

**"True Faith and Prayer"**

**James 5:13-18**

**Introduction:** Today in our study of James we come to a passage of Scripture which has always been difficult for me based upon what James recorded here. But many thanks to A. C. Gaebelien's Commentary on James which opened this entire passage up for me to grasp what James is saying here.

The subject in the section before us is PRAYER. The word "prayer" is used 7 times in verses 13-18. But there is much more here that we need to see.

Let me remind you that James is writing to Jewish believers and that is very important to remember because their Jewish history is one of the keys to understanding this letter and especially the section which is before us.

**I. The Questions**

**Notice James 5:13-14**

Here in these verses James asks 3 questions to these Jewish believers.

1. Is any afflicted?
2. Is any merry?
3. Is any sick?

Now the very first question that James asks makes me really stop and think about something. James just addressed those who were in the furnace of affliction and how they were to be patient in 5:7-12. Then we come to these verses and he asks, "Is any among you afflicted?"

My reply is that there were many among them who were afflicted so why does James ask this question? My thinking is that James had another kind of affliction in mind in these verses.

Let me cut right to the point here. I believe in the section before us James is addressing those who are under the chastening hand of God. In other words I believe James is asking if there are any who are suffering because of a sinful practice within their lives. Now just in case you think that does not fit the text let me show you something.

**Notice James 5:15-16**

If the one who is sick confesses his faults then James tells us he will be healed. James has in mind believers who are under the chastening hand of God. There are more ways we shall see this also. With that said let me take you on a short journey through God's Word so that we can see how God does chasten His children.

**Psalm 88:7**

*Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves.*

**Psalm 119:75**

*<sup>75</sup> I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.*

**Lamentations 1:12**

*<sup>12</sup> Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger.*

Here in Lamentations the writer refers to how God afflicted the people of Judah when they were attacked by the Babylonians. This was the result of sin.

Remember Jonah?

**Jonah 1:1-4**

*Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying,*

*<sup>2</sup> Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.*

*<sup>3</sup> But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.*

*<sup>4</sup> But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken.*

<sup>5</sup> Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them. But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep.

Jonah experienced much affliction because he had stepped outside the will of God.

Remember what David went through after he fell into the sin of adultery and murder?

### **Psalm 32:3-4**

<sup>3</sup> When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

<sup>4</sup> For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.

These are all examples of people who endured AFFLICTION because of sin in their lives. These were also examples which James' readers would have know because they were Jewish and they would have known the Old Testament. Now let us get to our text.

### **Notice James 5:13**

James calls for the one who is afflicted to pray. I think there are a couple of ways to look at this command to pray.

First of all the person who has fallen into a life of chastisement and affliction from God is someone who is not spending time in prayer. The person who has fallen into sin I can assure you is far from a consistent life of prayer. The main reason is because for them to enter into prayer brings them face to face with God and that would bring conviction so they avoid that. Therefore, James is calling them back into fellowship with God and it starts with prayer.

## **1. Confess your sin to God.**

### **1 John 1:9**

<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So if a believer is afflicted the first step is to go to God in prayer to confess your sins.

## **2. Ask God to search your heart.**

**Psalm 139:23-24**

<sup>23</sup> *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:*

<sup>24</sup> *And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Let's move on to the next question which James asks.

**Notice James 5:13b**

The one who is merry is to sing psalms which was exactly what the Jews did in the synagogues. I believe the thought in the mind of James here is that the person with a clear conscience is to sing praises to God. This leads to opportunities of testimony.

**1 Peter 3:15**

<sup>15</sup> *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:*

**Notice James 5:14a**

Here is the next question which James asks. Is any sick among you?

Now this is an extension of the affliction. When someone comes under the chastening of God and refuses to submit to God's correction God can and will bring sickness into the believer's life.

**1 Corinthians 11:29-30**

<sup>29</sup> *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*

<sup>30</sup> *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*

Those who abused the Lord's Table were weak and sickly and some had even died. This is exactly what happens if we as believers refuse to surrender to God's correction.

**II. The Instructions**

**Notice James 5:14**

James tells these Jewish believers that they were to call for the elders of the church and allow them to pray for them and anoint them with oil.

Now we need to understand that the oil in James' day was often used for medicinal purposes as well as many other things. In the Old Testament kings and priests were anointed with oil as a sign of consecration to the office. This was a practice that was common to the Jews. The main use of oil was to help those who were sick or hurting.

Remember the story of the Good Samaritan?

#### **Luke 10:30-34**

<sup>30</sup> *And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.*

<sup>31</sup> *And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.*

<sup>32</sup> *And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.*

<sup>33</sup> *But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,*

<sup>34</sup> *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.*

Let me show you what the disciples did.

#### **Mark 6:13**

<sup>13</sup> *And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.*

Now consider this, the practice of using oil for anointing was a Jewish tradition. The disciples did it but Jesus never commanded it. James instructed his readers to be anointed with oil but they were Jewish and it was a practiced tradition with them.

Now I agree with Gabebelein when he says it was a practice of the Jews but was never given to the church. The reason is when Timothy was sick Paul told him to take a little wine for his stomach. When Paul battled with his thorn in the flesh he did not call on the elders to anoint him with oil. The anointing is never mentioned in the in the later Epistles.

### **III. The Results of the Prayer**

**Notice James 5:15**

The prayer of faith (not the oil) shall save the sick and the Lord shall raise him up and grant to him forgiveness of his sins.

Now listen to what I am about to tell you: not everyone who is prayed for is healed. You see sometimes it is not the will of God that a person be healed from a sickness they are battling with.

So how can James be so dogmatic and say with assurance that the prayer of faith shall save the sick and that the Lord will raise him up?

If the person who is sick is sick because they are under the affliction of their Heavenly Father then I can assure you that it is God's PURPOSE with the sickness to bring them out of the sin they are practicing. Therefore if they are willing to repent and confess their sin then God will raise them up and restore their health if it has not gone too far.

**Notice James 5:16a**

Here is a wonderful promise given by James. This applies if the sickness is because the believer had fallen into sin and was under the chastening of God. This is NOT saying that in a public service everyone is to stand up and confess publicly every sin. James says to confess our faults ONE to ANOTHER. The words "faults" is many times translated "trespasses". I am sure that James had in mind that we are to go to the one who we trespassed against and ask for their forgiveness. In other words we are to make it right with the one we offended.

**IV. The Value of Prayer**

**Notice James 5:16b-17**

Here James points to Elijah who prayed that it would not rain and it did not for three and one half years. Then he prayed it would rain and it did. Now the point to see here is that Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed in the will of God and his prayer was answered.

**Application:**

If we are afflicted because of falling into sin then we can be sure it is not God's will that we stay there. So to confess the sin and repent and then pray for God to remove the affliction is certainly God's will.

**Hebrews 12:9-11**

<sup>9</sup> Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

<sup>10</sup> For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

<sup>11</sup> Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.