

James 5:13–18

- 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.

Encouragement to Pray **James 5:13-18**

INTRO:

Prayer is important. James wrote about practical issues in our Christian life, but he returned to the issue of prayer again in this final paragraph of his epistle. He told us: We must pray because of our circumstances, because of sickness, and because of prayer's efficacy.

I. Pray in Our Circumstances (v. 13)

II. Pray in Our Sickness (v. 14-16)

III. Pray, because It Is Effectual (v. 16b-18)

I. Pray in Our Circumstances (v. 13)

James 5:13 *“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.”*

A. Without fanfare, James moved on to the important duty of prayer. He makes three statements and then prescribes an action. The first two situations he dealt with in **verse 13**. If you are going through a hard and painful time, you must pray. The best example of this is Paul's response to his *“thorn in the flesh.”* We read about it in **2 Corinthians 12:8-9**.

“Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, [in order] that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

B. ***“Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.”*** The second situation is when we find ourselves cheerful, we are to sing Psalms. Most likely this is not referring to the Psalms in the Old Testament. Rather it refers to singing songs of praise to God. This may not seem like a form of prayer, but prayer at its essence is speaking to the living God. Our praise should be addressed to the Lord so our singing of Psalms is in its essence prayer. We don't usually forget to pray when we are hurting. It is when things are going well that we frequently forget to pray and praise God.

II. Pray in Our Sickness (v.14-16)

James 5:14-16a ***“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. 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. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.”***

A. The third option James listed was if anyone is sick. Literally James used the word for without strength. When this happened there was a process to go through.

“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church,”

Contrary to today, church people in James' day did not think their leaders omniscient. If there was something wrong they were responsible for telling the church leaders.

B. The next step was something the elders were supposed to do.

“And let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”

We must not see this as some miracle method for healing akin to rubbing Aladdin's lamp and compelling God to heal this person. I say that because here we find pages of material in the commentaries talking about why they were to anoint with olive oil. This is not magic or a way to twist God's arm. This is a process to follow but James wants us to know it is the prayer that is most important.

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

C. What do we do with this statement? Is this an unequivocal promise from God? Every commentary I looked at made a point of pointing out that in their own experience or in the experience of others, those prayed for were not always healed. In fact, one commentator concludes that this promise is only valid if the person is not dying. We must not believe we can alter the sovereign will of God. If this was

unequivocal no one would ever die. The point is prayer is important and effective in praying for physical needs.

D. Prayer is also vitally important in the forgiveness of sins.

“And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”

This is not to be the foundation of “final unction,” but to remind us that we not only should pray for physical illness and troubles but for spiritual issues also.

E. We can pray for others sins as well as our own if they confess them, to us.

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

Accountability partnerships can be very helpful. However, they must be entered into very carefully and only with a person you can trust implicitly. Spouses are good for this.

Pray when you are sad. Pray and praise when you are happy. Pray when you are sick and remember how powerful prayer is.

III. Pray, because It Is Effectual (v.16b-18)

James 5:16b-17 ***“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. 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.”***

A. The New American Standard translates ***“The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”*** The righteous person’s entreating God has much might as [his prayer] is working. This is not saying prayer is a means of twisting God’s arm. It is saying seek to be confessed up when you pray and pray earnestly knowing prayer is important and God will use it.

B. How do we know this is true? Remember Elijah?

“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”

James makes an important observation in citing this illustration. Elijah was human. We can fail to appreciate what God can do in us by thinking men like Elijah are a lot different from us. Elijah was a prophet and God told Elijah directly what He was going to do. Still, God used Elijah’s prayers to accomplish a miracle. He can do that with us also. However, remember Yahweh is still the sovereign Lord of the universe and of you and me.

What do we take from this?

1. Prayer should be the centerpiece of our walk with the Lord. Why isn't it? First, because we need to fight for the right of prayer, not because God does not want us to pray, He does. We fight to pray because Satan will do anything to keep us from praying. Second, remember our help in prayer. ***“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”*** (Romans 8:26)

2. Prayer does work. Remember **James 4:2-3?** ***“Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.”*** We must never neglect to pray. We also must remember our God is far greater than we are and will answer prayer according to His will.

Hymn #435 *What A Friend We Have In Jesus*