

## **Suffering and Prayer** **James 5:13-18 (NKJV)**

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. 16 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails 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 land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

History tells us that James was such a man of prayer that when he died that they noticed he had such calluses on his knees that he was hence called camel knees.

The Bible and history have known some great men of prayer.

But most of us would probably not consider ourselves as such.

But affliction comes our way and our prayer life improves, which good according to James.

But how sure are we of our prayers.

How do we understand prayer and how it works.

James has already told us that we have not because we ask not.

And that we have not because our prayer is based on our own selfish motives and desires.

And then what do we do with unanswered prayers?

Prayers that we earnestly lift up to God but it seems that God is not interested.

Many many books have been written on prayer but most with the idea of telling you how to get God to answer your prayers.

Some have reduced the formula to a simple ask anything of God in the name of Jesus and you will have it if you only have faith.

The trouble is that James doesn't answer these questions for us. But he does tell us what to do.

I. Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray.

A. Let him pray

1. Prayer is not the art of manipulating God to do what we want.
2. It is the sharing of our deepest concerns with our heavenly father.
3. Like the young child that knows that he is in trouble and only knows that

his father cares about his problems.

B. Meaning of suffering.

1. The verb in James 5:13 belongs to a new section and refers to the spiritual burden inflicted by misfortune or trouble. TDNT
2. Suffering usually indicates a physical situation that causes pain and threatens life.
3. It can also be a suffering of soul.
  - a. Fear, anguish.
  - b. Often times the anguish that we experience because of physical problems is more severe than the pain its self.
  - c. Matthew 26:38 Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.”
  - d. To watch meant to pray.
  - e. Psalms 42:11 Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.

C. If you are suffering, pray.

1. Manasseh
  - a. He was the most wicked and godless king of all Israel-Judah.
  - b. He was finally afflicted by God through the king of Assyria.
  - c. From there he gave a full repentance and was set free to return home but was never able to rectify all the damage he had done in his life.
  - d. But when God afflicted him, he prayed and repented.
2. Hezekiah
  - a. He was a good king and when the Assyrians came against him and sent a letter demanding that he surrender or be destroyed.
  - b. Isaiah 37:14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.
3. Jonah
  - a. Even in his rebellion against God, God sent affliction on Jonah and Jonah prayed.

b. Jonah 2:1-9 (NKJV)

(1) 1 Then Jonah prayed to the LORD his God from the fish's belly. 2 And he said: "I cried out to the LORD because of my affliction, And He answered me. "Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, And You heard my voice. 3 For You cast me into the deep, Into the heart of the seas, And the floods surrounded me; All Your billows and Your waves passed over me. 4 Then I said, 'I have been cast out of Your sight; Yet I will look again toward Your holy temple.' 5 The waters surrounded me, even to my soul; The deep closed around me; Weeds were wrapped around my head. 6 I went down to the moorings of the mountains; The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God. 7 "When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD; And my prayer went up to You, Into Your holy temple. 8 "Those who regard worthless idols Forsake their own Mercy. 9 But I will sacrifice to You With the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD."

4. Paul & Silas

a. After Paul and Silas were beaten they sang songs and prayed.

b. Acts 16:22-33 (NKJV)

(1) 22 Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. 23 And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. 24 Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. 25 But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. 26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. 27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. 28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." 29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 So

they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.

5. Paul with the thorn in the flesh.

a. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NKJV)

(1) 7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

6. Jesus at Gethsemane

D. Suffering should lead us to pray.

1. By drawing near to God in affliction, the will is subdued, and the heart consoled and encouraged. God Himself is revealed to the soul, and works by His grace; and in the sense of His presence we say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." (Ps 119). And not only are we near to God, but we also open our hearts to Him. He would have us do so, for He is full of grace. He desires our confidence, not only that we may be subject to His will, but that we may present our cares to Him. J.N.Darby

E. Suffering often leads to other things.

1. Complaining
2. Anger
3. Discouragement and depression.
4. Just what should a child of God do when in the depths of adversity and affliction? "Let him pray," says God's Word. Do not complain! Do not grumble! Pray! Every affliction is a call to prayer. There were times when I felt that God sent adversity to draw me closer to Him in prayer. This has been particularly true when I had become lax in my prayer life. We all must admit that affliction has a way of making the heart humble, contrite,

and more dependent upon God. *Lehman Strauss, Lehman Strauss Commentaries – James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James, (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1967), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 206.*

- II. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.
  - A. We have much more to rejoice over than we suffer afflictions.
    - 1. God's people should be a cheerful people.
    - 2. God has placed so many blessings on us, both present and future.
      - a. Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy [to be compared] with the glory which shall be revealed in us.
    - 3. Hebrews 12:2 looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of [our] faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.