

## JAMES: PRACTICING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

### XII. Ministering With Sensitivity To One Another

(James 5:13-18)

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. Though the Epistle of James offers little formal structure and is less concerned about theological concepts than other New Testament works, it is intensely practical, explaining how to be "doers" of God's Word, James 1:22.
- B. James 5:13-18 addresses the need to minister with sensitivity to one another in Christ (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 834), and we view this passage for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

#### **II. Ministering With Sensitivity To One Another, James 5:13-18.**

- A. We need to minister sensitively in addressing each other's sufferings that are caused by trials, James 5:13a:
  - 1. If anyone in the local church is "suffering ill, trouble" (*kakopatheí*), he should be regularly praying about it. (*proseuchestho*, the **present** imperative of *proseuchomai*, "pray;" U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 789; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 349; Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.).
  - 2. James implied that those who suffer ill should be taught to be in constant prayer about the trial.
- B. We need to minister sensitively in addressing each other's joy, James 5:13b:
  - 1. If anyone in the local church is "cheerful" (*euthumeo*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 173), he should be regularly singing praises in expressing his joy. (*psalleto*, the **present** imperative of *psallo*, "sing praises;" Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 441).
  - 2. James implied that those who are cheerful should be taught regularly to sing praises to God.
- C. We need to minister sensitively in addressing each other's spiritual weaknesses amid suffering, James 5:14-18:
  - 1. The James 5:14 question about anyone being "sick" (KJV) translates the Greek term *asthenei* that means "to be weak," and the term rendered "sick" (KJV) in James 5:15 translates the Greek term *kamonta* that means "to be weary." (Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.) Thus, James 5:14-18 does **NOT** refer to the "bedfast, the diseased, or the ill" or to those near death, and from which interpretation has developed the Roman Catholic Church's "sacrament" of "extreme unction" [or "last rites"] (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to James 5:14-15; Robert C. Broderick, Ed., The Catholic Ency., 1986, p. 208, 340), but to "those who had grown weary, who had become weak both morally and spiritually." (Ibid., B. K. C., N. T.)
  - 2. Such a needy believer was to call for the elders of the church, leaders who were to "encourage the timid" and "help the weak" to request that the elders pray over him and anoint him with oil, James 5:14; Ibid.
  - 3. This anointing was **NOT** a **religious ritual**, for "anoint" renders the Greek verb *aleipsantes*, "rub with oil," not the Greek verb *chrio* that means "ceremonially anoint," Ibid. James was "referring to the common practice of using oil as a means of bestowing honor, refreshment, and grooming." (Ibid., citing Daniel R. Hayden, "Calling the Elders to Pray," Bib. Sac. 138. July-Sept. 1981:264) The weak or weary would be refreshed and encouraged by the elders who had come to rub oil on his head and pray for him, Ibid.
  - 4. The intercessory prayer of the elders who performed this culturally uplifting deed would restore the afflicted believer from his discouragement and the Lord would raise him up, James 5:15a. [Note how James 5:15a *counters* belief in "last rites" just before death, for the believer here is edified and raised up!]
  - 5. If the despondent believer had sinned, he would be forgiven through the effect of this ministry that would encourage him to confess his sin and be restored to fellowship with the Lord, James 5:15b with 1 John 1:9.
  - 6. Thus, believers were to confess their sins to one another [if they had wronged one another] and pray for one another that they might be restored from a state of spiritual weakness and weariness, James 5:16a.
  - 7. James added that the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective (James 5:16b), illustrating this truth in the ministry of Old Testament Elijah: though he was a man of like nature to us, he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and it did not rain for 3 ½ years, but when he prayed fervently again (1 Kings 18:42-46), God sent an abundant rain so that the earth bore its produce, ending the famine, James 5:17-18.

***Lesson:*** *God directs that we believers minister with sensitivity to each other, teaching those who suffer to be in prayer over it, teaching those who are cheerful regularly to sing praises and teaching believers who suffer spiritual weakness and weariness to call for the church leaders to encourage them and intercede in prayer for them. If the weak and weary have sinned, by confessing it to God and others they have wronged, God will nurture them and raise them up, for the intercessory work of righteous believers, like that of Elijah of old, is powerful and effective.*

***Application:*** *May we believers minister with sensitivity to one another to edify each other for God's glory.*