

# James 5:13-20

## Commentary: Reasons To Pray (James 5:13-20)

As James closes his letter, we find one of the strongest passages on prayer in the New Testament. In the author's previous discussion on enduring injustice, James uses the word *patient* or *patience* four times in just five verses (5:7-11). In this passage, he uses the word *pray* or *prayer* seven times (13-18). The placement of these two passages is far from accidental, for there is a strong connection between patience and prayer; when situations arise in which patience is required, prayer is the key. James implores his readers to take all their needs and requests to God in prayer and identifies at least three reasons why every believer needs to make prayer a cornerstone of every aspect of life.

### Instructions:

Carefully read through James 5:13-20 and then attempt to answer the questions which follow.

James has focused throughout his letter on the believer's response to suffering and trials in life. In this passage, he comes to the conclusion that the ultimate response should be going to God in prayer.

1) In what situations are we to pray (v13-14)?

James calls for those that are sick within the church to "call for the Elders to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (v14).

2) Who takes the initiative for prayer (v14)?

When the Elders pray "in the name of the Lord" (v14) they are praying with the intention to see the will of the Lord done. Sometimes, it is not the Lord's will to heal an individual of their infirmity.

**Note:** it is not the Elders that perform the healing, nor the "faith" of the believer receiving the healing. Healing is, and always has been, performed by God.

3) Give two examples from the New Testament of believers that were not healed from their infirmities.

4) Give three reasons from II Corinthians 1: 4, 8-9, and 11 why God may choose not to heal someone?

The word “sick” in verse 14 is better translated as “weary”; emphasizing being completely weak, without strength, or incapacitated. It can have emotional, spiritual and physical implications.

5) Should believers request the anointing of oil and prayer from the church Eldership for mild ailments?

The Greek word for “anointing” used in verse 14 is “aleiphein” which is a general term, as opposed to “chriein” which is used specifically in scripture to describe the anointing for sacred and religious purposes. This has made many theologians believe that the purpose of anointing with oil when praying for the sick is strictly medicinal. While it is true that oil was commonly used for medicinal reasons, and certainly could have been used by the Elders for this reason, there is a greater symbolic picture that the “anointing of oil” represents throughout the scriptures.

6) What symbolic picture does the anointing of oil represent? **Hint: Psalm 23**

James does not call the deacons of the church to pray for the sick, nor does he call for other congregation members or even blood relatives to pray for the afflicted individual; he calls for the Elders to perform this task.

7) What does this say about the responsibilities and ministry of Elders in the church?

James mentions the need for confession of sins in relation to receiving healing from sickness (v14-16). Sometimes, although most often not, sickness can be a result of unconfessed sin. Confessing allows for the isolation of the spiritual condition that may be affecting the physical condition.

8) If a believer has unconfessed sin, what must they do prior to receiving prayer for healing (v15-16)?

9) What does James say about the prayer of a righteous person (v16)?

10) How does the example of Elijah demonstrate the power of a fervent prayer (v17-18)?

The final instruction that James gives is on lovingly rebuking the church member who has fallen into a pattern of sin.

11) What is the blessing given on the one who helps another believer in this way (v19-20)?