**From Suffering and Prayer to Cheer and Song**

*James 5:13*

**Introduction**

1. Suffering is common to man. The proper reaction to it is not.
2. A significant part of following Christ involves our perception of suffering, and the proper reaction to it. (**cf. Mark 8:34** – taking up cross)
	1. The proper perception and reaction can help us sever ties to this temporal world as we long for heaven.
	2. The improper perception and reaction can lead to us severing ties with God.
3. God has provided us with insight into the problem of suffering and the things He can do for us in it, as well as essential tools for us to endure.
4. **James 5:13** provides the proper response to all suffering, and what it can do for us.
5. The Reality of Suffering
6. Suffering is not a matter of if, but when.
	1. **James 1:2** – “when”
		1. **James 5:1-7** – Readers currently undergoing maltreatment from others. (Rich apostrophized.)
			1. **2 Timothy 3:12** – specific suffering of persecution for the Christian.
		2. Trials are a given, but James is addressing the Christian’s handling of trials.
			1. EX: **1:2-5** – joy, patience, growth, prayer for wisdom, etc.
	2. Various – i.e. many different ways to be tried and suffer.
		1. **5:13** – suffering – *kakopatheō* – undergo hardship (STRONG)
		2. Persecution, sickness, loss, financial, relationship struggles, familial problems, division of family due to sin and error, etc.
	3. Suffering should not cause the Christian to waiver in faith (as the skeptic would seek to exploit it), but turn to God for understanding.
		1. These things will not lead to doubt if we understand God never promised they would go away.
		2. In writing to brethren, James speaks of sufferings and trials as a present reality, and future guarantee.
7. Suffering does not exist because God willed it, but it continues to exist because God allows it.
	1. **James 1:16-17** – only good comes from God.
		1. Death and suffering entered through man – **1 Corinthians 15:21-22**
		2. God is powerful enough to stop it, but obviously hasn’t – not even for His children.
		3. Why would God allow His people to go through the negative things we go through?
	2. **Romans 8:20** – creation (spiritual – Christians; **Romans 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17**) is left to experience these hardships because their hope is for something beyond this life.
		1. **(vv. 18-19)** – Paul talking about suffering as a Christian, and having the hope of glory.
8. Suffering is a negative that God can use to bring about a positive.
	1. **Romans 8:24-25** – produces perseverance within us.
		1. **Romans 8:28** – works together for our good.
	2. **Hebrews 12:10-11** – chastening for our profit – spiritual production.
		1. Not of necessity punitive – but God allowing us to go through things for our good.
		2. **(vv. 12-15)** – rather than respond negatively, and reap the consequences, respond as God instructs, and reap the fruit He offers.
9. The Response of Prayer
10. A primary part of the proper response to trials and suffering is prayer to God.
	1. **James 5:13** – turn to God in prayer.
		1. Always – **1 Thessalonians 5:17**
		2. However, especially appropriate/needed in adversity – **1 Peter 5:7**
	2. God is the one we petition for help – **Psalm 46:1**
		1. *David* – **Psalm 57:1** (when fleeing from Saul into cave)
		2. *Hannah* – **1 Samuel 1:6, 10-11, 20** (Provoked by Peninnah, prayed, Lord gave her a child – Samuel)
		3. *Daniel* – **Daniel 2:12-13, 17-18** (King requiring telling of dream and interpretation – ***“seek”*** – make a petition); **Daniel 6:10** (after knowing the writing was signed)
		4. *Jesus* – **Luke 22:44; Hebrews 5:7** (greatest trial, prayer in garden)
		5. *Peter and John* threatened (Persecution beginning) – **Acts 4:23-24, 31** – prayed, and God heard.
		6. *Peter in prison, John* killed – **Acts 12:5, 12** – church praying for him, angel freed him.
	3. Prayer is effective – **James 5:16-18** – example of Elijah.
		1. **It is not some psychological exercise that we engage in to trick ourselves into being okay.**
		2. **(vv. 17-18)** – Elijah was a man through whom God exhibited great power. However, this is not an example of such miraculous display.
			1. It was the petitioning of God by a righteous man that was effective.
11. Responding in prayer to God knowing such is effective does not guarantee the cessation of the trial.
	1. **2 Corinthians 12:7-10** – Paul prayed fervently for the thorn in the flesh to be removed, and it was not.
		1. Did the prayer work? – (**vv. 9-10)** – it did!
		2. Such guarantees the Lord’s help – **Hebrews 4:16; James 1:5**
	2. **James 1:6** – that prayer must be without doubting (wavering), knowing regardless of what the outcome/answer is, God is providing what is needed.
		1. **Cf. Matthew 26:39** – not my will, but Your will.
12. The Result of Cheer
13. When we truly give our struggles to God in prayer, cheer is the inevitable result.
	1. **James 5:13** – From suffering and prayer to cheer and song.
		1. This is not necessarily a state devoid of adversity **– James 1:2** – joy in trial.
	2. Cheerful – *euthymeō* – eu, “well,” thumos, “mind” (VINE) (3x in NT)
		1. Paul in custody aboard ship sailing to Italy, despite warning of disaster – **Acts 27:20-26** – tempest, Euroclydon.
		2. **(vv. 22, 25)** – ***“take heart”*** – euthymeō
		3. Despite the continuing storm, and eventual destruction of the ship – WELLNESS OF MIND IN SPITE OF THE CALAMITY.
14. Cheer, wellness of mind, is a result of prayer offered to God in the midst of trial.
	1. *euthymeō*:
		1. Used in Acts – wellness of mind coming from something God had spoken to men.
		2. **James 5:13 – wellness of mind coming from us speaking to God.**
			1. TWO LINES OF COMMUNICATION ARE VITAL.
	2. **Philippians 4:4** – we’re to always be rejoicing, including in the times of hardship (Paul writing from prison).
		1. How? – ***“In the Lord”*** – i.e. your joy being independent of outward circumstances, and resting in the Lord’s cause. (**Philippians 4:13** – through Christ).
		2. **Philippians 4:6-7** – in part, through prayer – peace of God guards your heart because you know it is in His hands.
			1. **Part of that peace comes through contentment with the Lord’s cause**.
	3. I can be cheerful knowing God hears my prayers, and will give me what He knows I need – **1 John 5:14-15**
		1. **Matthew 7:9-11** – He will give us what we need.
15. The Reciprocation of Song
16. Times of trial and affliction necessitate petitioning God for aid, but we must always remember to express our gratitude and admiration for God’s lovingkindness.
17. **Hebrews 13:15** – the sacrifice of the fruit of our lips through songs of praise is prescribed by God and is a natural reaction to the cheerful state afforded us by Him.
	1. **Acts 16:25** – Paul and Silas after being beaten and thrown in prison.
		1. It is not unreasonable to imagine they followed the practice of prayer in times of great distress.
		2. Distress to prayer, prayer to cheer, cheer to song.
	2. Messianic Psalm – **Psalm 22:1-2, 19-21, 22-24** – trouble, petition to God, praise for His hearing of the prayer.
		1. **Hebrews 2:11-12** – quoted in Hebrews in a discussion of Christ’s sharing in humanity to bring salvation.
		2. **“declare Your name”** – the praise was a declaration of God’s name – i.e. His character, person, praiseworthy attributes.
		3. Something we are to do as Christians – **1 Peter 2:9** – ***“praises”*** (excellencies – *aretē*). 🡪
18. God’s awareness, attentive ear, and providential care in our trials which leads to state of cheer demands that we extol His great name. Even if the trouble continues.
	1. **Job 1:20-22** – despite all Job went through, he praised the name of God.
		1. **(v. 21)** – “blessed” – LXX – *eulogeō* – lit., "to speak well of" (eu, "well," logos, "a word") (VINE) **(cf. Ephesians 1:3**)
		2. Eulogy (from same root) – at funeral, speak well of the person who has passed.
		3. Job is speaking highly of God even when He has allowed things to be “taken away.”
		4. NOTE: JOB MAY NOT HAVE UNDERSTOOD THE GREATER PURPOSE OF THESE EVENTS AT THE TIME, BUT HE CONTINUALLY TRUSTED IN GOD’S CHARACTER.
	2. God has prescribed song for our good – **Colossians 3:15-16** – peace of God, word dwelling through song, thanksgiving (“grace”) to His name.
		1. Proper expression in good times – where our focus should go.
		2. Reorients us in the bad times – where our focus should go (He is always good).

**Conclusion**

1. **James 5:13** – the pattern we should follow.
2. It is important for us to handle our trials in a godly manner.
3. As we turn to God with all our troubles, He will bring us to a cheerful state.
4. We must not forget to praise Him and thank Him for His constant care.