

A. Introduction

- 1. A Follow-up on Endurance ^A

- 2. Our Text and Our life

B. Downs and Ups 5:13

- 1. Are Times Hard ^B

- 2. Are Times Good ^C

C. Sickness and Anointing 5:14-15

- 1. The Sickness ^D

- 2. The Elders' Prayer ^E

- 3. Anointing with Oil ^F

D. Making Relationships Right 5:16a

- 1. Mutual Confession

- 2. Mutual Prayer

E. Conclusion

- 1. The Righteous Man 5:16b

- 2. The Lesson Summarised

^A 2 Timothy 4:7-8

^B Psalms 34:6

^C Luke 12:15-21

^D Colossians 4:14, 1 Corinthians 11:30, John 9:2-3, Mark 2:1-11

^E Psalm 103:3

^F Luke 10:30-37; Isaiah 1:6

A. Introduction

1. A Follow-up on Endurance

a. James 5:7-11, deal with the matter of patience, and more particularly with that aspect of patience called endurance – sticking out the race until the end of the course

(A) the farmer is an illustration: he plants the seed and then patiently waits through the former and the latter rains – for which he is dependent upon God – until the harvest, patience’ precious result

(B) one aspect of endurance is that of refraining from murmuring or complaining against other Christians: God isn’t finished with me yet, nor is He finished with you, yet ... so be patient

(C) three times in those verses the fact is raised that the return of the Lord is imminent, to judge and to reward

(D) the example of Job is given to show such endurance is worthwhile because of the ultimate reward received

(E) such endurance will enable every believer to be able to say with Paul, ‘7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.’ (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

b. then James 5:12, deals with the matter of truthfulness

(A) that it should be unnecessary for a Christian to swear oaths

(B) rather, Christians should be known as truth speakers, as followers of Jesus Christ who is the Truth

c. both of these subjects lead us to our text for today, a text illustrated by the Scripture reading we had from 1 Thessalonians 5:8-24

2. Our Text and Our Life James 5:13-16

a. 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. (NAS, 1995 revision)

- b. this will not be a message on the so-called 'faith healing' although we may say a word or two on that subject along the way
- c. instead, it continues the themes of what has preceded, because when you examine them they deal with the matter of relationships
- d. you will have, no doubt, recognized the title that we have given to this message: that it comes from the marriage ceremony
 - (A) marriage is a human relationship that the Bible uses to illustrate God's relationship to us, both individually and corporately as the people of God ... His church
 - (B) marriage calls for endurance – this past Wednesday Maureen and I celebrated, or more accurately, observed, our 42nd anniversary
 - (C) marriage calls for truthfulness – nothing destroys the marriage relationship as quickly as lies and deceit
 - (D) and the wedding vows remind us, marriage is 'for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part ...' marriage calls for steadfast commitment
- e. thus, our text reminds us that God has made provision in our family relationship to Himself, for the ups and downs of our life, both our physical life and our spiritual life, with James giving us counsel on what these could be and how to deal with them

B. Downs and Ups 5:13

1. Are Times Hard?

- a. 'Is anyone among you suffering. Let him pray.'
- b. that word suffering covers a wide range of afflictions
- c. it is not limited to either physical or spiritual problems
- d. it does not exclude external persecution nor internal distress
- e. in fact it covers just about every adverse situation that the child of God can encounter – let me remove that qualification: it covers every adverse situation that you may face

- f. the response needed – indeed commanded – is prayer
- g. there is probably no one here who has not experienced it ... you have run into a difficulty, a disappointment, a discouragement ... then you talk it over with a sympathetic listener – a spouse, a parent, a friend – and the magnitude of the problem diminishes in you mind
- h. well, in our spiritual relationship, God is the ultimate, sympathetic listener – read the Psalms and you discover that He is willing to listen to the severest complaints – prayer is His gift to us so that we can talk to Him, for as David said, [‘This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him And saved him out of all his troubles.’](#) (Psalms 34:6)

2. Are Times Good?

- a. [‘Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praises.’](#)
- b. now, we may think that we do not need any advice about handling things when we are feeling well, when everything is going great
- c. the farmer in Luke 12 whose barns were too small to hold his bumper crop is a warning lesson – his thoughts never went above himself
- d. James gives us a remedy concerning the dangers of prosperity – sing
- e. he uses the verb psallo – meaning first to pluck a stringed instrument such as a harp or lyre, and then to sing with such accompaniment
- f. this is the word from which we get the English word, psalm, and while James’ command to us does not necessarily limit our praises to the book of Psalms, they were the song book of the early church
- g. by the way, the NT encouragement to use psalms refutes those who teach musical instruments cannot be used in Christian worship
- h. in fact the Hebrew name for the book of Psalms simply means praises
- i. the point is, that when things are going well, give thanks to God

C. Sickness, Prayer and Anointing 5:14-15

1. The Sickness

- a. [‘14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them 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.'

- b. there is a group in Great Britain who call themselves 'The Peculiar People,' who take this verse among others very literally. Originally they would not call in a doctor in a case of illness. In the nineteenth century there was a noted case where a child died as a result and they were charged with manslaughter. They hired a lawyer to defend them so there was the irony of their not seeking advice in one case, but of using it in another. God heals through doctors as shown in Scripture, e.g., by Paul's commending Luke the beloved physician (Col. 4:14)
- c. what is the nature of the sickness considered in this verse?
 - (A) the Bible teaches that sometimes – not always – sickness is the result of sin; one example was in the words we read during the communion service: 'For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.' (1 Corinthians 11:30)
 - (B) so while Jesus on one occasion, after healing a man, told him to go and to sin no more, there was another occasion when He said that the sickness was not from sin, but that the works of God might be displayed in him (John 9:2-3)
 - (C) the first thing to note is that there is a very strong connection of this sickness in this verse with possible sin
 - (1) the word 'sick' in verse 14 means weakness or illness
 - (2) that in verse 15 has more the idea of the labour and misery of soul that accompany sickness, especially if due to sin
 - (3) the closing words of verse 15, that healing would show that any sin had been forgiven – much as Jesus did when He proved his power to forgive sins by healing the paralysed man lowered by four friends through the roof in Mark 2:1-11.
 - (4) the word describing his getting well, being restored is usually rendered 'save', not the one usually rendered 'heal,' so that there is seen to be a spiritual connotation in this restoration
- d. the onus is placed therefore on the one who falls ill, in realizing that there is, or may be, unforgiven sin in their life, to call for spiritual help – and that is to be found in those having the spiritual oversight of the local body of Christ, the church

2. The Elders' Prayer

a. prayer is the emphasis in these verses

- (A) prayer that was to take place in the sick person's presence
- (B) prayer by those who should, from the office they held, be in such a relationship with God as to pray strongly for both the physical and the spiritual condition of this sufferer
- (C) the anointing with oil was only an accompanying action, of which we will speak further in a moment
- (D) this prayer is marked by faith, it is no mere formula as the Jewish exorcists used, or as by today's faith-healers, or read from a book

b. under the conditions given, and the situation as so understood, the apostle James can say with full confidence, the sick will be saved

- (A) all healing comes from God: '[Who pardons all your iniquities, Who heals all your diseases;](#)' (Psalms 103:3) – note the connection
- (B) but God does not always give physical healing: Paul prayed for the healing of a thorn in his flesh until the Lord told him to stop

3. Anointing with Oil

a. already mentioned has been the fact that prayer is central to these verses, while the anointing with oil only secondary

b. the word used here for anoint is secular and without religious import – religious anointing is chrio, from which we get the name, Christ

- (A) there is not justification for such anointing for a spiritual benefit
- (B) nor can this be used to justify the Roman church's practice of extreme unction, which ironically is to prepare the soul for death, rather than to effect the restoration of the body

c. anointing with oil was a common practice in treating illness

- (A) the good Samaritan used it in treating the wounded man
- (B) Isaiah 1:6 speaks figuratively of spiritually sick Israel not having her bruises and wounds softened with oil
- (C) Herod the Great as he was approaching death, was actually given a bath in oil in an attempt to bring restoration

(D) in James' day, anointing was tantamount to giving 2 aspirin!

d. so we can sum up by saying that the prayer was for the priority healing of the soul; anointing, the practical medical treatment of the body – we pray to God, we see the doctor

D. Making Relationships Right 5:16a

1. Mutual Confession

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

b. physical illness is not the only thing that sins and faults can bring

c. it is my conclusion that the sins or faults spoken of in verse 16 are not specifically those iniquities which we as believers can commit against a holy God, but rather those which we commit against one another – which are nevertheless for that very reason against God

d. such wrong bring sickness to this body of Christ, the local church, and this is a grave illness that needs healing – James gives the remedy

e. there is no thought here of the Roman confessional – as Luther said, **A strange confessor! His name is 'One another'.**^{-(2)}}

f. nor is it talking about public rehearsal of all of our sins – that was the teaching of the Moral Re-armament movement of 75 years ago

(A) too often it was an outlet of unhealthy exhibitionism

(B) or a self-seeking demand for attention

g. what I believe to be in view here was the reconciliation with a fellow Christian through confession to that Christian of wrong done to him and a seeking of healing forgiveness; this is then augmented by ...

2. Mutual Prayer

a. there is nothing like prayer for another person – coming before a holy and all-knowing God – to humble us and to remove from our hearts those feelings of antagonism and anger

b. when this is added to the admission and acknowledgement – for it is what confession is – then healing will come both to individuals and to the body of Christ to which they belong

E. Conclusion

1. The Righteous Man... 5:16b
 - a. **'... The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.'**
 - b. next week we shall continue these messages from James looking at this verse and following two verses as we consider the power of prayer under the title, 'Elijah, Prophet of Powerful Prayer'
 - c. but do not wait for that to put the lessons of this passage into practice during this week
2. The Lessons Summarised
 - a. address spiritually the physical events in our life:
 - (A) suffering, hurt feelings, disappointments ... with prayer
 - (B) achievements, good times, well-being ... with praise
 - b. meet spiritual problems with spiritual remedies
 - (A) physical chastisement by God for sin ... by confession and prayer
 - (B) broken human fellowship ... by mutual confession and prayer

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version of 1769
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Some of my commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

- BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870
- EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan – Volume 12, James, by Donald W. Burdick, Professor of New Testament, Denver Seminary, ISBN 0-310-36540-6
- EGT – The Expositor’s Greek Testament, *James*, by W. E. Oesterley, Hodder & Stoughton, 1910 (Liberal, but generally helpful on Greek idiom.)
- Lange – Commentary on the Holy Scriptures by John Peter Lange, translated by Philip Schaff, Volume 9 of the New Testament; Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1915 (His interpretations sometimes take strange twists.)
- NICNT – The New International Commentary on the New Testament , *Commentary on the Epistles of James and John* by Alexander Ross, Wm B Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1954 – ISBN 0-8028-2192-8
- TYN – Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, *The General Epistle of James*, by Professor R. V. G. Tasker, The Tyndale Press, 1956
- Kerux – The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site, www.holwick.com.

2. NICNT, *in loc.*