

James Part 13 – Study Notes

Introduction

Illustration of a car – If we don't put fuel in the car it will stop. Likewise life without prayer, a prayer starved Christian cannot shine in a dark and desperate world. Effective, fervent prayer moves the heart of the All-powerful God. It is easy to fill our lives with so many other things and leave no time for this crucial activity.

James was well known for his prayer life. We studied in the introduction that James was known as *camel knees*. He spent so much time on his knees praying that they resembled the calloused knees of the camel. James encouraged his readers to pray and ask God for help, James 1:5 *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.* In the last part of this letter he developed the theme of prayer more fully. James argued that **real faith produces genuine patience**. He continued to develop the idea of how believers are to conduct ourselves with patience as we await the Lord's return. He said that true faith manifests itself through prayer.

In the face of every obstacle, whether in sickness or in sin, the correct response for every believer is prayer. Prayer not only reflects the attitude of genuine faith; it also reveals patient endurance as we turn to God to handle life's struggles in His perfect time. Prayer becomes the crucial part of authentic faith.

James 5:13 *Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.* James began this section with two ends of the spectrum of life: suffering and happiness. The one refers to affliction, which can come in all sorts of ways. The response for every believer when this happens is to **pray**. People generally do pray when they are in pain, when worry overcomes them, when things get out of hand. Then God gets a **999** call. But people can easily put off prayer when everything is going well. James made it clear: **everything we do must start and end in prayer.**

As we study the Word of God He doesn't promise to immediately end affliction or bring instant relief when we pray but He does promise to bring perseverance and patience. Prayer doesn't express faith in God to deliver us **from** trials, but **through** trials. When we are afflicted it's time to pray and when we are delivered from it, its time to praise. The proper response to happiness is praise. James sees praise as another form of prayer, lifting our hearts in worship, thanksgiving and honour to God for who He is and what He has done. So in both of these ends of the spectrum we are to pray.

James 5:14-15 *Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.* Most of the prayer requests on our prayer lists have to do with recovery from illness, surgery or injury. So James addressed the issue of the physically ill in these two verses. He prescribes three things.

First call for the spiritual leaders of the church. Sometimes people don't want to let others know when they are sick. James says we are to give the body of Christ the opportunity to minister to the sick as well as the medical profession.

Second, James prescribed a specific response to the leaders: pray while anointing the person with oil. There are two distinct uses of anointing with oil in the Bible. One involves a ceremonial act as a symbol of consecration, for example, anointing David as King of Israel. The other is for medical or hygienic purposes. Like the use of ointments for wounds, and lotions for skin conditions, oils were used to affect the body in specific ways. The idea behind prayer and anointing with oil is that the body of Christ, the Church, should seek to come to the aid of both the physical and spiritual needs of the sick person. James does not believe that there is any conflict between prayer and medicine.

Third James said leave the results to the Lord. Ultimately God does the healing not the oil, not the elders, not the prayer. Praying in **the name of the Lord** means **praying in His will**. Accepting His plan and purposes.

James said that the elder's prayer and anointing offered in faith will bring restoration, raising up the sick person and forgiveness. In this chapter, James had a particular individual in mind that was suffering from an illness as a result of sin. James made it clear that physical illness can be a result from personal sin but James specifically used a Greek word *kan* which means *and if*. So he was saying **so if they have sinned, they will be forgiven**. We need to be clear that not all physical illness are the results of sin, but some can be. If the person's illness was caused by personal sin, then God's restoration can include both physical and spiritual recovery.

James 5:16 *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The*

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prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. James shifts from the third person (anyone who is sick) to the second person (your sins). He was saying that some of the people in the church were sick because of their sins. Some of them needed to take care of the matter now, before sickness set in, so they were to confess their sins one to another.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church in which sin led to God's discipline. 1 Corinthians 11:27-31 *So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.* ²⁸ *Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup.* ²⁹ *For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.* ³⁰ *That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.* ³¹ *But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment.* The reality is that sin leads to sickness and death. And we should confess our sins to one another.

James is not talking about confessing to a priest in a confessional booth or dumping all our sins and shame in front of everyone in the congregation. James is talking about making amends with those people we have wronged and forgiving those who have wronged you.

It might be that you are ill deep within; your soul is plagued with bitterness or guilt. If you allow this to continue without confession and prayer then they will consume you. They will eventually work their way out in unhealthy habits, depression, anger and physical illness. When a believer in Christ confesses their sins to the person they have wronged their guilt will be healed. When they pray for those who harmed them, their bitterness will be cured. When we are released from the burdens of guilt and bitterness through confession and prayer, the garbage that contaminates our life will be cleared away. The condition of righteousness before God and others will result in our ability to pray more effectively. *The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

James concluded by giving us examples of praying for specific requests. James 5:17 -18 *Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.* ¹⁸ *Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.* The context of praying for God to respond to specific requests, is the life that has been cleansed from sin through confession and prayer. If we are bogged down with guilt, bitterness, sins, not only will our prayers be ineffective, but we may not be in a fit spiritual state to discern what to pray for and how to pray.

The righteous person has their attitudes and priorities towards God's will. That causes the prayer of a righteous person to be effective and powerful. We can pray effectively by knowing scripture and praying in keeping with the Word of God. We need to be specific; dealing directly with particular issues and ask for specific results. We need to have absolute faith in God's ability, timing and wisdom, trusting without reservation that His answer to our prayers will always be right.

James illustrated such prayer with the prophet Elijah who had a sinful, inconsistent, imperfect life but was forgiven and equipped from above. His prayers had power that stopped and started the rain. Elijah as a righteous man knew what to pray for and when to pray for it. The Holy Spirit enabled him to discern God's will to pray for certain miraculous events. Each of us here can be in tune with the Holy Spirit's leading and know how, when, and what to pray. In every circumstance we must go to God in prayer. Prayer is a continuous conversation with God. Believers should be prayer addicts. We don't wait until we are perfect until we pray. Don't wait till we are great. We must Pray while we wait!

Does God heal today? This question sparks endless debate. There are principles that help the hurting and erase confusion as to why we suffer and what God has done and will do about it.

There are two classifications of sin. **Original sin** is the sinful condition all humans, except Jesus Christ, inherit from Adam who was the *source* and *head* of the human race. Romans 5:12 *therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people.* **Personal sins** are individual acts of wrong we regularly and willfully commit on our own because of our sinful condition, Romans 3:23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* Because of **original sin** we commit acts of sin.

Original sin introduced suffering, illness, and death to the human race (Romans 5:12 above). If **original sin** never entered the Garden of Eden humanity never would have known sickness or death. All sickness and suffering is a result of **original sin**. After Adam and Eve fell they began to suffer a deathlike existence in the world characterized by suffering, caused by their own departure from God's way (Genesis 3).

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Sometimes there is a direct relationship between personal sins and sickness. David testified to the relationship between his own personal acts of disobedience and physical ailments in Psalm 32:5 *Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the guilt of my sin* and Psalm 38:4-5 *My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear. ⁵My wounds fester and are loathsome because of my sinful folly.*

Sometimes there is no relationship between personal sins and sickness. Some people are born with afflictions, suffering before they ever reach the age of committing personal sin. Other's, like **Job**, live upright lives when suffering comes (Job 1:1-5). Jesus himself never committed personal sins, yet He often suffered; that is why He can fully empathize with our suffering in a fallen world. *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.*

Contrary to what some people teach today, it is not God's will that everyone be healed in this life. Some believe God wants every believer to experience complete physical healing in this life. They use the scripture in Isaiah 53:5 *but he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.* But Isaiah 53 has to do with the spiritual needs of humans and Christ's priceless provision for the forgiveness of sins.

In demonstrating His authority to heal sicknesses and diseases, Jesus proved his ability to heal spiritual sickness. That's why He was wounded and bruised, that's why He died, not primarily to heal sick people in this life but to give spiritual life and to raise us from our dead bodies that will never again suffer sickness and death, Revelation 21:4 *He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.* The Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.* Peter referred here to spiritual wholeness, not physical healing.

The Apostle Paul asked three times for God to remove his thorn of suffering. Three times he got a direct **No** from God, 2 Corinthians 12:7-9). I want to underline again that physical healing is not promised to everybody.

Does God heal today? Yes most emphatically, **He does!** He can and does, sometimes instantaneously, sometimes gradually. Every time healing happens, **God is responsible.** He is the source. Sometimes he uses medical treatment, sometimes through miracles.

There are people who claim that it is God's will that everyone should be healed and cause more harm than good. If they pray for you and you are not healed they will put the blame on **you** and say that it is due to **your** lack of faith or sin in **your** life. This is not the truth! Use these principles we have just studied.

Further studies on specific things for which Believers are instructed to pray.

1. For those who persecute them, Matthew 5:44 *But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.*
2. For the Kingdom of God, Matthew 6:10 *your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*
3. For daily provision, Matthew 6:11 *Give us today our daily bread.*
4. For overcoming Temptation, Matthew 6:13 *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.*
5. For forgiveness, Luke 11:4 *Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.*
6. For all God's People, Ephesians 6:18 *And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.*
7. For the Gospel advancement, 2 Thessalonians 3:1 *As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.*
8. For earthly rulers, 1 Timothy 2:2 *for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.*
9. For wisdom, James 1:5 *If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*
10. For one another, James 5:16 *therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*