

May 25, 2014

Let Us Pray

James 5:13-18

All Stand and Read Scripture

James 5:13-18

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? *Then* he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; ¹⁵ and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish 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 earth for three years and six months. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.

Prayer

INTRODUCTION:

Prayer is the means by which we can **communicate** with God and **draw closer** to Him.

Throughout the book of James, he has been giving us ways that we can become more mature in our Christian walk with Christ. He started the book telling us that we should pray for wisdom, so we would know how to live our lives for Him. This wisdom will cause us to pray **correctly** in order that we will grow to maturity despite the trials that we go through, knowing that the testing of our faith produces endurance in our lives and draws us closer to God.

James 1:2-5

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

² Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. ⁴ And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

⁵ But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him **ask of God**, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and **it will be given to him**.

¹² Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

James is now concluding his book, again exhorting us to pray. In fact, **all six verses** have the word “**prayer**” in them.

The title to my message this morning is “**Let Us Pray**”. Let’s take a look at what James is trying to tell the Christian.

BODY:

1. How We Should Pray

Prayer is our means to communicate with God. The scriptures tell us that He is faithful to hear our prayers and that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us according to the will of God.

Romans 8:26-27

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

²⁶ In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words; ²⁷ and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to *the will of God*.

Paul tells us that we should “Pray without ceasing”. (I Thes. 5:17).

We are to “keep our minds on things above, not on the things that are on the earth.” (Col.3:2).

Jesus tells us that when we pray, we should **pray in secret** with a **humble heart**.

Matthew 6:5-6

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

⁵ “When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. ⁶ But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.

Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Gatherer

Luke 18:14

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁴ I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

When we pray, we should implore “not my will, but Thine be done”. Jesus taught us to pray that way in the Lord’s prayer. He also prayed it three times in the Garden of Gethsemane before he was crucified on the cross.

The important lesson here is that God wants our “learning to rely upon Him” to be more important than our “being comfortable” in our life here on earth.

Our closest times with God **tend to be** when we are in trials. When we are weak, we realize we need God.

We must rely on Him instead of someone or something else.

Christians we admire most are the ones who **endure** these trials. This gives them a **great testimony** to share later. They are the ones that we want to have **coffee** with and learn how they made it through their trials.

If we would but draw closer to God and allow Him to empower us, we have the promise that his grace will get us through.

When we **pray** for our suffering, God does not always remove it. Paul is a good example of this with his “Thorn in the Flesh”!

2 Corinthians 12:8-9

⁸ Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. ⁹ And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”

Paul pleaded at three distinct times to have his “thorn in the flesh” removed. God replied with “My grace is sufficient”. God is in charge and He calls the shots. He knows what is best for us.

Let God teach you strength in your weakness! Don’t **DEMAND** that your “**thorn in the flesh**” go away in your prayer. Paul’s didn’t. “**Not my will, but thine be done**”. Trust God to take control of your life!

ILLUSTRATION:

Christians can be like teabags. We are not of much value until we are put in hot water.

2. The Purpose of Prayer

Sometimes the reason we pray is to **get us out of uncomfortable circumstances**, but more often than not, the purpose of prayer **should be to get us through** them.

I am **not suggesting** we shouldn't **pray deliverance prayers**, but there are times we need to **pray prevailing prayers** or prayers to **"get us through"** our current circumstances.

Instead of asking God to eliminate our circumstances, we need to ask God to:

- give us the proper attitude to endure our circumstance,
- give us the strength to stand firm in our faith,
- and give us the willpower to keep on keeping on.

There is a big difference between praying for our **circumstances to go away** and praying we have the **endurance to get through them**.

We're often so **anxious to get out of** difficult, painful, or challenging situations that we **fail to grow through them**.

We're so fixated on having them **eliminated** in our lives that we **don't gain** anything from them. We **fail to learn the lessons** God is trying to teach us or **cultivate the character** God is trying to **grow** in us.

We're so focused on God changing our circumstances that we never allow God to **change us!** So instead of ten or twenty years of experience, we have one year of experience repeated ten or twenty times.

- Sometimes we need to pray **"get me out"** prayers.
- But more often we need to pray **"get me through"** prayers.
- We need the **discernment** to know when to pray what.

Paul of all people would have a lot he could **boast** about. God gave him a **"thorn in the flesh"** and it gave him great discomfort. God used the "" to **humble** him and keep him from **boasting**.

The ultimate purpose of prayer is to Glorify God.

If we're being completely honest, most of our **prayers** have as their **chief objective** our own **personal comfort** rather than **God's glory**. We want to **pray away** every problem, but those **shortsighted prayers would short-circuit** God's **perfect plan**. There are seasons and situations when we need to simply pray that He will **help us through** our sufferings.

Can our prayers change our circumstances? Absolutely! But when our **circumstances don't change**, it's often an **indication that God is trying to change us**. The **primary purpose of prayer** is **not to change circumstances**;

the primary purpose of prayer is to **change us!** But either way, the **chief objective** remains the same: **to glorify God** in any and every situation.

3. The Results of Prayer

James 5:14-16

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; ¹⁵ and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

If we love the Lord, we will pray for the sick and pray for one another. God promises that the **effective** prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. The sick can be healed and their sins forgiven him when it is the will of God.

The leaders of the church are asked to shepherd over the family and protect them. They are to pray for the sick who ask for their prayers. When someone asks to be prayed for, it opens an opportunity to teach them how to live for God.

Anointing with oil is mentioned. The anointing may be more a **symbolic reference**. There are several scriptures that use oil for **medicinal purposes**.

Luke 10:33-34

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

³³ But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, ³⁴ and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on *them*; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him.

The emphasis here by James is prayer.

God promises that all things work together for GOOD for those that love the Lord (Rom. 8:28-29). Most of us would like to define GOOD as:

- Financial Gain,
- Material Gain,
- Public Recognition,
- Improved Health.

God does NOT declare that he works all things together to make Christians HEALTHY, WEALTHY, and WISE.

God actually does something better: He works all things together so that Christians will be **conformed to the image of Christ**.

When we PRAY to God, we should be asking “**Not my will, but Thine be done**” concerning our hardships. God promises to take the things in my life, both good and bad, and somehow use them together in such a way to make me more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

THAT’S THE PROMISE OF GOD!

CONCLUSION:

Many of us are going through **circumstances** in our life that we wish could “**PRAY away**” such as:

- health issues
- financial problems
- bad relationships
- and challenging work schedules.

I would like to encourage you to stay strong in the Lord, and **PRAY** that He would help us to grow through your times of suffering.

Consider:

Proverbs 3:5-12

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.

⁶ In all your ways **acknowledge Him**,
And He will make your paths straight.

⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.

⁸ It will be **healing to your body**
And refreshment to your bones.

⁹ Honor the LORD from your wealth
And from the first of all your produce;

¹⁰ So your barns will be filled with plenty
And your vats will overflow with new wine.

¹¹ My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD
Or loathe His reproof,

¹² For whom the LORD loves He reproveth,
Even as a father *corrects* the son in whom he delights.

I encourage you not to focus on your problems, but focus on all of the blessings that God consistently provides to you every minute.

Give Him the **glory** for everything in your life through **prayer!**

If you have not put your faith and trust in Christ, DO IT TODAY!

When your focus is on God instead of your problems, you will be able to “**Sing Praises**” to Him despite your circumstances. This is because we **KNOW** that all things work together for good for those who trust the Lord.

Paul tells us that the goal for our life is contentment. We must be trusting God and learn to be content with what He provides for us. When we do this, we will grow in patience and become more like Christ.

We are told in Eph. 3:9 that God is **not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**

If you do not know Christ as your personal Savior, the window of opportunity is open for you now. God wants to come into your life. Won't you come forward this morning and let God know that you are ready to turn your life around for Him and start living your life for Him?

Your destiny is determined by how you live. Will it be for you or by serving God?

If you have wandered away from the Lord and the Holy Spirit is convicting you this morning to come back home, this invitation is open to you to rededicate your life to Christ by stepping forward.

We are also here with open arms, if you would like to identify yourself as part of this family of God in the Greenwood Christian church.

The Family of God

I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God.
I've been washed in the fountain, cleansed by His blood!
Joint heirs with Jesus as we travel this sod,
For I'm part of the family, the family of God.