

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, October 9, 2013 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

## PRAYER THAT WORKS The Power of Effective Kneeling *James 5:13-18*

*“The prayer power has never been tried to its full capacity...if we want to see mighty wonders of divine power and grace wrought in the place of weakness, failure and disappointment, let us answer God’s standing challenge, ‘Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and might things which thou knowest not.’” - J. Hudson Taylor*

Effective, fervent, bold prayer takes heaven by storm. Such communication with the Almighty is the slender nerve that moves the muscles of omnipotence. How well John Welsh knew that! Eight of his twenty-four hours every day were invested in prayer. David Brainerd, George Muller, Hudson Taylor, Rees Howells, and C.T. Studd were cut from the same piece of cloth. It was said that John Wesley’s prayers changed the face of England far more than his preaching. Jim Elliot writes: “The saint who advances on his knees never retreats.” In this study, our thoughts will be turned to the subject of kneeling with power as we consider the counsel of one whose life gave significance to his words.

### I. THE EXAMPLE OF JAMES

In the first century, James was known as a man of deep prayer. In fact, what you may not know about James, the half-brother of Jesus, is that according to tradition he bore the nickname of “Camel Knees.” Apparently, his knees were enlarged and calloused because he spent so much time in prayer. Throughout James’ letter, he stresses the importance of works (*“Faith without works is dead!” James 2:17*), and Christian behavior (*impartiality, taming the tongue, humility and the dangers of material riches and wealth*), and application of biblical truth on such things as trials, tribulation and suffering. But spiritually speaking, James was a man who spent as much time on his knees as on his feet.

### II. THE INSTRUCTION OF JAMES (James 5:13-18)

This is not James’ first reference to prayer, In **James 1:5** he suggest prayer for the one who lacks wisdom, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who give generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”* And in **James 4:1-3** James indicates that arguments, quarreling, and conflicts are the result of not having certain things, and the lack exists because we do not “ask,” *“<sup>1</sup>What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? <sup>2</sup>You desire but*

do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God.<sup>3</sup> When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” In chapter 5, verses 13-18, prayer is mentioned seven times. Within these six verses, James brings before us four specific and practical area in which prayer is essential.

#### **4 Essential Areas of Prayer:**

1. **When afflicted pray (v.13)** – <sup>13</sup> *Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.* James is not referring just to physical affliction, but to mental, emotional, and spiritual difficulties as well. The term “afflicted” (KJV) or “troubled” means being “smitten with trouble.” James’s counsel: Pray! He does not promise relief, but implies a promise of strength.
2. **When sick pray (vv.14-15)** – <sup>14</sup> *Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.* <sup>15</sup> *And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.* The situation given here involved one who is physically ill – the key idea being someone who is bedridden, without strength, unable to work or continue on. Including prayer, there are three things a sick person is to do.

#### **3 Things the Sick Are To Do According to James:**

- (1) **He is to call of the spiritual leaders of the church to come to him or her –**
- (2) **He is to allow the leaders to (as the wording of the original text suggests) anoint him with oil, then pray for him or her –** A deeper study of this passage in context of the book of James reveals that the reference to anointing a sufferer with oil is a suggestion to first apply the proper medicine.

#### **A Word about Anointing**

*The specific Greek term used in James 5:14 for “anointing” does not convey the thought we usually ascribe to it, that is, a religious ceremony in which oil is applied to the head. Here the Greek word translated as “anoint” interestingly and literally means “to apply or to rub something into the skin” and speaks of a medical application. It is a medical term. This term was used in extra-biblical literature in regard to plastering walls (i.e. smearing something onto something else). In biblical times, oil was used on one who was sick for it’s medical affects. We find this occurring in (Dr. Luke) Luke 10:34 when the Samaritan poured oil and wine onto the wounds of the man victimized by robbers and left for dead. James does not write about “ceremonial anointing” here in James 5:14 as some have suggested, but a literally reading of the text, context and background suggest that James was calling for the use of the best medical procedures of the day... simply rubbing or massaging oil into the body, then praying. Translating into today’s terms, oil represents, antibiotics, various other medications, surgery, therapy, and so on.*

- (3) **He is to leave the results up to the Lord** – The key phrase here is *“in the name of the Lord,”* which is a reference to the will of God. When sick, we are to pray for the will of God and in faith count upon God to bring about restoration.
3. **When corrupted by sin prayer (v.16)** – *“<sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”* The word “therefore” indicates that James is summing up a very important point. It appears that there were believers among his intended audience who were bedridden because of unresolved sin in their life; he instructs them to confess to each other and pray for one another. Both of these terms, in the original text, are in a grammatical tense that suggests that these activities should go on as a regular habit. With that act of confession and the reinforcement of prayer, healing can be maintained by the reassurance that comes from fellow believers. A word of clarification is in order, however: James is not suggesting that Christians dump out their filth in the presence of an assembly; there is a tone of privacy in this directive.

**A Word of Caution: What James is not saying?**

- (1) **James is not saying that all sickness is the result of a specific sin we have committed** – No doubt that Biblically speaking death, sickness and disease entered into the human race when sin entered the human race. That is a Biblical precept that can be found clearly laid out in Scripture. Ultimately speaking sickness, pain and suffering... even death can be laid squarely at the feet of sin. But the idea that “I am sick because I must have done something really bad in my life!” is an over reach at best and not Scriptural. Can sin make you sick? Yes! Are some sick because of sin? Yes! That’s what James says! Is everyone in the hospital there because of some sin they committed? No! There are some really good, and Godly saints of the Lord, who are close to God, prayed up, confessed up and living for Him who get sick and die... Not all sickness is the direct result of sin in a person’s life, so be careful here.
- (2) **James is not saying that just by confiding in someone that you have sinned you will automatically be healed physically** – Not everyone experiencing the healing of the Lord. Obviously from our own experience, not everyone is healed from sickness, illness and pain. And some who openly seek the Lord and confess Him are not healed. Remember that there is much torment and pain that comes mentally, emotionally and spiritually when we have sinned. Sometimes it is deep guilt, or anguish we feel inside because we have failed miserably or let someone down. Sometimes it comes because we have cause great harm and/or hurt to another person or our own family or friends. Practically speaking, getting this off our chest so to speak... confessing our wrongs, making amends, forgiving and asking for forgiveness can bring great mental, emotional and spiritual healing to our soul and spirit.
- (3) **James is not saying that we should air our dirty laundry out before the entire body of Christ... the church** - As already stated, James is not suggesting that Christians dump out their filth in the presence of an assembly; there is a tone of privacy in this directive in James 5:16 when he says to *“confess your sins to each*

*other.*” Public and open confession to an audience can have a number of dangerous and destructive repercussions (consequences). For one thing, many in the listening audience may be baby believers that can quickly be caused to stumble and fall by an open confession. Scripture clearly tells us that we should never do anything to cause one of these to stumble or fall. Also, there are some who also be just immature enough in their own faith that they may have a hard time loving and forgiving one who confesses... you may actually cause dissension and division within the church. Be careful and use wisdom and discernment with this one.

4. **When specific needs occur pray (vv.16-18) –** *“<sup>16</sup>Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.<sup>17</sup> Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. <sup>18</sup>Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.”* The heart of this point is contained in the words, *“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective...”* Or as the NKJV puts it, *“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”* The term “prayer” used here varies in meaning from the term used in the three preceding instances. This one has to do with “a specific petition made with specific results in mind.” The Greek word translated here as “effective” is the word from which we get our English word “energy.” Though it is difficult to fully translate into English, this word carries the idea of adding an ingredient to something average and turning it into something exceptional. The question that comes to mind is, “How can our prayer become effective?” Three answering suggestions can be made.

### **3 Keys to Effective Prayer:**

- (1) **We cannot pray in ignorance to biblical truth and pray effectively –**
- (2) **We must pray with specific people, things, and results in mind –**
- (3) **We must pray in faith, confident that the God of heaven not only hears, but answers -**

## **III. THE RELEVANCE OF JAMES**

Four simple, applicable, and relevant lessons can be drawn from what James wrote in regard to prayer.

### **4 Relevant Lessons from James on Prayer:**

1. **Prayer is to be continuous and not for emergencies only -**
2. **Prayer is designed for every part of life -**
3. **Prayer is not a substitute for responsibility and intelligent thinking -**
4. **Prayer is not for the perfect, but for the imperfect -**