The Book Of James: Lesson 12

Prayer, Healing, & Restoration

**Memory Text:** “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” (James 5:16)

**Illustration/Setting The Stage:**

While it is absolutely true that comfort is found in Jesus, what did the man mean when he said that someone found Jesus in Comfort? Recently, a man living in England accidentally spilled fabric softener on his clothes while doing his laundry. When he took a close look at the fabric softener stain he said he saw...Jesus.

This man isn't the only one to see Jesus in an unusual place. There's the man who, while searching for a vacation destination on Google maps, supposedly saw the face of Jesus in a satellite image of a farmland in Hungary. Then there was the elderly man living in Texas who said that a burn pattern on a breakfast taco looked like Jesus. Add to these strange "sightings" the Washington man who thought he saw the face of Jesus on the underside of a crab he caught, a lady who claims that you can see an image of Jesus on a stingray, the London woman who discovered the face of Jesus staring at her from a crumpled sock, and the outline of the face of Jesus on a Wal-Mart receipt, and you might think that there's something significant about these occurrences. In case you're wondering, there isn't.

While some might see in them a message from God, or authentication that Jesus is a real person, all these sightings reveal is that humanity is extremely superstitious, very vulnerable, and fascinated with the miraculous and magical. People are drawn to these things out of curiosity.

Why didn’t Jesus respond to certain queries that came to Him asking Him to perform a miracle? You recall His encounters with Herod (Luke 23:8, 9 – entertainment), the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 12:38-41 – proof), and Satan (Matt. 4:2-4 – personal need)? He refused to perform the miracles because it wasn't in the best interest of the salvation of those who asked. Jesus could have performed the miracles (as it is
His very nature to bring healing), however He desires to bring more permanent healing.

What do James words about the healing of the sick mean? What is the relationship between healing and forgiveness? What is the significance of mentioning Elijah in this context? These questions and more will be answered in this weeks’ lesson.

**Sunday – The Essential Christian Toolkit**  
*James 5:13; Acts 16:25*

**Read James 5:13.** “Suffering” (to suffer misfortune; to suffer both mentally and physically – v. 10) – to suggest that the Christian can bypass suffering is to deny the clear testimony of scripture, history, and reality. James frequently refers to the reality of problems and difficulties in this life (1:2, 12, 14; 2:6, 15; 3:14-16; 4:7; 5:6). This type of suffering goes beyond the disappointment you might experience when your favorite team loses, or when your body aches after working in your yard or working out at the gym. True suffering might involve financial loss, death, persecution, disease (physical or mental), rejection, etc.

“Cheerful” (or joyful) – To suggest that the Christian has to be gloomy, brooding, and carrying the weight of the world upon their shoulders is to deny the clear testimony of scripture, history, and reality. God’s plan for us is that we lead serene, happy lives (Prov. 15:13, 15; Phil. 4:11). This is different from gaiety or frivolousness. True cheerfulness comes when we know God will support us with his grace and comfort us through think and thin. “For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.” (2 Tim. 1:12)

So what are we called to do when we suffer? **Pray** (Joseph, Moses, Christ). Someone asked C.S. Lewis, "Why do the righteous suffer?" "Why not?" he replied. "They're the only ones who can take it." “Prayer takes hold of Omnipotence, and gains us the
victory.” (My Life Today, p. 20) What are we encouraged to do when we are cheerful? Sing psalms or praises (Red Sea experience, Last Supper).

This is the Christians toolkit. These two “tools” can be used at anytime. Both recognize God. Both acknowledge His goodness and faithfulness. Both are more intertwined than we generally think. Psalms of praise are also prayers. David sung them when suffering. James encourages us to “count it all joy when we fall into various trials.” (James 1:2) What did Paul and Silas do when imprisoned?

* Acts 16:25: “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing [not “Blank Space” or “Shake It Off” by Taylor Swift, or “Jealous” by Nick Jonas, but] hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.” Earthy songs can’t lift us to heaven. Sensual songs can’t help grow us spiritually. There is something powerful about scripture songs, hymns, and spiritual songs (Col. 3:16) that do much to teach and counsel us in the things of God.

**Monday – Prayer For The Sick**
James 5:14, 15; Psalm 107:17-20

**Read James 5:14, 15.** We don’t need to doubt God’s desire and ability to heal.

**Psalm 103:13, 14:** “As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.”

* Psalm 107:17-20: “Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, were afflicted. Their soul abhorred all manner of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.”
What are the essential elements James prescribes for healing the sick?  1) Recognition of personal need of healing.  2) Collective recognition for divine intervention.  3) Seeking God in prayer.  4) Anointing with oil (Mark 6:13 – sending out of the twelve vs extreme unction, last right of the church for the dying).  5) Coming in the name of the Lord.  6) With faith.

What important spiritual components are found in these verses? Oil = consecration to God. Prayer = Willingness to cooperate with God and obey His requirements (both spiritual and physical). Name of the Lord = submission to His will (immediate, gradual, or second coming). Forgiven sins = a desire for spiritual healing also.

* Question: Why don’t we see more miracles today, like in Christ’s day?

“The way in which Christ worked was to preach the Word, and to relieve suffering by miraculous works of healing. But I am instructed that we cannot now work in this way, for Satan will exercise his power by working miracles. God’s servants today could not work by means of miracles, because spurious works of healing, claiming to be divine, will be wrought. For this reason the Lord has marked out a way in which His people are to carry forward a work of physical healing, combined with the teaching of the Word. Sanitariums are to be established, and with these institutions are to be connected workers who will carry forward genuine medical missionary work.” (Selected Messages, Vol. 2, p. 54)

So it is through the health message that God wants to work (NEWSTART, medical missionary work, etc.). We do have assurance of divine intervention at His discretion through the Bible anointing service outlined in James 5. But for now God works primarily through natural means, not always the spectacular.
Read James 5:16. God desires that our souls be healed more than our bodies. Yes, John wrote, “Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers,” (3 John 2) but again the emphasis is on healthy souls (“as you soul prospers”). This is the purpose of our health ministry - not to make people healthy for hell, but healthy for heaven. I know people who are physically healthy, but an unforgiving spirit is increasing their blood pressure, or guilt is overwhelming them. Our health message embraces the entire person – physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual wellbeing. God desires to bring a deeper healing.

Story of paralytic (Mark 2:1-12). “Yet it was not physical restoration he desired so much as relief from the burden of sin. If he could see Jesus, and receive the assurance of forgiveness and peace with Heaven, he would be content to live or die, according to God’s will.” (Desire of Ages, p. 267) Doctors and God’s people (medical missionaries) are not only to do all they can to bring physical healing to the sick, but also to heal the whole person. Healing includes the healing of relationships (“one another”).

Luke 4:18: ““The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed;”

* 1 Peter 2:24, 25: “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.”
Wednesday – Models Of Prayer
James 5:17, 18; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

Read James 5:17, 18. These verses illustrate the promise given in v. 16. “Fervent prayer” - prayer that is earnestly exercised. “Righteous” – prayer doesn’t depend on wealth, rank, talent, or office but upon the character of the man/woman offering it. “Avails much” – power to accomplish an objective. The objective in this context is the restoration of relationships – true healing. "There is nothing that makes us love a man so much as prayer for him.” – William Law

“Elijah” – a man with no special advantages; he lived life as every one must face it. “Like passions” or like feelings (Paul & Barnabas assured the people of Lystra of the same – Acts 14:15). He faced trials and was at times affected by human weakness (1 Kings 19:4). Therefore, his successes didn’t depend on him being a super Christian, but upon the grace of God. Jesus humanity made prayer “a necessity and a privilege.” (Steps to Christ, p. 94)

“Would not rain” – not in spite or resentment but based on God’s word (Deut. 11:13-17). His prayers were effective because they sprang from a thoughtful study of God’s word in light of his present circumstances. Ours will be successful too when the same is done.

“Prayed again” – this and the preceding prayer were motivated by his love for his countrymen and his desire to see them return to the worship of the true God. His was a ministry of reconciliation:

* 2 Cor. 5:17-20: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of
reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."

“Three and a half years” – significant time of probation in the Bible – 3 ½ years of Jesus ministry (Dan. 9:27) – 3 ½ times of persecution during the Dark Ages (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 12:14) – At the end of the 3 ½ years God used Elijah to begin a work of revival and reformation, a work that would be repeated by John the Baptist (Matt. 11:13, 14) and God’s last-day remnant (Mal. 4:5, 6; Rev. 14:6-12)

Thursday – Restoration & Forgiveness
James 5:19, 20

**Read James 5:19, 20.** A few years ago, an angry man rushed through the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam until he reached Rembrandt’s famous painting "Nightwatch." Then he took out a knife and slashed it repeatedly before he could be stopped. A short time later, a distraught, hostile man slipped into St. Peter’s Cathedral in Rome with a hammer and began to smash Michelangelo’s beautiful sculpture The Pieta.

Two cherished works of art were severely damaged. But what did officials do? Throw them out and forget about them? Absolutely not! Using the best experts, who worked with the utmost care and precision, they made every effort to restore the treasures.

God desires to restore broken people and relationships, especially the one with Himself. James final appeal to the church is to be the means in the hand of God by which this restoration takes place. It’s really a work similar to that of Elijah (read Mal. 4:5, 6). This work requires patience, sympathy, tenderness, and humility.

**Appeal:** There is nothing that God cannot heal, transform, or restore. Avail yourself of His wonderful grace today.