

THE BOOK OF JAMES

“Pray”

Scripture Reading: JAMES 5:13-18

-) **SLIDES 1-6**. Bible Jeopardy!
-) **SLIDES 7-9**. Read today’s Scripture text.
-) **SLIDE 10**. Today we continue in our expository study in the Book of JAMES. This is week #28. I have titled today’s message *“Pray”* (5:13, 14, 16).
-) If you read these 6 verses and have questions about the content, you’re in good company. So do I.
-) Perhaps your questions are like this: What kind of suffering in v13? What kind of sickness in v14? Do church elders have special prayer power? Why anoint and why use oil? Is healing 100% guaranteed? And when the sick person gets well, are their sins automatically forgiven?
-) **SLIDE 11**. Pentecostals and charismatics (those of what we call a continuationist belief) love these verses because it is their proof text which equates faith with physical healing. JAMES 5:14-15a. If you have faith, you get physically healed. If you don’t, you don’t. After all, that’s what it says. Right?
-) But not all people get healed, do they? Does that mean the sick person lacked faith? Does that mean the person praying over them lacked faith?
-) Common sense and experience tells us that not all sick people get well when praying and being prayed for. If they did, there would be many more people alive today. If they did, these so-called faith healers like Bennie Hinn and others would be going through hospitals wiping out sickness. But they’re not. Because we know it doesn’t always work.

-) **SLIDE 12.** Even the apostle Paul who healed many and brought one man (Eutychus) back to life, suggests Timothy drink a little wine for his ailing stomach. 1 TIMOTHY 5:23. Why didn't Paul tell him to pray to be healed or, better yet, why didn't Paul just heal him?
-) Mike, are you saying the Scriptures cannot be trusted? Are you saying the Scriptures are wrong? Not at all.
-) To understand these six verses properly, let's apply the first rule of proper Bible interpretation. Context. Then let's look at one Greek word used in this text that can be very misleading.
-) **SLIDE 13.** JAMES 5:4. If we look at the context of v1-11, we know that the pay that was due these brethren who were laborers was being withheld. And I'm convinced the reason for this was a form of persecution against the brethren.
-) **SLIDE 14.** JAMES 5:8a, 10, 11a. James encourages these brethren to have patience through their suffering. And suffering comes in many different flavors. And suffering can bring us to the point of weakness.
-) Let's get practical. Our daily struggles can certainly make us weak physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. I've been through it. You've been through it. They are not good times. Tell story of Gail with open heart surgery.
-) *"Lord, I can't do this. But I thought I could. I need your help."* Have you ever been there? Weakness. When mental, emotional, or spiritually weakness brings us to the point of sickness, that is the context of this passage.
-) **SLIDE 15.** JAMES 5:13. Suffering. Suffering from what? The pressures of the world. The pressures of persecution. The pressures of bosses that are withholding my pay. The pressures of a heart and mind that are extremely heavy.
-) **SLIDE 16.** And what is James' first solution? That person should pray. JAMES 5:13.

-) **SLIDE 17.** When we are **SUFFERING** in any way, we should pray. Some people have the strength to pray for themselves when going through difficult situations. And it is never wrong to pray for ourselves. James tells us to do this.
-) But what if the situation escalates? What if we have reached the end of our ropes? What if our weakness has peaked? This is where we need to redefine one word James uses here to better fit the context of this passage.
-) **SLIDE 18.** JAMES 5:14. Sick. Today we classify “*sick*” as cancer, covid, a broken arm, a necessary surgical procedure, etc. This is what comes to mind when we use the word “*sick*.”
-) **SLIDE 19.** I’m not a Greek scholar, but I know how to look stuff up. The word “*sick*” is the Greek word “*asthene* ” which can mean sick, weak, or powerless.
-) **SLIDE 20.** So let’s use the word “*weak*” instead of the word “*sick*” and see how this helps make this passage make a lot more sense, considering the context of this passage is all about the brethren who are suffering mentally, emotionally, and spiritually from persecution. JAMES 5:14.
-) So now we have a situation where the brother or sister in Christ is so weak that they are unable to pray for themselves. We’ve been there, haven’t we? Sometimes we can be so weak, that we don’t know how to pray for ourselves.
-) **SLIDE 21.** What solution does James give us in this situation? JAMES 5:14. The elders (or those who are spiritually strong) in the church should pray for this person.
-) **SLIDE 22.** When others are weak and suffering, we who are **STRONG** must pray for that person. This is called intercessory prayer. Those who are strong are interceding for our weak brother or sister in Christ. We are praying in their behalf.
-) **SLIDE 23.** JAMES 5:15. The text tells us that the person will be restored. Restored back to what?

-) Back to where that person is no longer weak from the burden of the suffering and persecution he or she had been facing.
-) Listen. Going through mental and emotional weaknesses and suffering can cause us to lose our spiritual focus. Amen? I've been there and maybe you've been there too.
-) I know there have been many people who have prayed for me over the years. And we, as a congregation, have prayed for each other over the years. And this intercessory prayer has brought us to the point where we can regain our spiritual focus.
-) **SLIDE 24.** JAMES 5:16. Remember, anytime we see the word "*therefore*" we need to look at the verses before that to see what the word "*therefore*" is there for.
-) **SLIDE 25.** Let's add v15 to v16. JAMES 5:15-16.
-) Up to this point, we have talked about mental and emotional weakness. There is another factor that can make the believer weak. And that is our sin. Our sin can burden us to the point of weakness (sickness). What's the solution?
-) The Catholic religion has a sacrament they call Penance. It's when a person goes into a confessional (booth) and privately confesses his/her sins to a priest. According to Catholic doctrine, the priest is an intercessor and through him the Lord grants forgiveness to the person confessing.
-) As Protestants, we know that only God can forgive sins and Jesus Christ is our intercessor for that forgiveness.
-) But that sin has built up inside us and it's like a toxin that begins to gnaw away at our spirit. And when it does, we can become very weak mentally, emotionally, and physically. Not only can our sufferings and persecutions make us weak, our sin can make us weak also.
-) **SLIDE 26.** Confessing our sins to **OTHERS** and to God will help renew our strength.

-) When we arrive at the point when we realize our shortcomings and our failures and our sins are making us weak, we need to take that next step to confess our sins to one another. That is when the healing begins. That is when we begin to regain our spiritual focus.
-) **SLIDE 27.** And if we are strong enough to confess our sins to one another, we will be strong enough to confess our sins to the Lord. And when we confess our sins to the Lord, He will be faithful to forgive us. JAMES 5:15.
-) **SLIDE 28.** The Scriptures give us a promise. JAMES 5:16.
-) Do we have mental and emotional stress that is bringing us to the point of weakness and sickness? Do we have weakness and sickness due to unconfessed sin? Do we want to get well?
-) I believe we do. The Scriptures tell us to pray. And if we have a brother or sister in Christ who cannot pray for themselves, we who are strong pray for that person. I don't think we want to see ourselves or others being burdened by any form of unnecessary weakness.
-) **SLIDE 29.** James leaves us with an example of how prayer can change a situation. JAMES 5:17-18.
-) Sure, we are not praying to change the weather. But we are praying to help a hurting brother or sister in Christ. We want to lift that person above and beyond their burden; their weakness; their sickness. And there's a very simple solution. We pray.
-) **SLIDE 30.** One last point. JAMES 5:14. Why anoint with oil? Because oil soothes. There's nothing healing about the oil itself. Oil soothes. It's comforting. And isn't that what we sometimes need? This body and this mind and this spirit just need to rest and get well. And to me anointing with oil is a confirmation that we are sincere about our prayers of healing the burdens for that person.
-) And we pray.

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