

The Power of Prayer

James 5:13-20

James, throughout this book has had a great deal to say about the tongue, and this chapter is no different. He mentioned some of the lowest uses of the tongue: Complaining and swearing. But he also used some of the highest uses of the tongue, such as: Proclaiming Gods Word, praying and praising God. Prayer is certainly a high and holy privilege!!

- Seven times in this section James mentions prayer. The mature Christian is prayerful in the troubles of life. For example: Instead of constant complaining about our situation, we bring it to God. He is the only one who can do anything about it.
- In this section, James gives us four situations in which God answers prayer.

1. Prayer for the suffering. (5:13)

- The word trouble means “Suffering in difficult circumstances.”
- What should we do when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances? We cannot afford to waste time complaining and saying everyone else has it better than me. Or even worse, blame God for everything. (Illustration: The dad that complained about the church service afterwards.)
- We should pray, and ask God for wisdom that we need to understand the situation and use it to His glory. Who in here has an analytical mind? Use

that. Because the sooner we know the why and how, we can pray more purposefully.

- Prayer can remove affliction, if that is God's will. It can also give us grace that we need to endure troubles. Paul prayed that God would change his circumstances, but instead, God gave Paul the grace he needed to turn his weakness into strength.
- Jesus prayed in Gethsemane that the cup might be removed, and it was not, but the Father gave him the strength he needed to go to the cross and die for our sins.
- God balances our lives by giving us hours of suffering and days of singing. The mature Christian knows how to sing even in his suffering. Paul and Silas when they were suffering in jail, "prayed and sang praises unto God."
- Praying and singing were important parts of worship in the early church and they should be important to us today.

2. Prayer for the Sick. (5:14-16)

- What is the prayer of Faith? 1John 5:14-15 'And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us: and if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desire of him.'
- The prayer of faith is a prayer offered when you know the will of God and pray according to his will.

- Take the sick for instance. Those who claim that God heals every case, and that it is not his will for children to be sick, are denying both scripture and experience.
- But when we have an inner conviction from the Spirit that it is God's will to heal, then we can pray and expect God to work.
- There are some practical lessons that we must not overlook. For one thing, disobedience to God can lead to sickness.
 - Secondly, sin affects the whole church. We can never sin alone because it has a way of growing and affecting others.
 - Thirdly, there is healing spiritually and physically when sin is dealt with. James said to make a habit of confessing your sin to each other. Word of advice: Notice it says to each other and not to everyone. Be careful who you confide in.
 - The confessing James is talking about is done among the saints or other Christians. He was not suggesting that we confess to a preacher or priest. We confess our sins first to the Lord.
- Then to the people who have been affected by them. We must never confess sin beyond the circle of that sin's influence. Private sin requires private confession; public sin requires public confession.
- It is wrong for Christians to hang their dirty laundry in public because it could do more wrong than the original sin has done. Example: Girl in my youth group got pregnant. Instead of hiding in shame she made a public confession. First to God, then her family, and then to her church.

- What was the result of all of this confessing? It removed all rumors, and she didn't have to walk through it alone. It gave her church an opportunity to love on her and offer support.

3. Prayer for the Nations. (5:17-18)

- James cites Elijah as an example of a "righteous man" whose prayers released power. "The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."(James 5:16)
- The background for this verse is found in 1 Kings 17-18. King Ahab and his wife Jezebel, had lead Israel away from the Lord and into the worship of Baal. God punished the nation by holding back the rain for three and a half years.
- Elijah challenged the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel. Over and over the prophets of Ball prayed and nothing happened. Elijah on the other hand prayed but once and fire from heaven came down and consumed the sacrifice.
- The nation still needed rain. Elijah went to the top of Mount Carmel and prayed. Seven times he prayed and sent his servant to look for signs of rain and on the seventh time Elijah's servant said, there is a cloud about the size of a man's hand come. The rain came and the nation was saved.
- Do we need showers of blessing on our country today? Yes we certainly do!!!
- A man by the name of Robert Law once said, "Prayer is not getting man's will done on earth. It's getting God's will done on earth. If you are

wondering why your prayers are not being answered, it maybe because you are not praying according to God's will.

- Elijah didn't only believe in his praying, but he was persistent. On Mount Carmel, Elijah continued to pray for rain until his servant came and reported a cloud the size of a man's hand.
- Too many times we fail to get what God promised because we STOP praying!!
- There is a difference between vain repetition and true believing persistence in prayer. Jesus prayed three times in the garden; Paul prayed three times that his thorn in the flesh would be taken from him. So many times our heart and spirit are not engaged when we pray, but only our babbling mouths.
- Did you know that prayer power is the greatest power in the world today? James 5:16 "Tremendous power is made available through a good man's earnest prayer."
- History has shown how we went from man power to horse power, and then to dynamite and TNT, and now to nuclear power. But greater than nuclear power is prayer.
- Our brain says prayer is a last ditch effort but the Word of God says it "dunamis" (Greek for strength, power, ability) power. That's why the Bible tells us to renew our minds. We have to retrain our minds to think according to the WORD and not the world.
- We need to pray for our nation today, that God will bring conviction and revival, and that showers of blessing will return to our land. One of the first responsibilities of the church is to pray for government leaders.

