

James

Review & introduction.

• **THE DO's & DON'Ts OF THE BOOK OF JAMES**

- I wrote this paraphrase of James in 1998 at the time of my first son's first sermon (on James—JUST DO IT
- **Chapter 1**
- **Do** let patience have her perfect work so that you may be perfectly complete and lacking nothing [4]
- **Do** you lack wisdom?—ask God in faith consistently without wavering because a wavering pray-er has his prayer requests tossed and lossed![5-7]
- **Don't** be double minded –it results in total instability.[8]
- **Do** endure your periods of testings and trials—in anticipation of the crown of life promised by the Lord [12]
- **Don't** say that God tempts you to do evil---he never does that [13]
- **Do** understand that temptation results from our lust which on conception produces sin which has eternal death for its wages or sentence[14 &15]

- **Do** not err [stray or wander] my beloved brethren [16].
- **Do** let all the brethren be swift to hear, and slow to speak and to wrath for the wrath of God worketh not the righteousness of God[19 & 20].
- **Do** lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness and receive with meekness the engrafted soul saving word [21].
- **Do** the word and don't fool yourself by only hearing it.[22].
- **Do** look into and continue in the perfect law of liberty;if you are a doer of the work rather than a forgetful hearer you will be blessed [25]
- **Don't** demonstrate a vain and pious religion based on an unbridled tongue and a deceitful heart[26]
- **Do** visit orphans and widows and remain unspotted from the world; this is pure and undefiled religion before God. [27].

- **Chapter 2**

- **Don't** be a respecter of persons; favoring the rich over the poor because the rich blaspheme the Lord's name Furthermore such a practice is sin. [1-9].
- **Don't** offend in one point of the law or you are guilty of the whole law [10&11]
- **Do** what you say and say what you do [12]
- **Don't** be merciful and receive judgement without mercy [13]
- **Do** understand that faith without works is unprofitable and powerless to save [14].
- **Do** be practical as you demonstrate that a faith that is not manifested by works is dead and unprofitable[15-17].
- **Demonstrate** a workless faith and I will demonstrate a faith that manifests itself by works[18].
- **Do** revise the truth that faith that is not accompanied by appropriate action is useless[20].
- **Do** grasp that both Abraham & Rahab demonstrated their faith and became justified by the action that they took [21-25]
- **Do** appreciate that a spiritless body is as dead as a workless faith[26].

• Chapter 3

- **Don't** serve many masters, because you will receive greater judgement [1].
- **Don't** offend in Word and you will be considered perfect and can exercise self control [2].
- **Don't** gossip [3-12].
- **Do** be wise and endowed with knowledge and demonstrate this wisdom by your lifestyle [13]
- **Do** you have bitter envying and strife in your hearts? ---well glory not.
- **Don't** lie against the truth, because envying and strife is associated with confusion and every evil work.[14 &16].
- **Do** note that the wisdom which is from below is earthly, sensual & devilish [15].
- **Do** note that the wisdom from above is pure , peacable, gentle, easily entreated, full of mercy and good fruits without partiality or hypocrisy[17 &18].

- **Chapter4**
- **Don't** war and fight and lust and kill---just ask properly [1,2].
- **Don't** ask amiss just to consume it on your own lusts [3].
- **Don't** be friends with the world ---that's enmity with God [9] (c.f. 1Jn 2: 15-17).
- **Do** you want God's grace and exaltation ?-- well humble yourself in his sight and submit to him [6,7, 10].
- Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you [8]
- **Do** you want the devil to flee from you ?-- well resist him [7].
- **Don't** be double minded [8].
- **Do** the Lord's will, because Life is short [14 15].
- **Do** what you know you ought to do; if you don't, its Sin [17].

Chapter 5

- **Don't** trust in heaping up riches by corrupt means and the position it brings—it will bring you misery.[1-6]
- **Do** be patient until the Lord comes with the same anticipation that a farmer exhibits [7].
- **Do** be patient and stablish your heart for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh [8]
- **Don't** grudge one against another, lest ye be condemned [9].
- **Do** be an example of suffering affliction and of patience[10].
- **Do** endure and be patient like Job[10].
- **Don't** swear –just keep your word [12].
- **Do** confess your faults and pray for one another for the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much [16].
- **Do** pray like Elijah but don't err from the truth [17-18] .
- **Do** convert sinners from their error and thus hide a multitude of sins[19-20].
- **DON'T TALK IT, JUST DO IT !!**

James 5

(13-20).

JAMES 5:13-20

- 13Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.
- 14Is any sick among you? 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:
- 15And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.
- 16Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.
- 17Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.
- 18And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.
- 19Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;
- 20Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

- **One might conclude that James has dealt with a number of behaviors in his book**
- **In chapter 1, the behavior dealt with is *trials***: the difficult experiences that every believer encounters in life. James revealed that God's goal for believers in allowing us to experience trials is personal maturity. He also explained that the method by which we attain this goal is by patiently accepting our trials as from God.
- **In chapter 2, the behavior in view is *prejudice***. God's goal for believers, that prejudice tends to thwart, is love for *all* people. The method by which we can reach this goal in God's plan is by exercising genuine faith in God. James explained the relationship between prejudice and faith in this chapter.
- **In chapter 3, the behavior is our *speech***. God's goal is that we bless others with our speech: God Himself, and all other people. The method is to receive and use wisdom from God.
- **In chapter 4, the behavior is *conflicts in interpersonal and inner personal relationships***. God's goal is that we maintain peace with others, and His method is submission to God.
- **In chapter 5, the behavior is our *use of money and lack of prayer*** The goal is that we use money to serve others, rather than hoarding it for ourselves. The method of attaining this goal is twofold: patience with God, and prayer to God.

The Church's role in physical healing

(James 5:13-18)

- **13** Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.
- Verse 13 and those which follow are a continuation of 5:12 and give the alternative to swearing, which is praying.
- We must not miss this connection between 5:12 and 5:13 because it is based on the letter's underlying theme of faith.
- **Praying is the alternative to swearing.**
- **In James's view, oaths and prayers are simply the verbal expressions of underlying stances of unbelief and faith, respectively.**

- **Because James is a man of faith, and has a passion for prayer., his concluding instructions to suffering Christians, is to dwell on the matter of prayer with three emphases:**
 - **when to pray,**
 - **how to pray and**
 - **why pray.**

When to Pray (5:13-14)

- **The basic point of the instruction in 5:12 is to ensure the integrity of one's speech without having to rely on oaths...**
- **INSTEAD, WE ARE TO PRAY AND KEEP BRINGING EACH OTHER BACK TO THE TRUTH**
- **The emphasis on prayer in James' closing message is that as we hold onto the truth and trust God in prayer during our trials, we are to keep helping others to do the same**
- **In Verse 13 James is reminding us to turn to God in good times as well as bad, and that prayer and praise are important parts in the lives of Christians.**

- **when to pray,**
- ***Pray in times of trouble.*** The kind of trouble is not specified; it is a general verb, *kakopatheo*.
- **James encourages persons who are suffering to pray.**
- **If anyone is in trouble, that person should pray to God.**
- **"Is anyone among you suffering?"** don't allow the fact of trouble to suggest that God is uncaring or unknowing or unable to help, and so we would pray less. The biblical instruction is the opposite: pray more.
- **Trouble is the very time to pray.**
- In contrast to what is discussed in verse 12, prayer to God, not profanity, is the proper outlet for feelings of sadness caused by suffering as we patiently endure our troubles.
- The answer to that **prayer may not remove the problem. But it will give help and strength to be able to live through the trouble.**

- ***Pray in times of happiness.*** No single cause for happiness is specified; again it is a general verb, *euthymeo*.

"Is anyone cheerful" (NASB) or encouraged?

- **James encourages persons who are cheerful to sing praises.**
- Those who are cheerful (who feel good) should praise God. They should sing psalms or praises to God.
- We must not allow times of happiness to make us complacent, so that we would pray less.
- The biblical instruction is again the opposite: pray more.
- **Happiness is the very time to *sing songs of praise*.**
- **The right way to express joy is by praising God ("sing praises"), not swearing.**

- ***Pray in times of sickness.***
- No particular disease is identified; again it is a general verb, *astheneo*, meaning to be weak or sick.
- **We must not feel defeated in times of sickness.**
Weakness makes us feel hopeless, as if there were nothing to do.
- The biblical outlook is the opposite: there is something very significant to do, namely, to pray.
- **Weakness is the very time for prayer.**
- **Healing and restoration comes about by simply getting the matter out instead of carrying it inside – something that leads to stress, ulcers, neuroses, etc.**
- **Since every good gift is from above . . . Including being healed, no Christian should never approach the doctor without also approaching God.**

- It is not surprising to find that James dealt with sickness (Gr. *asthenai*, weakness) in this epistle, because he had earlier referred to the fact that **departure from the will of God sets the Christian on a course that, unless corrected, may result in his or her premature physical death (1:15, 21;5:20).**
- Spiritual weakness, and sometimes physical sickness, result from sinful living.

- In this segment of the chapter **pray in all kinds of circumstances is the advice and instruction.**
- "The habit of prayer should be, and indeed is, one of the most obvious features which differentiates a Christian from other people"
- **"James's emphasis on prayer in this section is especially noteworthy since few things undergird perseverance more effectively than prayer. In the final analysis, a persevering life is also a prayerful life."**
- James encouraged his readers to pray, as well as to be patient, to enable them to overcome the temptation to live only for the present and to stop living by faith.
- James not only begins and ends his epistle with references to trials, but he "also begins ([James 1:5-8](#)) and ends ([James 5:13-18](#)) with prayer as the instrumental means for managing trials."
- **Prayer is the right course of action for the full range of life-situations and for *any one* in these situations.**

- **When to pray (5:13)...next**
- **How to Pray (5:14-16)**
James continues to encourages prayer by setting forth practices for effective prayer in these situations.
- **14. Is any sick among you? 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 shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.**
- **16 Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**
- **What is one who is sick to do?** - Call for the elders of the church
- **What are the elders to do?** - **Pray over the sick, anointing with oil in the name of the Lord** When the elders have come, they will pray over the sick person and they will put oil on that person in the name of the Lord

- **1. We should call upon *the elders or* the leaders or pastor-teachers *of the church* for prayer.** The fact that the sick person calls **is an expression of faith, which is one condition for effective prayer (1:6-7).**
- **The fact that the elders are the ones called is an expression of submission and unity in the church, which are additional conditions for powerful praying.**
- James teaches a spiritual power available to the church that is exercised through the elders.
- This is not at all to diminish the importance of personal prayer by each Christian.
- **It is to affirm the value of agreement by the church, for Jesus promised that agreement among Christians would unleash power for answered prayer (Mt 18:19-20; Jn 15:7-17).**

- **2. We are to pray *in the name of the Lord*.** If the first practice expressed submission to each other in the church, **this second practice expresses submission to the Lord himself.** In this sense, **it is not just a formula with which to pray but a state in which to be praying: pray in union with Christ.** This is a request for God to act, because he is the source of all healing
- **The promises of Jesus (Jn 14:13-14; 15:16; 16:23-24) give basis for expecting great power as we practice the principle of praying in his name. These promises apparently led the early church from its very beginning to practice a deliberate calling upon the name of the Lord in the context of baptizing, healing and casting out demons.**
- Examples may be found in Luke 10:17 and Acts 2:38, 3:6, 9:34 and 10:48. **The phrase *in the name of the Lord* means that the power comes from God and that the one praying acts in union with Christ to call upon the power of God.**
- **No matter what circumstance of suffering or illness may overtake the child of God, the avenue of prayer is open for his seeking relief from the Father himself through Christ.**

- **Is "anointing with oil" sacramental or medicinal? –**
- There are a number of reasons for understanding this application of oil as medicinal rather than sacramental.
- **1 The word used *aleipsantes* ("anoint") is not the usual word for sacramental or ritualistic anointing.**
- **James could have used the verb *chrio* if that had been what he had in mind. The distinction is still observed in modern Greek, with *aleipho* meaning "to daub," "to smear," and *chrio* meaning "to anoint."**
- The word *aleiphein* ("rub") is the "mundane and profane" term—referring to all kinds of rubbing, whereas *chriein* ("anoint") is the "sacred and religious" word used to describe religious ceremonies.
- **2 "Anointing . . . with oil" was the equivalent in James' day of applying medication (cf. 1 Tim. 5:23), as ". . . oil among the ancients was highly valued for its therapeutic qualities and was one of the most common medicines of biblical times. (Isa. 1:16; Luke 10:34)."**
- The "oil" provided more refreshment and soothing comfort than it did real relief for serious ailments, but people drank it as well as rubbing it on themselves as a medication.
- It is evident, then, that **James is prescribing prayer and medicine.**

- When James instructs his readers to *anoint . . . with oil*, it is not the oil that heals.
- James's emphasis here is certainly on the power of the Lord rather than any power in the oil.
- The cure is not by means of the oil but by the power of the Lord.
- Note also that "Prayer is the more significant of the two ministries performed by the elders.
- 'Pray' is the main verb, while 'anoint' is a participle.
- Moreover, the overall emphasis of the paragraph is on prayer. So the anointing is a secondary action.
- "Difficulties in deciding what exactly in the preceding verse is meant by anointing **should not cause us to overlook the main point of vv 13-18, which is prayer. It is prayer—not the anointing—which leads to the healing of the sick person.**"

- **3. We are to offer prayer *in faith*.** This phrase is James's explicit return to his underlying theme as he concludes his letter, and all he has said about faith is the background for his meaning here.
- In 1:6 he told the person needing wisdom to ask "in faith" (*en pistei*), not doubting.
- He has spent this letter exhorting his readers about the goodness and purity of God, showing their selfish fighting to be a lack of faith, both unnecessary and evil.
- Now he refers to the prayer "of faith" (*tes pisteos*) and would again expect his readers to repudiate unbelief as they pray. (recall in 1:5-8, he discusses praying without doubting.)
- **It is the prayer of faith that shall save the sick v 15**

- **15And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.**
- **Verse 15 teaches that those who pray with the sick person (the "elders,") must believe that God will answer their prayers if "offered in faith."**
- In answer to "**the prayer offered in faith**" God will make the sick person well again.
- **Note that healing is not here linked to the faith of the one being healed (cf. Mark 2:5; 5:35-43; John 5:5-9).....but to the pray-er.**
- **Again, note that it is prayer, not the oil, that leads to the healing of the sick person.**

- James introduces the mention of sin at the end of 5:15 in the context of praying for a sick person: *If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.*
- If sin was the cause of the illness, God will forgive that sin.
- **The implication is that the physical illness and the guilt may be interwoven, and the cure promised in 5:16 seems to encompass both physical and spiritual healing**
- ‘If’ makes it clear that not all illness comes from sin. More often than not sin is not the direct cause of it.
- It is a conditional clause (*kan*, "and if"); the connection between sin and illness is a possibility, not a necessity in every case. **"if he has committed sins"**
- The "if" **does not assume that sin is the cause of illness. In first century Judaism, sin and sickness had a theological connection (cf. 1 Cor. 11:30; Mark 2:5-11; John 5:14). However, Jesus' statements in John 9:3 show that this is not always the case.**

- The conviction that prayer will bring results implicit in 5:13-14, becomes explicit in 5:15-16 with James's assurance of four results.
- **The prayer will make the sick person well . . .**
- **the Lord will raise him up . . .**
- **he will be forgiven . . .**
- **so that you may be healed.**
- **The first result, *make well*, is the NIV's translation of the verb *sosei* "will save." It is a proper translation for this context, where "will save" is in the sense of healing rather than spiritual salvation.**
- **Similarly, the verb *egerei*, *will raise up*, would refer to physical restoration rather than spiritual resurrection in this context.**
- When James declares that the penitent sinner ***will be forgiven***, what he has described as the context is prayer of intercession, not absolution, with emphasis on God as the one answering prayer. It is a final reminder that God is the giver of every good gift.
- The concept of ***being healed*** can have a spiritual sense with the verb *iaomai*, as in 1 Peter 2:24, which refers to Isaiah 53. Here in 5:16 it seems to refer to physical healing, although James recognizes in 5:15 a possible combination of illness and sin. The vision he is sharing with his readers is for both physical and spiritual healing of their lives.

- As we read James's concluding remarks here, let us recall what he has been saying in the course of the letter.
- In writing to people struggling in hardship he **urges them to pray.**
- **James is advocating that the positive response to hardship is FAITH instead of "advocating a stoic or impassive response to adversity."...or swearing as in v 12**
- But it is more than that.
- **These verses, coming as the conclusion to all James has addressed in his readers' lives, describe a healing of their relationships with God and with each other.**
- Their relationships *needed* healing. **As a first result of their hardships, their relationship with God has been suffering.**
- **They were falling into temptation to doubt God (1:6), to blame God (1:13) and to bargain with God (5:12). James is directing them back to God in faith with a reliance on him in prayer.**
- **A second result of their adversities is that their relationships with each other have been suffering.** James has had to warn them against the evils of playing favorites with each other (2:1), verbally attacking each other (3:9), fighting with each other (4:1), slandering each other (4:11) and judging each other (4:12).

16

- Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.
- James 5:16 is as important for what it does NOT say, as for what it says.
- If we take the verse in context, we won't misinterpret or misapply it.

- **This verse is the basis for the Roman Catholic doctrine of extreme unction (i.e., anointing someone with oil at death to gain merit with God for so doing). This practice began in the eighth century.**

- In Verse 16, the key words in my opinion are **One to another ... Mutuality is certainly implied by this.**
- **We want to stress that there is no class of men set up in God's church to hear confessions. No so-called "priest" ever had the right to hear the confessions of the penitent, unless he himself, in turn, would likewise confess his own sins to the confessor.**
- **This does not mean that Christians are to indulge in indiscriminate public, or even private confessions; but certainly the passage has nothing to do with confession to a priest.**

- **This verse does not condone Roman Catholic confessionals and priests serving as intermediaries in the forgiveness process. Confession in a confessional isn't what's implied here.**
- **The Roman Catholic doctrine of auricular confession has no support from this passage.**
- **Note again that the confessions are directed "to one another" and not specifically to the "elders," or a priest or other church official per se**
- **"Elders" does not refer to a priestly set of workers. And not even the elders ever had the power to absolve a sinner or set terms and conditions of his forgiveness**
- **For the Bible very clearly proclaims in 1 Timothy, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."**
- **Since Christ is our Mediator, then there is absolutely no need for priests to serve in this manner.**

- **The cathartic effect of confession, as mutually engaged among Christians, is helpful and beneficial, the purpose of such confessions being that of enlisting the mutual prayers of Christians for each other.**
- **There is not in view here any requirement for Christians to confess their sins "to the whole church," a practice which is not only not in view here, but which, under certain circumstances, can have a positively detrimental effect.**
- **The holy church itself is not a "priest" standing between the penitent Christian and his forgiveness.**

- Although descriptive in nature, the following account from Acts is the sort of thing James is referring to –
- **Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed what they had done. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. Acts 19:18, 19**
- **As you can see, these people openly confessed their wrongdoing. The result was that the “word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.” This is the goal of confession and prayers for healing – that the Lord may be glorified and that we may be healed.**

Confess *your* faults..... one to another,

- **Now, lets try to determine what the verse really says.**
- **5:16 "confess your sins" This is an imperative**
- In view of the possibility of spiritual and physical sickness following sin,
- **believers should normally "confess [their] sins (against one another) privately to one another"**
- **Confession was and is an important part in the healing process (cf. Lev. 5:5; Num. 5:7; Ps. 51). It is an effective antidote to pride, self-centeredness, and sin.**
- **Possibly confession is to be made to those wronged. Often the early church dealt with sin corporately and publicly (cf. 1 Tim. 5:19-20).**
- **Confession cleanses the heart and warns other believers!**
- **To summarize, confession is surely first made to God, but then to (1) the elders at the home of the sick person; (2) the people sinned against; and (3) the whole gathered congregation.**

- "In the ancient mind sin and sickness went together, and so confession of sin was necessary if prayer for the sick was to be effective.
- The confession is to be not only to the elders (or other ministers) but *to one another*, that is, probably to those they have wronged."

- **"We must never confess sin beyond the circle of that sin's influence. Private sin requires private confession; public sin requires public confession. It is wrong for Christians to 'hang dirty wash in public,' for such 'confessing' might do more harm than the original sin."**
- **"Perhaps . . . the 'sins' that need to be confessed and remitted are those lapses from faithful endurance that James has written to warn about throughout the course of his book."**

and pray one for another

- **The fourth principle for effective praying is to pray united as repentant sinners; we should *confess . . . FAULTS to each other and pray for each other.***
- This verse helps us realize what a dramatic transformation of relationships James envisions.
- **He points out in verse 16 the oneness we have with each other because of our common need for forgiveness.**
- If we consciously stand together before God as sinners needing grace and wanting righteousness, that stance has compelling application to our relationships.
- Instead of judging each other, we will be driven to confess to each other.
- Instead of desiring to place guilt on each other, we will become eager to forgive each other.
- Instead of moving to criticize, we will move to intercede for each other.
- A spirit of reconciliation will pervade the church. This, too, James learned from Jesus (Mt 5:23-24; 6:12-15; 7:1-5).

- **and pray one for another,**
- Furthermore they should "pray for one another" so that God may *heal* them (both spiritually and physically).
- It is not only the elders and the sick person who should pray.
- All the Christians should pray for one another.
- They should confess their faults to one another.
- They must pray for one another that God may heal them.
- As they confess their faults and pray for one another, God makes them clean.
- He forgives them and they forgive one another.
- Those whom God forgives he considers to be righteous persons.
- When righteous persons pray to God, he will hear them and do great things in answer to their prayers.
- "A funny thing happens when you don't pray,--nothing)."
- **James is certainly convinced that prayer brings results.**
- Therefore his final way to encourage his readers to pray is to describe the effectiveness of prayer.

that ye may be healed.

- "so that you may be healed" God is the one who heals. As there was ambiguity in the Greek term "sick" in James 5:14, the same wide semantic field is found in the term "healed." It can refer to physical or spiritual healing (cf. Matt. 13:15, quoting Isa. 6:10; Heb. 12:11-13; 1 Pet. 2:24, quoting Isa. 53:5).
- In the spiritual battle for purity and wholeness, confession and prayer are the believer's major weapons along with a knowledge of the gospel and the Word of God (cf. Eph. 6:10-20).
- As we admit wrong to God and others, we find peace and acceptance. As we help others find hope and help, we find it ourselves.
- I believe that James used the case of a *sick* person to demonstrate the powerful effect that praying can have, in order to encourage his readers to pray for those who are sick *because of sin*. He also did so to encourage them to exercise patience rather than living for the present.

The effectual fervent prayer

- The word in the sentence translated "effective" or "powerful" is *energoumene*).
- This is actually a participle of the verb *energeo*, which means "to work" or "to be effective" with much energy.
- This participle describes the subject, *prayer*, and enhances the idea of the verb *ischyei*, "has power."
- James is thus giving a highly charged affirmation of prayer as both "powerful and effective.
- Prayer is powerful because it is the means whereby we avail ourselves of the power of God

- Here are some interesting translations of this phrase
- NASB "the effective prayer of a righteous man **can accomplish much**"
- NKJV "the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man **avails much**"
- TEV "the prayer of a good person **has a powerful effect**"
- NJB "the heartfelt prayer of someone upright **works very powerfully**"
- **NRSV "the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective"**
- In Greek this is a compact, five-word sentence waiting to be unpacked by the student or expositor to reveal the vigorous expectation that **God dynamically answers prayer**
- James begins the sentence in Greek *with poly* ("much") as the matter he wants his readers to see first and foremost: **i.e how very much can be accomplished through prayer.**
- **This seems to denote two conditions:**
 - **(1) uprightness; and**
 - **(2) persistence (cf. James 5:17 and Matt. 7:7-8).**
- **The effectiveness of intercessory prayer is related to the spiritual life of the intercessor (cf. Pro. 15:29) and primarily to the will and power of God.**

of a righteous man

- Note that the person praying is designated as *dikaious* ("righteous"), even though righteousness has not been mentioned thus far in the passage
- The term *righteous* in 5:16 is more than an automatic statement that "holds good for every believing petitioner."
- It is a call for every believer to reach toward righteousness. All along, James has been urging his readers to resist the temptation to compromise righteousness in their trials.
- James is convinced that genuine faith will express itself in righteousness, and the prayer of genuine faith is the prayer that is effective.
- In this verse, the "righteous man" is the person who has confessed his sins and has received forgiveness.

availeth much.

- Now, with the designation of the one praying as *righteous* and with the shift in terms from general "prayer" to specific "entreaty," the implication is as follows:
- In your trials, you don't need the power gained by money or favoritism or selfishness or fighting or swearing; use the power of prayer, for which you need righteousness.
- Commit yourself to doing what is right without compromise; then you may rely on God in prayer for all your needs.
- God does powerful things when a good person asks him.
- The supplication of a righteous man availeth much in its working
- The meaning is clear: a good man has great power in prayer."
- After all, what causes me to try to protect myself by unrighteous means in trials? It is my unbelief.
- On the other hand, confident belief in God's grace will make me strong for acting righteously in the midst of trials. It is a message similar to that of 1 Peter 4:19 and 5:6-7.

Why Pray (5:17-18)/ The power of prayer 5:17-18

- Pray because God answers prayer with His miraculous power.
- 17Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.
- 18And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

- **In James 5:17-18, to further emphasize the power of faith, and to illustrate the power of prayer, James uses an incident in the life of the Old Testament prophet Elijah, known for his miracle-producing prayers**
- **With his concern for his readers to have faith instead of doubt, James has chosen as his illustration an episode that is not only prominent and familiar from Old Testament history but also clearly supportive of the point he wishes to make.**
- **James 5:17-18 is devoted to the basic facts surrounding Elijah's prayers about the long drought and the renewed rain recorded in .(1 Kings 17:1; 18:1, 41-45.)**
- **These miracles were undeniably beyond Elijah's human power, and were clearly divine answers to prayer.**
- **The example of Elijah is used as a counterpoint to stress once again the need for a peaceful solution gained by prayer and submission to the divine will.**
- **James is saying that we're humans just like Elijah and therefore have the ability, by faith, to have effective prayer lives which can truly move mountains, just as Elijah did.**

- **Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are,**
- The primary intended effect of this illustration is revealed in the brief introductory sentence in **5:17 that tells us WHO HE WAS**
- **Having emphasized righteousness as a condition for effective praying, James does not want Christians to postpone praying while they try to attain some level of perfection or superspirituality. So he points out first of all that Elijah *was a man just like us.***
- **He is saying that despite the remarkable answers Elijah received, in response to his prayers that the prophet was an ordinary man ("with a nature like ours").**
- **The argument is that Elijah, despite the fact of his being a noted prophet chosen by God, was merely a fallible and sinful man like the Christians of all generations; but that, in spite of his mortality, sin and imperfections, God mightily answers his prayers, and he will do the same for us. He is saying that we can all pray and get answers to prayer just as Elijah did.**
- **There was nothing special about Elijah. He had no special power. He was a person just like us. Elijah was just a human being who trusted in God. James is showing us that anyone who is right with God can pray strong prayers. If Elijah could pray in this way, so can we.**

- **WHAT HE DID--He prayed**
- **and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain:**
- The chapters in Kings do not record what James supplies here, i.e **that Elijah *prayed earnestly that it would not rain.***
- Here the point is not that Elijah put up a particularly fervent prayer **but that praying was precisely what he did- he *prayed earnestly.***
- In the Greek "**Prayed earnestly**" is in a construction that suggests intensity and frequency.
- "**Prayed earnestly**" is literally "he prayed in prayer" or "he prayed with prayer," or "he prayed and prayed"
- **This verse is not a call for *fervent* prayer so much as a call for *prayer period* (cf. 4:16). A "righteous man" who prays can accomplish much. Therefore, answers to prayer are within the reach of any believer (cf. Luke 11:9-13).**
- By means of his praying, Elijah influenced God in the outworking of His decree.
- **God allows us to influence Him (in how He controls events) through prayer even today, as well in certain areas of His will.**
- **James is saying: Strive earnestly for the goal of righteousness, but get down immediately to the business of praying.**
- **James desire in the passage is not only to erect a standard of fervency and frequency of prayer for his readers to attain; but he wants us to see that an active prayer life is readily available to us, just as it was to Elijah.**
- **James wants us to see that the mighty power and the great expectations of prayer is also for us , just as it was to Elijah.**
- **James wants to stress that Elijah just prayed'--that, and nothing more!"**

- WHAT HE DID-He prayed
- He prayed according to God's will
- ". . . Elijah confidently made his audacious petitions to Jehovah because he knew that they were in harmony with the will of God. He could confidently persist in his request for rain (1 Ki 18:42-44) because he knew that God had promised to send the rain he was asking for (1 Ki 18:2
- He could persevere in prayer because he knew his petition was in harmony with the expressed will of God.
- "Knowing the will of God is the sure foundation for effective prayer [1 John 5:14].
- "When the Scriptural teaching that prayer is a definite means of working with God is apprehended, we feel that this is fully in keeping with His gracious character. God yearns to take His sons into His confidence and let them share with Him in the accomplishment of His purposes.
- He has so arranged this world that there is a definite place for answered prayer in the divine government.
- He deliberately so constituted things that His believing children may have, and are invited to have, a definite share in the fulfillment of His saving purpose with mankind through intercessory prayer.
- **The Scriptures are replete with illustrations of how the cause of the Lord was furthered as God answered the prayers of His people."**
- **Elijah's prayer is just one of them**

- **If you feel your prayers aren't being answered, make sure they align with God's will and then have faith that they're heard and they will be responded to according to His great plan for us.**

- and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.
- The account of Elijah and the drought in 1 Kings doesn't give the exact duration of time that the drought lasted; it merely says "And it came to pass after many days"
- However, both Jesus and James tell us it was three and a half years.
- But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; Luke 4:25
- Also the Old Testament does not specifically mention the prayer of Elijah as being the cause of the drought; but, in this particular, James illuminates the Old Testament.
- All miracles were wrought in answer to prayer, even those of Jesus, as indicated by [John 9:31](#); [John 11:41](#).
- Thus, if all the miracles of Jesus were wrought in answer to prayer, it would be very illogical to suppose that those wrought by Elijah were achieved in any manner differently.

V 18

- **And he prayed again; and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.**
- **Verse 18 completes the thought given on Elijah in verse 17 After the set time of three and a half years, Elijah prayed for rain and it came.**
- **We read in 1 Kings 18:42-44**
- **And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, “Go up now, look toward the sea.” So he went up and looked, and said, “There is nothing.” And seven times he said, “Go again.” Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, “There is a cloud, as small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!” So he said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.’”**
- **If you’ll notice, Elijah prayed seven times before the cloud appeared. This should be a lesson to us all. If our prayers seem to have gone unheard the first time, we need to get on our knees and make them again, and again, and.... again if necessary.**
- **Perseverance demonstrates a heartfelt desire. It also demonstrates faith that you believe your prayer is effective. If we quit praying after the first round, what does that say about our faith? “**
- **Repeated and heartfelt prayers indicate that we really believe God is capable of granting our petition. If we didn’t believe this, we wouldn’t continue. So have faith, be persistent, and wear out the knees on your pants if necessary. God does hear and God does respond to the faithful prayers of His children.**

19-20

- In verse 14-16, we see that the elders of the assembly were engaged in the restoration of a sinning saint.
- In verses 17-18, we see Elijah used in the partial and temporary restoration of a backsliden nation.
- In verses 19-20, we are exhorted to engage in the restoration of a Christian brother who has wandered away from the faith either in doctrine or in practice.

- **THE WAY BACK TO LIVING BY FAITH 5:19-20**
- **Bring back those who have gone wrong 5:19-20**

-

My brethren, if any among you err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.

v19

- **v19** Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him;
- **If any err from the truth ... That a Christian can err from the truth is not merely a possibility, but a frequent occurrence.**
- 1) People do wander from the truth after having accepted it. This is not when a Christian does something wrong. It is more than that. **It is when a person wanders away from Jesus Christ and denies the truth.**
- It was easy in James' time, as it is now, to be led astray from Christ, who is the Truth. BUT
- **2) Those that have strayed from the truth can be brought back. They have not lost their salvation, nor have they committed some unpardonable sin by straying.**

- **Verses 19-20 are teaching that Christian brothers and sisters should look after one another, so that when one of them wanders away, or is erring in his way the rest should feel it deeply and it is their duty and desire to try to bring back to the Lord Jesus any who have turned away.**
- **No duty laid upon Christians is more in keeping with the mind of their Lord, or more expressive of Christian love, than the duty of reclaiming the backslider.**
- To bring back a brother or sister to Jesus is certainly a great work.
- **Remember, any believer, not just the elders, can help a brother back into the right way ([James 5:14](#); cf. [Ezekiel 33:1-9](#)).**

- **He who thus converteth a sinner from the error of his ways**
- **Converting one here means to bring them to correct and amend their ways**
- When it says turning a sinner from the error of his way will “save a soul from death” it can be looked at in two ways – **physical death and spiritual death.**
- **As this is talking about one of the brethren, then it must be referring to physical death. When a person strays from biblical precepts, they don't lose their salvation, but they can lose their life.**
- Such was the case with Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. They lied and paid the penalty for it. When we walk away from the Lord, we can enter into abusive behavior – drunkenness, drugs, etc. which can shorten our life.
- **Additionally, because we bear the name of the Lord and have received His Holy Spirit, we put His name to shame. Because He guards His name jealously, He may call us home to keep it from being further blasphemed.**

- **shall save a soul from death,**
- **The "soul" saved "from death"** is that of the backslider to whom also belongs the "multitude of sins."
- We should probably understand **the "soul"** to represent the whole person here, as well as elsewhere in James' epistle (cf. 1:21).
- Suppose that a person brings another one back to the Lord Jesus. He should know that by this God has saved that person from death.
- **"Death" here** represents the temporal destruction of the person, i.e death of the body not his or her eternal damnation (cf. 1 Cor. 3:15; 1 John 5:16).

- When one is brought back to repentance, it will cover a multitude of sins which would have otherwise been committed as well as bringing forth forgiveness for those which were committed during the wayward walk.
- There are a multitude of blessings which come about from leading a soul back to the proper path, so we are to be responsible in our care and attention of our fellow believers.
- When we help a backslider back to restoration, **the Lord will forgive that person the many sins that he or she has done. God will be glorified** and the wayward soul will be saved from death.

- **In summary.....**
- **A person who comes to Jesus with real trust and receives new life from him, can never lose that life. But these verses talk about one of them, that is one of that church, who turns away.**
- **The repentance of the reclaimed sinning believer "covers" or results in the forgiveness (*covering*) of his or her sins.** This description of forgiveness harks back to Old Testament usage, where the biblical writers described sin as covered when forgiven.
- Such usage was understandable for James, who was a Jewish believer writing to other Jews primarily (1:1; cf. Matt. 7:1-5; Gal. 6:1-5). His description does not contradict other New Testament revelation concerning forgiveness.

CONCLUSION

- This epistle deals with five practical problems that every believer, immature or mature, encounters as he or she seeks to live by faith—and the issues underlying these problems.
- James not only identified the problems, but
- **he uncovered their sources,**
- **pointed out complicating factors, and**
- **prescribed treatment to overcome them—with a view to his readers' becoming more spiritually mature.**
- The problems themselves, as well as James' method of dealing with them, account for the popularity of this epistle throughout church history, and for its perennial value in ministry.

- **The last half of the James chapter 5 provides a call to prayer and praise.**
- **The suffering are to pray, the cheerful are to sing praises, and the sick are to call for the elders of the church, who are to pray over the sick and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.**
- In answer to the prayer of faith, the Lord will raise the sick and also forgive any sins they had committed.
- In this context James encourages Christians to confess their faults to one another and pray for one another that they may be healed.
- He reminds them of the value of fervent prayer by the righteous, using Elijah as an example of how God answers prayer providentially.
- The epistle then closes with a reminder that turning a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins (**13-20**).