"FAITH WITH BOOTS ON"

BIG IDEA . . . Part 14: Look to God in Times Like These (Jam. 5:13-18)

INTRO. – Experiences of all kinds come our way in life, whether Christian or not. All face both up (good) and down (bad) times. Life is a series of peaks and valleys. Before we die, every emotional string on our heart is played. How is a believer to respond? Psalmist wrote, "I trust in you, oh Lord. *My times* are in *your hands*" (31:14-15). Regardless of the times, they are in God's control. Moses said, "your strength will equal your days" (God provides what I need for today). James instructs us in what to do in the varied experiences of life. In last section, he challenged us to wait patiently in: uncontrollable circumstances, unmanageable people, unexplainable problem(s). Now, he shows us what to do while we patiently wait. James, using three questions, mentions three kinds of life situations and what to do in each.

I. *PRAY* IN TIMES OF *HARDNESS* (13a)

A. *Situation* (*in trouble*) – James asks. . . is any Christian suffering, afflicted, facing difficulty, having problems, in hard times? (2 Tim. 2:3). James' readers facing hard times (5:4-6). All face hard times of various kinds: job, marriage, kids, etc. Believers aren't immune. "The righteous will have troubles" (Psa. 34:19a). Paul told Philippian, "it was kind of you to share my trouble." What are we to do? (1:2-8).

B. *Instruction* (*pray*) – Every affliction is a call to pray. James didn't say to complain, worry, etc. Hardness either drives us away or draws us closer to God. What is your first response when trouble comes? Keep on praying for wisdom and strength. James was a man of prayer (camel knees). Hymn – "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"

C. Conclusion? One of two results. God either removes or provides grace and strength (Psa. 34:19b)

II. *PRAISE* IN TIMES OF *GLADNESS* (13b) - Flipside

A. *Situation* (*happy*?) – Cheerful, joy, satisfied, good times . . . These times we enjoy. In glad times what?

B. *Instruction* (*sing songs of praise*) – God's outlet for us in the good times is sing and praise. Bible says much about both. Our faith is a singing faith. Listen to Psalmist 149:1,5,6 . . . to Paul in Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 . . . Music makes you smarter . . .

C. Conclusions? Prov. 15: 13,15; 17:22 . . .

III. *PROCESS* IN TIMES OF *SICKNESS* (14-18) – What to do in times of physical illness is only experience remaining. James gives a process of what to do in times of sickness.

A. *Situation* (14a - *anyone of you sick*?) – weak spiritually or physically?

1. *Any one of you* is a Christian. Christians do get sick and even die. Examples: Paul (2 Cor. 12:7-10), Timothy (1 Tim. 5:23), Trophimus (2 Tim. 4:20), Epaphroditus (Ph. 2:27).
2. *Sick* is seriously ill, perhaps bedridden and incapacitated . . . as v. 14 "pray over" and v. 15 "raise him" suggest. The sickness James addresses appears to be sin-related (v. 15) "continuously sinned" and (v. 16 "confess"). Though all sickness is ultimately due to original sin, not all sickness is due to personal sin (Rom. 5:12; John 9:1-4). But, some sickness is result of personal sin (Mk. 2:1-12; Jn. 5:1-14). Some illness we bring on ourselves because we sin – overeat, alcohol, tobacco, worry, etc. James' language suggests this person's sickness is due to unconfessed sin (1 Cor. 11:30).

B. *Instructions* given to the:

1. *Sick* – take initiative to *call the elders*. The sick person summons the spiritual leaders, not priest or faith healers. When James wrote, special gifts of healing still existed. Weak call on strong. The sick are also to confess sins (15b-16a).
2. *Elders'* task is twofold:
   - "Pray over him in faith" – Effective prayer has three key factors: obedience, faith and sovereignty. To pray in faith is to pray according to God's will (1 Jn. 5:14-15). Faith is not the issue here, but God's will.
   - "Anoint him with oil" – Of two words available, one used refers to medicinal. Use best available medicine. Also symbolic of Holy Spirit. Sentence construction shows this is done first, then call for elders to pray. Here is timing: confess personal sins, consult medical doctor, call for spiritual elders, wait.

C. *Conclusion?* To pray "thy will be done" leaves results to God. *The Lord* (not elders) makes this *person well*, *raises up*, *forgives*, heals. He doesn't always heal on earth. But does always forgive.

D. *Illustration* of Elijah (17-18) – Mayhue comments . . .

CONC: Life happens. Both Christians and non- Christians experience good and bad times. Difference is that because of Jesus, the Christian's worse hard time is better than a lost person's best good time. He is resource in hard times. A Christian's worst time with Jesus is better than lost best time w/o Jesus! James tells us what to do in times of hardness (pray), of gladness (praise), of sickness (process). He has covered all times. Common solution to all is prayer and praise. Both look to God, both are essential, both are effective, the enemy hates both and both are often greatest weaknesses in a believer's life. Where do you look in these times? What experiences are you facing (hardness, gladness, sickness) today? Are you looking to God? He is a God for all seasons.