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| Topic | Prayer and Faith |
| Reference  | James 5: 13-20 |
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| Speaker | Br Arnold Lim |

There are many ways in which we can pray, some very well, some very good, some not that good. In fact in James chapter 4 verse 3

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives.

So there is a wrong way of praying. James in Chapter 4 talks about coveting and that coveting comes into prayer. So how then should we pray? In the earlier five chapters James brings us through faith, through suffering, through wisdom and at the end of it, he tells us to pray. They are four types of prayers:

1. Praying for yourself (v13).
2. Praying by the elders (v14-15).
3. Praying for each other (v16).
4. Praying powerfully and effectively (v17-18).

In verse 1 James asks two questions and they are both extremes of emotions.

Is any one of you in trouble? *ESV has is a word suffering* **OR**Is anyone happy?

What is God telling us to meet Him in the midst of all occasions of your life whether you are feeling happy, down or sad and Ephesian says,

And pray in the Spirit on **all occasions** with all kinds of prayers and requests. *Eph 6:18a*

* When life is rough, pray.
* When life is great, pray.

Let us look at our prayer lives. We pray the most when we are in trouble and the text is telling us that, *“you are in trouble if you only come to God when you are in trouble”.* Because the prayer then becomes a prayer of desperation because things are bad, so you pray like you never prayed, but when things are good, certainly the intensity of the prayer disappears. When things are going fine in life or is just another normal day at work, duration of our prayer becomes shorter. Here James goes in the midst of everything; either it is a bad day or a good day, you have to pray. There are people who only pray when they are in trouble. The other type is the type that says that they are Christians, my prayers should not be so self-centered, I should pray for other people, I should pray for the church, I should pray for other stuff and it is a very noble gesture and there is a wonderful thing of prayer in God.

James very much talks about suffering; he starts of chapter 1 with suffering,

Chapter 1 verse 2

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

There we have joy; we have the trials when life is rough.

Verse 3

for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

Verse 5

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

The first thing that James teaches us about praying for yourself and now I am talking about praying when you are suffering is to have a kingdom perspective. Pray that we say our sufferings through God’s kingdom and not ours, why, because when things go very bad the problem tends to overwhelm us and we all go through it, whether it is a disease we are going through, it could be a family problem, you could have a fear and uncertainty and when you wake up every day that thing is just like not going away. We have to pray to look at it through God’s kingdom. Oswald Chambers says *“We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the difficulties.”*

Some of the most saddest people you meet are people who use to be terribly-terribly happy because life was great. They had a nice house, they had kids who are doing well, good health, life was good and then all things went wrong and then they pray and their prayers certainly have no effect, why because they never learn to pray when there was small issues and took more their perspective to God, so when the big thunderstorm happens their prayer becomes meaningless.

There are three main things we should have which James 1 tells us

1. Wisdom. We always pray to God to get us out of trouble, but we have to pray to get wisdom in those circumstances.

Verse 5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God… When we go into problems we get desperate and when we get desperate anything works. There are lot of people who are not religious certainly become very religious when they have a problem. They just have to pray and they will pray to any god until it works.

1. Pray against double mindedness.

**6** But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubt is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

**7** For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord;

**8** he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

This is in particular illness. When people get very sick they get desperate and they try to see a doctor, if doctor does not work they do alternative medicine, if this does not work then they go to church and get people pray, if that does not work they change the church to pray, then they go to a rally where you hear some foreign minister is coming and or fly to another country that is double mindedness because the focus then is not on God, the focus is “get me out of this problem, I don’t care how you do it, just get me out” and he says to pray against that.

1. Pray for perseverance when the storm continues and it gets tiring and you say, “Lord how long, you wake up the hurt is there. James repeats that in verse 5.

Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise

Be joyful always, pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. *1 Thess 4: 16.*

James here could be meaning two things, he could be meaning people who are happy despite suffering and some people have that maturity or he could simply be saying you are happy. In the Jewish culture singing is an expression of thankfulness and that the language use here actually means a psalm.

There is Old Catholic prayer called the Prayer Of Examen is a 14th century prayer. The prayer teaches us at the end of the day look back on your day, it was a monk who taught that at the end of the day look back on your day and ask yourself when you recollect today what were you thankful for? You realize when you make that a habit you breathe life.

**Praying By The Elders**

v14 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.

v15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well: the Lord will raise him up.

We are now shifting from praying for healing. There are two views. The first view was propagated by man in the late 80s called John Wimber and the proposition is this

*Should we expect to have the same kind of miraculous healing today as was done by Jesus and the apostles in the book of Acts?*

And in his two very landmark books his answer is a resounding yes and that the church has forgotten it and he started what was known as power evangelism.

The second question is *Are the gifts of healing in 1 Cor 12:9 & 28 still available today?*

Again resounding yes and he has a lot of supporters on this. On the opposite end of the spectrum there is John MacArthur, who says, *“No all gifts are seized, all the people out there are just cheating people”.*

Scripture does not give us enough information to make a decisive decision either way. In the James text is tells us to whom to call? James says to call your elders, does it mean the elders have some supernatural power, no it is very clear. It is the mandate of the elders as shepherds. Now what is interesting that James tags is that it takes the argument away from does he have the gift of healing and very clearly the text shifts the healing to God. An elder could be a pastor, a teacher or leader, God will use such a person as a channel for healing. You are going to get how important this is, because he goes on to link it and say the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. The context of this goes to the elder. Meaning if you are sick it is your responsibility to call the elders, why, because God has used the elders as a channel for prayer.

1 Cor 12:28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues.

The apostle at that time had the power to move into any church and regulate the church, you do not have that nowadays.

1Co 12:29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?

1Co 12:30 Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

This text puts the healing now instead of an office to a gift. It is an important distinction to pick up. If we are sick should we go for something like this?

*1) When I am ill should I go to a healing rally?*

The James text is instructional; it is not a suggestion or record. The 1 Corinthian text is a record, meaning James is giving a commandment. God uses elders and God also uses people with gifts. So on one hand there is the office of the elder that heals and there are those with the gifts of healing. Faith is having wisdom to discern and faith is trusting in God. This is a clear sign of double mindedness because some people in these rallies teach you this,

*Kenneth Hagin* says, *Jesus, came to redeem us from Satan’s power and dominance over us…we are to reign as kings in life. That means we have dominance over our lives. We are to dominate, not to be dominated. Circumstances are not to dominate you….****Disease and sicknesses are not to rule and reign over you. You are to rule and reign over sickness.*** *We are to rule as kings in life by Christ Jesus, in whom we have redemption.*

By this motive, if you do not have anything you are a terrible Christian. It is not just the healing per se but what do they teach in relation to the healing. So however if you go to healing rally and after that you become closer to God, then it is a good thing. **It is not the healing, it is what the healing leads to.**

2*) If I am not healed after being prayed over, does it mean I have insufficient faith?*

People should call the elder to pray and prayer offered in faith, the grammar links the faith to the elder. Because people are sick they are vulnerable, the text puts the faith not on the guy who is sick he puts it on the elder. There is evidence in scripture where the faith is not on the person, Jesus says this on the paralytic, Mark 2:5

When Jesus saw ***their*** faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, ***your*** sins are forgiven.”

We are calling this the power of intercessory prayers. These prayers are powerful and effective, we do not need to go to some magical faith healer.

*3) Is my illness a result of God punishing me?*

Here is a very sad thing we get this again and again and people would like to have this correlation. We think if we are a good Christian, God should bless me with good health. So if I have bad health I must be a really bad Christian that is the way we sort of link the two together. So the sicker you are the more terrible you are as a Christian. The first thing that text does is that text does connect sin and health. You cannot avoid it because of the grammar. It says,

James 5:15 And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

It is the same flow of the text. So James is tying sin and health together. What we want to do this morning is to unlock what exactly does he mean?

There is a general connection between our spiritual health and our physical health, irregardless of the religion. The moment you have a spiritual nature or inclination your health is better, because psychologically you have hope, so people know this. So there is a connection. Now James ties the connection between spiritual health and physical health. Doctors will tell us illnesses are psychosomatically linked, meaning if you are the type that gets stressed very easily quite luckily you get sick. Here scripture takes it one step further, David Garland says

*Modern society tends to take a mechanistic approach to the problem of illness. When a machine malfunctions, the mechanic diagnoses what is wrong and removes or fixes the faulty part. When our physical bodies break down, we expect the doctor to diagnose what is wrong and remove or correct the faulty part. After this has been done, the body is supposed to function normally again. Humans are not machines, however, and a number of factors contribute to health.* ***One of the things that can destroy our health is the paralyzing weight of sin.*** *It does not show up on any blood test or X-rays, but is virulent as any physical disease.*

*David E. Garland, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (pg 98, The NIV Application Commentary on The Gospel of Mark)*

James is taking it on a corporate level.

1 Cor 12, if one person hurts the whole body suffers, if one person is happy the whole body is happy.

Is your illnesses is wrath of God?

1. No, as Jesus says this when the Pharisees asked,
“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, John 9:2b-3a
2. Can God inflict illness on a church?

Yes, we find this in 1 Corinthians

For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. 1 Cor 11:30

v16a Therefore **confess your sins** to each other and pray for each other so that **you may be healed.**

He has two things in mind when using the world healed; physical healing and spiritual healing. So James is linking the two.

1. Sin directly causes *some* sickness.
2. Sin indirectly causes *all* sickness.

James teaches us to firstly pray ourselves for healing, then to call on the elders to pray and finally to pray with each other for corporate healing.

*4) Should churches have “healing ministries?”*

When you start to move to techniques you are moving your faith away from God and you are being double-minded. The function of all here is simply consecration, because when you anoint a person or reminding him in Jewish culture you are set aside by God. It is a good thing if people could have a room where they come and pray over regularly over everything. This shows love and care. Christianity is a community and if it is not a community faith it is not a faith at all. This is how we should pray

This, then, is how you should pray: our father in heaven, hallowed by your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

*Matt 6:9-10*

So to truly pray for healing is to acknowledge sovereignty and do this he quotes”

To remember in all circumstances we are an anointed people, consecrated by God *(5:14)* .

Sometimes we don’t heal by prayer, God has a will for that. What God wants you to do is bring it before him in prayer and what God assures you that even though he may not heal you he has listened to your prayer and that prayer is powerful. We see this in the most important in Paul where he prayed for healing for his thorn but God’s will was not to heal him.

v16a Therefore confess your sins **to each other** and pray for each other so that you may be healed.

**How accountable are we to each other?**

**How much do we actually know each other?**

Church history tells us that this was often done in a corporate manner, publically everyone comes up and they confess it because there is a commune-affect to it. The principle here simply is

How accountable are we to each other and how much do we actually know each other? It is great all of us can find a prayer partner and share your struggles but we know in a church of this size it is difficult. James is encouraging us that we are community and if you have never found a small group to share at least once in your life, I would like to suggest that is not Christianity that is Sunday Comfort Zone Ritualistic Christianity. In a community we should all know each other as a family, take care of each other, help the ones in need, pray for each other.