



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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Lesson 12

James 5:13-20 Commentary New American Standard Bible

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [*International Bible Study Commentary*](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [*International Bible Study Forum*](#).

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

The first action to take when suffering begins is to turn to God in prayer. God will sometimes work a direct miracle and remove the cause of the suffering. God may not choose to work a direct miracle and remove our suffering, but in answer to our prayers He may show us what to do, who to go to, or what to stop doing, so we can find relief and perhaps remove the cause of our suffering. When we are

cheerful, we can thank and praise God for the attitude and circumstances that bring us joy. Praise and prayer should always go together no matter what our circumstances.

(James 5:14) 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;

The Bible does not direct us to quietly bear our suffering alone. The Bible encourages us to ask the elders or spiritual leaders in our church to pray for us and help us. Anointing with oil may be the application of oil or an ointment known for its healing properties that might be too expensive for one family alone to own so it is shared by the church. In Jesus' parable, the good Samaritan brought healing to the man he found on the road by applying oil and wine to his wounds. The anointing with oil may also represent an act of obedience that the elders perform and the sick person requests and receives in the name of the Lord. Whenever oil or medicine is used to help someone, Jesus deserves our thanks for their provision.

(James 5:15) 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.

The prayer of faith in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ will save the sick: sometimes God will heal them in this life; at other times, He will heal them in heaven. After He

raises His followers from the dead, He will give them healed and glorified human bodies. However God chooses, He will demonstrate His faithfulness to the sick in answer to their prayers and the prayers of others. Perhaps more importantly, since Jesus Christ came to save us from our sins, believers have the assurance that if they sin they can repent and pray in faith to Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and God will forgive them.

(James 5:16) 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.

The church knows that not everyone can be trusted with the secrets of others when people ask for prayer or make confession of their sins; so, we do not share with one another the sins and secrets of others, which is gossip, unless the secrets and sins are such that others need to be protected and warned, which is a part of church discipline that is conducted by responsible church leaders. If we sin against someone in the church, we need to repent and confess to them and ask the one we have wronged to forgive us (and make amends to them, if possible).

Sometimes our sins against another have resulted in many people being hurt or misinformed; in that case, confession and efforts to right our wrongs are required in relation to all concerned. Some will not be healed until they deal rightly with their sins through faith in Jesus Christ. Right living makes right praying possible for believers. Right

praying is powerful and effective for believers, especially with the help of the Holy Spirit, who prays for us from within us, and the help of Jesus, who prays for us from heaven as our High Priest.

(James 5:17) 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.

Elijah prayed for people to recognize that they were sinning. He wanted people to repent, confess their sins, turn back from idolatry to the true God, and seek forgiveness from God. For the sake of unrepentant sinners who needed God, Elijah prayed fervently that there would be no rain; perhaps if they suffered without rain they would turn back to God.

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

When the people repented and turned back to God, Elijah prayed for them and God heard his prayer. God forgave His people and sent the rain they needed for their crops and fresh water to drink. Both Elijah and God had good reasons for Elijah to pray as He did and for God to answer Elijah's prayer as He did (see 1 Kings 17 and 18).

(James 5:19) My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back,

It is possible for a believer or member of a church to be misled or wander away from the truth. Such “wandering” can be the result of sin, and such “wandering” can lead to sin or more sins. Prayer for the wanderer and teaching or reminding the wanderer of the truth can influence them (with the help of the Holy Spirit) to turn back to the true God and the truth. The Bible encourages us to pray and do what we can to lead people back to God and to trust in the truth of His word.

(James 5:20) let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

The wanderer may remain on the path that leads away from God and the truth; the Bible calls this path the broad road that leads to destruction, or he can be led to turn around and go back to God and the narrow way that leads to life (See Matthew 7:13-20). The soul that persists in walking away from God will walk away from God forever, and that is eternal death, eternal separation from God: the person will receive what they have wanted in this life – a life away from God, but this will bring them eternal sorrow. Whenever someone returns to the Lord in repentance and faith, and whenever someone leads a sinner to saving faith in Jesus Christ, a multitude of sins will not be committed and a multitude of sins will be forgiven. A multitude of sins and their deserved punishment will be covered and the sinner will be cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Compare James 5:13, Philippians 4:4, and 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.
2. Read James 5:14-15. In what other ways do Christians do this today?
3. When we pray for those who have committed sins, what can we pray for them?
4. Is sickness always the result of sin? Can some sickness be the result of sin? Give reasons for your answer.
5. Is there a relationship between the way we live daily and the way God hears and answers our prayers?

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