

Day Thirteen

James 5:13-20



13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 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 one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. 18 Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

19 My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, 20 let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

- I. The world is adulterous and so it destroys itself.
- II. But you are not to attack one another because you trust God to do His job.
- III. You are not to boast about the future because you know God is in control.
- IV. You are not to hoard riches and devour people because the Lord of hosts calls us to a different plane of existence.
- V. You are to patiently endure suffering because you know that God is loving and promise-keeping, and He's working through affliction for your greatest good.
- VI. You should have no need to make a vow because your word is rooted in your character which is grounded in God's consistent Truth.
- VII. And whether you are comfortable or uncomfortable you are to lift your voice to God in prayer and praise because you trust His promises. (5:13)
 - A. But then comes verse 14. This verse has been misunderstood by many people.
 1. Consider the word "_____ " — *astheneō*.
 - a) The word is used 36 times in the NT.
 - b) Of the 17 times it's used in the Gospels and Acts, the word refers to physical weakness and sickness.
 - (1) Jesus healed the sick — Matthew 10:8.
 - (2) Jesus healed the invalids — John 5:3.
 - (3) And Jesus raised the once "_____ " Lazarus from the dead — John 11.
 - c) The word is also used this way three times in the Epistles.
 - (1) Philippians 2:26-27 refers to Epaphroditus being ill.
 - (2) And in II Timothy 4:20 talks about Trophimus being ill.
 - d) But let's consider some of the other 15 times this Greek word is used in the Epistles (not including James).
 - (1) Romans 4:19, "He did not **weaken** in faith."
 - (2) Romans 8:3, "For God has done what the law, **weakened** by the flesh, could not do."

- (3) Romans 14:1-2, “As for the one who is **weak** in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. One person believes he may eat anything, while the **weak** person eats only vegetables.”
- (4) I Corinthians 8:9, “But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the **weak**.”
- (5) These passages are not referring to physical illness. They’re talking about spiritual weakness, weak _____.
- e) The word in James 5:14 should not have been translated “sick.” It should have been translated “weak” because it refers to the individual’s spiritual state.
2. Also, this passage doesn’t make sense (or is consistent with the rest of the _____) if James is talking about physical sickness.
- a) We’ve been told from the beginning of the letter to *rejoice* in our suffering. But here it seems we’re being encouraged to escape suffering.
- b) Second, we’re told in this passage that the Lord will answer the prayer of the faithful and raise up the sick individual.
- c) Third, the idea of _____ is introduced in verse 15. Many people have wrongly thought that sickness is a physical punishment for sin.
- d) Then in verse 16 we’re commanded to confess to each other and pray for each other in order to be healed from “sickness.”
- e) And then the passage talks about the power of prayer and eventually leads into a discussion of erring brothers.
3. Let’s work through the passage again from the standpoint that James is talking about someone who is spiritually _____.
- a) If you suffer — pray. If you’re comfortable — praise.
- b) But if your spiritually weak faith has left you unstable, empty, and neglected of God because of your doubts . . .
- (1) Call the _____. Call the spiritually strong ones in the church. This should remind us of Galatians 6:1, “*Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.*”
- (a) The elders will pray for you in your weakness.
- (b) The elders should also anoint you. But what is this anointing? There are two logical and grammatically consistent ideas, but let’s talk first about what it doesn’t mean.
- i) The Greek word used here is never used of ceremonial anointing. This is not merely a show or religious pomp.
- ii) One of the ideas is that of emotional/spiritual healing. Certain natural oils have the ability to root out emotional issues in the brain.
- iii) The second concept is that of stimulating and encouraging and strengthening the weak individual. The phrase “*anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord*” can also be translated “*rubbing him with oil in the name of the Lord*”; it literally reads “*after having oiled him.*”

- (1) In Isaiah 1:6 we read, *“From the sole of the foot even to the head there is nothing sound in it, only bruises, welts and raw wounds, not pressed out or bandaged, nor softened with oil.”*
- (2) In Psalm 23:5 we read the familiar words, *“You have anointed my head with oil.”*
- iv) John MacArthur says of this passage, *“The elders’ ministry of intercession and restoration is to be done in the name of the Lord. Any truly biblical encouragement must be consistent with who God is (which is what His name represents). To do something in the name of Christ is to do what He would have done in the situation; to pray in the name of Christ is to ask what He would want; to minister in the name of Christ is to serve others on His behalf.”*
- (2) Then continuing into verse 15 we see that this faithful prayer from the spiritually _____ elder can save you from your spiritual weakness.
- (a) I Corinthians 7:16, *“For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?”*
- (b) However, God’s not going to save us from our spiritual weakness against our wills. The assumption is that the spiritually weak person is calling the elders because they _____ they’re weak and they want to participate in true spiritual healing.
- (c) And even though the elders pray and strengthen them with Truth, and even though they submit to it, it will be the Lord who raises them up.
- (3) And now the second half of verse 15 also makes sense. If in our weakened spiritual state we have sinned, our sins will be forgiven as we _____ to Truth.
- (4) This is why verse 16 commands us to confess our sins to each other and pray for each other. This is another of the one-another habits that can bring about our “healing” — a word which here means to be made whole. We’ll no longer be double-minded.
- (5) Then the rest of the passage continues to make all the sense in the world because it argues for the spiritually strengthening power of _____.
- (a) Verse 13 tells us to turn to prayer at our most difficult times.
- (b) If we’re too weak to pray, if we doubt too much for the Lord to answer us, then verse 14 tells us to call others in to pray for us.
- (c) We do this because verse 15 says the prayer of faith accomplishes things because God respects the prayers of faith.
- (d) Verse 16 continues this theme by telling us to pray for each other because the prayer of a righteous man has great _____.
- (e) Verse 17 then illustrates that Elijah, a man just like us, prayed fervently and it stopped raining for three and a half years.
- (f) And verse 18 informs us that with a single faithful prayer it _____ again.

4. This passage is not about being healed from physical sickness. It can't be. Righteous people get sick, faithful people pray for their healing, and they often are not healed from their physical malady. Sometimes the Lord heals them, but sometimes He doesn't.
 5. This passage is also not about us getting sick because we've sinned. In John 9:1-3, the Lord answers this question. *"As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of _____ might be displayed in him."*
 6. This passage is about the power of prayer to strengthen a doubting _____.
This passage is about the power of God and His Truth to exalt us. Remember James 4:7-10, *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you **double-minded**. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you."* James 5:15 tells us *"the Lord will raise him up."*
- B. And all of this makes the final two verses the perfect ending.
1. We all _____. James 1-5 teaches us the purpose of suffering.
 2. But some are double-minded, and they doubt God's goodness. They doubt His Truth. They have weak faith, and so they're not _____ and they don't worship Him.
 - a) These double-minded are being encouraged to see their spiritual weakness and ask for _____.
 - b) But others must be tracked down because they don't see their need. James 5:19-20, *"My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins."*
 3. Here we see a repetition of three ideas we've already learned in James:
 - a) Christians will wander from Truth when we stop believing Truth.
 - b) A double-minded man can come _____ to the Truth.
 - c) One person can help another person from their spiritual weakness. Basically, we can understand it to mean that we participate in their salvation and sanctification as we confront them with Truth, pray for them, and they submit to God.
- C. What a powerful way to end his letter. The reality is that we all doubt from time to time, especially in times of trial and testing. And it's in these times that we're tempted to doubt and wander from God that He provides us four beautiful gifts to bring us back to Him:
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. Accountability from spiritually _____ believers.