

THE BOOK OF JAMES

FATHWORKS



James 5:13-20

The Need For One Another

'Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.'

James 5:13-20, NIV

As James concludes his letter, he discusses the need for one another as put our faith on full display. Throughout the course of James' letter, he has constantly exhorted his readers to take the faith they held in their soul and express it outward. Yet, as a member of the body of Christ, we are not to go through our spiritual path on our own. We are guided by the mentors and leaders who have gone before us to show us how to walk in our faith. We have our peers and friends to hold one another up and challenge one another along the way. Furthermore, we guide those who come after us. For the Christian to successfully be connected to his or her Christian community, there is a minimum of three generations of interaction, each one providing different opportunities and challenges for the believer.

Confession and Forgiveness

The Christian life should not be lived outside of the context of community. For many people, the idea of sharing their most intimate and personal details can be terrifying. We all sin and we all understand that each other sins, but when it comes to confessing our sins, we hesitate to say anything in fear of what might occur. For some, the fear is judgment. For others, it is being ostracized. We fear that "if they only knew..." then we would be less in the eyes of our brothers and sisters.

- When you think of confessing your sin, what comes to mind? How does this compare with what James is talking about in these verses?
- What are some of the common fears in confession of sins? Is there anything we specifically fear in people knowing us fully, the good and the bad?
- How does Jesus alleviate the fears of confession? What are the benefits of confession? Do they outweigh the fears?
- How should we react when a person is needing to talk about a struggle or sin?

The Heroes of The Faith

James brings up the prophet Elijah, one of the most notable biblical figures of the Old Testament. As a prophet of God, he proclaimed the word and indictment of God against those who defied the Holy King. Most notably, he spoke on behalf of God in dealing with the followers of Baal in 1 Kings 18 burning the sacrifice to God fully. Furthermore, he lived a life that God snatched him up to heaven, sparing him the agony of death in 2 Kings 1. We all have our heroes of the faith whom we enjoy hearing of their stories. Yet, James puts this into perspective. They were ordinary people, no different than you or I. We have the same faith they did and can live our lives in a way that others look up to us in the same way.

- Who are some of your favorite biblical characters and why? What favorite stories do you have in the bible?
- How does it make you feel to think that others may look at us in the same way that we look at the biblical heroes? Would knowing that others see us as representatives of The Lord God Almighty change anything about how we display our faith?
- If God granted to others the ability to pray in faith and restore people from sickness, pronouncing healing and that we are able to pray for miracles? What role does prayer play in this?

Accountability of Faith

We all are accountable to someone. As Christians, we are ultimately accountable to God. Yet, as James makes clear, we are accountable for one another as well. When one part of the body of Christ is hurting or straying, then all parts suffer from this. The body of Christ is intended that all person are functioning in the plan that God designed them to function. Everyone supporting one another. The same is true when people begin to turn from the faith. Every life is valuable to the body of Christ. Where many would decide that a person straying from the faith is an abandonment and allow them to leave, James exhorts the listeners to live out their faith by drawing that person closer.

- Is it always easy to bring someone back who is straying from the faith? Why or why not?
- What is the difference between loving/supporting a person and agreeing with what they do? Why is this distinction so critical to our faith and spiritual relationship? What happens when you confuse these two things as interchangeable?
- What moments stands out to you about a time when have you best been supported/held accountable by friends, peers, and other members of the faith? What impact did this have on you?