

“Steadfast Part 11: A Powerful Community” (4-16-23)

Series Overview: We are called to be Steadfast (endure) which produces Maturity and Wholeness

Review: Hearer/Doer, Law of Love, Living Faith, Words, A Divided Heart, Peacemakers, Time, Money, Patient Endurance - Maybe a quick testimony about this sermon & sister’s text

Today: James 5:13-16 (2 weeks left / a mini-series about a powerful & effective community)

James 5:13-16 (ESV)

(13) Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. (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 of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. (16) Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Note: I would argue that James isn’t just giving a list of various anecdotes on prayer & faith. Instead, I believe that, as he is wrapping up this letter on steadfast endurance towards maturity in Christ, he wants to encourage us that . . .

There is great power in a prayerful, caring community of faith & righteousness!

1) Prayer

James 5:13 (ESV)

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.

Note: These aren’t 2 separate thoughts, but a way of life!

- Throughout these verses its easy to read them as advice for the individual, but note - “among you” . . .
- Let him pray (in greek): pray / Let him sing praise (in greek): praise - instruments (music) & singing!
- Both are forms of prayer - petition (request) & praise (gratitude, thanksgiving)

*One of the biggest issues in our culture & therefore in our reading of scripture is we take them as individuals instead of in the context of community

- Now we can certainly apply them directly into our own lives - I can pray & praise
- But there is great power when the body of Christ comes together to pray!

Let’s look at the 2 conditions James brings up, & consider them in the context of prayerful community . . .

suffering: to suffer evil or afflictions or hardship; to be afflicted, troubled, dejected

cheerful: to be cheerful, be of good spirits, take courage

We will all be in situations like these, but will we walk through them alone?

- Do I reach out to others for prayer & celebration
- Am I aware of the needs of others, and join them in prayer & celebration

Only other place in NT that uses this Greek word for cheerful are found 3 times in the story of Paul caught in a storm (Read Acts 27 for the full story): The passage describes the trouble they are in like this . . .

- violently storm-tossed (vs. 18)
- neither sun nor stars appeared for many days (vs. 20)
- all hope of being saved was at last abandoned (vs. 20)

Paul encourages them to be “cheerful” also translated as “take heart” or to be “encouraged” . . .

Acts 27:22-25 (ESV)

(22) Yet now I urge you to **take heart**, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. (23) For this very night there stood before me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, (24) and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar. And behold, God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ (25) So **take heart**, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told.

Note: twice he encourages them to “take heart” - then as they seek a spot to run aground, Paul shares a few more words and encourages them to stop and eat!

Acts 27:35-36 (ESV)

(35) And when he had said these things, he took bread, and giving thanks to God in the presence of all he broke it and began to eat. (36) Then they all were **encouraged** and ate some food themselves.

This sort of prayer, encouragement, & praise in various seasons produces this . . .

Proverbs 15:15 (ESV)

All the days of the afflicted are evil, but the cheerful of heart has a continual feast.

Application: Afflicted & Cheerful are not mutually exclusive - a community that knows how to be “in it” together - to pray for one another and to encourage one another to “take heart” through praise - will find itself continually filled, even in season of “famine”

2) Care

James 5:14 (ESV)

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.

Note: As we are called to pray for one another, we are also called to combine that prayer with care!

Sick: sick, weak, impotent, diseased. This word is used in the context of sickness/illness (even leading to death), lameness or blindness, weak as it relates to sin/addiction. It can even mean weak in the faith.

Anoint: To rub, to cover over, besmear

Confusion arises in the NT when two distinct words, **chrío** which has a sacred or religious meaning, and **aleíphō** (G218), to oil or rub with oil, are translated with the same Eng. word "anoint," without any distinction

- **Chrio** - the idea of a sacred anointing - commissioning for the office of king/priest/etc.
- **Aleipho** - the idea of anointing to care for oneself or for another. It's medicinal and therapeutic

Examples of Aleipho . . .

- (Luke 7:36-50) While at a dinner in the home of a Pharisee - A sinful woman wipes Jesus feet with her tears, hair, and anoints them with ointment / oil. Jesus forgives her & sends her out in peace.
- (John 12:1-8) Mary of Bethany (sister of Lazarus) - anoints Jesus meets with expensive ointment
- (Mark 16:1) At Jesus death, the women come to the tomb to “anoint” his body
- Story of the Good Samaritan when he encounters & cares for the beaten man by the side of the road . . .

Luke 10:34 (ESV)

He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

Only time in NT where this word for anoint is directly associated with healing . . .

Mark 6:7, 12-13 (ESV)

(7) And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. . . (12) So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. (13) And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

Note: Disciples sent in Jesus name to bring care & healing, in order to bring people to the Lord (repent)!

Application: The idea of **Aleipho** is caring for the sick person - treating their wounds, caring for them, and praying for them!

3) Power - faith & righteousness**a) Faith****James 5:15 (ESV)**

And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Note: A reminder of the kind of faith that saves - an Active or "Living Faith" (Part 4)

From "A Living Faith - Part 4":

James 2:14 (ESV)

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?

Note: Save (Greek is Sozo): The basic meaning of the verb "sozo" is to rescue from peril, to protect, keep alive. It involves the preservation of life, spirit, soul, and body. This word occurs 54 times in the Gospels:

- 14 relate to **deliverance and healing** from disease or demonic possession
- 20 instances, related to **the rescue of physical life** from some impending peril or instant death
- The remaining 20 times, the reference is to **spiritual salvation**

"Saving Faith" is meant to touch the whole person, and our works (labor, activity, participation) play a key role!

James 2:15-17 (ESV)

(15) If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, (16) and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? (17) So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

Note: Remember, we are called to move beyond "good intentions" into a faith that has a real tangible impact!

So now James closes his letter telling us about the power of a prayer of faith . . .

- **Prayer of faith will save the sick** (sick here means weary - to toil, tire, faint main idea: to be weary from constant work / not the same as vs 14)
- **The Lord will raise up** (arise - from sleep, from death, from sluggishness / lethargy)

Faith - combined with Prayer & Care is powerful, and brings new life to the weary!

b) Righteousness

James 5:16 (ESV)

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Note: Much of what I want to say about this verse goes with next Sunday's message.

However, I want you to notice once again the power of real community:

confess to one another - pray for one another - this brings healing!

Healing - Thayer Definition:

- 1) to cure, heal
- 2) to make whole
- 3) to free from errors and sins, to bring about (one's) salvation

The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working!

Righteous (also translated just) . . . There is a whole Theological treasure trove of verses on this!

Romans 5:19 (ESV)

For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Galatians 3:11 (ESV)

Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith."

- It takes faith to receive righteousness from God!
- That kind of faith grows my faith - since I'm relying on God for the most important thing, I learn to rely on him for everything!
- Additionally, it is so effective to be in a community where we confess one to another. We can only do that when we realize how we have been forgiven. Then we can be gracious with each other when we confess!

***Next Week** - the power of a gracious, confessing community!

Conclusion: There is great power in a prayerful, caring community of faith & righteousness!

Matthew 25:34-40 (ESV)

(34) Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (35) For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, (36) I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' (37) Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? (38) And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? (39) And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' (40) And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'