

July 7, 2024 PM – Pastor Kevin Olivier
James 5:13-18 – “The Prayer of the Righteous”

- A. Only in the glory of heaven will we know what has been accomplished by the prayers of the righteous.
- B. James gave us an immensely practical epistle.

Consider the prayers of the righteous.	I. YOU ARE TO PRAY AND SING PRAISES II. CALL THE ELDERS WHEN YOU ARE SICK
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I. YOU ARE TO PRAY AND SING PRAISES

A. Notice first that you are to pray when you suffer. **Verse 13** opens by saying, “**Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray.**”

- 1. Some resort to other sources to help them through suffering.
- 2. God’s prescription for suffering is to pray. Ask God to relieve your suffering.
 - a. Earlier in **chapter 4**, James wrote, “**You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures**” (**vv2-3**).
 - b. It is not hard to think of wrong motives when asking God to relieve us from suffering.
 - c. It is not wrong to pray for relief from suffering, especially when you have severe pain.
 - d. As James wrote earlier, your prayer when suffering should be that God would help you grow in endurance. → **James 1:2-4**.
 - e. We should pray that we can imitate Paul as he used suffering to grow in his Christian faith. → **Phil 3:7-11**

B. The second half of **v13** calls for you to sing God praises when you are cheerful. James wrote, “**...Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.**”

- 1. Think of how many things you love to do to celebrate.
 - a. James said that when you are filled with joy, you should praise God to thank Him.
 - b. This was the spontaneous reaction of the Hebrews after God delivered them through the Red Sea. → **Ex 15:1-6**
- 2. In addition to seeing this vibrant example in the OT, the NT gives us a mandate to give our God thanks and praise.
 - a. **Eph 5:20** says that we are to be “**...always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.**”
 - b. **1 Thes 5:16-18**: “**Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.**”
- 3. Even if you are not the best singer, God commands you to sing praises to Him in worship. Praise to God is your prayer put to a musical tune.
 - a. **Ps 133:1** says, “**Sing for joy in the Lord, O you righteous ones; praise is becoming to the upright.**”
 - b. Having understood a much greater depth of God’s plan of forgiveness and the imputed righteousness of Christ, we have much greater cause to “**sing for joy in the Lord**” than the psalmist did.

II. CALL THE ELDERS WHEN YOU ARE SICK → v14

- A. It is agreed upon from multiple scholars concerning v14. If the elders are called upon by someone who is ill in the church, the elders of the church should go together to pray for him or her.
1. There is the mention of prayer at the bedside, yet it does not have to be at the bedside.
 2. Some churches have the sick come up to the front and have the elders pray for him or her during a worship church. That practice does not come from this text. If you “call for the elders” it is to call for them to come to you.
 3. Having your pastor to come and pray for you when you are in the hospital is great, yet that is not the mandate given here. It should be your pastor (teaching elder) and your ruling elders.
- B. According to v14, the sick man “**must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.**”
1. Some in the Protestant churches may be reluctant follow the instruction from v14 to anoint the sick “**with oil in the name of the Lord**” because of Roman Catholic abuses of this text.
 - a. The Roman Catholics use this very passage to support what they call the supposed sacrament of “extreme unction.” It is usually reserved for those who are seriously ill.
 - b. According to one online Roman Catholic encyclopedia, “the sacrament consists... in the unction with oil, specially blessed by the bishop, of the organs of the five external senses (eyes, ears, nostrils, lips, hands), of the feet, and, for men (where the custom exists and the condition of the patient permits of his being moved), of the loins.”¹
 2. Some mention that the purpose of the oil for the anointing was because it was like the medicine of the time. Oil has been mentioned for this purpose in both the OT and NT.
 - a. Speaking of Israel’s spiritual sickness, Isaiah compared his people to one who is terribly ill and badly beaten. In Isa 1:5-6, he wrote, “**The whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint. 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.**”
 - b. In His parable of the good Samaritan in Lu 10, Jesus mentioned how this man used a common practice during that time in history. The Samaritan found a man who had been beaten by robbers and left half dead on the side of the road. Moved by compassion, he “**bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him**” (vv33-34).
 3. Some argue that more effective modern medicine has made the oil outdated and is no longer necessary to be applied. It is better to err on this side of doing what Scripture says. What should be non-negotiable is having the Session come and pray for the one who asks for prayer.
- C. James gives us hope for healing when we seek God in this manner. → vv15-16
1. According to James, sin could be associated with an illness; however, in the case of Job we know for certain that absolutely was not a reason for his plight as his associates repeatedly said it was.
 2. This text does say we should confess our sins to one another yet not to a priest.
- D. Consider asking for the elders to pray for you because this united prayer is powerful. → end of v16f.

Review, further application, and conclusion:

¹ <https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/extreme-unction>