

PRAYER, PRAISE AND HEALING - PART 2

Is anyone cheerful?

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	James 5:13b
Subject:	What a believer who is cheerful should do
Complement:	sing psalms
Exegetical idea:	A believer who is cheerful should sing psalms.
Homiletical idea:	Sing songs of praise to the LORD when you're having a good day so when the bad day comes, you will praise Him still!
Purpose:	To encourage my hearers to fill their minds with the Word of God while they are cheerful so that God can instruct them through His Word in every situation of life!

Introduction

I have been really looking forward to today's message! The short passage of Scripture that we are going to study today has changed my life and changed my family! We are continuing our series on Prayer, Praise and Healing from the book of James. Toward the conclusion of his letter, James asks three important questions. We considered the first question last week. It's found in the first half of James 5:13: "Is anyone among you suffering?"

That word "suffering", "afflicted" in the KJV, "in trouble" in the NIV, means to be in the midst of hard times, to be going through bad times. James asks, "Is anyone among you going through hard times?" That can happen even to Christians, can't it? Oh, yes. Even followers of Jesus go through hard times. And what should we do when we are in the midst of hard times, according to James? Pray. Cry out to God! And how should we pray? How should we cry out to God? However we can. Just cry out to God. He will hear your heart cry. And, even if you can't find the words to say, God will hear your silent heart cry. Hallelujah! Praise His holy name!

So, when you're in the midst of hard times, cry out to God. Some of you have been

crying out to God this week! And He hears your cry. He says, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you, and you will honor Me!” Psalm 50:15 We also were challenged last week to cry out to God not just for ourselves, but for others that need our prayers. I was so blessed on Wednesday evening at the 7:00 PM prayer service! People were crying out to God, not just for themselves but for others! It was powerful! God is doing a mighty work in our midst!

If you missed the first message in this series on Prayer, Praise and Healing, you can watch it or listen online at www.forestlakechurch.org.

Today, we are going to consider the second of three questions that James asks near the end of his epistle. This second question is also found in James 5:13, the second half of the verse. I invite you to open your Bible to the book of James, chapter 5, and let’s look at the second half of verse 13. The NKJV translates the second question in James 5:13 this way: “Is anyone cheerful?” Is anyone cheerful? Who has the KJV of the Bible? How is this second question translated in your version of the Bible? “Is anyone merry?” What about the NIV? “Is anyone happy?”

What do you notice about these three translations? They are all different. So what does this word mean in the second question that James asks believers? Cheerful? Merry? Happy? The Greek verb that is used in this second part of James 5:13 is ,↔2Λ:ΞΤ, and I’m not convinced that any of the Bible translations that we just quoted have translated this verb accurately. The verb ,↔2Λ:ΞΤ is made up of two words: the prefix ,↔, which we find in English words like eulogy and euphoria. The prefix ,↔ means good or well. And 2Λ: λ̄ means passion. That includes anger or wrath, but combined with the prefix ,↔ this unusual Greek

word literally means “to be of good passions”, “to be in good spirits”.

James might have said, “Is anyone having a good day?” That’s the etymology of the word ,↔2Λ:ΞT, translated in our text, “Is anyone cheerful?” “Is anyone merry?” “Is anyone happy?”

We can also learn about the meaning of this key word in James 5:13 by examining the two other places in the NT where this same verb ,↔2Λ:ΞT is found. Both other occurrences are in the book of Acts, chapter 27. Dr. Luke is recording the story of Paul’s stormy voyage and shipwreck off the coast of Malta. And in Acts 27:22 we read, “.....” And then again in Acts 27:25, “.....”

You can see from the context why “be of good courage!” or “cheer up!” is a good translation. They have not been having a good day. In fact, it has been more than two weeks since they had a good day! So, with that story in mind, to translate ,↔2Λ:ΞT in James 5:13 as “Is anyone happy?” sound rather weak to me! What do you think? And “is anyone merry?” That sounds too much like Christmas! A good translation might be “Is anyone of good courage? Is anyone in good spirits? Is anyone having a good day?”

I’m sure that some of us here on campus today, or some of you who have joined us via our media ministry, might answer “Yes!” I’m of good courage today! I’m having a good day!” If you can answer “Yes!” to James’ question today, then James has some very specific counsel for you. Again, just one word in Greek text. It’s the Greek verb Pϙ88T. It’s a word that will require some careful study in order to understand the counsel that James has for us, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

How does the second half of James 5:13 read in your translation of the Bible? In the

NKJV it reads, “Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.” What about the KJV? “Is any merry? Let him sing psalms.” That’s the same as the NKJV. What about the NIV? “Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise!”

What’s the best translation? Is it “Let him sing psalms” or “Let him sing songs of praise?” To answer that question, we need to go back to the Greek translation of the book of psalms. What do we call the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures? The Septuagint. When the Jewish scholars around 200 BC translated the Psalms from Hebrew into Greek, they often used the verb P₅₈₈T, the same verb found in our text in James 5:13.

Let’s look at three psalms where the verb P₅₈₈T is used when translating from Hebrew to Greek. These passages will help us to understand the answer to James’ second question in James 5:13. Turn to Psalm 18:49. “.....” When the Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew zamar, “to sing praises” into Greek, they used the Greek verb P₅₈₈T, the same verb found in our text in James 5:13.

Look at another example in Psalm 47:6. The Hebrew verb for sing praises is zamar. And you can guess what Greek verb the Jewish scholars chose! P₅₈₈T.

One more example. Psalm 9. That’s one of my favorite psalms of praise! The psalmist declares, “I will praise you, O Lord, with my whole heart! I will tell of all your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You. I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.” When the Jewish scholars translated that Hebrew for “I will sing praise,” they used the verb P₅₈₈T.

So, when James asks, “Are you having a good day?” and then uses the verb P₅₈₈T, he is not simply encouraging us to sing songs. He is specifically encouraging us to sing songs of praise to the LORD. Specifically, to sing Scripture songs of praise!

And that's something that I love to do. I love to sing Scripture songs of praise to the LORD! And I am blessed to live with someone who compose the melodies for those Scripture songs of praise so that I can hide those words in my mind and in my heart. You are going to hear one of those Scripture songs of praise to the LORD in just a few minutes.

But someone might be thinking, "Wait a minute! Why does James tell us to sing Scripture songs of praise if we're having a good day? Aren't we supposed to praise the Lord at all times? Yes! We are supposed to praise the Lord at all times. The psalmist David declared, "I will bless the LORD at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth!" So it's good to sing songs of praise to the Lord at all times.

But I can think of at least two reasons why James encourages us to sing Scripture songs of praise when we're having a good day. First, if you're having a good day, and you are thankful for all of God's blessings, don't you think that it's appropriate to sing Scripture songs of praise to the Lord? Isn't that a good idea? Moses makes it clear in Deuteronomy chapter 8 that when we are in the midst of good times we ought not to forget that it is the Lord who is the giver of every good and perfect gift. All of our blessings come from His hand. So it makes sense for James to say, If you're having a good day, sing Scripture songs of praise to the LORD!

But there's another reason why we should sing Scripture songs of praise to the Lord when things are going well. It's during the good times that we need to be filling our minds and our hearts with the Word of God. **"Sing songs of praise to the Lord when you're having a good day!** That's good counsel. When you're in the midst of hard times, it's not that easy to focus. **"Sing songs of praise to the Lord when you're having a good day!**

Do you remember the story of Joseph when he became ruler over Egypt. During the

seven years of plenty, Joseph ordered grain to be stored up in barns. Why? So that there would be reserves when the seven years of famine came. And we also need to store up God's Word in our hearts during the times when things are going well. Then, when the seven years of famine come, when we are going through hard times, we will have the precious Word of God stored in our minds and hearts! Does that make sense to you?

James wisely, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, encourages us to learn those Scripture songs of praise, and to sing those songs of praise, when we're having a good day. Then, when the hard times comes, we'll not only cry out to God, as we learned last week, but we will already have His Word in our minds and in our hearts.

That's why I'm so excited that we are learning the Scripture songs of praise at our Wednesday evening prayer service! If you haven't been to the Wednesday evening prayer service recently, you have missed some beautiful music! I've asked some of those who come the Wednesday evening prayer service to help me sing one of those Scripture songs of praise today. It's actually that same psalm that I quoted earlier: Psalm 9. If you know the song, please feel free to sing along with us.

Psalm 9:1-2

I will praise you, O LORD, with my whole heart.

I will tell of all Your marvelous works.

I will be glad and rejoice in You.

I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.

We have a special prayer service Scripture song CD that we have prepared. It includes

this psalm of praise, and 5 other Scripture songs. And we'd like to give you a free copy of this CD! There's just one condition: You have to come to the Wednesday prayer service to get it! That is, unless you live far from here. If you're joining us via our media ministry, via web church, or radio, or television, just send us an e-mail with your mailing address, and we'll send you a copy of this Scripture songs CD as a gift from the Forest Lake Church family!

Why would we do that? The answer is simple. We need to fill our hearts and minds with the Word of God! And James has given us some very practical counsel today: **Sing songs of praise to the LORD when you're having a good day so when the bad day comes, you will praise Him still!** Don't wait until the hard times come to start scrambling around for the precious promises of God's Word. Fill your mind and heart with the Word of God now!

And if you're not having a good day, if your not of good courage, then just get one of the Scripture songs CDs and listen to it. Even if you're too down to sing along, just let the Word of God soak into your mind and heart. The day will come when you will be able once again to lift up your heart and voice in praise to the Lord!

Several weeks ago, something happened to me that filled my heart with joy! I heard a young family filling their hearts with the Word of God! They were having a good day, and there is no better time to sing Scripture songs of praise than when you're having a good day! I was so blessed by their singing that I asked them if they would sing for us today at church. Please remember that this is not a performance. This is an illustration of what we all should be doing: filling our hearts with the Word of God!

I would like to invite Noah, and Levi and Eden, and Zion, and their parents Pamela and David to come up here with my wife Bodil. They are going to share with you one of the

Scripture songs that they have hidden in their hearts!

Which song are you going to sing for us today? “The Fruit of the Spirit.”

Galatians 5:22-23 NKJV

**The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering
kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control**

Thank you, Nerness family, for sharing that Word of God with us today. That is also a song of praise! You are praising God for the fruit of the Spirit which is given to us! That was beautiful, wasn't it? And thank you, Pamela and David, for filling your hearts and the hearts of your children with the Word of God!

I'm thankful for another piece of practical counsel from James, the brother of our LORD. Last week we learned, “If you're in the midst of hard times, cry out to God!” I hope that you not only remembered that, but that you will live it too! **Sing songs of praise to the LORD when you're having a good day so when the bad day comes, you will praise Him still!** Very practical counsel! **Sing songs of praise to the LORD when you're having a good day so when the bad day comes, you will praise Him still!** And in the days or weeks ahead, whether you're having a good day or a bad day, you'll be glad that your mind and heart is filled with the Word of God!