

Help for the Weak

The Test of Prayerfulness: God's Kind Process in Restoring the Weakened Believer **James 5:13-18** Chris Mueller 5-1-22

Introduction:

James 5:13 *Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. 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; 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. 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. 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. 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.*

John MacArthur To properly understand any passage one must interpret it in light of the paragraphs immediately preceding and following it, the chapter or section it is in, and the book containing it. Context provides the flow of thought in which any given passage of Scripture exists. To ignore context is to sacrifice a proper interpretation; it has well been said that a text without a context is a pretext. Therefore, before attempting to interpret this challenging paragraph, a review of the context in which it was written is essential.

Helping the weak requires mature help, fellowship, and most of all, prayer.

#1 Evaluate the different R to hurtful oppression **13**

James begins by reminding you that everyone reacts differently to persecution

Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 *Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction*

1 Peter 5:7 *casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you*

#2 Engage the R for restoration from damaging attacks **14-15**

Spiritual leaders are needed to sort through the damaging struggles

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; 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.*

2 Corinthians 12:10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Luke 10:34a *and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; ...*

John 14:13 *Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. 14 "If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it*

Psalms 32:5 *I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD"; And You forgave the guilt of my sin.*

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

#3 Emphasize the R of the Church for restoration 16a

Immersion into the body of Christ is necessary for complete spiritual healing

16a Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.

Proverbs 28:13 He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion

#4 Embrace the R power of prayer to restore weakened believers 16b-17

Prayer from the obedient is powerful and necessary for full restoration

16b The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish 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 earth for three years and six months. 18 Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

God answers prayer which are: in keeping with the will of God (1 John 5:14-15); made in faith (Hebrews 11:6; Matthew 17:20); made by a person who has confessed and given up sin (Psalm 66:18; Isaiah 59:1-2); made under the direction and power of the Holy Spirit (Jude 20); made by a person who has forgiven others (Matthew 18:21-35); made by a person who is in harmony with others (Matthew 5:23-24, 1 Peter 3:7); made in the name of Jesus, which means it is in harmony with His purpose and concerns (John 14:13; 15:16); persistently offered (Luke 11:5-8); and asked for unselfishly (James 4:2-3).

John MacArthur Weak prayers come from weak people; strong prayers come from strong people. The energetic prayers of a righteous man are a potent force in calling down the power of God for restoring weak, struggling believers to spiritual health.

Re-read this passage with full meaning:

James 5:13 Is anyone among you being abused or treated wickedly? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing Psalms. 14 Is anyone among you spiritually weak from persecution? Then he must ask for the elders of the church to come alongside him and they are to pray over him, rubbing his wounds with oil just as Christ would; 15 and the prayer offered in faith will deliver the defeated abused believer, and the Lord will again awaken his desire to serve Christ with joy, and if he has committed sins in the process of being abused from persecution, they will be forgiven him. 16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be spiritually restored again. The powerful prayer of those who are made righteous and live righteously is very strong. 17 Elijah was just like us, hungry, afraid, even depressed, yet when he gave himself to prayer, it stopped raining for 3½ years and then 18 he prayed again and it rained once more, bringing blessing to a parched land, just like godly prayers will be blessing to the parched hearts of abused believers.

Take Home:

- A. Force yourself to pray before you start your _____
- B. You need immersion in the church body to _____ spiritually as a believer
- C. Sin for the Christian is to be confessed: always to God, _____ to genuine believers
- D. If you are a church attender who is weakened, _____, don't isolate

Questions for Growth in Christ

1. How do you know if a weakened church attender is a genuine believer or a make-believer?
2. What kind of things happen today that can weaken a Christian in this manner? What might happen in the coming years?
3. Of the four medicines for spiritual weakness – confession, prayer, sound theology, and mature spiritual guidance - which one are you most prone to neglect, and why?
4. What will you do to begin to pray more this week, this month, and this year?
5. What steps does the NT teach for each normal Christian to truly become immersed in a church body?
6. Are there any sins you need to confess to God and to other believers? Will you?

