

# Faith in Action: A Study of James

## Faith Handles Failure

James 5:13-20

### Trust in Christ....

- ... is not developed absent of challenge but by applying trust in the midst of challenge. (1:1-8)
- ...provides perspective to help us live God oriented lives. (1:9-18)
- ...will produce Christlikeness. (1:19-27)
- ...produces mercy as we love our neighbor as ourselves. (2:1-13)
- ...must change us. (2:14-26)
- ...must be demonstrated in our words. (3:1-12)
- ...shapes our hearts and desires with wisdom. (3:13-4:12)
- ...helps us have understanding on our limitations. (4:13-17)
- ...leads us to wait for our full reward. (5:1-12)

### Faith Responds to Reality

5:13

Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.

James 5:13

### Sin Has Consequences

5:14-16

Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

James 5:14-16

The heart of the problem lies in just what James meant when he referred to the “sick.” Actually there is no reason to consider “sick” as referring exclusively to physical illness. The word *asthenei* literally means “to be weak.” Though it is used in the Gospels for physical maladies, it is generally used in Acts and the Epistles to refer to a weak faith or a weak conscience (cf. Acts 20:35; Rom. 6:19; 14:1; 1 Cor. 8:9-12). That it should be considered “weak” in this verse is clear in that another Greek word (*kamnonta*) in James 5:15, translated sick person, literally means “to be weary.” The only other use in the New Testament (Heb. 12:3) of that word clearly emphasizes this same meaning.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*

The Old Testament prophets often used healing from sickness as an image for healing from sin, and Jewish literature often associated sin and sickness; for instance, the eighth blessing of a Jewish daily prayer, for healing (although the emphasis is not physical healing), followed petitions for forgiveness and redemption. James does not imply a direct causal relationship between all sickness and sin, any more than Paul or the Old Testament does (see comment on Phil 2:25–30).

*The IVP Bible Background Commentary*

The temptation to show disdain for the poor (2:3), to ignore their needs for food and clothing (2:16), and to threaten their physical survival (5:4) by withholding their fair wages is the same temptation to neglect fellow believers that would leave the sick alone on their backs. Believers who are sick and infirm are to receive special attention by the whole congregation.

*James*

## **Faith is Powerful**

**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 earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

James 5:17-18

Although it is certainly true that Elijah was a “man,” here ἄνθρωπος (anthrōpos) has been translated as “human being” because the emphasis in context is not on Elijah’s masculine gender, but on the common humanity he shared with the author and the readers.

*The NET Bible*

## **Obedience Fosters Obedience**

**5:19-20**

My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

James 5:19-20

Wandering ones need to be brought back to the fold. James referred here not to evangelism but to restoration. Revival, not redemption, is in view. The rescue action is of great significance. A lost sheep is saved from destruction and his sins (the sins of the restored one, not the restorer) are covered as if a veil were thrown over them (cf. 1 Peter 4:8). He can move ahead again on the path toward spiritual maturity.

James has given clear instructions about how to achieve practical holiness and spiritual maturity. His pointed exhortations were designed to stab the consciences and stir the souls of his beloved Jewish brothers. Stand with confidence, serve with compassion, speak with care, submit with contrition, and share with concern. A believer should be what God wants him to be, do what God wants him to do, say what God wants him to say, sense what God wants him to sense, and share what God wants him to share. Spiritual maturity involves every aspect of life.

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*

**Trust in Christ  
is enough  
even in our failures and sin.**

**Questions for Application**

Q1. What ways have you seen your sin have tangible impact in your life?

Q2. How have you been encouraged by other's obedience?