

The Prayer of a Righteous Church
James 5:13-20
Jerry Grey WBC 12-18; 1-24

Introduction: This passage we are about study is an oft overlooked passage. The book of Jude is probably the only passage more over looked. There is a great wealth of blessing here and a great test of faith that rests in the teachings about prayer in this passage. All inspired scripture is a blessing.

This passage is also one of the most misunderstood passages in the bible. Many use this passage as a magical wand to prove that God has to heal us physically. Many use this passage as a litmus test for spirituality. Many evangelists and televangelists use this passage to raise money. I have had people rake me over the coals for saying what I just said to you. *“Pastor, don’t you believe in miracles?”* Well, yes I do, but I’m not saved by how many miracles God does in my life. I am also not saved by how many times I get healed. I am also not measured spiritually by how many miracles God does in my life. After all, if God does heal or work miracles, it will not be me doing them; it will be God and God alone.

I also don’t intend to stop glorifying God if I don’t get my way. If I am not healed when I pray I know that God has a bigger and better plan. I also know that God heals in many different ways. I have seen many people healed over the years and have prayed for people that were healed. I have also seen many people die and get God’s total healing. I want to pray correctly; if I am praying for healing and God wants to save my soul, then please Lord, cancel my first prayer.

This passage is about prayer and faith. It is also about obedience and praying in the will of God. As a pastor, there is nothing more frustrating than seeing your sheep suffer and not be able to help them. Every time I touch you and pray for

you, I want you to know that I beg God to heal you. The frustrating part of this prayer is that I have enough faith to know that God can in fact do it. Many times He does not heal physically, but He does heal. **We are all, at this very moment, experiencing healing. If you have been to the doctor or have taken antibiotics or had surgery... you have been healed by technology that God has given us.**

This passage is here to challenge our **faith, obedience, and knowledge.** Before we exegete this text, let me show you a passage to increase your faith about your powerful God.

Illustration: In Mark chapter 5 Jesus confronts a demon possessed man and heals him. Jesus then heals a woman that has the issue of blood. Then Jesus raises Jairus' daughter from the dead. From this chapter, Mark teaches us that Jesus has the power to overcome **demons, disease, and death.**

Read Text James 5:13-20

13 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. 14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

17 Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.

18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

19 My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, 20 remember this: Whoever

turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Verse 13: Are you in trouble? Then pray. If I have counted correctly James use three different words for prayer and uses those words 7xs in total. Obviously this section is about prayer.

What does this word “**trouble**” mean? **Kakopatheo, which comes from kakos and pathos.** **Kakos** refers to things that are evil, or bad, to harm, ill, or wicked. **Pathos** refers to affliction, passion, or lust. Together it refers to some type of bad trouble or affliction. To suffer some continual evil affliction. I would personally say this refers to **physical, mental, emotional, financial, or religious affliction or trouble.**

Other uses of this word.

2 Tim 2:3

3 Endure **hardship** with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.
NIV

2 Tim 4:5

5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure **hardship**, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.
NIV

James says that if we find ourselves in this situation that we are to **pray. Proseuchomai, to pray, supplicate, or worship with earnestness.** I will also say that at some point everybody

finds themselves in a troublesome spot. Just expect it. Sometimes my trouble is my fault and sometimes it is just the circumstances of life. Either way, just pray.

- Mental- depression or anxiety or fatigue may cause undue stress on us all at times. Our lives are filled with mental stress.
- Financial problems- Sometimes our fault and sometimes not our fault, but still one of the difficult problems of life.
- Spiritual problems- Weak faith, weak resistance to worldliness, disobedience, persecution, trials, testing and normal growth all cause stressful situations. Guilt.
- Physical problems- Poor health or accidents or surgeries or just getting older can cause stress. A new or bad diagnosis.
- Life- losing a job or a loved one. Moving, infertility, etc.

Likewise we know that the Christian life has another side to it as well. James says that if you are happy you should sing. The Greek words here are great words. If you are of good spirits then sing man. If you have a good passion or fierceness in your soul, let it out.

Second, the word for sing is **psalleto**. It comes from a word that means to rub or touch. To twitch or twang. To pluck. As in playing the harp. To make melody or play the stringed instruments for divine worship or celebration. I feel sorry for the Church of Christ people, they think instruments are evil. God gave us the stringed instruments to play glorified music. Music is awesome. Singing is awesome. Those who learn to play or have natural ability are so blessed.

As a matter of fact, God loves praise so much that He created creatures that praise and sing His glory 24-7 for all eternity. For all of history someone has been singing God's praise continually. All throughout the OT, people were singing and rejoicing with the tambourine and harp. God made provisions for temple worship with the Levites who led the music. Solomon said that there was a

season for rejoicing and singing. Zephaniah said that God is literally singing over us. Paul and Silas sang while chained to the wall of a Jail in Philippi. How can a person that's saved not have a song in their heart. Singing can change your life.

Rev 5:13

13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, **singing:**
**“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
 be praise and honor and glory and power,
 for ever and ever!”**

If you are in trouble... sing. And especially if you are happy. It will help you. It will change your looks. It will give gloomy people a personality.

Verse 14: These next two verses are overlooked and misunderstood. There are several key words we need to know.

~**Astheneo-** To be sick, weak, or impotent. To be without strength. One who is diseased.

~**Presbuteros-** This refers to the elders. In our day the Deacons or spiritual leaders in the flock.

~ **Proskaleomai-** Let him call. (AMIMP). The significance is that the calling must be done by the person who is sick. The calling of the elders is a sign of faith and knowledge of the Word of God. This is an imperative in the original.

The elders are to respond in faith as well. If you are sick call for the elders and they are to anoint you with oil. The prayer of faith will heal those who call. It is said that the prayer of faith will heal, not the oil. Oil is used many times in the Word to represent many things, but the oil is never said to heal miraculously.

The Samaritan used oil as a natural medicine to heal the man that was beaten. The 12 went out and anointed the sick with oil and wine. Both used as an antiseptic and soothing gel. Some use the oil with the phase “*in the name of the Lord*” for healing. The reference here that James uses is not an Apostolic command to always use oil for healing. The Apostles and even Jesus healed many people without the use of oil. As a matter of fact, Paul who had the gift of healing, but did not heal everybody that he came into contact with. **Epaphroditus** almost died in Paul’s care and in 2 Timothy 4:20 Paul actually says that he left **Trophimus** there sick.

The point here is that the requirement that God has for healing is prayer. Period. It is my belief that oil represents so much more than some object of healing. It is never the man who heals or some object. **God is the healer.** If he tells you to go wash in the pool of Siloam, then do it, but don’t say the pool healed you. Jesus actually encountered a man that thought the angel disturbing the water was how people were healed (Pool called Bethesda by the sheep gate). Jesus didn’t need the water; he just told the man to get up and walk.

Some will even claim that if people are not healed ,the person did not have enough faith, or they have sin in their lives. Well James takes care of that by stating that God will forgive the sin of the one who asks for healing. In fact, it may be the sickness that brought them to a place of surrender. Actually, many times God brings a time of sickness and affliction for growth or testing. The sickness is not due to sin but God’s will. The oil, the washing, or whatever requirements God has for healing, is to identify our faith in asking.

If all men were healed then what's with 2 Corinthians 12:9?

2 Cor 12:7-10

7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. 8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. 9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. NIV

If God doesn't heal He gives grace. Is there anyone in the house that is not dealing with some affliction right now that God is giving you grace to deal with it right now.

Could it be that His grace is the healing?

James says that the sick are to call the elders and they should anoint with oil and pray in the name of the Lord. This is quite significant because we often forget what it means to pray in Christ name. We forget what it means to say Amen. When we pray in the name of the Lord, we are saying that we trust our prayer to His care and to His will. God will answer according to His **will**, His **way**, and His **time**. Amen means **"let it be so or let it be true."** **The word Amen is itself a prayer.** We are trusting our supplication to the care of our God, whatever the outcome.

Verse 15: The KJV has the correct translation here. The literal translation here comes from the word **"to save."** The word is **sozo, (FAI).** This word is more often translated as **"save, heal, make whole, or preserve."** It refers to being made whole through salvation or to be rescued or saved... To do well, heal or

preserve. It is my belief that healing and salvation are one and the same.

Luke 5:17-25 (Save and Raise up)

17 And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem:

and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.

18 And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.

19 And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.

20 And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.

21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?

22 But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?

23 **Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?**

24 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, **Arise, and take up** thy couch, and go into thine house.

25 And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

KJV

This is why James also says that if one comes to ask God for healing they have also asked for forgiveness of sin. We see from this that sin is the reason for our sickness. Sickness was not in the world until sin came in. We have been dying ever since. Your sickness today may not be directly related to some particular sin

you have committed, but it will be directly related to your father Adam and the inherited effects of our sin nature. ***That's why I have told you that if you are saved right now that you have experienced healing already.***

We also see in this vignette that God will raise the sick (**Kamno**) person up. **Kamno** means sick, wearied, or faint. **Egeiro** is to raise up, rear up, stand up, or take up. *It is the idea of taking one up from death, or disease, or impotence.* James says the same thing. God promises to lift us up when the church prays. The verb tense is future active indicative. If we are not healed here, we certainly will be at death. The promise of the resurrection, and even with a premature death before the resurrection, God promises a lifting up. Both these words refer to raising one up from the bed of sickness.

The phrase **“pray offered in faith”** is what we call **a descriptive genitive (Genitive describes “what Kind”).** It refers to a prayer that is offered in faith. **The prayer for healing must be made by those who believe that God can heal.** He may not heal in the way we choose, but He definitely can heal. And has promised to heal. In some way or the other.

Verse 16: “Therefore”... James starts with a Greek adverb to tie this section to the previous verses. James connects confession to the healing process. It should be obvious that unconfessed sin is the result of unanswered prayers. **Faith and confession precede healing.**

Let me teach you that the body is connected and unconfessed sin disrupts the health of the body. We are connected in immeasurable ways. Paul teaches us this about the body of Christ in his letters to the Corinthians.

1 Cor 12:12-20

12 The **body** is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one **body**. So it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one **body** — whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free — and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

14 Now the **body** is not made up of one part but of many. 15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the **body**," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the **body**.

16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the **body**," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the **body**. 17 If the whole **body** were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole **body** were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has arranged the parts in the **body**, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the **body** be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one **body**.

NIV

This truth makes it quite significant that we are connected and that what I do as a member affects the other members of the body.

- If you sin... it affects us all
- If you gossip... it affects us all
- If you are negative... it affects us all
- If you are diseased... we are all diseased

- Likewise if you confess... we all get clean
- If you pray... we are all blessed
- If you are healed... we are all healed
- If you build.. we are all built

That's why the title of this sermon is "***The Prayer of a Righteous Church.***" I can go to your house with the elders and pray for you and it is biblical. But I love the way James speaks here of including others. This is a spiritual body exercise. This service does not have to be legalistic or done every week, but at times, we need to clean the house and come together and pray in unity and seek God's healing.

I don't intend to have confession services where people get up and confess all their dirty deeds, but a private confession time with a close friend or family member is important for spiritual growth. The cleaner we are, the healthier we are. Kistemaker says that, public confession should have "***discretion and limitation.***"

The beauty of confession is seen in the body because there is no greater way to show forgiveness to a brother than to pray with them as they confess. This shows full acceptance and healing as the sinner confesses.

- The results of the righteous man praying is awesome. James gives us two words here to describe what it's like when a man who is "**fessed up**" calls on God.

~**Energes- Is our word for powerful and effective.** It refers to that which is powerful, mighty, efficient, and active.

~**Ischuo-** The prayer of the righteous man does a lot a work. It will avail and prevail. It will move heaven, which moves mountains.

If you want to see spiritual giants, don't look on the sermon schedule of the next pastor's conference. Don't look to see who is on TV. Don't look to those who appear to be tall, handsome, and charismatic. **Go look in the prayer closet.** What you see in public is a direct result of what goes on in the closet.

Heb 11:6

6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who **earnestly seek him.**

NIV

Verses 17-18: A few Examples to help build our faith.

- We are introduced to the great man Helias here. Better known as Elijah. You may say that your prayers may never be answered like the great prophet... but wait. The scripture says that Elijah was a man just like we. Literal translation is **“Elias was a man of like passions.”**
- **Greek- homoiopathes:** The word is a compound word that means **“same feelings.”** One who feels and suffers and is vexed by the same circumstances of life.
- **Elijah was an ordinary righteous man that prayed in the will of God and did extraordinary things.** And so can we!!! Elijah experienced depression, fear, physical limitations, and many other common human problems.
- Elijah is, however a very high standard. It might be worth us looking at the great prophets life at some time in the future.
- Out of all the people in the OT, James uses Elijah as an example of a righteous praying man. There is a reason for that.

Examples of Mighty Prayer

1. 1 Kings 18 and 19 Elijah prayed for the rain to come.
2. Luke 4:25 Jesus spoke of a famine in the land.
3. Joshua prayed and the sun stood still, Joshua 10:12-13
4. Elijah prayed and the widow's son came back to life, 1 Kings 17
5. Elijah prayed and the Shunamite's son was restored to life, 2 Kings 4

6. Hezekiah prayed and 185 thousand Assyrians were slain, Isa. 37
7. The Jer. Church prayed and Peter was released from prison, Acts 12.

If I have counted correctly the name Elijah shows up 28 times in the NT. The last reference in the OT is here:

Mal 4:5-6

5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

KJV

In the NT John the Baptist is called the Elijah to come. John was the forerunner of Christ. It is my belief that Elijah is also one of the two witnesses in Revelation chapter 11.

Luke 4:24-27

24 "I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. 25 I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. 26 Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in **Zarephath** in the region of Sidon. 27 And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed — only Naaman the Syrian."

NIV

I want to be the widow of Zarephath tonight. We will have the faith of this widow and ask God to heal and restore. We submit to his will.

Isa 53:4-5

4 Surely he took up our infirmities
 and carried our sorrows,
 yet we considered him stricken by God,
 smitten by him, and afflicted.
 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions,
 he was crushed for our iniquities;
 the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

NIV

Verse 19: James takes us back to the context of the book and reminds the readers that body life or church life is important. The topic has been prayer from verse 13 to verse 20. We are to pray for each other and now James says to recover a brother Christian from the error of their ways.

Our goal is to cover our brothers and sisters sins. Many times people like to gossip about their sins. Our job is to heal, restore, and cover. If we restore, have we not helped our very own body? What is better, to restore or to bury our family.

Key words and phrases:

- **Planao- to stray: Aorist Passive Subjunctive.** To err, go out of the way, to be seduced, or deceived. The subjunctive gives us the word “**if.**” Let me assure you that we may translate this as “when” instead of “if.”
- **Alethia- truth:** People stray from the truth every day. That’s what the preacher and the prophet are for. Please live you life in the truth. If you will live in the truth, you will be kept safe from harm.
- **Epistrepho- to convert or turn around, repent.** **Aorist Active Subjunctive:** This is the second subjunctive indicating a third-class condition sentence, which assumes the possibility of the condition. In other words, if someone

will try to convert, or turn the one who has strayed, that one will save a life and cover a multitude of sins.

- The witness will convert the person and **sozo** (save) that person from **thanatos** (death). In case you have forgotten, the work of the ministry, prayer, and worship are matters of life and death. Eternity is a stake. I take this seriously.

Time to anoint and pray.