

James 5:13-18 “Faith and Restoration”

Pastor Bruce Zachary

Thesis: Imagine a man who is diagnosed with cancer, who then loses his job, he becomes depressed, and next his wife leaves. What is his greatest prayer need? Today, we discover the connection between prayer and restoration, and the benefits are likely better than you expected...

James, was nicknamed “camel knees” because of the callouses on his knees from countless hours of prayer. James was a man dedicated to prayer, who knew the significance of passionate prayer by a person who is yielded to Jesus. Seven times in these few verses, James refers to prayer. Let’s discover together the connection between prayer and restoration...

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.

Subject: Prayer and healing

Object: Pray and be restored

1. Who needs restoration? [13-15]

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.

Pray for emotional, physical, and spiritual restoration for the suffering, sick, and sinning.

Those who are *suffering* [13] are experiencing the general affliction, hardship, and troubles of life.

The key to restoration is revealed, *let him pray* [13]. Pray for relief, strength to endure, wisdom to grow through the experience, restoration of emotional well-being or peace (shalom-contentment).

Those who are *cheerful* [13] are experiencing the joy of the Lord [Neh. 8:10, Jn. 15:11]. When you're cheerful *sing psalms*, or give praise to God. Note, we should offer prayers and praise to God in the midst of struggles and restoration.

James asks, *Is anyone among you sick* [14]? Here, the Greek term refers to weak, feeble, and without strength, or the physically ill. On the other hand, *save the sick* [15] refers to the weary, or emotionally burdened rather than physically ill. James also includes those in need of spiritual healing, *and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven* [15]. While some illness can be a consequence of sin, certainly not all [Mk. 2:1-17, 1Cor. 11:30, Jn. 9:13, Job 1-2]. “By Jesus’ stripes we are healed” [Is. 53:5]. There is restoration available for the suffering, the sick, and sinners. Jesus models a life that is healthy and balanced in the mind, body, spirit, and emotional spheres [Lu. 2:52]. Physical and emotional health are important, but spiritual health is more important, because spiritual health will help produce overall well-being.

2. What’s required for restoration? [14-16]

Dedication and devotion to God:

James refers to *prayer* four times [14-16]. Through prayer, we declare our devotion to God and dependence upon Him. We recognize that ultimately God is the source of healing and restoration, *and the Lord will raise him up* [15]. *Raising up* refers to making well, awaking from slumber, and restoring. This is not a guarantee of immediate physical healing, or even healing in this life [2Cor. 12:8-10, 1Tim. 5:23], but assurance of ultimate restoration in Christ.

Restoration flows from intimacy with God.

Call for the elders of the church ... to pray over you [14], acknowledges God's authority in seeking spiritually mature representatives to intercede before God. *Anointing with oil* [14], is primarily a symbol of the work of the Holy Spirit (although oil was used medicinally [Lu.10:34]). *In the name of the Lord* [14] is a reference to Christ's authority.

And the prayer of faith will save the sick [15] refers to confident trust in God's sovereignty, ability, and goodness. Pray expecting God to heal if it is His will [1Jn. 5:14-15].

Sometimes we pray, but we really don't expect God to respond. When Peter was in prison awaiting execution, the church was praying for his release. When God miraculously freed Peter, and he came to the prayer gathering, they didn't believe it at first [Ac. 12:1-16].

Dedication and devotion to one another:

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed [16]. Jesus' followers are to share their struggles with other believers. There is One Mediator between God and man, namely Jesus [1Tim. 2:5]. We don't need to make confession to a priest or pastor to be right with God [1Jn. 1:9]. Nevertheless, in order to experience true restoration, and spiritual and emotional health, we need to forge true Christian community.

We are to share our struggles, humbly admit wrongs to others, ask forgiveness from others, ask for and receive prayer from others, and pray for others. The response to confession should be: love, encouragement, and prayer, not gossip, judgment or unsolicited advice.

The responsibility to other believers is seen at the end of the letter where James encourages Jesus' followers to help restore others who have wandered from the truth [19-20, Gal. 6:1].

Determination [16]

The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much [16]. The kind of prayer that is *effective* is *fervent* or passionate. Jesus prayed with intimacy and intensity. Passion has nothing to do with your voice, or physical manifestations per se [See, Elijah 1 Ki. 18]. In essence, be passionate about what God is passionate about, and keep persevering in prayer as long as God is putting the burden on your heart [Lu. 18:1-8]. *Righteousness* is based on an intimate relationship with Jesus which makes us right with God, not our moral perfection. We often pray when we are at our lowest and need to be restored, and God hears and restores.

The NLT translates, “The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.” So, what are some of the results of prayer?

Group Prayer for Restoration

3. What's the benefit of restoration? [17-18]

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.

James points to Elijah as an example of prayer producing restoration. *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours* [17]: Elijah was used mightily by God but he was just a man. Note, it is God's power available to us, not our strength. Elijah prayed for God to stop the rain and for three and a half years it did not rain [17]. James succinctly notes that at the end of the three and a half years that Elijah prayed again and God brought forth rain and the earth produced its harvest ending the drought and famine [18].

Why did God inspire James to highlight this example, rather than other powerful incidents of prayer in the life of Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, or Nehemiah? The backstory of Elijah's prayer is illuminating...

God's people return to Him:

The drought that was triggered when Elijah prayed was God's wake-up call to Israel for their idolatry.

The Jews had been worshiping the Canaanite god Baal who was associated with fertility and rain [1Ki. 17]. For three and a half years, despite the prayers to Baal for rain, there was no rain. Then Elijah orchestrated a showdown with the 450 prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel [1Ki. 18:20-39]. There, God displayed that Baal was powerless, and that there was (and is) only one True God. As the Jews confessed, repented, and returned to the Lord, they discovered their greatest need wasn't rain, but restoration with God.

God blesses His people:

Once the God's people returned to Him, God brought rain, following Elijah's persistent determined prayer [1 Ki. 18:41-46]. The rains brought an end to the drought and famine that had produced hunger and wanting. God is always the cure for our hunger and wanting - spiritual, emotional, and physical.

God is revealed as the end not the means to an end:

In the example of a man diagnosed with cancer, who then loses his job, who becomes depressed, and next his wife leaves, his greatest need is God. So often, we pray to get something that we perceive as good, or avoid something we perceive as bad. That thinking makes God the means to an end, rather than the end. The greatest benefit of restoration is renewal with God.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. Why is spiritual and emotional health as important (or more important) than physical health?

Q2. What are some of the possible challenges to asking for prayer for emotional or spiritual needs? How might we overcome those challenges?

Q3. Read Section 2, “What’s required for restoration?” What could that look like in your life and the life of your group?

Q4. Spend significant time praying together as a group and discuss your experiences.

Digging Deeper

1. Here is a link to a book that I wrote on the subject of prayer that may be helpful: <http://calvarynexus.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Prayer-Bruce-Zachary.pdf>

2. To receive a weekly list of prayers from the Calvary Nexus community, simply send a note to prayer@calvarynexus.org. Subscribe, and spend time this week praying over all or part of the requests

Neighboring Idea - pray with and/or for neighbors