

James 5:13-20

Intro: • After reading these verses, which of the following seems to be the primary subject:

- suffering?
- sickness?
- healing?
- prayer?
- forgiveness?

Vs. 13 • Is the “suffering” James refers to...

- illness?
- hardship?
- adversity?
- persecution?
- What should the “suffering” person “pray” for?
 - that God will defeat his enemies?
 - that God will restore his health?
 - that God will deliver him from his circumstances?
 - that God will give him the strength to endure? (cf. 5:7-11; Phil. 4:13; II Cor. 12:9)
- Correlate Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 with James’ admonition that the “cheerful” should “sing praises”. (cf. Rom. 12:15; 15:9-11)

Vs. 14 • What does being “sick” entail?

- physical injuries?
- physical exhaustion?
- physical disease?
- extreme or terminal physical illness?
- psychological illness?
- spiritual weakness?
- Does the “calling for the elders of the church” for prayer and anointing...
 - deny the need to seek medical attention?
 - imply supernatural abilities employed by elders?
 - indicate that elders represent the faithfulness of God
 - serve as an accommodation to the Jewish practice of summoning religious leaders and imploring their prayers?
- What is the purpose of anointing the sick with oil?
 - Was olive oil regarded to have medicinal value? (cf. Mk. 6:13; Lk. 10:34)
 - Is this a sacramental religious rite?
 - Is this a symbolic act? If so, what does it symbolize?

Vs. 15 • Is James listing the guaranteed results of faithful prayer?

- Is James explaining the “power of prayer”?
- Is “the prayer” referring to the prayer of elders? ...or the prayer of any Christian?
- What is the significance of the prayer being “offered in faith”?
- Is James establishing the basis for “faith-healing”?
- Does “restoring the one who is sick” mean...
 - the ill will get well?
 - the weary will be encouraged?
 - the spiritually sick will be regenerated?
 - the non-functional will be restored to functionality?
- Does “the Lord will raise them up” refer to...
 - raised up to health?
 - raised up to functionality?
 - raised up in the final resurrection?
- Is James implying that there is a connection between sins and sickness? (cf. John 9:1-3; 11:4; I Cor. 11:30)

- Can prayers effect the forgiveness of sins?
- Is this a proceduralized promise for the inevitable answering of all prayers? (cf. 4:3)

Vs. 16 • Are we to confess our sins...

- to God?
- to a priest?
- to one another?
 - publicly?
 - privately?
- What problems might arise if Christians confess their sins to one another?
- What kind of “healing” results from mutual confession and prayer?
 - inevitable physical healing of all ailments?
 - collective social healing of the Christian congregation?
 - therapeutic healing – psychological and behavioral?
 - spiritual healing?
- What is an “effective prayer”?
 - a prayer that uses the correct words?
 - a prayer that is earnest and sincere?
 - a prayer that is energized by the Holy Spirit? (Gk. word *energoumene*)
 - a prayer that is receptive to the divine Pray-er in us? (cf. Rom. 8:26)
- Who is a “righteous man”?
 - a charismatic faith-healer?
 - a gifted “prayer warrior”?
 - a person whose behavior is habitually righteous?
 - any Christian person in whom the Righteous One, Jesus Christ, lives? (cf. 5:6)
- How do such prayers of such persons “accomplish much”?

Vss. 17,18 • Consult I Kings 17,18 for the Old Testament account being referred to here.

- What does it mean that Elijah “had a nature like ours”?
- What is James trying to illustrate with his reference to Elijah?
 - God answers prayer supernaturally?
 - the earnestness or sincerity of prayer will get desired results?
 - when the Christian feels dry and barren, he can be revived and restored through prayer in order to manifest the “fruit of the Spirit”?

Vss. 19,20 • What does it mean to “stray from the truth”?

- aberrant doctrinal beliefs?
- errant Christian behavior?
- abhorrent apostasy?
- alienate oneself from Jesus?
- Does “turning a sinner from the error of his way” mean...
 - converting someone in regeneration?
 - leading a Christian to repentance?
 - assisting a Christian in the adjustment of their behavior?
 - exercising church discipline? (cf. Matt. 18:15-17)
- Whose soul is saved from death?
 - the sinful one?
 - the assisting one? (cf. I Tim. 4:16)
- How can such action “save one’s soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins”?
 - regenerate one to eternal life and forgiveness of sins?
 - restore one’s behavior to a living expression of Christ, and avoidance of sin?
 - restore the unity of life in a forgiving congregation of Christians?

Conc. • Does the emphasis on proceduralized prayer and the promised results thereof within these verses seem problematic to you?

- Does this epistle seem to have an abrupt ending?
- How would you explain James’ over-all purpose for writing this epistle?