

Authentic Christianity
Prayer and Praise
James 5:13-16

March 14, 2021 am

HDBC

Today we come to a passage that reminds us that prayer and praise are not restricted to organized times of worship, but belong in our day-to-day lives. Authentic Christians are well aware of this.

Paul wrote that we are to *pray without ceasing*. To him prayer is just as important to us as breathing. If we cease to breathe we cease to live. If we cease to pray our spiritual life suffers. We are to be in daily conversation with God on an ongoing basis. There should not be a moment when we are out of fellowship with God.

But there are also things that force us to move beyond the conversational praying as we are simply doing the regular stuff of life. There are situations that cause us to draw aside for intentional prayer and praise.

READ THE TEXT – James 5:13-16

In these verses James helps us understand the place of prayer and praise, particularly as we go through the ups and downs of life. He writes of three categories of people. Or rather, three circumstances in which people may find themselves. He mentions . . .

The suffering

The cheerful

The sick

He then offers an appropriate response to each circumstance. So . . .
When is it appropriate to sing praises and when is it appropriate to pray? What should you do when you suffer? How do you express a cheerful heart? How should you respond to sickness?

1. The Suffering (13A)

To suffer misfortune, to have a hard experience. Any kind of trouble.

Too many people back away from the Lord, the church and prayer when they experience tough times. I can tell you that this is exactly what the enemy wants you to do. He wants to separate you from the very sources of strength, encouragement and protection. When you are suffering is when you most need to draw near to the Lord. The more intense the trouble, the more you need to seek the Lord in prayer and fellowship with others.

Natural mind begins to try to figure ways out of the suffering. How can I get relief? What can I do? Try to work out solutions.

God's word says PRAY.

In a blog post Randy Alcorn discussed why God allows suffering in the lives of his people: Mountain climbers could save time and energy if they reached the summit in a helicopter, but their ultimate purpose is conquest, not efficiency. Sure, they want to reach a goal, but they desire to do it by testing and deepening their character, discipline, and resolve.

God could create scientists, mathematicians, athletes, and musicians. He doesn't. He creates children who take on those roles over a long process. God doesn't make us fully Christlike the moment we're born again. He conforms us to the image of Christ gradually.

In our spiritual lives, as in our professional lives, and in sports and hobbies, we improve and excel by handling failure and learning from it. Only in cultivating discipline, endurance, and patience do we find satisfaction and reward. And those qualities are most developed through some form of suffering.

Proverbs 3:5-6 says *Trust in the Lord with all your heart, do not lean on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him...*

You pray not only to ask for strength in the suffering but to seek to know what God is doing in you through the suffering. In other words to hear from Him that He is using your pain in a way that will ultimately be good for the Kingdom of God, that your suffering is not for nothing. It has a purpose, a transcendent purpose. That's why we pray when we suffer.

2. The Cheerful (13B)

Though there are times of suffering in every life, there are times of cheerfulness and joy. God knows the importance of balance. The word means ***to be in good spirits, to be in happy mood.***

Times of cheerfulness and joy sometimes cause us to become ***forgetful of the Lord.*** When things are upbeat, we can forget God because at the moment we have not need of his help. **Plummer says *the lighthearted are apt to be lightheaded.***

When things are going well, we need to be more intentional about seeing the work of God that has allowed our cheerfulness. We would not have the smiles, the laughter or the joy without the work of God in our lives. So, we must offer praise to Him for all He has done. James also gives an indication of how we are to express our joy. Directed toward praise to Lord.

James gives the proper response to both extremes of emotion. Sorrow should lead to prayer, joy to **praise**. When we are cheerful, we should recognize that this comes from God and we should praise Him for it.

3. The Sick (14-16A)

This word indicates a ***sickness that incapacitates a man for work.*** It literally means, *to be without strength.* **The instructions here are not meant to be followed for every toothache, headache or sore foot.**

A. The Responsibility of the Sick Person

1) Call the Elders

Elders - *Those holding positions of authority in church.* At HDBC we bring together our pastoral staff and our deacons. They are to come to the bedside of the sick person and to pray for him or her.

2) Confess Sins

This does not refer to a general confession of all sins. This is not a call for a general assembly in which every person confesses every sin to everyone else. James is referring to specific kind of situation in which the sickness was a result of specific sin. Discipline of God on person's life. Until confession was made, the sickness would remain.

Jerry Lynn was trying to figure out where to put a hole in his wall for a TV wire. He went up to the second floor of his house and lowered his wife's alarm clock on a string through an air vent—he "thought he could listen to the alarm, which he set to go off after 10 minutes, and know where to put the hole."

But the string broke. The clock fell. Lynn was still able to use it, though; when the alarm went off, "he could still hear where he needed to poke a hole in the wall." And then the alarm kept going off every night at the same time—for 13 years.

He figured the batteries would likely die soon, but each night he and his wife would be treated to about a minute of beeping that could be heard "from any room on the first floor."

Finally, after 13 years they had a hole cut in the wall so they could remove the clock.

Unconfessed sin is a lot like that clock. Until it is dealt with, it will just keep hanging around, interrupting life and crying to be confessed. Obviously the most important confession is to God, against whom all sin is committed. But there are times when confession to others is needed. James deals with one of those.

General thoughts about confessing sins to others.

- 1) I confess to others when my sin has directly affected them
- 2) I confess to others when they already know about my sin.
- 3) I confess to trusted believers to whom I am accountable
- 4) I confess to elders when sin has led to sickness

B. The Responsibility of the Elders

1) Pray Over Sick Person

This suggests gathering around or standing over the person to pray for him or her.

2) Anoint Him With Oil

It usually means "to rub, or apply." Putting salve on sore, trainer rubbing down athlete after game, plastering wall. What is the purpose of the oil? Three thoughts.

a. Medicinal Value

Olive oil was used as a salve to help heal a wound. In the story of the Good Samaritan oil was poured on the wounds as medicine.

b. Symbolic Meaning

Throughout the Bible oil is seen as a picture of the Holy Spirit. When kings and prophets were anointed with oil it was an outward sign of the inward anointing of the Holy Spirit coming upon them. In this case it would signify the healing power of the Holy Spirit. And would be a sign that the sick person is actually trusting God for healing. Sign of faith. It also involves personal touch.

Which does James mean? Probably the second. However there is nothing in the Bible that would prohibit a sick person from pursuing all medical options for healing, as well as ultimately trusting in the sovereign, healing work of God. Take your medicine, pray for healing and trust the Lord.

Two positive things from this practice:

First, the spiritual leaders would see firsthand the condition of the person and better understand the seriousness of the situation.

Second, the sick person would be encouraged by the physical presence of others praying on their behalf.

C. The Results of These Actions

1) Prayer of faith will restore him

The key is understanding what James means by *the prayer offered in faith*.

Key is found in 1 John 5:14-15. The prayer of faith is the prayer that is yielded to the will of God. It is faith not in one's desires, but in the will of God. It is a realization that God not only can, but also wants to heal this person in this particular instance.

2) God will raise him up

Literally, *God will enable him to get out of the bed.* To stand again.
To get back to work.

3) Sins will be forgiven

If the man confesses his sins, which caused the sickness, and he is healed, that will be a clear indication that his sins had been forgiven. Suffering not always related to sins, but sometimes is. (Mark 2:5-11; 1 Corinthians 11:30)

As you think about praying for healing and the relationship between sin and sickness, keep in mind five important principles taught throughout the Bible.

1. There are two classifications of Sin – original & personal.
2. Original sin Introduced sickness to human race
3. Sometimes there is direct relationship between personal sin and sickness. David and Bathsheba.
4. Sometimes there is not a direct relationship between personal sin and sickness. Man born blind.
5. It is not God's will that everyone be healed

Paul had the gift of healing (Acts 20:7-12; 28:7-9). yet he left Trophimus sick in Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20).

Epaphroditus almost died while ministering to Paul (Phil. 2:25-27).

Timothy had a stomach problem which Paul did not heal.

Paul, himself had a thorn in the flesh that was not healed by the Lord.

Takeaways:

1. **Prayer is to be part of every aspect of our lives**

One of the main points James makes is that prayer is always appropriate. Are you suffering? Pray! Are you cheerful? Praise, which certainly is a form of prayer. Are you sick? Pray.

It is advantageous to have a scheduled time for consistent, structured praying, but that should not be the extent of it. We communicate with God regularly throughout the day.

2. **Prayer is to be preemptive as well as reactive**

If you only pray after you experience a problem then you are late. It's not too late to pray, but you are behind schedule. If you only praise after you experience something positive, then you are behind. Be preemptive, not simply reactive.

3. **Prayer is not a substitute for responsibility**

You should pray about the tests that are coming, but you should also study.
You should pray for good health but also take care of your body.
You should pray for the right spouse, then date the right people.
You should pray for direction and wisdom, but also get all the facts.
You should pray when you are sick but also go to the doctor.