

22S34 James 5:12-20 (Part 11) Prayer

Hello everyone. Thank you for joining me today @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. I hope everyone is doing well. Today we are concluding our study of James with James 5:12-20 (Part 11) Prayer

Before we start, we need to understand a little about this amazing short letter from James. Who was James? Historians are not sure. Many believe this is James the half-brother of Jesus or even another early Church leader. Most believe this is the same James that appears in the book of Acts and was the leader of the Jerusalem Council in Acts Chapter 15. We don't know the exact date it was written but there are indications that this was written before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD, but we really don't know. The best guess is 50-60AD. Which would make this one of the earliest New Testament letters. James was writing to Hebrew believers scattered among the nations who are facing many trials and persecution. The main theme in this letter is patient perseverance in the midst of the trouble of life. James is encouraging his readers to actively live what they have learned in Christ. He has strong messages about various sins but includes pride, hypocrisy, favoritism, and slander.

I'm reading from the New American Standard version (NAS) today. But of course, you can use whatever translation you choose.

Let's read James 5:12-20 (NAS) ¹² *But above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you do not fall under judgment.* ¹³ *Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.* ¹⁴ *Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;* ¹⁵ *and the prayer of faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.* ¹⁶ *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. A prayer of a righteous person, when it is brought about, can accomplish 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 earth for three years and six months.* ¹⁸ *Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.* ¹⁹ *My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you strays from the truth and someone turns him back,* ²⁰ *let him know that the one who has turned a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.*

Let's pray. Dear heavenly father, guide our discussion today such that your message is clear to each of us. As we read your word from James, help us see what James wants his readers to understand and why. I pray that you help me stay out of the way so your hope and peace can be shared with us. I pray this in your name Lord Jesus. Amen.

Now, let's take a closer look at these verses, James 5:12 (NAS) ¹² *But above all, my brothers and sisters, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath; but your yes is to be yes, and your no, no, so that you do not fall under judgment.* |

almost wish James would have just stopped at don't swear. The Bible tells us in many places not to swear oaths or swear period. Let your yes be yes and your no be no. I'm going to get a little off subject for a moment. Have you ever seen or said something like OMG. OMG is an acronym, oh my God. This is a type of swear. We should never swear by God or Heaven or Jesus. We should just simply not swear. Another thing is why do most people swear. Well, to add some boost to their words. They don't feel their words are enough so they add an oath or swear. Somehow, they think this will encourage people to believe them or share in their viewpoint. But why, is what you are saying not enough. If not, then why say it. Let your yes be yes and no be no.

Let's read on, James 5:13-15 (NAS) *¹³Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. ¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; ¹⁵and the prayer of faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.*

James makes this so simple. When things are going badly, call on God. Pray. When things are going great, don't forget God. Instead praise God of the good you are experiencing. If you are sick, sick can mean a lot of things, but James wants us to share our trouble with our church family, pray together for those who are sick. I don't think this is a promise, but James is telling us God hears us and if it is God's will then restoration and healing can happen. But then James gets to the real point of the matter. When we are faithful and believe, then our sins can be forgiven and that is true healing.

Then James says in James 5:16 (NAS), *¹⁶Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. A prayer of a righteous person, when it is brought about, can accomplish much.* Much has been made of this particular verse. Confess sins to one another and pray for one another. I think James is telling us to be accountable to each other, not that we need to confess to other people. God is the only one who can forgive our sins, so I think this is more about accountability. And James says a prayer of a righteous person can do much. First of all, none of us can be righteous on our own, we can only be right with God through Jesus and what Jesus did for us. So, a righteous man must be a follower of Jesus. So the prayers of Christians, true followers of Jesus can accomplish much. Don't underestimate the power of prayer. When we ask for things in accordance with God's will, we can see God do amazing supernatural things. Or maybe just prayers for someone to recover from something like COVID. When I was sick with COVID in the Hospital, I could feel the prayers. I know that is probably not a good way to say it, but I sensed that people were praying for me. I felt God's love and their love even though I did not speak with them or see them. There is power in the name of Jesus, so prayer with power and sometimes God will give us a glimpse of the future heaven with a healing or answered prayer. So keep on praying.

Then James says in James 5:17-18 (NAS). *¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.* James uses this amazing story of Elijah from the Old Testament.

Elijah was just like us, just a man. But he prayed with faith and stopped the rain, then prayed again and the rain came back. Now that is faithful, powerful prayer.

Then James says in James 5:19-20 (NAS). *¹⁹My brothers and sisters, if anyone among you strays from the truth and someone turns him back, ²⁰let him know that the one who has turned a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.* What a great way to end this letter. Straying from the faith or the truth. This is often referred to as apostasy or falling away from Jesus. Some call this backsliding. Whatever you call it, when we see someone like this, we should try to help them come back. Don't just let them turn away for Jesus. I know for myself when I was straying far from my faith in Jesus, God sent me many people to remind me I needed Jesus. And I'm very grateful for each of those persons who helped me to return to Jesus. But James is really talking about how important this is. *²⁰let him know that the one who has turned a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.* Save the sinner's soul. I'm not God but I believe that when I was far from Jesus and actively and intentionally living a life doing things I knew to be against God, my soul was in jeopardy. I don't believe I was saved. The people God sent to me and helped me get back on track. They contributed to saving my soul from the ultimate death. I'm so thankful. Now I live for the opportunity to be used by God to urge others to seek God.

Let's review.

- 1) Yes or No? yes be yes and No be no. We should never curse or make oaths. There are many places in the Bible that tell us this is a very bad practice. But even more significantly, what we say should be enough on its own. Why do we need to pledge an oath or swear for someone else to take our words seriously or join us. If our words are not enough on their own, then maybe we shouldn't say them at all.
- 2) Everything? If we are suffering or if we are cheerful or if we are sick. Take it all to Jesus. If it's good then praise the Lord who gave you that good moment. If it's bad then talk to God, that's what pray is, talking to God. Pray for what you hope for and pray for God's will to be done even if it's not what you hope for. Have others pray with you and for you. Prayer is powerful and God listens to His children. Trust God.
- 3) Others? Our lives are not really about us. Our lives are about God. And sometimes we get to be part of God's plan for others. Sometimes its correction. Sometimes its encouragement, Sometimes its listening or even just your presence. God will guide you, just say yes and obey, then experience the glimpse of heaven from our side of the universe. What a blessing to be used by God.

Let's Pray. Heavenly Father thank you for this letter from James. Help us to read and meditate on this letter so we can hear the message you have for us. Help us to remember who you are Lord. You are our king, king of kings. You are our Lord, Lord over everyone. We can trust you, Lord. Help us to ask you for wisdom when we don't understand. I pray this in your Name Lord Jesus. Amen

Let me leave you with this, the book of James is meant to encourage us. We have to guard ourselves from our tendency to be jealous and envy, to be arrogant and prideful. We need to speak the truth and do what is right, no matter what that means for us. Yes, yes and no, no. We need to serve others in Jesus' name. That is how the world sees our faith. We cannot work our way to heaven. But our actions, what we say and do, might just be the things that people see. That be what leads them to Jesus. My actions are important, your actions are important. We must do what Jesus asks us to do if we are to be followers of Jesus. But there is a lot of good news. First God will help you every step of the way, Second, doing what God wants is amazingly satisfying. And last, Jesus gave everything for us, if we truly love Jesus, then all we have and are, is a small price to pay for all He gives us in return. Choose Jesus. Trust Jesus. Live the amazing abundant satisfying life He has planned for you.

Thank you for joining me for our study of James. Please email me comments or feedback. And if you liked the message, please share the link with your friends. Until next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.