

James 5:13-20
“Am I the Bee’s Knees, or the Camel Knees?”
September 6, 2026

Four questions raised by this passage:

Is sickness a spiritual problem?

Does not getting healed mean I, or the elders, didn’t have enough faith?

If I ask the elders to pray, and I don’t get well, does that mean God’s Word is unreliable?

Do I have a right to expect to get well?

Understand the context in which these verses lie. **James 1:21** and **5:20** are about “saving” (Gr *sozo*) a “soul” (Gr *psyche*) from death.

“save soul” occurs 4 times in NT, means “saving your life” (**Heb 10:39; James 1:21; 5:20; 1 Pet 3:20**). James is making the point that a believer who does not accept God’s Word with humility might very well face a premature death.

For example, look at the children of Israel, in the wilderness, in **Exodus 17**. Massah = test; Meribah = argument; strife; quarrel. In a trial, the Israelites did not have patience and endurance; did not receive the circumstances God gave them with humility; instead, they had wrath against God.

Psalms 95:6ff “Come, let us worship and bow down, Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.”

Getting on our knees before God says something: Showing subservience to Him as your Superior; Showing humility; Showing yourself how humility looks; Emphasizing the relationship between God and you: He is there, I am here, and we are not equal.

They hardened their hearts in the midst of their trial. They did not ask God for wisdom, skill for negotiating the tribulation. They wandered in the wilderness 40 years and everyone 20 and older, died.

We err in our hearts when we are not on our knees in our hearts.

1 Corinthians 10:5ff and **James 1:21**. We have the children of Israel in the wilderness as our example of what not to do: They did not lay aside wickedness; did not receive the word with humility; did not obey God. They lost their lives over the next 40 years, everyone >= 20.

We receive with meekness ON OUR KNEES. We have the Holy Spirit within us and we have His Word in the Scriptures.

Listening to Him will save our lives.

James 5:13 “suffering” lit. “enduring hardship” →PRAY

“cheerful” lit. “keeping up your courage” →PRAY with singing!

These two verbs are imperatives. God commands us to pray when we are in the trial.

BE a Camel Knees!!

V 14,15 “sick” = Gr *astheneo* = weak; sick. The sick person has to be the one to call. “Elders” = leaders in the early church. They pray. They anoint with oil. “Anoint” = Gr *aleipho* to apply; rub on, NOT Gr *chrizo* = ceremonial anointing for setting apart. This is not a ceremonial anointing.

→All sickness and death are indirectly due to sin. **Romans 5:12; 6:23**

→Some illness is due to sin. **1 Cor 11: 29ff**

→Some illness is not due to sin. **John 9:1ff**

→Some premature death is directly due to sin. **1 Cor 11:30; James 1:15; 1 John 5:16ff**. A believer can sin himself to death; we should pray for every believer we see who seems to have lost his or her sensitivity to the seriousness of sin in their lives, because we don’t know if it’s a sin to death or not.

→Some premature death is not directly due to sin. **John 11:1ff**

Taking the context into account, James seems to be saying this:

If a believer is suffering from spiritual and physical weakness and illness from unrepentant and unconfessed sin, then this type of prayer, coupled with the person’s confession, will result in his healing. It is a promise. This is the sin of living without humility towards God and the Word, and that sin saps the soul of life and eventually saps the body of vitality.

God is full of forgiveness and life! Our antidote is maintaining an attitude of confession to God and one another.