

The Prayer of Faith

- *James 5:13-20*

- Throughout this book, James has mentioned several times the use of the tongue & more specifically how we can use it for the glory of God.
- Prayer is one of the greatest privileges we have when it comes to using our voice to magnify His name. What a fitting way for James to close out this book as he encourages us to continue on in the Prayer of Faith.
- READ SCRIPTURE

1. Prayer for the Suffering (v.13-14)

- The word *afflicted* means "suffering in difficult circumstances." The phrase "in trouble" is a good translation. Paul used this word to describe the circumstances he was in as he suffered for the Gospel's sake (II Tim. 2:9).
- I cannot press the importance enough for us to come before the Lord in prayer for ourselves & lift one another up in prayer during times of hardship.
- We spend a lot of time in prayer around here, we take time every service to lift up our requests for the Lord, and we do this specifically b/c we believe in the power of prayer.
 - a. **Prayer can remove affliction.**
 - i. How many of you believe the "prayer of a righteous man availeth much"? If it is God's will, He has the authority & the power to heal any need that we have in our life. I believe that with all my heart.
 - ii. I appreciate others who realize the power of prayer as they seek the prayers of others to bring healing to their life.
 - iii. I appreciate those of you who diligently & faithfully get on the "prayer chain" & call others during a time of need. That's important b/c God hears our cries & we have seen Him heal on many occasions.
 - b. **Prayer gives us grace.**
 - i. While we ultimately seek healing during our prayers for others & ourselves, it is during those times of reaching Heaven's throne that God gives to us the grace to go through this suffering if that is His will.
 - 1. Paul prayed that God might change his circumstances, but instead, God gave Paul something better than physical healing, he gave him the grace he needed to turn his weakness into strength.
 - 2. When Jesus prayed from the Garden that the cup might be removed, I believe He knew there was only one way, but He needed the Father to give Him the strength He would need to go to the cross and die for our sins.
 - c. **Prayer can bring a song.**
 - i. Have you ever knelt to pray & though your heart was heavy for particular needs, something about praying to a God who is in control brought a song of joy & peace to your heart.
 - ii. Singing a song doesn't necessarily mean that you have no worries. But a mature Christian can sing even in the midst of suffering.
 - 1. When Paul & Silas were in the jail at Philippi, what does the Bible record them doing? They were singing songs to the Lord.
 - a. Acts 16:25 – "And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them."

2. Were they excited about being in jail? Did they find pleasure in suffering?
Absolutely not.
 3. But they sang b/c of the peace that God gave to them in a time when they needed it most.
- iii. Let me say this about singing as well. Singing is an expression of your inward spiritual life.
1. If you can stand up & sing about God's Amazing Grace & it not affect you, something is wrong.
 2. If you can sing about being a Child of The King & you cant smile about it, something is wrong.
 3. If you can sing the words of Victory in Jesus & yet your expressions sees as though you are still in bondage, something is wrong.
 4. Our singing should come from the heart & be motivated by the Holy Spirit.
- iv. If we bring our prayers before the Lord in this manner, are we guaranteed that our ailments will be healed? No, but we are guaranteed that God's will shall be accomplished & the recipient of that prayer will be encouraged.

2. Prayer for the Sin-Sick (vv.15-16)

a. Sickness Because of Sin

- i. James here is specifically talking about those who are involved in some kind of sin & have potentially been excommunicated from the church b/c of their habitual sin.
 1. Let this be a reminder that God allows sickness at times as a result of consequences or failure to acknowledge Him.
 2. I Corinthians 11:30 – “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”
- ii. In this case, when he is ready to confess his faults, the elders of the church were to go to him & pray with him so that he might be restored.

b. The person is healed by "the prayer of faith"

- i. When we call the deacons of the church to the altar to pray for others, & even when we anoint others with oil, what is it that restores them?
 1. Is it these men?
 2. Is it the oil?
 3. Of course not, it is the faith of these group of people.
 - a. I John 5:14-15 – “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.”
- ii. We should count it an honor & privilege to pray for others; but there are times where it is difficult to know what to pray.
 1. Have there ever been times where you went to pray for someone & you really struggled with even what to pray?
 2. Romans 8:26 – “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”
 - a. It is foolish to think that every prayer brings the healing we desire.
 - b. It is important for us always to pray for God's will to be done, not just our own.

3. Prayer For Our Nation (vv.17-18)

- **Here James gives the miraculous story of how Elijah came before God in prayer not only for himself, but for the entire nation of Israel.**
 - o King Ahab & his wife Jezebel were instrumental in I Kings 17-18 in leading the children of Israel away from the Lord & now the chosen people of God found themselves worshipping Baal.
 - o God punished the nation by holding back the rain that they needed & for 3 ½ years, the heavens were shut up & not a drop of rain fell to the earth.
 - This affected their water supply.
 - This affected their crops.
 - o Then Elijah challenged the priests of Baal on Mt. Carmel to pray unto their god.
 - They built an altar.
 - Offered a sacrifice.
 - And prayed for fire to be sent down.
 - o Once their cries went unanswered, Elijah repaired the altar, prepared his sacrifice, doused it with what precious water they had left, & cried out to the Lord to send fire from Heaven & the fire came and consumed the sacrifice. He had proven that Jehovah was the true God.
 - **Though God had responded powerfully, the nation of Israel was still without water & needed it desperately.**
 - o Elijah went to the top of Carmel and fell down before the Lord in prayer. He prayed and sent his servant **seven times** to see if there was evidence of rain; and the seventh time his servant saw a little cloud. Before long, there was a great rain, and the nation was saved.
 - o There are times were we feel intimidated by the prayers of such faithful men; yet God says that Elijah was a man just like you & me (v.17).
 - o But he was a "righteous man," obedient to the Lord and trusting Him to meet not only his need, but the need for the entire nation.
 - **Don't miss this. Elijah had to faithfully pray in order for God to meet his need. The Bible says that he prayed 7 times. He was persistent & determined to show his faithfulness to God b/c this need was important to him.**
 - **The greatest need our nation has today is that Godly men & women would pray diligently for our country & its leaders.**
 - o I Timothy 2:1-3
- 4. Prayer For the Backslider (vv.19-20)**
- **There are times when a brother or sister will stray from the truth & maybe even find themselves wandering in sin.**
 - o What is the church's responsibility to this person, to bring judgment or make their faults public? James instructs to earnestly pray for their safe return to the faith.
 - o We have already mentioned the consequences associated with sin in our lives. Part of our prayer as believers is that God would extend mercy to them in their lives & show them their need to turn back to Christ.
 - o But ultimately our prayer should be that God would do whatever it takes to bring them back to the fold.
 - If a sheep is lost from the fold & begins to wander & puts his life in jeopardy, the shepherd will at first gently bring him back to the fold.
 - But if he continues to wonder, the shepherd will be forced to take drastic measures to ensure the future safety of the sheep.
 - o But along with our prayers, we should be seeking to help the backslidden in an effort to bring them back to Christ.