**

Then James addresses prayer for those that are sick. He says to “call for the elders of the church.” The word elder means “older” but here it is referring to those in religious service such as pastors, deacons and such. Notice also that James specifically says to “call for the elders.” In other words, if you are sick, make sure to inform the elders of the church. Do not wait on them to just find out on their own. If you aren't able to do it yourself, have someone else do it for you but let them know of your problems.

There is absolutely nothing worse for a pastor than to have to hear about a church member that is sick by overhearing someone talking about it or accidentally finding out. Or nowadays, stumbling across it on Facebook. Listen, as your pastor I love you and I care about you. When you are sick I want to know about it. Our deacons need to know about it. We cannot be there for you or know to pray for you if nobody tells us you are sick.

If I find out you are sick or in the hospital because someone posted it on Facebook, I'm going to let you know about it. Ain't that right brother Curt? 😊 It is frustrating, and embarrassing for your pastor to be the last person to know when something is wrong. I've had people tell me “well, I know you are busy and I didn't want to bother you.” Listen, I may be at work and I may not be able to answer the phone when you call but I want to know. Leave me a message, send me a text, call my wife, call one of our deacons, whatever you need to do, but let me know so I can at least be praying for you.

**and let them pray over him:** The main thing is that we pray over those that are sick. Many times, when someone is sick they are unable to pray for themselves. You may be mentally, spiritually, or physically exhausted and just not able. That's when you need the prayers of your Church, your pastor, your deacons, those that love you and care for you. Praying for someone is one of the greatest things you can do for them. Whenever someone tells me that they are praying for me or have been praying for me, it gives me the greatest feeling. Just to know that someone cares about me enough to lift up a prayer for me, it's the greatest thing.

**anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:** The common oil used for anointing is olive oil. Olive oil has always been used along with other things to treat wounds and skin problems. One example can be found in the story of the Good Samaritan. When he went over to help the man who had been robbed and beaten and left “**half dead,**”

he used oil mixed with wine to treat his wounds: **Luke 10:34** *And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*

This was a mixture of Olive oil and wine which would have soothed his wounds and maybe help guard against infection.

We also find that Jesus and his disciples used oil when treating those that were sick: **Mark 6:12-13** *And they went out, and preached that men should repent. 13 And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.*

Throughout the Bible you will find that oil is an emblem of the Holy Spirit. Olive oil was used to consecrate something. When you read about kings being anointed, such as what Samuel did to David: **1 Samuel 16:13** *Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah.*

When it comes to our present day New Testament Church, we too have every right to do as they did in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church of praying and anointing the sick with oil. It is not the power of the olive oil that heals, it is the power found in the last part of that verse: **anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:**

Of course, we wouldn't just go around pouring olive oil on everybody that has a cough or a snuffle, but in times of great need when it seems that all hope is lost, I believe we should still follow the biblical pattern of praying and anointing in the name of the Lord.

**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.*

**the prayer of faith shall save the sick:** Also notice that when we pray for healing we are to pray prayers of faith. In other words, believing that our prayers will reach God's ears and He will hear us and answer our prayers. Why on earth would we pray for healing if we didn't believe God could heal?

Will God always choose to heal? No, it's not always God will that someone be healed. Just as the Bible says in **Hebrews 9:27** *And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:* It may be their appointed time, but that doesn't mean that it is. So, we should pray by faith that the Lord heals.

**16** *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

This verse is used by the Roman Catholics to promote their heresy of confession to a priest and he in turns forgives you of your sins. No man can forgive sins except the man, Christ Jesus. What James is referring to is bringing your burdens to your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. The say confession is good for the soul, that's because it is such a relief to get it off your shoulders and let somebody else carry your burdens around instead of trying to do it all yourself.

He doesn't mean you have to come to Church and discuss every single detail of what you are going through. Nobody has to know the intricate details. The important thing is to have others praying for you and with you. If you are dealing with a heavy burden or some sin in your life and it has got you defeated, the best thing you can do is let your Church family know so they can be praying for you. That's why James says what he does in the last part of that verse: **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**

**17** *Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*

Then James gives an example of the power of the prayers of a righteous man. He uses their Prophet, Elijah and how he prayed it would not rain and God answered his prayers and made it stop raining for 3 years and 6 months. Then he prayed again, and God made it start raining again.

The thing James is trying to show them though concerning Elijah was the fact that he was just a man like they were. He said he was "subject to like passions as we are." That means Elijah had troubles, cares, burdens, stress, hunger, pains, sickness yet he earnestly prayed, and God answered his prayers.

I think one of the problems we have today is that we aren't earnestly praying. I think a lot of prayers that are lifted up these days are prayers out of routine, or habit. We've become so good at it we don't even have to think about it. We can just open our mouths and the words roll off our tongue without a thought.

**19** *Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;*  
**20** *Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*

Then James ends his Epistle with a plea for those that are Spiritual to help those that are erring from truth and living in sin.

Erring from truth can mean many things. They may be wrong in their doctrine, or have embraced some type of erroneous teaching, or they may be living in some type of sin. This was a problem for those Jewish believers because they were so saturated with the Law all of their lives. It would be easy for them to be convinced by the Judaizers to still follow the laws and rituals of the Hebrews as well as the Grace of Christ. That was one of the biggest problems that men like James, Peter, and especially Paul, had to deal with in the early Church.

James says that these people need to be converted. That doesn't imply they had become unsaved, it means that those that are Spiritual should help them see the error of their ways and convert back to living in the truth of the faith.

It's the same word that Jesus used when talking with Peter: **Luke 22:31-32** *And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: 32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*

Peter was not lost when Jesus had this conversation with him, Jesus had already promised him the keys to the kingdom, he wouldn't have done that to a lost man. So, Jesus tells Peter he is praying for him because he knows what's about to happen with him when he denies him 3 times. Jesus is stating that when Peter is converted (when he sees the error of his ways) he will be able to help strengthen the brethren (meaning the other disciples).

So, James means those that have erred from the truth. We are to tell them the truth in hopes that they see their sin and error and convert from that way of thinking and live in the truth.

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† All Scripture from the Authorized King James Version