



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Suffering? Pray!

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The Epistle of James' (AD 45-50) likely author was James, the half-brother of Jesus Christ, a humble man, the leader of the Jerusalem church and the leader of the Council of Jerusalem. While James is addressing the twelve tribes that had scattered to all parts of the world and attempts to be encouraging to the believing Jews who were struggling with trials and tribulations, he confronts the issue of the testing and fruit of a faithful Christian's walk and the wise Godly righteous reactions of him when grounded in total faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers will battle the enemies of the world, their flesh and Satan (3:15). Wisdom's foundation is either from man or from God and people will need to make a choice. James challenges the believers to be patient "for the coming of the Lord is near." and a solution for the suffering in the mean time. (James 5:13-18 NASB)

"Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises." (5:13)

Suffering? Pray! – Cheerful? Praise! James is beginning to bring his epistle to a close and is providing further direction to the believing Jews, scattered to foreign lands (Acts 8:1), who were being persecuted by non-believing Jews and Gentiles. James directs those who were suffering and spiritually weakened (see previous verses) to seek comfort through God in prayer. Additionally, when they are provided the comfort and become cheerful, happy, or optimistic the result of a living faith is to praise God. What are those who are weakened by their suffering to do?

"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; and the prayer offered in 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. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. " (5:14-16)

Sick, weaken by suffering. The Greek term for sick is 'astheneo', meaning without strength, powerless, weak, or feeble. James directs those that are spiritually weakened by suffering or sickness, to seek the elders of the church who are expected to be spiritually strong and call for them to pray over them. The believer who is struggling with their suffering can become depressed and weak in spirit. James directs those that are spiritually weak to come along side of those who are spiritually strong.

The spiritually strong are to pray over them and anoint (Gk 'aleipho'; to rub, cover over, besmear) them with oil in the name of the Lord. Possibly this oil's use (olive oil) is ceremonial, symbolic of the Holy Spirit working in the heart of the sick, or it was used in medical treatments due to physical injuries. However, it also could refer to the elders, the spiritually strong, attempting to be comforting, encouraging and strengthening by covering, coming along side and bearing one another burdens. When believers become spiritually sick they are to lean on the spiritually strong in the Lord, who alone brings about the spiritual healing. James states that the prayers of a righteous man can accomplish much. When people with a living faith share their burdens and sins with a fellow believer, the prayers offered in faith bring restoration to the sick. James provides an OT illustration in Elijah.

"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. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit. (5:17-18)"

Elijah, a regular guy, prayed with faith. "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours", he was like us. Elijah is mentioned 30 times in the NT. James provides this illustration to show the power of prayer, from a regular guy with a living faith.

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

*What a Friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry Ev'rything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry Ev'rything to God in prayer.*

*Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged: Take it to the Lord in prayer!
Can we find a friend so faithful, Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our ev'ry weakness- Take it to the Lord in prayer!*

*Are we weak and heavy laden, Cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Saviour, still our Refuge- Take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In His arms He'll take and shield thee, Thou wilt find a solace there.*

A Hymn by Joseph M. Scriven, 1855

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: SESSION OR HEARING WEDNESDAYS AT 7:30AM, STATEHOUSE RM. 44

STAFF, LOBBYISTS AND CAPITOL SQUARE COMMUNITY: WEDNESDAYS AT NOON, STATEHOUSE RM.44