



# James

How to Live the Christian Life!

## Living with Sickness

**James 5:13-15**

Message #12 of 13 – S674

**Sermon given on January 31, 2016**



**Sunday Morning Service**

Pastor Rick Lancaster

# Living with Sickness

*James 5:13-15*

## Opening Comments

- Turn to **James 5**
- Today, we conclude our series through the letter from James **How to Live the Christian Life**
- It would be nice if life were like a ‘Happily ever after’ fairy tale
- The reality is that there are trials and tribulations in the world
- There is sickness, disease, and death
- And it is not strange that people would want to find cures for what ails them
- Sadly, there is no pill or ‘snake oil’ that will cure all of our troubles and sicknesses
- What there is, is hope! And when we are struggling emotionally, relationally, physically, or spiritually – hope is what we need before anything else
- If you are able and willing to do so, please stand as we read today’s text as a sign of reverence for God’s Word
- Read **James 5:13-15**
- **Pray**

## Teaching

- **Living with Sickness**
- James is addressing a group of people that is very familiar with difficult circumstances
- The theme of today’s text is dealing with sickness, but there is a parallel theme of prayer
- Prayer is not a religious exercise that we do at meals and at church
- Prayer is as important to living the Christian life as air is to our natural life
- Prayer is not a pill that cures all our troubles
- Prayer is our connection to the God who loves us and has the power to deal with all our troubles
- Let’s look at what James says to these people who are struggling

- James begins with a series of questions
- **James 5:13a**
- If you bring any group of people together there are going to be some who are suffering
- If you are suffering, before you do anything else – Pray!
- What should you pray for? **Psalm 50:115**  
**Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.**
- Have you ever prayed and asked God to deliver you, and it didn't happen right away?
- Sometimes, for reasons that we don't understand God doesn't deliver us immediately
- Then we need to be praying differently **Psalm 27:14**  
**Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!**
- If God doesn't deliver you immediately, pray and ask God to help you to wait patiently for His deliverance
- Last week's message was on patience – listen online
- In any group some are suffering, but not everyone
- **James 5:13b**
- When we are happy, the world ought to know it
- Especially when we gather together as the body
- You may have noticed, we don't believe that church is supposed to a somber, dull experience
- When we gather together, all the realities of life should be represented
- And one of the greatest of those is thanksgiving and celebration
- We are commanded to be thankful and to celebrate God's goodness  
**Ephesians 5:18-20**  
**...be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...**
- When you are happy or cheerful, the church needs you to share that, because some people desperately need to know that there is something to be happy about in this world
- James' third question addresses the sick people in the congregation
- **James 5:14**

- Sickness, illness, disease come into the lives of the wicked and the righteous
- The question that is often asked is this sickness because of sin
- Well, the simple answer is, yes, no, and maybe
- There is sickness in the world because mankind fell into sin in the Garden of Eden
- If it hadn't been for the Fall there would have been no sickness, disease, or death
- Is some sickness directly related to personal sin – yes
- Ananias and Sapphira in Acts – died because of sin
- Some of the believers in Corinth were sick, and some died, because of sin
- Is all sickness directly related to personal sin – No
- Job was stricken with boils by Satan, even though he was a righteous man
- Could your sickness be related to personal sin – maybe
- If it might be, repent, and go back up to verse 13 and pray
- James directs the sick to call for the elders of the church
- Notice, James is telling the sick to initiate this activity
- Why? Because it proves that you have the faith to be healed
- Implied in this is the sense that God wants you to call for the elders
- Not every illness needs the elders to come and pray
- The elders are to come and pray and anoint
- The praying we understand, but what is the anointing about
- First off, the anointing is secondary to the praying
- In James' time there may have been medicinal value to this oil
- Jesus, in his parable of the Good Samaritan said oil was applied to the man's wounds
- For us, the oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit that indwells all Christians
- By anointing with oil we are setting the sick person apart to be ministered to in a special way by the Holy Spirit
- And then James says there will be a result
- This is where this message can get a little sticky

- **James 5:15**

- A casual reading of this has caused some to believe that this means something like if you have enough faith, that you can be healed
- Or if you are sick, it is because you don't have enough faith
- That is a misinterpretation of this verse and has caused great misery in the body of Christ
- Notice that it is not the sick person that is praying – it is the elders who are praying in verse 14
- The sick person has the faith to call for the elders
- The elders are to pray a 'prayer of faith'
- What is a 'prayer of faith'?
- A 'prayer of faith' is praying according to the will of God **1 John 5:14-15**

**Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.**

- That means that these elders know what God's will is before they pray for the sick person
- Not everyone gets healed
- The Bible is filled with examples of godly people who did not get healed
- The Apostle Paul had the spiritual gift of healing – a radical gift **Acts 19:11-12**

**Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.**

- And yet two of his travelling companions got sick – Trophimus had to be left behind and Epaphroditus almost died
- Paul himself was stricken with something that God told him He wasn't going to heal him from
- The 'prayer of faith' requires three things to work
- First – faith in Almighty God **Hebrews 11:6**

**Without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**

- Second – faith that God does and can heal the sick

- There are some who do not believe that God works miraculously today to heal the sick – they cannot pray ‘prayers of faith’
- Third – need the conviction of the Holy Spirit that it is God’s will for the person to be healed
- In Acts 14 the Apostle Paul had an encounter with a man crippled from birth
- It says ‘seeing that he had faith to be healed’ – not with his eyes, with his spirit
- As an elder I have experienced this on a number of occasions
- As I am called upon regularly to pray for someone, I get a sense of God’s will, and when I pray I can sense God’s power flowing
- There are other times when I don’t get a clear sense of what God wants, I then pray that God’s will would be clear and that we would be strengthened to walk in His will, whatever it is
- The hardest ones are when I sense the Holy Spirit telling me that He is not going to heal someone
- It is hard to stand at the bedside of someone with their loved ones gathered around, and sense that God is preparing to do a perfect healing; not of their body, but of their soul
- God still heals people – and we should pray for healing even when we are not sure what God is going to do
- Paul concludes this thought with, ‘if he has committed sin, he will be forgiven’
- Some, not all, sickness is connected with personal sin
- For the prayer of faith to work for healing they need to repent of their sins – and then the healing is evidence of their forgiveness
- God heals, but always, and He owes us no explanation why
- I am not perfect, but I have tried to serve Him faithfully
- And whenever I realize there is sin in my life, I try to repent of it immediately
- I have wrestled with high triglycerides for decades and last year was diagnosed with severe sleep apnea
- I have prayed and asked God to deliver me – He hasn’t
- I have used common sense and gone to the doctors to do what I can

- I take the medication they prescribe for my triglycerides
- I use the CPAP for my sleep apnea
- I have added regular exercise and am following an eating plan
- God may never take those things away from me – He hasn't told me He will, nor has He said He won't
- And it is likely as my body ages that other things will come up
- As they do I will seek His will, and if I feel Him leading me to, I will call for the elders of the church to pray over me
- But one thing I know for certain – a day is coming when I will be perfectly healed
- On this side of eternity, we call that death
- But from the vantage point of heaven, we call it glorification
- Where God will make me perfectly whole – no pain, no illness, no disease, and no more death, forever and ever
- Turn to **2 Corinthians 12** as we get ready to close this service
- No one likes being sick; especially with serious diseases or chronic pain or illness
- Want to leave you with a few quick thoughts about living with sickness
- First – **Seek God's will**
- Pray and tell God how you feel about your sickness – ask Him to deliver you
- **2 Corinthians 12:7-8**
- Paul did – begged God to take away his 'thorn in the flesh'
- Second thing – **Wait patiently for God's answer**
- God answered Paul, but He doesn't have to answer, silence is an answer
- **2 Corinthians 12:9a**
- God told Paul that he wasn't going to heal him
- In fact, Paul's infirmity was in his life so that God could use Paul more powerfully
- Paul asked God to take it away, God said 'No!'
- God loved Paul and still He said 'No!'
- God loves you, and He may say 'No!'

- Third thing – **Glorify God with your sickness**
- Once God told Paul ‘No!’ Paul used his infirmity as a banner to declare how awesome God was
- **2 Corinthians 12:9b-10**
- Paul didn’t wallow in despair, He rejoiced in His God
- His hope was not in his physical body being healed
- His hope was in the God who would make his body perfect in heaven
- Glorifying God is a choice – whether we are sick or not – whether we are strong or not
- If God heals you, glorify Him – If God doesn’t heal you, glorify Him
- There are people in this church that are going through physical things that you would never want to experience
- And yet, unless you are close to them you wouldn’t know it
- And they faithfully come to serve the body of Christ
- God is receiving great glory in their faithful service
- And I am humbled to serve alongside of them
- James has more to say on this topic, but we will have to wait until next week to continue
- Some see sickness as a disability – heard a quote this week from someone who struggled with physical disabilities her whole life
- “The only true disability is a bad attitude”
- Change your attitude about your sickness and it will change your life
- Amen
- **Pray**