

Prayers of Faith (Part 2 of # 20)

James 5: 13-18

In our last study we began to move through this wonderful passage dealing with prayer. It is evident, and expected, that James dealt with many who stood in need of prayer. He offers direction and wisdom concerning the prayers of God's people.

I am sure you will agree that we too stand in need of prayer. Every day we are mindful of particular needs that we feel burdened to take before the Lord in prayer. I am convinced the average Christian believes in prayer, and even engages in prayer, but do we pray as we should? Are we earnest in prayer or is our prayer time more of a habit than a genuine burden comforted by faith and expectation. Prayer is without question the greatest resource any believer has and yet it is often overlooked or neglected. Simply, we need to be a people of prayer.

Let's take a moment to review our previous discussion. As we do, keep in mind that faith is essential in prayer. God honors faith in every aspect of our lives and prayer is no exception. Last time we discussed:

I. The Instruction in Prayer (13-15)

A. Prayers in Affliction (13a) – This dealt with our suffering, dealing with evil blows from the outside world.

B. Prayers of Adoration (13b) – These lived in the same environment as the others, and yet they were merry. *“Being of a good mind and attitude, dealing with the joy we possess.”*

C. Prayers of Intercession (14-15)

1. The Appeal (14a) – *Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church.*

2. The Anointing (14b) – *let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.*

3. The Authority (15a) – *And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up.*

4. The Acquittal (15b) – *and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

As we continue to consider the [aspects](#) of prayer James reveals concerning: [Prayers of Faith](#), next we discover:

II. The Investment in Prayer (16) – Here James deals with our investment in prayer. It involves:

A. Confession (16a) – *Confess your faults one to another*. This verse has been a point of debate and contention for centuries. Many support “priestly confessionals” based upon this verse. It is interesting we find no such instruction in any of the other Epistles for such behavior, and I am convinced a proper understanding of this passage reveals James is not promoting or supporting such activity. We have a High Priest seated at the right hand of God. The believer has a Mediator and Intercessor in Christ the Lord. There is no need to seek forgiveness from or offer confession to a priest down here. Let’s look a bit closer at the first investment James speaks of.

- We must understand that the confession spoken of here is tied directly to the previous verse. Sickness is not always the result of sin, but in certain instances the two are connected. We considered in our last study the prayer of faith offered after one has dealt with the conviction of the Holy Spirit. James conveys that, when sin is revealed in conviction, there is need for confession.
- To properly understand we need to grasp the meaning of confession. The word *confess* in the text comes from a compound Greek word. It literally means “*to agree with someone else in the innermost recesses of one’s soul and to speak out publicly about it.*” Doesn’t that make perfect sense? When the Spirit reveals a need within our innermost being, we are expected to respond to His leading and publicly proclaim the spiritual activity that has taken place. We are to acknowledge our agreement with the guidance of the Lord and submission to Him.
- Naturally this would apply to one who was sick desiring healing, and it applies to each of us in our everyday prayer lives. Our hearts must be free of sin and in complete agreement with the Holy Spirit if we expect to be effective when we pray.

B. Cooperation (16b) – *and pray one for another, that ye may be healed*. James again confirms the need and benefit of intercessory prayer. We are admonished to pray for one another, taking the needs and requests of another before God with them and for them. This is a challenge to labor together in prayer.

- For me this is one of the greatest benefits of being part of the body of Christ. We have all faced situations when prayer was desperately needed. (In fact prayer is desperately needed more than we realize and far more often than we pray.) Isn’t it comforting to know that we have others who are willing to intercede for us and with us when burdens arise in our lives? We must keep our lives free of sin so we can pray when the need arises.

C. Commitment (16c) – *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*. We are familiar with this portion of James and it has brought comfort to many throughout the years. This simple statement reveals much.

- The type of prayer invested in here is not general or generic praying. It does not seek a general result or answer. The prayer spoken of in this context is specific prayer that seeks a specific result or answer. The need is well understood and expressed to God, fully believing and expecting God to move in that particular situation in a particular way.
- [The...prayer of a righteous man](#). We also note James speaks of this prayer being offered by a righteous man. Again he emphasizes the need for upright living and an unhindered fellowship with God. I heard a preacher say, “You can do a lot of things with sin in your life, but prayer is not one of them!” Our hearts must be pure before the Lord if we desire to have our petitions granted.
- Also James speaks of this prayer being [effectual](#) and [fervent](#). This is translated from a single Greek word derived from a noun through which we get our English word: *energy*. It has the idea of praying earnestly with energy and enthusiasm. It isn’t offered in a flippant, nonchalant way, but with great passion desiring God to move in a particular situation. We are promised that those whose hearts are in tune with God, committed to Him in prayer, will be effective when they pray.
- [The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much](#). This speaks of “*strength, ability, and power*.” It reveals these prayers have value. We have heard those referred to as being able to “get a hold” of heaven. That is what James is referring to. He speaks of the ability to pray in power and receive the blessing of God. We need those who can avail much in prayer!

I. The Instruction in Prayer (13-15)

II. The Investment in Prayer (16)

III. The Influence of Prayer (17-18) – These final verses offer comfort and encouragement in regard to prayer. They reveal the influence of genuine, sincere prayers of faith. Consider:

A. Our Frailty (17a) – [Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are](#). We are familiar with the prophet Elijah and the power he had through God. We know that he walked with the Lord in such a way that he did not see death, but was taken up unto the Lord in a whirlwind upon a chariot of fire. James declares that even though Elijah was a mighty man of God, he was subject to like passions, just as we are. This means he was “*liable to be afflicted in a similar manner as other men; he dealt with the same passions and infirmities we do*.” Simply Elijah was just a man that served a mighty God and his power and influence were given of the Lord, not human ability.

- I know I am not the only one that deals with discouragement and defeat. I know I am not alone in feeling inadequate in prayer at times. If we are honest, we all have those struggles from

time to time. That is okay! Elijah, one of the heroes of the faith dealt with the same struggles. He lived in flesh that was prone to doubt and discouragement. His victories were not won through his ability to remain strong, but in praying to God who was able and willing to deliver!

B. Our Faith (17b) – [and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain](#). That may seem simple, but in reality it is quite significant. Elijah prayed in regard to something that we have absolutely no control over. Modern technology has acquired the ability to forecast the weather fairly well, but they have no control over what God sends. This can be viewed as nothing less than a prayer of faith. If the heavens withheld rain, it would be up to God to control that.

- We too have prayed in regard to the weather, and this is just one example of prayers offered in faith. There are many circumstances we face in life that are beyond our ability to control or handle. We have no power to influence the outcome at all, and in times like those, we must offer prayers of faith, believing and trusting God to work in our situation.

C. Our Fulfillment (17c-18) – [and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months](#).

^[18] [And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit](#). Do you see the significance here? Elijah prayed that it might not rain and God withheld the rain. He prayed again and God sent rain such that the earth produced her fruit again. God answered the prayers of Elijah. Prayers of faith were honored and answered.

- When we pray in faith, we must fully expect God to move in our situation. That is not to say we will understand all God does, how He moves, or even be fully satisfied in our flesh when He does answer, but we must pray knowing God will honor prayers of faith! His ways are always just and best and we must know that He will work in our situation for our good and His glory.

Conclusion: This has been an enlightening study. It is apparent that God desires us to pray in faith to Him. He desires us to depend upon Him throughout life in every situation. I trust you have been encouraged and challenged concerning prayer.

When we pray, we must always keep the sovereignty of God in mind. We have all experienced times when it seemed as if our prayers were not answered. There have been times when we expected a different outcome. We must praise God in the things we do understand and trust Him in situations when we don't understand. Keep in mind He is working for the good of them that love Him and are called according to His purpose. God sees the big picture and has a much bigger plan than we can imagine.

Do you enjoy a personal relationship with Christ? Have you met Him in salvation, being confident that you can commune with Him on a daily basis? Christian is your prayer life as it should be? Are there areas in your life that hinder your prayers? Prayer is effective, but it must be offered in faith from a pure heart. If there are needs in your life, seek the Lord.

¹ Faith, Love & Hope: An Exposition of the Epistle of James.