

## **James 5:13-20 The Prayer of Faith**

*People in church are not alone. Members of Christ's body should be able to count on others for support and prayer.*

Scholars have had differing views on this passage (physical vs. spiritual sickness). This particular study will look at the view of spiritual sickness.

James says that we are to pray whether we are in trouble, or whether we are happy. In short, we are to pray continually (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Look up: Acts 16:22-25

V. 14 - The Greek "*astheneo*" is translated "sick". However, it has been used often in the New Testament to refer to both "physical weakness" and "spiritual weakness". Paul used it for those spiritually weak in the faith:

Romans 14:1-2 - Accept him whose faith is weak (*astheneo*), without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.

And again in 1 Corinthians 8:10-13

Oil was both a medicine (Good Samaritan, Luke 10:30-37) and a symbol of the Spirit of God (1 Samuel 16:12,13).

V. 15 - The Greek "*kamno*" is translated "sick" which means "to be weary in mind". This word only occurs here and in Hebrews 12:3-4 "Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary (*kamno*) and lose heart. In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

Although these verses should encourage and remind us to pray for the physically sick, the Greek words used, and their positioning within the chapter seem to refer to "spiritual strengthening", rather than physical healing. The statements in verse 13 regarding one's emotional state, and those of verse 15 and 16 noting an individual's sins, seem to validate this view. Furthermore, the example of Elijah in verse 17 references spiritual weakness, not physical.

James then outlines what must be done. First, the one who is "sick", must call for the church elders for prayer. And there needs to be "confession of sin".

Verse 15 speaks of the forgiveness for the "sick" person's confessed sin.

V. 16 - James tells us at the end of verse 16 that there is tremendous power that is made available through a good man's earnest prayer. While God can and does heal, we must also keep in mind that sometimes for His own reasons, He chooses not to heal (2 Cor.12:7).

V. 17, 18 - James uses Elijah as an example of a man who prayed for his nation's repentance. When Ahab was king, he had put up altars to Baal and Asherah. This led to the prophet Elijah praying for a drought so that the nation would repent of their idolatry (1 Kings 16:29-17:1). It did not rain for 3 ½ years, and Elijah challenged the priest of Baal to see who had the real God, and God proved that He is the Only God (1 Kings 18:1-40). The people then destroyed the false priests and repented, so once again Elijah prayed for rain and God sent the rain (1 Kings 18:41-46).

**James said that Elijah also was a man who faced the same trials that we do. He was a man who "prayed earnestly," that is, he prayed with power. Elijah's example teaches us that God can use us also to bring about change in our nation, if we will pray earnestly.**

V. 19, 20 - James closes this book by encouraging us to minister to our brothers in Christ who have strayed from their walk with the Lord. If we are to pray for the afflicted and the sick, then we should surely pray for the brother in Christ who is backslidden.

The word "wander" pictures someone who has gradually moved away from the truth (either by deception or sin). This could happen over a long period of time or quickly. We need to turn them back on the path of truth. Look up: Galatians 6:1

Not physical death but spiritual death. Timely intervention will "save his soul" and bring forgiveness from God. The person who saves the sinner in this case is the person who restores the one who has fallen. Ultimately, of course, only the Lord saves a person. The one who restores the person will cover the many sins *of the one who had strayed, for the one who returns from the way of error receives forgiveness*. Again, only God can cover sin, but Christians can be agents of God's forgiveness.