

James 5:13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

In **these closing words of James 5** We learn Prayer is essential for every area of life. Hardship or affliction, Joy, sickness whatever we are facing. Prayer is the solution and answer. James is going to give us principles for prayer, for private prayer and for church prayer.

OUR SUBJECT - Today is instruction teaching us how to effectively pray.

Is any among you Afflicted – that is struggling, with various difficulties, Hardships, maybe unfair treatment at work, maybe strife in the home, a husband or a daughter or son; very painful. or persecution for the word's sake, ungodly people mocking Christians. all kinds of misfortune, the fact is we all face this living in a fallen world, living where we have an enemy who hates righteousness and truth. Some may say, well what about the affliction of sickness is that included, yes but James deals specifically with it in the next verse. But these are afflictions, which are sometimes more painful than physical bodily sickness. there are people who suffer with anxiety or depression, some of them, might say I wish I did have a simple sickness that could be seen, then I'd ask people to pray for me, or go to a doctor- But this is too private, too shameful to tell and make it known. Besides Doctors don't have a real cure.

SO, WHAT CAN WE DO? James says, Let Him pray. This is teaching to treasure the spirit of prayer, to be dependant and submitted to God. It's a realisation of Divine help and sympathy. Even severely suffering; even relatively small and sudden problems, **Prayer is the arrow of deliverance shot into heaven, even in times of emergency.** Let Him pray - for support, - for patience, let Him depend upon God. - *He doesn't say we call down curses on our enemies.* Many are mistaken and spend most of their time addressing the enemy and binding his schemes and plans. No says James Let him **keep on CONSTANTLY PRAYING.**

WHAT IS PRAYER? firstly, we pray to the **FATHER our Father who hears and who cares and is full of compassion, able, and willing to help.** think of the psalms- "and the righteous cry out, **and the LORD hears,** delivering them out of all their troubles." What comfort to know - *The Lord is near to all who call upon Him in truth to fulfill the desire*

of those who fear Him, He also will hear their cry and save them. Psalm 145 18-19. - you see when I love Him and fear Him and have reverence towards Him, my desire will be according to His will, *and we know that God hears those who ask according to His will.* **WHEN AFFLICTED** - Pray always. continue to pray. **Our definition of prayer** - Prayer is bringing our desires to God, by the help of the Holy Spirit, in line with God's will, in Jesus' name, with repentance and thankfulness. - And what is prayer without personal fellowship with God? A mere shadow — an empty form — a dry exercise.

There is some wrong teaching circulating, perhaps you have heard it over the years. It says something like this just ask once – anything more than that is not faith that God has heard. **But what does the Word of God say?** *Luke 11:5-8 And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves; [6] for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; [7] and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'? [8] I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.*

The lesson in this parable, commonly called a friend at midnight, teaches us the importance of **perseverance in prayer.** The meaning of the parable is clear, If asking and asking again, perseverance in asking can get an answer from man to man, from a man who doesn't want to get up, How much more can we expect to get mercies when we pray to our God and Father. Our reliable God in our midnight hour always proves to be a friend in the midnight hour, *in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavillion, in the secret place of His tabernacle he shall hide me, He shall set me upon a Rock.* Psalm 27:5

Sometimes answers are not always as we expected, nor the timing we expect. The timing of answered prayer must be left entirely in Gods able hands. Let us lay matters before God again and again, day after day, and week after week even year after year, the answer might be long in coming but we keep asking- we see the bible case of **Hanna**, year by year, sorely provoked by her rival. Mocked- She went up to the house of the Lord and she continued praying before the Lord. We don't know how many years, but it was a sore trial. So bad she prayed in her heart, her lips moving but no voice was heard. Eli the priest thought she was drunk.... She answered, **no my Lord I am a sorrowful woman I have poured out my soul before the Lord.** That is what real prayer is, to pour out your soul to the Lord... It's a prayer that had a longing

to be answered, it's the deepest cry of your heart. Maybe it's so painful there are no words on your lips, no sound heard. What a Joy and a comfort to know our God hears the cry of our hearts. How she must have rejoiced to hear those words from Eli, 'go in peace may the Lord grant your petition which you have asked Him.'

"So I say to you, **ASK**, and it will be given to you; **SEEK**, and you will find; **KNOCK**, and it will be opened to you. Luke 11:9

SEEK AND YOU WILL FIND. Seek His wisdom, seek His face, seek His promises. Seek His comfort. I'm sure we have all lost something at one time or another, maybe your keys or your phone... You seek everywhere, but you cant find it, **what do you do?** you look again, thinking where could it be, I know and You look under the cushions of the sofa, you can't find it... 2 or 3 or 4 times you seek - you don't give up you must have it. This same seeking must also be in prayer, seek till you find. We seek the Lord in prayer, but we also seek Gods help in every situation we face. One very important area - We seek His help in reaching lost souls.

We all know that when little children have lost something, they come daddy, or mommy I lost this or that. the parent may say, well seek harder.... so often little children answer, 'I have been seeking but I can't find it.' So, the parent says go and look again. Many who have been parents will know this to be true.... **In prayer we don't we sometimes behave like a little child looking for just a short time then giving up.** No we should We should seek diligently with constant effort . we look over and over again. So, prayer is a diligent labour. **Remember** *Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.* Colossians 4:12

James reminds us by asking the question is any afflicted he doesn't speak about any specific affliction because **He wants to include and cover all difficulties.** He wants the remedy he is going to offer to be for all. Im sure that every person here today is facing or has faced much affliction. and sadly because we live in a fallen world we will still face affliction. what is the answer LET HIM PRAY. HOW CAN WE DO THAT WHEN THINGS ARE VERY HARD. **Job did it** when He lost all his material goods, when he lost his family. what did He do? *Job 1:20 Then Job arose, tore his robe,*

and shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped. Let Him worship, let Him pray....

We also learn from our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ what He did when dealing with affliction. This was especially true when Jesus Christ was distressed in Spirit *And being in agony, HE PRAYED MORE EARNESTLY. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Luke 22:44.* In this deep distress as 100% God and 100% man he knelt down and prayed showing us, *what kind of prayers a believer ought to make to God in time of trouble.* saying ... *'Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done.'*

We know the Father heard the Lord – *John 11:42 And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me."* but he did not take away the cross, but He gave Him power and strength to endure it. Is there any afflicted.

But then James asks a second question, is any among you merry any cheerful any joyful any in good spirits, let him sing psalms. Let Him keep singing. In fact, the verb here can be literally rendered, *let him psalm*, let him psalm. Let him sing out the Psalms.- *speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.* Eph 5:19. The book of psalms is given to us, It's been used over the centuries as a great prayer book, a great worship book. So, it is a great help to use Psalms, to read them to sing them to pray them in our private devotions. There is no need to go to a bookshop to look for a book on prayer, we already have the very best book available. PSALMS. Make an effort to try read through the book of Psalms, make use of this grace given. **They deal with every area of Christian life.** when you are low and feel discouraged *psalm 13:1 How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?* and we see just 6 verses later how David says **I will sing praises unto the Lord.** and also when we are encouraged for, we could **read and pray and sing** *Psalm 98. Oh, sing to the Lord a new song for He has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him the victory.* It is a great encouragement to just open the psalms and pray them, **make them personal.** Use them to inspire your prayers, they will deepen and enrich your prayer time. **Is there any afflicted-** Let Him pray **Is there any Merry** Let Him Psalm. **There are many who**

have found this true—Joy and gladness should always lead to praise, Psalms helps us praise in every season. We should use scripture saturated songs to express gratitude in praise. *In every joy that crowns my days, In every pain I bear, my heart shall find delight in praise, Or seek relief in prayer.* - Mrs. Williams.1762- - now the third question -

James 5:14 *Is any sick among you? 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:* We looked briefly at this last week. It may be that a young person or a healthy person doesn't see the value of praying for the sick often. I once knew a man very athletic and strong who had little compassion on those who were sickly, well one day he got sick and it changed his outlook. Let us look with compassion upon the sick at all times. **Let us remember It is according to the will of God.** Its not given in the absolute and unconditional sence that every time a prayer of faith is offered the sick would always be raised up. As often as he got infirm he would be raised up No that would mean he would never die. We cant over rule Gods will and timing. But all through the ages this promise has been answered many many times. A bible example would be Hezekiah In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.' " The prophet said your disease is incurable, you are as good as dead. But Prayer was heard and 15 years of Life was given. How Powerful heartfelt prayer of dependence and faith is. The shadow of the sun went back 10 degrees. The sun went back or stood still for about 40 muinates. Prayer is mighty. Remember we quoted John Calvin last week - Words cannot fully explain how necessary and profitable prayer is.

Lets look at The Prayer of Elijah. James 5:17-18 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. [18] And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

I think every believer would like to have an effectual prayer life. James is saying that we should seek to have this kind of prayer life. A prayer life that rescues those who have strayed form the path. verse 19, brethren, (*this is the last address our last brethren in James.*) **James 5:19-20** *Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and*

someone turns him back, [20] let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

How do we turn a sinner, well of course its God who does it but we can be instrumental by prayer for them. The Effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much. There is a wonderful account of Joseph Aline a puritan minister around 1634 who was just such a man. He would rise constantly before 4am to pray. and on Sundays even earlier if he did not spend the night in prayer. when he would get up at 4am in the morning to pray if he heard a shoemaker hammering away at a shoe. or a blacksmith hammering metal, how distressed He was . Oh Lord they are serving their trade to get money. Why have I not been up earlier praying and serving my master to receive treasure in heaven. Does my master not deserve more than this. He would pray and sing the psalms as his daily practice. Now if you needed prayer is this not the kind of person you would like to pray for you? The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous Oh Lord help us to be more zealous for you. This is the closing exhortation of James. The importance of prayer the great privilege we have, access to the throne of grace. Prayer is the first part of true worship.

James is saying when in doubt, when you are not sure, pray. whatever your circumstance pray- If you are afflicted, and in turmoil pray, if you are cheerful pray and sing psalms, If you are sick call the elders to pray. If you are troubled by sin, Pray. Share your prayer concerns with fellow righteous ones and pray together. the Lord hears prayer.

But there is one prayer that every one of us must pray. its foundational. its the most important prayer – for without it you will be a stranger to the covenant and the eternal promises. You know already, but still you must have prayed it is not knowing about what to ask it is asking. Lord save me I am a lost sinner, in need of salvation Have mercy upon me. Forgive me my many sins. I turn from them and I now turn to you Lord of all.. Receive me and make me your very own...

Have you prayed ? Oh delay not if you have never called upon the name of the Lord. Come unto Him today.

Let us close in prayer.... Loving heaving Father thank you for the privledge and the grace of prayer. We know we so neglect this grace – we can go days without prayer. Oh Lord help us to start praying every day, help us to pray many times during the day. Help us not to ask amis let our prayers be according to you will, let them be full of truth and scripture. Help us to be individuals who pray for our families, for our households. Help us to understand that although we are a small number that the prayer of the righteous availeth much. Grant us fervency in prayer we ask in the name of our lord and saviour. AMEN.