

**Sermon preached by Canon Jim Holbeck at St Andrew's Cathedral Sydney on Wed
28 June 2006**

Topic: James 5:13-20. Reading: THE "GOOD" LIFE. APPROPRIATE CHRISTIAN LIVING
(This is a condensed version of the final sermon preached by Canon Holbeck before his Long Service Leave which began on Mon 2nd July leading to his retirement as Leader of the Healing Ministry in Sydney as from the end of September 2006)

THE "GOOD" LIFE. APPROPRIATE CHRISTIAN LIVING. James 5:13-20

You and I are meant to be real people. I used a term at a funeral service recently in describing the man who had passed away. I called him as WYSIWYG person, a computer term using the first letters in the phrase, What You See Is What You Get. No humbug, no hypocrisy just a genuine person. We are meant to be outwardly what we are really like within in all the situations of life.

1. WHEN ONE IS GOING THROUGH EMOTIONAL TIMES. 13

James 5:13 *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.*

a). When suffering. The word for suffer is a word that means to be afflicted, endure afflictions, to suffer trouble. James uses it later in his letter to describe *the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. as an example of suffering and patience.* They were serving God but they faced difficulties. 5:10.

Three times in his 2nd letter to Timothy he wrote of the suffering that comes from standing for Christ and seeking to serve Him. *2 Tim 2:3 Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.*

2 Tim 2:9 for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! 2 Tim 4:5 ... always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry.

What is the appropriate response when you are facing difficulties? James says, **Let him pray**, a word always used of praying to God. Hand it all over to God in prayer. The noun is used in Phil 4:6, *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* Then you can experience the peace of God that passes understanding.

b). When cheerful? Paul spoke to people facing a crisis situation in Acts 27 and told them to *take heart ... be encouraged* because God was in control of the situation. They had no need to fear. *Verses 27:22, 25, 36.*

The appropriate response? **Let him sing praise.** (psallo) cf., Psalms. Eph 5:19 *singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts.* Thanking God in praise can bring great release even as we do it.

2. WHEN ONE IS SICK. Appropriate responses by individual and elders. 14-15.

14 Is anyone among you sick? 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. You will understand when I say the word for sick means being weak, feeble, lacking strength, too weary to cope.

a). What to do when sick. Let him call for the elders (presbuteros) of the church.

Let me say I have nothing against doctors or the medical profession and am grateful for what they have done in my life and in the life of all the members of my family. But I wonder sometimes whether we really see this verse as being part of the Bible for us to act on. Why don't we do it when it is part of the word of God to us? It may be fear. What happens if we pray over someone and nothing happens? Or the even greater fear. What happens if we pray over people and something does happen beyond our control? I wonder how many people might have been healed if they had called the elders to come and pray for them.

b). and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

There is nothing magical about the oil or the anointing. It is a way of identifying with God in His healing purposes. It is the prayer that is important. I sometimes say that prayer is an invitation to God to work in our human situation. *Ie., Your kingdom come, Your will be*

done!” It is here called *the prayer of faith*. Again it is not some magical incantation that must work in every situation. It is asking God to do His will in the situation we bring to Him and trusting Him to do so.

c). The result of such prayer.

15 And the prayer of faith will save (sozo= heal) the one who is sick)

i). It will save or heal the sick. Sick_{here} is a word denoting weariness) also Heb 12:3, *grow weary*.

ii). Raise, restore to health. and the Lord will raise him up. Note that it is the Lord who raises people up from their sickbed not the elders. He might work through their prayers but He Himself heals the sick.

I remember being called out on my day off to see a woman on a farm who was in incredible agony lying flat on her back not able to move. I took with me one of our female leaders. The sick woman was white with pain. We read the Bible to her and then prayed over her. To my amazement at the end of the prayer she sat bolt upright in bed and said “*All the pain has gone.*” Later she hopped out of bed and next day was driving her utility vehicle on the bumpy country roads with no pain at all. The Lord raised her up. We prayed but it was the Lord raised up from her sickbed.

iii). Forgiveness of sins. And if he has committed sins (hamartia) he will be forgiven (aphiemi). It is true that very often when people are in need and ask God to heal them and He does, that they become so much more open to God.

A massive fellow I knew had received all the medical treatment he could get over many years but only got worse. He was healed when he came forward to receive prayer for healing at the end of a service. Next day he invited me to see him in his home. Towering over me he said, *Me and my wife are not married even though we have been living together for many years.* That was shock number one.

Shock number 2 came next. He said, *Some people call it living in sin. What do you say about it?*

A bit of pastoral advice when faced with that sort of situation, say... as little as possible, as softly as possible.

Then he continued to my great relief, *It is wrong isn't it. So I'm going to go back to my farm and I will court her at weekends in a godly way and then we will only come together when we are both in a position to marry each other.* And that's what he did. His healing had opened up to God and to the will of God and he got things right with God. **And if he has committed sins (hamartia) he will be forgiven (aphiemi).**

3. HELPING ONE ANOTHER TOWARDS WHOLENESS. 16

16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working

a). Confession of sin to one another. 16 *Therefore, confess your sins to one another*

We need to confess our sins to God because He knows about them anyway. But we need to be open with Him and call sin by its true name, sin.

But there is a place for appropriate confessing our sins to one another, especially to the one we sinned against and asking their forgiveness.

b). Praying for one another for healing. and pray for one another, that you may be healed:

This is a different word for heal and means to make whole. It can even be used for salavation. When you and I pray for healing for people we should have in mind all that God has for them in His love and mercy and grace. To be whole in body and mind, to be whole in relationships with God and with others, to become transformed more and more into the likeness of Christ.

c). The result of righteous prayer. *The prayer of a righteous person has great power ischuo as it is working.* It is powerful when God releases His power to bring about the healing.

The righteous person is the person described in John 15:7, *If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.* When we abide in Him and His words abide in us, our prayers will be more in tune with His will.

4. PRAYING CAN BRING ABOUT CHANGES IN LIFE. 17-18

a). Elijah was human just like us. *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.* (Also Acts 14:15, Paul & Barnabas). He wasn't some superhero or some demigod. He was just like us.

b). His prayer. ...*he prayed fervently that it might not rain, 1 Kings 17-18.*

God led him to pray in this way that a nation might be humbled and be forced to cry out to God for help.

c). The result of his ongoing prayer, *and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. 18 Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.*

His prayers brought about a tremendous change in the situation he prayed about.

The prayers of righteous people can bring tremendous changes in any situation. Think of these encouraging words from St Paul in Eph 3:20, *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.* Let's never put limits on what God can do when He says we have can have no idea what He can do and that no prayer is beyond His capability in answering.

5. OUR MUTUAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST. 19-20

a). The restorative action to be taken. The prayers of righteous people can bring about transformation and change in people who wander away from God. **19** *My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth aletheia and someone brings him back.* (See Acts 3:19 for need to repent and **be converted**)

b). The result of such restorative action. **20** *let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.*

i). Save a soul from death. Sozo used here for save can also be translated "heal".

ii). Cover a multitude of sins. What a privilege it is for you and me to be able to pray for the needs of our fellow humans.

But we do so knowing that it has to be the Lord who does the healing not us.

He is the Lord who can do more than we can ever ask or think.

Let's ask this gracious and Powerful Lord to do that in our midst tonight.