

The book of James

5:12-20

Welcome back to the final study in this series in the book of James.

✠ **James 5:12** *But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes," be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.*

"God if you do this for me, I swear I will do this for You."

"God, if You will just get me out of this one, I swear (or promise) I will do this for You."

Do any of these sound familiar?

We tend to make promises to God when we are in need. We think that we just won't make it through this one, so we make a pact with God. The problem is we never seem to follow through on these promises, even though God kept His part of the bargain (so to speak).

James is telling us not to do this, but we also need to realize that we don't need to make promises to God in order for Him to help us.

Even Jesus said:

✠ **Matt 6:7-8** *And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.*

God knows what we need before we ask Him. Therefore, whether we make a bargain with God or not He will supply all your needs.

✠ **Phil 4:19** *And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

Paul tells us not to worry about our needs, but to pray to God letting Him know our needs.

✠ **Phil 4:6-7 (NLT)** *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

Did you notice the second part of verse 6? *and thank him for all he has done.*

God does so much for us every day, so much so that we take it all for granted and forget what God has done for us each day.

Here is one suggestion to remind you of what God does for you each day.

Take a note pad and everyday write down at least five things or ways that God has blessed you each day.

By the end of the month, if you go back and read it, you will see how much God blesses you each day.

‡ **Phil 4:6b-7a** *Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace,*

Notice Paul doesn't say to make a deal with God when you make your requests known to God. Just tell God your need and thank Him. That's all. Sound too simple? It really is, but when you do tell God, you must trust God that He will supply all your needs. If you don't, then you will not *experience God's peace*.

Remember what James said back in chapter 1?

‡ **James 1:6** *But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.*

When you start trying to make deals with God, then you are doubting God's love and provisions for you. That's why James says; *But let your "Yes," be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.*

You only make bargains with those who will not help you unless you do something for them.

‡ **Eccl 5:4-5 (NLT)** *So when you make a promise to God, don't delay in following through, for God takes no pleasure in fools. Keep all the promises you make to him. It is better to say nothing than to promise something that you don't follow through on.*

What James is talking about can also apply to vows you make to a person.

Remember when we were kids, and we would make a deal with our brothers or sisters that if they would do something for us, that we would do their chores for a week. We do the same thing now as adults.

"If you will just do this for me than I will do this for you."

So the person does it, but you don't follow through.

We even say, *"I will meet you at such and such a time."* But we fail to show up. We will make a phone call and try to give a good excuse, but the truth is, we really didn't want to meet with that person in the first place.

James says to just say, “*No thank-you*” instead of saying you will meet or help someone when you have no intentions of doing it.

I remember many, many years ago helping my cousin move. I did it because I love and care for my cousin very much. When I moved, my cousin drove over 150 miles to help me move. He didn't have to, I don't even remember asking him, but he did it anyway. Why, not because I helped him, but rather because he loves me and cares for me just the same. So don't look for something in return or make a pact with someone before you will do something for him or her. Just do it because you care for them!

James goes on to say.

✎ **James 5:13-15** *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 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. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.*

Are any of you suffering today? It's very possible some of you are, and you have been looking for answers or wondering why.

But I want you to notice what James says if you are suffering today. ***Let him pray.***

“But I have prayed, but now I am worrying.”

Notice James doesn't say to worry, but to pray.
I like the way the NLT puts this.

✎ **James 5:13a (NLT)** *Are any among you suffering? They should keep on praying about it.*

Keep praying about it. Why? Because when you worry, you take your eyes off of the Lord and put them on your problem. But when you pray, you are taking your eyes off your problems and you are looking at the Lord Who is bigger than any problem you can ever have!

Maybe you are not suffering, but instead, things are going really good and you are happy. For you James says: ***Let him sing psalms.***

Once again the NLT puts it as: ***And those who have reason to be thankful should continually sing praises to the Lord.***

But we should always remember if we are suffering or happy, we should always pray and sing praises to the Lord!

Maybe you are sick, James says to: ***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.***

Notice it says elders (Plural) and not elder (Singular). Why would James say this? If you have only one person pray for you and you are healed, then you may very likely give the praise and glory to that person rather than God. But if you have many elders or people praying for you and you are healed, you don't know which one the Lord worked through, so ALL the glory goes to the Lord and not man.

It also says to anoint the sick person with oil. Oil in the bible represents the Holy Spirit, and one of the gifts of the Spirit is the gift of healing.

I will let you in on something that's sad but true. You can go to your neighborhood bible bookstore and buy a little tiny bottle of what they call anointing oil that has a pretty smell to it. But you will have to pay \$5.00 and up even into the \$100.00 if you are not careful. This is robbing or fleecing the flock of God and making money on what God's word says.

In the church I go to, there is a bottle of Wesson oil sitting up front that they use to anoint people. It may cost maybe \$1.50, but you know what, it's not the oil that heals the person but the Lord.

So why anoint with oil? Because it's a representation of the Holy Spirit working on the individual, just as baptism does not save you, but represents your faith that you are saved and a new creation in Jesus Christ.

James goes on to say.

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

Have you ever heard that you are not healed because you don't have enough faith? James is saying here that it's not the faith of the sick person but rather the faith of those praying for him. So if you are sick and have been prayed for and have been told you just don't have enough faith. Maybe you should show the ones praying for you this verse and ask them if they have enough faith for you to be healed!

Maybe it's not your faith or the faith of those who are praying for you. Maybe the Lord has something else in mind, and it's not time for you to be healed. Just pray for the Lord's will to be done, and you will always be in good hands, sick or not!

Sometimes it is possible that you are sick due to sin, although this is not always the case. So don't think that if you are sick that you committed a sinful act and God is punishing you for it.

But we must also realize that when we sin, we may have to pay the consequences of our sins.

Sex before marriage can bring sexually transmitted diseases.

Homosexuality can bring aids.

Use of drugs and alcohol will affect your body and cause many different health problems.

Smoking causes many health problems as well.

We could go on and on with different examples of sin that could cause you to be sick. But always remember that if you confess your sins to the Lord that you will be forgiven and go to heaven. But you still may have to pay the price for your sins. So James is saying here that the prayer of those with faith can heal a person if it's the Lord's will, and possible you will be not only be forgiven for your sins, but the Lord will stop the results of your past sinful acts by healing you.

So who is a good person to go to when you are in need of prayer?
James gives us an example in the Old testament of who to go to.

 **James 5:16-18** *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. 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. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.*

I have friends in the church that I am very close to. Some that I would tell things to that I would tell no one else. These are normal men (or people) just like you and me. But there is nothing better than having a friend that you can trust and will pray for you. Someone you know that when they say, "I will be praying for you." You know that they really are praying for you.

Some of these are elders in the church, but then some of them are not. It doesn't matter what status they have in the church, but rather are they listening to the Lord and do they do what He says?

James tells us of Elijah who prayed for it to stop raining, and it did for 3 ½ years. But it wasn't because Elijah was a great man or had mighty powers, but rather the God he prayed to was great and there is no other like Him. Elijah was just a simple man (or person) like you and me, but he also listened to the Lord, and was obedient.

You see in order for Elijah to pray for it to stop raining for 3 ½ years, he had to be instructed to do so by God. But also Elijah also knew if he did pray for this and when it happened that there would be a famine in the land (which there was) and he could possibly starve to death or die of thirst.

So by praying this, Elijah not only believed that God would stop the rain, but also that God would supply his needs for these 3 ½ years of famine, and God did!

So if others do not come to you for prayer maybe you should look at how much you really trust in the Lord and how you are showing your faith in God to others?

The final verses in James read.

✉ **James 5:19-20** *Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, 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.*

No, “Love James” or “Your brother in the Lord, James”. No closing salutation but a closing statement that is very important.

I personally know what it’s like to turn from the Lord and go back into the world. Sure it was fun for a while, but I really started to hate myself and the things I was doing.

So who brought me back to the Lord? Without a doubt it was the Holy Spirit. But the Lord used a Christian band to do it. You see I was listening to secular radio and heard this one particular song that I really liked, so I went and bought the CD not knowing at the time that they were Christian. But after I listened to the CD, I knew without a doubt that they were Christians, and that the Lord was calling me back with open arms, just as the father did for the prodigal son.

Within a very short time (less than two months) I was going to church faithfully in fact almost all the time. I had moved out and broken up with the girl I was living with. And my life has never been better. Sure, I still have trials and struggles I deal with all the time. But the Lord is doing a work in me that I thought He would never do. Five or six years ago I never even thought that I would be teaching the bible over the Internet (in fact I never used the internet before). But here it is over two years of teaching and daily devotionals. This is not me but the Lord working through me!!!

But one thing I will never forget when I returned to the Lord.

When I went back to my old church, at the end of the service I went up for prayer, and it just happened to be with the pastor (God’s hand was in the whole thing) who said to me, and I quote, *“When I saw you walk in the church I rejoiced and thanked the Lord, because I have been praying for you all these years!”*

To know that the pastor had remembered me after five years of being away and that he had been praying for me. God’s hand has always been in my life and this was one way that the Lord was telling me that even though I had walked away from Him, He had never walked away from me!

Maybe you have walked away from the Lord. Let me tell you first hand that the Lord has not turned His back on you and is waiting for you to come back with open arms, just as He did for me.

Come back and you too will never be the same!

Well, that’s it for the book of James. If you have made it through this whole study series in James, I want you to give yourself a hand. This has been a very hard study and sometimes you may have felt like it was too hard, because of some of the things we covered. I warned you before we started that James does not hold back and tells it like it

is. Straight in your face teaching; and there is no way I could sugarcoat these teaching, nor did I want to.

Personally I have grown as a Christian and some of the studies were so tough that I wondered if I should just stop and forget the whole thing. But as you can see the Lord kept me going and we have made it through.

E-mail me and let me know how the Lord has touched or spoken to you in the book of James.

As I told you last week, the next study will be in the book of John, my favorite gospel. I would encourage you to start reading it and prepare for an awesome study about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

By the time we are done with John, you will see why it's my favorite gospel.

May God richly bless you in His love, grace and mercy, and may your faith and trust always be in the Lord Jesus Christ, our Father God and the Holy Spirit.