

Praying Together Patiently (2)

Համբերութեամբ Աղօթել Միասին

James 5:13-18

Last Sunday we covered James 5:7-12 with following subtitles:

1. Be Patient *Makrothymeō* (long-suffering)
2. Wait with the right attitude
3. Stand Firm, steadfast (*hypomenō*) (under pressure)
4. Be true to your word

In other words:

- Patience,
- Right heart,
- Steadfastness
- Prayer and worship.

Patience is a “humble acceptance of God’s ways while He works out His will for us. (David Roper)¹

Being patient does not mean being passive.

1. Worship and Prayer

James says :

Is anyone among you **suffering (trouble NIV)**? Let him **pray**. Is anyone **cheerful (happy NIV)**? Let him **sing praise**. ¹⁴Is 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. (5:13-14 ESV)

James will end his letter with the most important thing that he practiced, **praying and worshipping God**. His knees were like the camel’s knees. This meant hours of prayer to God.

We often talk about prayer, but do we pray? We may attend seminars about prayer. We may read books about prayer. We may ask others to pray for us. These are good things, but do we pray?

In this passage, James mentions three circumstances when we pray:

a. When we face **tough situations**, do we pray? Some of us do, and some of us just complain and alienate ourselves from everything. Everyday tough situations are chasing us. What do we do? James is clear; pray about them. If you have difficulty to find words for prayer, read the psalms. Many of the psalms are born out of suffering, especially the suffering of David.

Suffering is not fun. James says, “There will be suffering and hardship in our lives. How do we encounter them?”

-Don't just accept suffering—because God doesn't want it.

-Don't just avoid suffering—because God can use it.

-Don't just embrace suffering—because it is evil. (*Suffering: The Servant of Our Joy* TIM KELLER)

James gives examples from the Bible. Prophets Job, and Elijah. All those names are great example of Patience, Perseverance, Steadfastness and Prayer. All those names have experienced suffering. I will repeat what Tim Keller said: Don't just avoid suffering, God can use it. In fact, God used those hardships to shape them. **“The prayer believers are to offer in such circumstances is not necessarily for deliverance from the trial, but for the strength to endure it faithfully.”**² I have seen that in my life, and I will see more of them as well.

b. When you are **happy, pray and sing**. How fortunate we are. Do you know that we have more Christian songs than anyone else in history? We have thousands of hymns, praise songs, CDs DVDs radio... you name it. It is a good discipline to sing and pray when things are going well in our lives. **We have the tendency to lose our focus on God when we live smooth lives.** Again, if you do not find words for praise and prayer, go to the psalms. David will assist you.

-Thanking God, praising and adoring Him is not only words and melodies.

Worshipping God is a **Christ-centered lifestyle**. Jesus commanded us to worship

Him **in Spirit and Truth**. True worship is not the **ceremonies and activities of worship**. **It is the relationship between God and us.**

Eugene Peterson said about prayer:

“Praying is that act in the life of faith which **consciously and deliberately enters into a speaking/listening attentiveness before God**—his relationship with his creation and creatures and their relationship with him. Whenever we concentrate, focus, and attend, we pray. Prayer is the coming into awareness, the practicing of attention, the nurturing and development of personal intensity before God.”

It is consciously and deliberately speaking/listening to God. When we pray, we do not change God. When we pray, God molds us and changes us. James told us to seek wisdom for above. God enjoys hearing from us, and He speaks to us, if we are ready to listen.

c. When we are sick. The Greek word describes a severe sickness. Bring the issue to God. God is the ultimate healer. A friend of mine saw the following sign in the doctor’s office: “I treat, and God cures.” Also ask an elder, a deacon, or any person who has had a long journey in faith and prayer to anoint the sick with oil.

-Praying together for healing is vital in church life. In fact, it brings the church on their knees to worship, praise and pray to the heavenly God. At the present time, we are in this situation at our church, remembering different individuals in our prayers.

-Praying in faith is important as well.

James in the beginning of the letter encouraged the church to pray:

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:2-4 ESV)

However, doubt often comes and freezes our prayer life. We all can face doubt. If you are puzzled why certain things are happening in your life, join us. Many of us ask those questions. Look how James challenged us:

But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. (James 1:6 ESV)

When James uses the word doubt, he means people with a double mindset. James encourages us to focus on God even though we have doubts and unanswered questions.

However, we have to be very careful how to read these verses.

Praying in faith is not a magical power to convince the divine power to do whatever we want. Praying in faith is a biblical command. Praying and asking to receive is biblical command. **However, it does not mean God will grant all our desires.** It is important that **we trust God for His divine wisdom** that grants us His will.³

Illustrations: Paul often asked God to remove the thorn in the flesh. God's answer: **"my grace is sufficient for you."** Stephen died of his wounds and honored the Lord (Acts 7:59-60). **Tabitha** was raised from death and served the Lord (Acts 9:40-41). The blind and leper were healed by Jesus. **Joni Eareckson Tada** continues asking for healing, yet she is on the wheelchair praising God and drawing pictures with her mouth for His glory. What I mean is, when we are ill, we should continue praying and asking for healing.

2. The relationship of sickness and sin.

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

Therefore, confess your sins (*paraptōma*) 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 (effective) NIV. (5:15-16 ESV)

a. God did not create us so that we would be sick. In the beginning, we did not have sicknesses. Sickness and disease are part of our lives after Adam and Eve sinned. We live in defective world under the curse of sin. **Yet, we should be careful not to relate any sickness with a sin that one has committed.** This does not mean we do stuff that can bring harm to our lives; we could “sin” and bring trouble to our head. We could be angry and break a window or glass and injure ourselves. Or because of some illness or pain we could start blaming others, cursing God and falling in sin.

b. There is another type of sin which is a disease that destroys the church community, or any relationship: the sin of **gossip** and **judgment**. Many similar sins hurt the body of Christ and cause wounds. The word that is used for **sick** (*Kamno*) is different; it means a **despairing heart, a dark loss of hope** that requires the intervening prayers of the church.

James encourages us to **confess to each other our sin (*paraptōma*)**. This **confession is for healing, for the body of Christ to be edified and encouraged**. Sin can damage us, externally and internally, but when we confess to God and to each other, God will bring a miracle and healing to the community.

When David confessed his sin, he experienced the joy of release and he praised God with songs and psalms as a result.

Do we confess to each other? We Armenians are too proud to accept that we make mistakes in the first place. We have difficulty to accept that we have sinned. I wonder how we can ask God for healing when we are not broken.

3. Steadfastness in Prayer (Keep praying, praying fervently, earnestly)

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently, (earnestly) (*proseuchē*)⁴ that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. (James 5:13-18 ESV)

The story of Elijah is a good example of praying fervently, earnestly for 3.5 years. It is described in 1 Kings 17-18. Ahab was a wicked king who worshiped Baal. He

married Jezebel from Sidon, (wrong marriage) who worshiped Baal (Read the story in 1 King 17-18). Elijah prayed in faith for a long time for Yahweh to be in control of the situation of the drought. Elijah was simply a righteous man of God obeying Him.

This morning we are gathered in this place. We have the Communion Table opened. Do you want to us (elders, deacons) to pray for you? Do you want to pray? What do you want to pray? Let me finish with a verse from Peter:

“The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. ⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.” (1 Peter 4:7,8)

Amen.

1. David Roper, Growing slowly Wise p 163

2. Tyndale commentary on James.

3. This faith, while certainly including the notion of confidence in God’s ability to answer, also involves absolute confidence in the perfection of God’s will. A true prayer of faith, then, always includes within it a tacit acknowledgment of God’s sovereignty in all matters; that it is *God’s* will that must be done. And it is clear that it is by no means always God’s will to heal those who are ill (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7–9). Therefore, the ‘faith’ that is the indispensable condition for our prayers for healing to be answered – this faith being the gift of God – can be truly present only when it is God’s will to heal. (Tyndale Commentary on James)

4. Fervently, earnestly (*proseuchē*) the word in Greek means:

a. Prayer addressed to God

b. A place set apart or suited for the offering of prayer.