

Theme: Meeting Needs

James 5:13–20

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 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 sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

¹⁹ Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, ²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

Consider

5:13–14. What does James recommend for the following situations?

- Suffering: _____
- Cheerful: _____
- Sick: _____

How does each one of these responses turn the Christian back to God?

5:14–15. These verses use two different Greek words, both translated “sick” in English. In 5:14, James uses the word *astheneō* (either general physical sickness or mental weakness). In 5:15, James uses the more specific word *kamnoō*. To determine the definition of *kamnoō*, look up the following verses:

- Job 10:1: “My soul _____ my life.”²¹
- Hebrews 12:3: “lest you become _____.”
- Revelation 2:3: “and have not become _____.”

How do these verses help us understand what kind of sickness James means? Is he speaking of a physical ailment (like cancer or a cold) or a mental and spiritual weakness (like anxiety, depression, or hopelessness)?

What results will the “prayer of faith” have for the sick person?

Note: James typically means to “rescue” or “deliver from harm” when he uses the word “save” in this book.

What promise does God give to the one whose sins have brought on this sickness?

Is sickness always a result of sin? Read John 9:1–3 and notice what Jesus says about the man born blind.

5:16. To whom should we confess our sins? How is this related to praying for one another?

What type of prayer is effective?

- Prayer that is _____.
- Prayer of a _____ man.

5:17–18. Whose example does James use to illustrate the “effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man”? How did God answer his prayer?

In what ways was Elijah’s nature like our nature, and how did Elijah show faith? (For insight into Elijah’s strengths and weaknesses, see 1 Kings 17–19.)

5:19–20. Who is in danger of “wander[ing] from the truth?” What responsibility do other believers have toward this person? How might you help turn a sinner back to the truth? (See Galatians 6:1–2.)

What is the result of this intervention?

- Save a soul from _____.
- Cover _____.

Ask Yourself

When I experience extreme sadness, weariness, discouragement, or despair, where does God want me to turn? Where am I tempted to turn instead?

What are some things that may hinder my “prayer of faith”? (See Psalm 66:18; James 1:6–8; 4:3; Isaiah 59:2.)

²¹ This use of *kamnoō* comes from the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament called the Septuagint.

How should I think about physical ailments that God chooses not to remove from me? (See Paul's example in 2 Corinthians 12:7–10.)

Why is it important for me to be transparent and vulnerable with other people in church?

Why might confession of sin be necessary for the sick to be healed? (See 1 Corinthians 11:28–30.)

What should I do when I see a friend “wander[ing] from the truth”? How does this chapter motivate me to love and help fellow believers to walk with God?

Cross References

Job 10:1

“My soul loathes my life; I will give free course to my complaint, I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.

Hebrews 12:3

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

Revelation 2:3

and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.

John 9:1–3

¹ Now as *Jesus* passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. ² And His disciples asked Him, saying, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

³ Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.”

1 Kings 17:1

And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.”

1 Kings 18:1

And it came to pass *after* many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, “Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth.”

1 Kings 19:4

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, “It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I *am* no better than my fathers!”

Galatians 6:1–2

¹ Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. ² Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Psalms 66:18

If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.

James 1:6–8

⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ *he is* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

James 4:3

You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

Isaiah 59:2

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden *His* face from you, So that He will not hear.

2 Corinthians 12:7–10

⁷ And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. ⁸ Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹ And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰ Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

1 Corinthians 11:28–30

²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. ³⁰ For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep.