

The Book Of James: Keeping It Real

James 5:13-16

God provides.

From Genesis 22:14, when Abraham—through a very real encounter—declares His God a trustworthy Provider, we see and hear through God's Word how our faith and His provision work together:

Genesis 22:1-18

Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you." Early the next morning Abraham got up and loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided." The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

It is worth noting that all-powerful God could quite easily accomplish His provision of care, miracles, and supernatural movement apart from our involvement. And to a large extent, He does operate in an invisible realm on our behalf because of His love, mercy, and grace towards His children:

2Peter 1:3-4

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby

are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Gloriously, we can know these promises through His Word, and by faith simply believe them and receive them. Hallelujah! But there's more beloved—much more:

God provides for all the spiritual seasons of our lives:

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

And in this week's passage from James, we will see how God activates and involves the faith of the Jewish Christians—and all of us who follow Jesus—in any and all spiritual seasons:

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Can you identify definitive spiritual seasons in your life in which God provided for you in a way only He could do? What did you learn about God's character through His provision? What was your involvement before, during, and after God came through for you?

James 5:13

(KJV) Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

(NIV) Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.

The whole of discipleship may be capsulized in this first phrase: If you are in trouble, call out to God! Lean into Him, not people.

Proverbs 29:25

The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

Nothing in my twenty-one year sojourn with Jesus has caused me more pain and peril than people-pleasing. Whether it was saying yes in order to avoid the rejection of saying no; whether it was seeking the spiritual approval of and thereby being useful to someone I respected; or whether it was meeting a false expectation of another person over me. My motives were all based around people: people in need, people in authority, manipulative people, or just my need to be accepted in any and every situation by people! Of course, all this people-pleasing made me unfit to serve the Lord in a complete way. Hear these words from Paul:

Galatians 1:10

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Ouch!

Amazingly, I was only completely delivered of this enslaving behaviour in these last few years as a dear woman in Christ prayed over me at my ordination. And what did she pray? That the perfect love of God would flow through my life in a powerful way, casting out all fear—all fear.

And so, folks, all fear of people is now gone in my life.

Hallelujah!

1John 4:18

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

This is a learned response to trouble, as God teaches new believers to trust and obey him. Indeed, it is our first responsibility to disciple new converts towards God, not towards us!

So, James wants his audience—particularly the poor and troubled—to lean into the Lord. And when God comes through, as they are to not doubt He will (James 1:5-8) they are free to praise Him in song. Don't you love that our songs of praise are just a natural response to God's goodness? Let them sing songs of praise—indeed we shall, Lord!

*STUDY POINT: Identify six passages in the Old or New Testament where God's people praised Him publicly for a deliverance or provision.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: How has God come through for you recently? How did you choose to thank Him?

James 5:14

(KJV) Is any sick among you? 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:

(NIV) Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.

I recall a poignant moment when I was serving as an elder many years ago, as a man in our church burst into one of our elders' meetings in tears, imploring us to lay hands on him, issue oil over his head, pray for him, receive his confessions of sin. Absolutely and perfectly this man obeyed the Scriptures. He had been diagnosed with cancer, and was rightfully

placing himself at the mercy of the Lord by obeying the Scriptures. And what happened next?

James 5:15

(KJV) And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

(NIV) And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.

Beloved, this precious brother was made well, was raised up. He was healed. He was forgiven. His life was changed forever.

He believed. He obeyed. He received. And He was saved.

James 5:16

(KJV) Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

(NIV) Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

Even the foundation of modern psychiatry recognizes that verbal confession helps to heal deep wounds. How many counsellors' couches have been occupied by men, women, and children who simply needed to express feelings never before spoken to anyone? For them, in the secular sense, this confession and expression would be part of their process of healing. But for us in the Body of Christ, we invite Jesus into the conversations with those we trust and with whom we pray. James here is advocating mutual healing prayer from at least two parties who are right with God—not perfect, but righteous:

Matthew 6:33

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Find a righteousness seeker today, and begin to pray one to another. The blessing and the healing are yours in accordance with God's unfailing Word!

Amen.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Do you have at least one "righteousness seeker" in your life with whom you can confess sins and pray—and experience God's healing?

Next week we will finish out the Book of James by looking at the rest of this passage, and perhaps look back at some epic takeaways from this life-transforming book.

~ Reverend Darren McClelland