

## ***James – A Portrait of Living Faith***

***Memory Challenge: James Chapter 1: 1-18...***

### **Lesson 16-Righteous Praying Power**

#### **James 5:13-20**

The theme of verses 13-18 is prayer, and more specifically the effective powerful prayer of righteous believers. Prayer is mentioned six times in these verses. Individuals are called to pray in verse 13. The elders are called to pray in verses 14-15 and the congregation is called to pray in verse 16. Prayer is the proper response to facing difficult situations and trials of life.

As the context of these verses makes clear, the subject is not physical affliction, but spiritual affliction, weariness, exhaustion and depression that was defeating some of the believers in their trials. The power of prayer was the exhortation by James to help sustain them and provide the necessary healing and restoration so that they could further endure the trials of life.

#### **I. Individual Prayer Power (5:13)**

James knew some believers were suffering because of the oppression of others and because of various life trials. As a proper response to their suffering, James exhorts them to pray. Prayer is an essential ingredient to the endurance of afflictions and trials (ref. 1:5-6). The suffering believer must be in a constant state of prayer asking for God's comfort, strengthen, and increase our faith in the trial. Those who are able to maintain a joyful and cheerful attitude through their suffering are to "sing praises." Both prayer and praise are essential for the spiritual strength of those undergoing persecution.

#### **II. Elder Prayer Power (5:14-15)**

These verses represent an often misunderstood and misinterpreted portion of scripture. At first glance it appears that the focus is on physical sickness of the believer and a power of healing that come through the elders in the church. But such an interpretation is not in harmony with the context of the passage. James is addressing those believers who had become weak and despondent as a result of their suffering afflictions. They were at a point of being defeated in the spiritual battle and had lost their ability to endure their suffering on their own. In their condition they needed the help of the spiritually strong, the church elders.

### III. Congregational Prayer Power (5:16a)

James then the congregation as a whole, exhorting believers to confess their sins and struggles to one to another, and not wait until those sins drag them into spiritual defeat. James calls for mutual honesty and mutual confession among believers, as believers pray for one another. The purpose for the mutual prayer that James called for is that believers may be healed.

Sometimes physical infirmities are the result of spiritual infirmities and un-confessed sin. The repentant believer may find renewed physical health when the root of the problem, spiritual infirmity (e.g. un-confessed sin) is properly dealt with.

### IV. Example of Effective Prayer by Righteous Elijah (5:16b-18)

The prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much because it has energy, it is effective. Strong effective prayers come from those who are strong in faith. The energetic prayers of a righteous man are a powerful source for calling out in faith for God to restore weak and suffering believers, restoring them to spiritual health.

James provides an example from scripture. I. Kings 17-18. He reminds us that ***Elijah was just a man like us***. He was a righteous man who had great faith in God. To show the power of his prayers, God both stopped the rain and restored the rain in response to the righteous prayer of a righteous man, Elijah.

### V. Restoring Sinners to the Lord (Read 5:19-20)

These final verses form a fitting conclusion to the book of James. James wrote to call professed believers to test their faith and make sure it is genuine. James says ***by turning one from the error of his ways***, whether to encourage a true believer toward righteous living, or to help an unbeliever find the Lord for real, you will help save that soul from a multitude of sins.

#### Study References:

The MacArthur Study Bible (New King James Version)

James – Reformed Expository Commentary by Daniel M. Doriani (English Standard Version)

Liberty Annotated Study Bible (Jerry Falwell) – (King James Version)

The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on James by John MacArthur (NASB)

BlueLetterBible.org – website reference for commentary and Greek Word studies