

Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, November 9, 2016 – First Baptist Church Buda
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

GETTING PRACTICAL WITH YOUR FAITH A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF JAMES “The Power of Effective Kneeling” *James 5:13-20*

Effective, fervent, bold prayer takes heaven by storm. Such communication with the Almighty is the slender nerve that moves the muscles of omnipotence. Oh well John Welsh knew that! Eight of his 24 hours every day were invested in prayer. David Brainerd, George Muller, Hudson Taylor, Rees Howells, and C.T. Studd were cut from the same 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.

THE EXAMPLE OF JAMES

In the first century, James was known as a mighty man of prayer. **In fact, tradition tell us that James, the half-brother of Jesus, bore the nickname of “Camel Knees.”** Apparently, his knees were enlarged and calloused because he spent so much time in prayer. Throughout his letter, James has stressed the importance of work, activity and meaningful application of biblical truth. But spiritually speaking, James was a man who spent as much time on his knees as on his feet.

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

This is not James’s first reference to prayer. In chapter 1 he suggests prayer for the one who lacks wisdom (v.5). In chapter 4 he indicates that arguments, quarreling, and conflicts were the result of not having certain things, and the lack existed because his readers did not “ask” (vv.1-3). In chapter 5, verses 13-18, prayer is mentioned seven times. Within these six verses, James brings before us four specific and practical areas in which prayer is essential.

“¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six

months. ¹⁸ *And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.* – James 5:13-18 (NKJV)

4 Specific Areas Where Prayer is Essential:

1. **When afflicted... pray (v.13)** – James is not referring just to physical affliction, but to mental, emotional, and spiritual difficulties as well. The term “*suffering*” or “*afflicted*” 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)** – The situation given here involves 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 James Says a Sick Person is to Do:

- (1) **He is to call for the spiritual leaders of the church to come to him.**
 - (2) **He is to allow the leader to (*as the wording of the original text suggests*) anoint him with oil, then pray for him** – As we saw in last week’s study, the reference to anointing a sufferer with oil is a suggestion to first apply the proper medicine. Dr. John MacArthur says, “Perhaps it is better to understand the anointing in a metaphorical sense of the elders’ encouraging, comforting and strengthening the believer.”
 - (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... pray (v.16)** – James instructs his readers, ¹⁶ *Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.* Some verses begin verse 16 with the word “therefore” and may indicate that James is summing up a very important point. It appears (v.15) that there were believers among his intended audience who were bedridden because of unresolved sin; 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 the 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 here... James is not suggesting that Christians dump out their dirty laundry and filth in the presence of an assembly; there is a tone of privacy in this directive.

3 Practical Reason We Don’t, As a Precedent, Confess Before A Congregational Assembly:

- (1) **The Lost** – We don’t always know who is present in a congregational assembly (i.e. church service). We don’t know the spiritual condition of those present. Openly confessing sin before an entire assembly may push a seeking lost person further from salvation and Christ because of discouragement, disillusionment, and perceived hypocrisy.
- (2) **The Spiritually Immature** – Once again, we don’t always know who is present. The lost may be present, but so may be the spiritually immature or baby Christian. Just as we can’t see the spiritual condition of the lost person who may be present, neither can we see the spiritual maturity level of the Christians present. A young believer, spiritually

underdeveloped in their walk may be hindered by an open confession of sin. They may not be at a point where they need to hear such things, or they can't navigate what they hearing in relation to things they may still be dealing with. They may fall back into gross sin as a result, or become disillusioned with the church and walk away from those they need in their spiritual walk.

- (3) **The Factious** – Open confession before a gathered assembly may also cause side to be taken, battle lines drawn, and factions to chosen. This has the potential of splitting a church and causing much division in the body of Christ... sometime because of spiritual level of those present.

4. **When specific needs occur... pray (vv.16-18) –**

The heart of this point is contained in the words, *"...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 term "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' (turned into something exceptional)? Three answering suggestions can be made.

3 Ways to Turn Your Praying Into Something Exceptional:

- (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-**

THE RELEVANCE OF JAMES

Four simple, applicable, and relevant lessons can be drawn from what James has to say regarding prayer.

4 Simple Lessons on Prayer:

1. **Prayer is to be continuous and not for emergencies only** – Listen, our prayers got real serious the past few week because of the seriousness of this election and we got scared... and this seems always to be our approach to prayer. This ought not to be, but our prayers should be continuous and not reserved for drastic measure.
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 -**

A FINAL WORD ON HOW TO HANDLE STRAYING SAINTS (James 5:19-20)

"¹⁹ Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, ²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins." –James 5:19-20 (NKJV)

In closing this study, we come to a timely subject... wayward Christians. What is our relationship with them to be... beside prayer fervently for them? Is there ever a time when one Christian should step in and deal with another who is walking away from God? Is that strictly the function of the Holy Spirit, or should we become a part of the solution? If so, how can we do that without appearing to be legalistic or ultra-severe? If not, what is to be our response to such a passage a Galatians 6:1-3, *“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. ² Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”*? James 5:19-20 give us God’s counsel on this very serious and significant issue as James closing words.

There are people who feel called to a “ministry of criticism.” Their primary concern is to nail those who have strayed from the truth. They are quick to point the finger and slow to show a sensitive heart. James’s counsel has nothing to do with this kind of approach. In verses 19-20 James writes, *“¹⁹ Brethren, if anyone among you (the who) wanders from the truth(the what) , and someone turns him back (what should be done), ²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.”* The first half of that statement (v.19) provides some important facts to help us understand the text as seen above, but the question of how is equally important. This is where Paul’s words in Galatians 6:1-3 come into play and help to know the how. Again Galatians 6:1-3 says, *Galatians 6:1-3, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. ² Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.”*? This is where it must begin. One who helps another must cultivate the attitude that will make good his efforts. Looking at some instructions given by Paul, we can pinpoint three attitudes that must be a part of helping one find his or her way back to the truth he once knew.

3 Helpful Biblical Attitudes in Bringing the Straying Back:

1. **Dependence on the Holy Spirit** – Paul says, *“... you who are spiritual restore...”* What does it mean to be “spiritual”? Paul says the confronter must be spiritual... that is, controlled by the Holy Spirit. This is not a fleshly ministry. One who helps another needs to have his heart so warm and molded with God’s heart that his voice actually represents the concerns of God.
2. **Gentleness** – Paul says, *“... you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness...”* When working with someone who is either wounded or broken, this is of particular importance. It is no time or place for fools to rush in or have an angry and harsh or impatient spirit.
3. **Genuine Humility** – Paul says, *“...you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself...”* People who are successful in this kind of ministry to the hurting and the straying realize their own limitations and frailties. In fact, when helping others, they are very careful not to say too much or do too much... to over reach, but allow God to work and them simply be used by Him.

Now importantly what happens when this kind of ministry is carried off? Well James says in verse 20, *“²⁰ let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul*

from death and cover a multitude of sins.” There it is... (1) the straying one’s soul is saved, and (2) a multitude of sins will be covered **because of confession, the returning person’s sin will be forgive by God and covered over completely (forgive)*

In summarizing James’s counsel we can reduce his closing statements to these four concise statement... we can carry it away from this wonderful letter written by James, the half-brother of Jesus, and into helping those needing it the most.

4 Concise Statement on Helping Straying Saints:

- 1. There are definite occasions where we can be involved**
- 2. The entire process must be under the direction and control of the Holy Spirit**
- 3. The attitude is as important as the action**
- 4. When we are prompted by the Lord, we should not feel out of place**