

Prayer That Is Effective Part 2

Today, as we take this final step in our study of this blessed Book of James, may we again consider the precious gift of grace that God has given to us of boundless access into His presence through prayer. And we will again use these wonderful words of James chapter 5 for our study. Listen!

¹³ Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. ¹⁴ Is any sick among you? 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 shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. ¹⁶ Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5:13-16)

I love these last words here in verse 16, and we will center much of our meditation upon them. Listen!

¹⁶ . . . the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5:16)

But, before we begin there, I would like for us to first go back over some of the things that we studied in earlier messages about this wonderful treasure we have in “prayer”. And may we remind ourselves that in order for these very special and precious words to come to fruition in our lives, there are certain basic essentials that must first be put into place. And the more firmly these essentials are in place within our souls, the more apt our prayers are to become truly effectual.

The first essential is that of “faith”, that special mysterious power and ability that is put into our hearts by God Himself as His blessed Holy Spirit comes to live within us. It is a power that enables you and me to see, to hear, to think, and to do things that we would not otherwise be able to do.

“Faith”, when brought up onto the surface of our daily lives, can become a special kind of “portal” through which we can actually see into the realms of God, and really see His faithful hand at work in the ordinary matters of our day.

And it's through that same faith that God enables you and me to draw up near to Him in our times of afflictions and to seek His special comfort, and yes, even seek the "special grace" of healing for our sicknesses.

But unfortunately, as we begin to take an inward look at our faith, we too often find that such levels and intensity of faith as those spoken about in these words are not easily come by. Yes, we do know that we have the faith that it takes to save our souls, but to reach to levels of faith that will transport us to that "higher ground" that the old hymn speaks about seems often to elude our grasp, to be just outside of our reach, especially when our afflictions and our sicknesses are intense and ongoing.

And unfortunately, because of that weakness of our faith, we often choose instead to accept the rationale of the world and to walk paths that lean more to commonsense and logic rather than to belief in a supernatural power of our unseen God.

And instead of being patient and waiting for the hand of God to make our provision and provide our solutions, we choose to settle for the "common graces" that are available to all people, doctors, retirement plans, Social Security, Medicare, the stock market, and other provisions such as those.

But these words are telling us that it should not be that way, that we should not permit our weaknesses to overcome what little faith we do have, that we should first, and continually "seek His Face". In Psalm 27, we read,

⁸ When You said, "Seek My face, "my heart said to You, "Your face, Lord, I will seek." (Psalm 27:8)

and that is exactly what you and I must do.

The "Face of God", the "Heart of God" wants more for you and me than anything this world has to offer. And with the help of His Holy Spirit, His "face", His "heart", His gracious provision can be found within the precious and powerful words of this book. And we have only to search these words diligently and God will reveal Himself to us. And as He reveals Himself to us, a very special provision will begin to take place, "faith" will begin to emerge within our soul.

Recall these very simple words that God spoke to us in Romans chapter 10, verse 17, where He said,

¹⁷ . . . faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
(Romans 10:17)

These words cannot be any more plain. The simple answer to our constant dilemma of weak and elusive faith is to read and hear the words, the truths, that are given within this Book. Listen again!

¹⁷ . . . faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.
(Romans 10:17)

You and I have only to hear and experience the words being spoken to us out of the pages of this Book and our hearts will begin to experience a miraculous change. God will give us faith. That is His personal promise, and He will surely keep His promises.

But you might say, I do read the words of this Book and yet, my faith still remains weak and inadequate. And yes, I identify with you in that struggle. But still, the answer that God has given to us, even for that struggle, is also right here in these words.

He has said that we are to “seek His face”. But we must understand that our “seeking” must be with our “whole heart”, a surrendered heart, and fervently so, diligently and endlessly.

And that is where we, so often, fail. We read, but our minds wander to matters of the day. We “put in our time” in our reading, but our hearts are often divided and distracted by other pressing matters, and we miss out on some of the most important part of “hearing” the message that God is giving to us in those moments. One translation of this verse says to us,

¹Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ. (Romans 10:17)

Again yes, we read and we hear, but other concerns drown out some to the most important parts of the “message” God is giving us within His words.

Because of that, He is calling you and me to isolate ourselves, and to “dig deeper”, to pray and sometimes to “fast” and to diligently give our whole heart to the “knowing” and to the “believing” of His words. And as we do that, then faith, real faith, the kind that will be “effectual” in prayer will begin to take place. Listen to these words in Psalm 37,

³ Trust in the Lord, and do good. Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. ⁴ Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. ⁵ Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring *it* to pass. ⁶ He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your justice as the noonday. ⁷ Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him. (Psalm 37:3-7)

Folks, this is a promise from God. And I especially love verse 5 where He promises that if we will commit our ways to Him and Trust in Him, He will bring the desires of our hearts, those things we are praying for, into being. Wow!

So then, may we in these remaining few minutes, give our whole heart and our full attention to this one single point of truth in this word, that of what it takes for our “prayer of faith” to become effectual. Verse 15 of our text,

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 sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (James 5:15-16)

Notice first that God, very pointedly, speaks about the presence of sin in our lives. And we must understand that sin is a hindrance, a barrier to effectual prayer. And God knows all about them, especially about those special “secret sins” that we hold onto, those sins that have become so commonplace within us that we barely remember that they are there within our soul. And those sins are abhorrent to God, a barrier that can prevent our prayers from being effective.

And so, as part of our coming to God in our prayers, we must first ask Him to search us and to reveal our sins to us. And then, with “broken and contrite hearts”, we must repent, confessing those sins to Him and asking Him for His forgiveness.

And yes, when our sin involves other people, we must also go to them and seek their forgiveness. It is then that our faith will be “freed up” to do as the rest of verse 16 tells us,

¹⁶ . . . the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

(James 5:16)

Simply put, God is saying that for our prayer to be “effectual”, our prayer must be prayed with deep abiding faith, and that it must come from a righteous man. When that is done, then that prayer will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

But be sure to remember that even as our prayer is for another person, our faith and our seeking must ever and always be after the Person of God, for His will and for His purposes. And then the prayer will surely be effectual. Hebrews 11:6,

⁶ . . . he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

And note here that diligence is essential and that it is an important part of the word “fervent”, here in verse 16.

¹⁶ . . . the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

(James 5:16)

Why must we be diligent and fervent? It is simply the nature of God to desire that we be single minded and reaching to Him in our faith. God will not listen to the prayers of a “double-minded” man or woman. But He will listen to the effectual and fervent prayer of a righteous man or woman, and He will honor those prayers.

And God desires us to be diligent and fervent for another reason, so that we will personally benefit by our continuing in prayer. In requiring you and me to remain before Him for long periods of time, seeking His face, we will begin to understand so much more about all the other matters that surround, and are involved in, the matter that we are praying about.

In my own situation of asking God to heal my sickness, when I first began to ask God to heal me, I thought first of my pain and my affliction. But that was not

God's first thought. His first thought was about my more pressing need for "faith".

And as I continued to earnestly, diligently and fervently pray and seek His face, God made me to understand that my "faith" was really His "first order of business", that yes, He does want to heal my sickness and to raise me up, but He is far more interested in the eternal condition of my soul.

And not only that, He revealed to me that as His beloved son, He wants the two of us to have a deeper and more intimate, Father and son relationship. And so, He purposely permitted me to suffer my affliction so that I would turn my heart and my attention more fully to Him. In Psalm 119, verse 71, we read,

⁷¹ It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.
(Psalm 119:71)

God has decreed that you and I should have an ongoing deep abiding relationship with Him. But, too often, when all is going well, when we are well in our health, when we are well in our finances and well in all the other matters of life, we seem easily to forget all those benefits that we enjoy when we continually stand in His presence, beseeching Him for His grace and mercy. Caught up in the enjoyments of life, we can even forget where our blessings are actually coming from.

And in those times, perhaps even more often, God intervenes and brings us reminders of the true "wellspring" "from whence our help comes". He allows afflictions to be "unfriendly friends" to remind us of our need for Him.

. . . The last matter in this verse that I want you and me to examine today is that of "righteousness". Verse 16 again,

¹⁶ . . . the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.
(James 5:16)

I must confess that for the most part I am still somewhat baffled by the thought that I could actually be righteous. But God is slowly revealing His truth to me.

Here we are told that the effectual fervent prayer must come from a “righteous man”. But knowing that these scriptures tell us that there is “none righteous, no not one”, how can this be? How can a wretched person, like me, like you, be “righteous”?

Again, as with all good and right provisions, this provision comes entirely from the gracious hand of God. In our accepting Christ as our Savior, His Holy Spirit, who has taken up residence within us, imputes the “righteousness of Christ” into our being and makes us to be that righteous person that these words speak about.

In 1 Corinthians 1:30, we are told that “it is of God that Christ Jesus Himself has become in us our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption”. Folks, it is ever and always His “Righteousness” and never our own.

But then, even that is only the beginning. There is even another step that God offers to you and to me in this matter of righteousness. In Philippians 2 we are told that God graciously gives us the power and the unction to actually work out that righteousness in the common matters of our daily lives. And that is where this effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availing much comes into action. A righteous man or woman, who is surrendered to the abiding presence of Christ will do righteous things, will be ever and always standing before the mercy seat of God, crying out for mercy and grace, and not only for himself or herself, but especially for the hearts and souls of others.

And as we surrender to Christ, our righteous prayers will become more effectual than we have ever imagined possible. Our part is to pray and to do it diligently and fervently, and God will do the rest.

So, let's you and I begin to do our part this very day, to diligently and fervently pray the “prayer of faith”, and we are assured that “The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man (or woman will) availeth much.” Listen as we close!

6 . . . he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)

¹⁵And 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. (James 5:15)

¹⁶ . . . the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.
(James 5:16)