

In AD62, James, the brother of Jesus and writer of the epistle of James, is martyred, being thrown off the temple mount. He was a man of prayer and spoke about prayer in his epistle. As he was murdered by the pharisees he asked the Lord to forgive them for what they had done.

>>>The epistle of James begins with prayer in asking the Lord for wisdom in trials and in chapter 5 V13-15, he speaks of the role of prayer for the suffering, cheerful, and sick (those spiritually weakened).

1. **Elements of Prayer: The Practice of Prayer:** V13-15. Other passages speaking of the practice of prayer: Rom. 15:30, Eph. 6:18-19, 1 Thess. 5:17-18, Heb. 13:18-19, all of these exhort believers to labor and exert effort to pray. A) James is historically the first epistle written for the church and gives instructions to believers concerning the life and practice of Christians. B) Much space is given in the epistle to the practice of prayer and how it is a strengthening power to believers in suffering and joy.

a. **Types of People in V13-18:**

- i. **The suffering:** the meaning of the word “suffering” is for those who have been exerted upon or upon which has been a hardening. The same word is used by Paul and translated in 2 Tim. 2:9 as suffering hardship. These are believers who have endured much suffering in life and have become like a road that has been tread and worn. They must pray. There is no logical, promised results from the prayers, just a command to obey and pray. There is joy coming after the suffering of this life and in the context of the Jews who were dispersed from Jerusalem, the suffering would continue and remain for many years.
- ii. **The cheerful:** let them sing praises, could also be rendered, “let him psalm.” Eph. 5:19 uses similar language, “speaking to one another (yourselves) in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.” This is a command to recite and sing psalms of praise and adoration to God. The cheerful leading others and themselves in the recitation of God’s worthiness, grace, and sovereign power. Paul tells the men on the boat in Acts 27:22-25 to be of good cheer. This isn’t a big smile and a merry time, but it is an acknowledgement of God’s control, provision, and the truth of God’s word given to us that suffering is not without meaning.
- iii. **The sick:** V14, the word “sick” is used 14X in Scripture to describe a weakness, 1 Cor. 8:11-12, 2 Cor. 11:21, 12:10 “weakness.” V14, the phrase “anointing him with oil” isn’t in the context of a ceremonial usage in anointing the king or the head with oil. It could mean “to rub” with oil. Those elders (spiritually mature as Paul describes in Gal. 6:1) would be called by the one who is spiritually weak, asking for prayer, and the elders would come to give aid and comfort in the promises and power of God towards the weak brother. V15 continues, “The Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven.” The context not being an anointing for position, but of a strengthening by appealing to our Mediator and Savior. The Gospel being reaffirmed by the elders to the believer and the believer being reminded of the grace of God that brought salvation and restoration. The practice of prayer leads to the weakened brother repenting of sin.

2. **Elements of Prayer: The Power of Prayer:** V16, gives the consequences of prayer: 1) Healing or restoration, not necessarily a physical healing. A restoration of spirit and heart resulting from obedience and confession of sin. 2) Reconciliation: “confess your sins to one another,” similar to Christ’s command to leave your gift at the altar and be reconciled to your brother, Matt. 5:23-24. A similar application are the prayers of the husband and wife being hindered because the husband isn’t living with the wife in an understanding way and the wife not being in subjection to her husband, 1 Pet. 3:1, 7. 3) Prayer Works: V17-18, just as Elijah, a natural man (just like us) prayed and a drought came, so we can pray effectually as *mere* men and commit our supplications and needs to our Father and Savior for Him to answer in His perfect way and wisdom.

- a. God answers prayer and will bring to pass all His will. We can trust and have faith and humble ourselves to His purposes for us and rely upon Him to answer every prayer.

Further Discussion and Application:

There is much application in James' writings. He brings to light that prayer is a comfort because the believer in Christ has access to the Father and can request help in time of need. To those who have endured much suffering, how can those who are able be an encouragement to those suffering? How might a listening ear and regular fellowship strengthen and encourage both the giver and receiver? How can you be more understanding to your brother or sister who is suffering pain and circumstance beyond their control in life? How will humility help in this ministry of helps?

Regarding the cheerful. What do the songs (psalms) of God reveal to the listener and the one who meditates on the word of God? What psalms bring comfort in difficult times? Look through the first 25 psalms and spend some time writing the themes found in each song. What is Yahweh revealing about Himself in these songs?

For those spiritually weakened and "sick," how have you grown through a time of spiritual weakness? Maybe the details are tender and difficult, but how did you overcome in that situation? What practices and habits were developed during this time? What new friends did you make? What was put on and what was put off? Why does James instruct the weakened brother to call for the elders? Why does humility show up during this time of weakness? Why does the brother need to take the next step to call the elders and ask for them to come and bring healing found in the truths of Scripture?

James speaks of Elijah who demonstrated great power as a man of God in Israel during the time of Jezebel and King Ahab. Why does James use Elijah, with a nature like ours, as an example of why prayer shouldn't be thought powerless? Why do men that pray have great confidence in God who hears? Verse 19 and 20 show the power of prayer as well. What is the power of prayer in those verses?

Look at James 5:7-11. What is the testimony of the prophets and commands to believers in these last days? Why is patience mentioned again by James to believers? What is God's disposition towards believers and men of faith as seen in the life of Job? What does Scripture say we can be assured of?