

Tonight, we end our series in James... it's been a really awesome study... super practical as we learned how our faith in Christ collides with our life... that's what James has been right? – *what it looks like when faith and life collide...* We've been challenged... *in how we hear and respond to the Word... how we treat other people... if our faith is active... how we speak... challenged in our pride... helped in our understanding of true wisdom, encouraged in suffering... in waiting*

And tonight, James gets at two of the most important elements of the Christian life... praying and pursuing others... Prayer is definitely one of the most important elements in our lives as we follow Christ. However, it is also one of the things we do the least... it is one of the easiest things to do and we can do it anywhere... yet we hardly ever do it. – James is going to help us see this... and then he is going to challenge us to pursue others... those who are wandering...

READ: James 5:13-20 **Main: God cares about our prayers and our pursuit of others.**

1. Prayer is powerful... (13-18)

James is painting a picture that prayer is powerful and helps us see how...

The second half of verse 16 is what holds this whole section together... it sums this entire section up... *The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*

What is prayer? Prayer simply is having a conversation with God through Jesus. Prayer is unique to the follower of Christ... it is when we listen to God... speak to God... asking him, thanking him, praising him... so... 3 truths on prayer...

***Prayer is for all situations** (13-14)

James asks three questions that all end in the same way... *is anyone among you suffering? – let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Call to the elders and let them pray...*

These three questions... situations pretty much cover most of life's emotions in just a few verses... *suffering, cheerful, sick...*

We usually are one of these things ha... the good and the bad...!

James begins with **suffering**... going through difficult times... now specifically for those who James is writing to this most likely would've been suffering hardships from their faith... persecution... (remember 12 Tribes of the Dispersion)

However, James is pushing Christians who are suffering regardless of the cause to pray... for what? Maybe strength... patience... endurance... whatever it is James is sure that prayer is the answer...

Then James mentions those who are **cheerful**... happy... joyful... jolly... when things are going great... what is the answer... prayer... to sing praises!

So easily we get in our minds that prayer is just for when times are bad... when things aren't going are way... think about this... aside from tonight when is the last time you prayed... probably when things weren't going so well...

When is the last time you prayed and thanked God for where you are at? When things were going well... if you're like me sometimes you forget to think God in the good...

James is saying... if you are cheerful... happy... things are going well... praise him! (Psalm praising God)

Lastly James mentions when you are **sick**...

Sickness is another time James says we can entrust our hearts, bodies, mind to the Lord... praying that he would bring restoration... comfort... peace during a time of pain and brokenness...

You see... the picture James is painting is one of entrusting your life to the Lord regardless of the situation... good, bad... happy, sad... we can give ourselves to God in prayer and we should... in every situation... every season of life!

***Prayer and confession lead to forgiveness and healing**

Not only is prayer powerful because it is for all situations, but it's also powerful because it brings healing and forgiveness... (14-16a)

James brings out that the sick are to entrust their sickness to God in two ways – praying and letting the elders or pastors of the church anoint them with oil and pray for them... James says, *the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up*

Here is the difficult part with this... this can be very misconstrued, used wrongly...

We all know that sometimes it seems that our prayers don't come true... we pray for one thing and the exact opposite happens... specifically sick people!

So... **oil** is equal to medicine here... James is pointing the sick to prayer by the elders (pastors) and the use of medical treatment...

The hard question is what we are to believe when it seems the prayer of faith hasn't "worked..." The one we were praying for dies...

Here is the truth... God is going to bring about the healing of the believer in one of two ways... he will *physically heal* them here or heal them completely by *bringing them into his presence*...

This kind of points back to a few weeks ago... praying in a way that says *if the Lord wills...*

In this section James also brings out how sin plays a role in all of this...

What James leads us to see is that sometimes, sicknesses are a result of our sin... In the OT we see the Lord using plagues as a judgement...

James is pointing us to see that a prayer of faith... confession of sin will bring about forgiveness, healing...spiritually and possibly physically...

The catch though is that it may not look exactly as we want it to look... but knowing God is working everything out brings great comfort!

***Prayers from the righteous are heard by God**

This section ends with an example of God answering prayer... (17-18)

We find a prophet named Elijah in our passage...

Elijah was a man *with a nature like ours*... He was human... not super man with superpowers (1 Kings 17-18)

James is pointing to a time in Bible history when Elijah prayed for God to send rain and God sent rain, he prayed for God to stop the rain and God stopped the rain!

Now I know what your thinking – *well... can I do this...? Or I've prayed for a lot of things I've never seen God show up...*

Here is why Elijah's prayer was answered – *it was the will of God...* God had spoken, set what he was already going to do and Elijah knew this...

One commentator said, *Elijah knew the will of God [...] this knowledge was why he prayed so fervently. By applying Scripture believers can know and should do the will of God through their own fervent praying...*

So... here's what James is saying – as followers of Christ, you and I have great power through our prayers... even more though - God answers them! He answers them in the way that fits with his plans... the way that brings him the most glory!

We can entrust our sufferings to him, entrust our cheerfulness to him, entrust our sickness to him and fully trust that he hears the prayer of the righteous person! His children... just as a Father hears the voice of a child, he hears his children's! God already established what he was going to do, and he answered Elijah's prayer because it was in accordance with his will...

There is great comfort in knowing that we can pray to the Lord and he hears our prayers and maybe even more than that – he answers them in the way that is greatest for us in his eyes!

So, if you are praying and it seems as if nothing is happening... know the Lord is working... his perfect will!

Elijah did all this; God did all this for the restoration of Israel... to bring them back from their wandering... he cared about his people... those that were connected to him... he used the prayer of Elijah to bring his people back!

The really neat part is – this is exactly where James takes us, where he ends the book!

2. Pursuing others brings life... (19-20)

James ends the book with a plea for the follower of Christ to pursue those who seem to be wandering from the faith...

James says... (19-20)

My brothers if anyone among you wanders from the truth...

James is saying if you know of a brother or sister in Christ who is wandering from the faith... think about or has left the faith you are to pursue them... chase them...!

Listen to the outcome... *whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins...*

Guys... our friends... our family... those who are not in Christ are in trouble... life or death trouble... the Christian who is wandering... the one who doesn't know Jesus...!

James is not exaggerating... not playing... when he says when one is restored to faith in Christ his soul is saved... his sins are covered...

That is the promise of the gospel of Jesus Christ! Through Jesus there is *restoration*... through Jesus there is *redemption*... through Jesus there is *forgiveness*... through Jesus there is *hope*...

We pursue those who wander because Jesus pursues us when we wander!

The two main thoughts tonight are one of prayer and one of caring for others... they fit together...

Tonight, the **application** is simple...

- Know that if you're in Christ... your prayers matter... they are powerful... God hears them... **pray boldly!**
- If you are wondering from Jesus... wandering from his word trust in him and it again... fresh start... begin now... trust in him for the first time or the hundredth... know he is pursuing you... **trust in Jesus**...
- Tonight, all of us know someone who is wandering from truth... what does it look like for you to **pursue them**... engage them in gospel convo... disciple them... bring them to church... invite them to Bible study... go after the one who doesn't know Jesus!