

James 5:16-20

PRAY, CONFESS, HEAL - Vs. 16-18

As we see James turning from those who had sinned and were weak in the faith, now to the whole congregation, to encourage those to pray for one another and confess so as to not be drug down the path others were. Confess - to acknowledge, to profess. Sins - (trespasses) to miss the mark. And we are to do this to one another, this is the importance of Christian fellowship. Pray - to call upon God for understanding and strength. As the previous verses were focused upon the elders prayer for the weak we pray for each other. Healed - has both a literal physical healing and a metaphorical one. Matthew 13:15 "For the heart of this people has become dull, With their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes, Otherwise they would see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I would heal them." Hebrews 12:12-13 "Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that *the limb* which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed."

Transition: from speaking to weak believers, now he transitions to those who may not even be true believers. The entire epistle of James is centered around those who have dead faith. They express it, but they don't practice it when trials and situations arise. And now he addresses the fact that many are in the church but aren't true believers.

A CALL TO REPENT - Vs. 19-20

Don't be alarmed at the amount of people in the church that aren't truly saved, cf. Matthew 7:21-23. Isaiah 29:13 "Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition." And James marks this early on "But prove yourself doers of the word, and not merely hearers" (James 1:22).

Many today are deceived because they belong to a church, they quote Bible verses on social media, they like sermons on social media, and they listen to Christian music. Let's review momentarily what true saving faith is marked by.

- A proper response to trials, temptations, the Word of God, and God's standard for holy living (chapter 1)
- A proper response to people from various social classes and its manifestation of righteous deeds (chapter 2)
- Proper speech, wisdom and not being a friend of the world (chapter 3)
- Humility and submission to God's will (chapter 4)
- Proper view of money, possessions and truthfulness (chapter 5)

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Cf. James 4:7-10 as he exhorts those whose faith had failed the test to come. In these last two verses we see the call to evangelize those who claim to be believers.

THE EVIDENCE (STRAYING)

Vs. 13 describes a group of believers (suffering and cheerful), they are to pray. Vs. 14 describes the weak, sinning believer under the enormous stress of trials, and the elders are to pray for them to be strengthened, and the Lord will deliver them. Now in vs. 19 we see the need for the brethren to call people to true salvation. Jesus promised such people would be found in every church, cf. Matthew 13:20-23; 24-30; 47-50.

The words "among you" indicates they are in a believing church. Paul described one such as these, his name was Demas, 2 Timothy 4:10 "for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica."

Strays from the truth means "to wander, to go astray." It even carries the meaning to "apostatize." It is used to describe a physical wandering. But most often it is used to describe a straying from spiritual truth. Deuteronomy 11:28 "and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known." Proverbs 14:22 "Will they not go astray who devise evil? But kindness and truth will be to those who devise good." 2 Peter 2:15 "forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness." In Scripture these statements frequently describe the unsaved. Matthew 22:29 "But Jesus answered and said to them, You are mistaken (from plano), not understanding the Scriptures nor the power of God." 1 Peter 2:25 describes the life before Christ, "For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."

Straying from what? The truth, which refers to the word of God. It is as sure mark of those who are not true believers when they reject the truth of God's word. 1 John 2:22 "Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son." 1 John 4:3 "and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world." Furthermore, Jesus affirms the sign of one who is a true disciple, John 8:31 "So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine."

The error of his way, results in an errant theology and lifestyle. An example might be someone who clings to the world's view of family, marriage and holiness, rather than what the Scriptures say about it. Those who reject God's word, reject the principals of godly living. Despite and outward expression of faith, it fails the test of true obedience to Scripture by their lifestyle and beliefs.

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THE GOAL (TURN ONE BACK)

What's the goal? To turn a sinner back, away from the wide gate to the narrow gate. This phrase speaks of repentance. It also affirms the believers responsibility to speak the truth to those who are in sin. Do so in love of course. But it also means to speak against false teachings they may be adhering too. Speaking of Paul's testimony in Acts 9:35 "And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord." Acts 3:19a "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away."

The word save translates the most common usage for salvation. Turning to God in repentance results in salvation. It results in conveying a multitude of sins, past, present and future. It results in saving one from hell.