

Turn in your Bibles tonight to James Chapter 5 and we will be looking at verses 13 to 18. A couple of weeks ago I had the privilege on Sunday, March 1st to speak about prayer using Scripture from Colossians Chapter 4 verse 2. If you remember that verse read as such:

Colossians 4:2

² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.

I was greatly challenged by that portion of Scripture and I hope you were also. I need prayer to keep that close relationship with the Lord. Prayer helps me to be reminded to pray for other people and prayer helps me to remember to be thankful for the blessings God pours out on me day after day. We also talked about being purposeful and to be specific in our prayers.

Here we are this evening and we get to talk about prayer again. Once again, we see the importance of prayer and we will see the power of prayer and what it accomplishes when we pray in faith and seeking God's will and purpose in every situation. ***Let's read our verses for this evening:***

James 5:13-18

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. 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 one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. ¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

Let's be reminded of who James is writing this letter to and what is going on in the lives of these people during this time. James is writing to Jewish Christians that have been dispersed out of Jerusalem because of the persecution that had come upon them because of many of them coming to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ after Peter preached at the day of Pentecost.

This persecution began after Stephen was martyred, by stoning, for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So, with this persecution many of the Jews fled Jerusalem that lived there. But, also, many that fled just went back to their hometowns of where they had come from as they had come to Jerusalem to celebrate what was called the Feast of Weeks or Festival of Weeks. In the Greek it is the word, Pentecost.

50 days after the celebration of Passover there is a celebration of the harvest of the wheat harvest, giving thanks and praise to the Lord for the blessing of their crop. But, for Christians we definitely refer to that day as, The day of Pentecost, as the Holy Spirit came upon the believers in the upper room and then went out, with Peter leading the way, and preaching that Jesus is the Messiah.

This brought persecution from the Pharisees and those that did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. But, there was also Roman persecution coming from the Roman Emperor Claudius and it only escalated when his son Nero took over.

Now, would you say these Christians are under a lot of stress? First, there is persecution for their faith! I am sure this affected them financially as they tried to do business. I would say some were losing their lives. James alluded to the trials they would face at the very beginning of this letter. Turn over to Chapter 1 and let's read verses 2 to 4.

James 1:2-4

²Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

I assure you they, you are going to meet various trials for their faith. What does James say? Count it all joy! These trials are going to strengthen you, they are going to make you more mature in your faith, they will bring you to trust in the character of God and his faithfulness. You will face the struggles and trials in this world with a confidence. Not because of who you are but who you are trusting!

James then puts all these tests before them in the next 4 ½ Chapters, 94 verses and approximately 2100 words for them to make sure they are truly walking in the faith and are truly a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, he brings it full circle and starts addressing struggles, trials that they have been enduring.

What does he say to them? Pray!!! Pray? That is just too simple James. Well, let's read verse 13 again.

James 5:13

¹³ Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.

I know this portion of scripture has been used many times to talk about healing from a particular sickness. But, what we are talking about here is a spiritual weakness, being worn out, afflicted because of the persecution or trial that is being experienced. Also, this portion of Scripture is again about prayer and the power of prayer in our lives.

At the beginning of Chapter 5, James spoke to the point of the poor being afflicted by the rich in how the rich were using their resources and the way they were treating those that worked for them. James then encouraged those believers to be patient in their suffering. Being steadfast in their faith and trust that the Lord has so much more for you, and he is with you.

What we see in this verse is a way to be patient and to endure our suffering, and that is in the privilege and the power of Prayer! Remember what prayer is? Prayer is a resource to go before the God who spoke all things into existence and make our requests known. Prayer is the privilege to go before the Holy, Righteous, Just, All Powerful, All Knowing God of the universe and we can bow before and say, "Abba, Father", Daddy, I need you!" Prayer is the weapon we use for times of spiritual affliction! Prayer is that intimate link between our savior and ourselves.

But, one of the least things we use. James says, Pray!!!!

Let's take everything, as a whole, in what is happening during this time. All the persecution that is going on. Some were physically beaten for their faith. Some have lost their lives for their faith. But, even beyond that, just the constant day to day verbal attacks began to weigh on you. So, yes, it is talking about the physical beating of persecution, but it is also talking about that the weight is so heavy that you are weary, you feel beaten down and you have nothing left, you are spent!

Let's look at verse 13 again.

James 5:13

13 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.

Now, James kind of seems to be talking out of two sides of his mouth or maybe he is being factitious here. I don't think so. He is talking about suffering, being worn out, being spent, being in utter despair and then he asks, "Is anyone cheerful?" Let him sing praise. What we see here I believe is a transition!

When you truly are praying and your pouring your heart out to God, doesn't your spirit begin to change. It can go from despair to maybe not elation but to comfort. Knowing it is going to be alright. May I remind us all, that if we are a true follower of Jesus Christ. It is going to be alright. I already mentioned it one time, but James said to count our trials as joy.

Remember what Jesus said in John 16:33? Most of you are probably saying, no, why don't you tell me. Okay, I will!

John 16:33

33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart: I have overcome the world."

You will have tribulation! But, take heart! You know what that actually means? Be cheerful!! Jesus, has overcome the world.

Think right now about something you are concerned about. Are you praying? I used these verses the Sunday before and Pastor Kevin used this past Sunday. ***Philippians 4:6-7, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."***

Are you forfeiting peace that comes from God because we will not pray? I was reminded of a couple of hymns while I was studying. One is, "I Need Thee Every Hour." Look at the lyrics on the screen.

***I need Thee every hour,
Most gracious Lord;
No tender voice like Thine
Can peace afford.
I need Thee, oh, I need Thee;
Every hour I need Thee;
Oh, bless me now, my Savior!
I come to Thee.***

Did you notice something in that third line? ***No tender voice like thine can peace afford!*** Prayer is not a one-way connection. It goes both ways. God wants to speak to you as well! We are commanded to pray! Does that not sound like God wants to speak to you? Of course, he does! And the first prayer he wants to hear, Is Lord forgive me! I repent of my sins and I surrender my life to you! Take it and use me for your glory!

The other hymn I thought of was, "What A Friend We Have In Jesus!"

*What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear
And what a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer*

*Oh, what peace we often forfeit
Oh, what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer*

Prayer is praise! Prayer can be a transition to singing! You can even sing your prayer if you want to. In the trial we can have peace and strength.

But what if you are so broken, so downtrodden, so weary that you can't even pray for yourself? You just can't bring yourself to pray. Look at verse 14 and 15.

James 5:14-15

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 one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Now, what we see here, I believe are three facets to this word sick. Because the definition of the word means: weak, feeble, without strength. If you are being physically persecuted would you not feel this way? If you are verbally persecuted would you not feel this way? If you are physically sick would you not feel weak, feeble and without strength? Here is the other thing. Is sin a condition that needs to be prayed over? Can our sin cause us to be physically and spiritually sick? Can we be so distraught, ashamed of our sin that we can be broken and we just need peace, we need relief? Yes!

You know what the problem is. Most of the time we don't feel guilt over our sin. We don't have shame over our sin. If we are walking in known sin, we cannot expect a Holy, Righteous God to answer our prayers or move on our behalf if we ignore our sin.

So, what is this person to do that may be at this completely broken point in their life? Verse 14 says:

James 5:14

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.

Let him or her call for the Elders of the Church. Let me say something about this right here. It is the person who is sick that must request the Elders to come and pray. You can't ask for that person and say you want the Elders to come anoint and pray over your relative or friend. The individual must ask. But why the Elders?

The Elders are supposed to be spiritually strong. This coincides with Acts 6:4 when in Jerusalem the number of believers were increasing in number the Apostles were not able to stay focused on their calling. Acts 6 is when the office of Deacon was instituted to take care of the families. So, the Apostles can do what they were supposed to be doing. Act 6:4 says, ***“But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*** To disciple the congregation through the preaching and teaching of God's Word and yes, pray for the congregation. Come alongside and pray for those that need prayer for various situations in their life.

And as the Church grew then that calling was given to the overseers, the elders of the congregations. There is a hierarchy in the Church, and you will find that in Ephesians 4. This brought a thought to my mind.

I looked at these verses and I thought, Oh My! What a responsibility! I would also say a privilege. But this is what I asked myself. Am I an elder of this Church where I am at a place in my life that I could be called on to pray? That my life would not be a hindrance in anyway to any person that needs to see Jesus Christ or not be a hindrance to any prayer I bring before God on behalf of anyone! That was a very sobering thought that came over me. Why? Look at what is says at the end of verse 16.

“The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” Many of you will know it better from the Kings James Version. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much!” More on that in a moment.

The Elders are to pray. Anointing with oil, in the name of the Lord. Anointing with oil was used for several situations. In the Old Testament we would see where the priests were set apart and they would be anointed with oil to signify this setting apart as Holy for the priesthood. Aaron was anointed in Exodus 29. It was also used to anoint Kings. Samuel anointed David in 1 Samuel 16.

Ladies here are your Essential Oils. It was also used to mend wounds. The olive oil would be mixed with herbs and rubbed on wounds. In Luke 10, The Parable of the Good Samaritan. What did the Samaritan do for the wounds of the man that was beaten and robbed and was laying by the roadside? Verse 34 says, “He bound up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them.” Let’s see this. Let’s look at verses 14 and 15 again and add verse 16.

James 5:14-16

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 one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Here is the person that is so downtrodden, the weary, the weak, grieved, broken or physically sick that they just don’t feel like they just can’t pray for themselves. They call for the Elders to come. The Elders come at the request of the person and they pray for them while anointing them with oil. Is there something special about the oil here? No! Here, is where the power comes from.

The oil was used to show a setting apart for a special use of God. In this case the person is being anointed to bring them before the Lord in prayer in their distress. There was no power in the oil. But the power comes from praying, praying in the name of the Lord. How do we usually finish our prayers? In Jesus Name, Amen! Is that some type of special formula in getting your prayers answered? On the surface, no! You don’t have to end every prayer with, In Jesus Name. In John 14:13, Jesus did say, “Whatever you ask in my name, I will do!”

But that doesn’t mean that we just tag that onto the end of every prayer we pray.

Praying in Jesus name means you are saying, “In everything that the name of Jesus embodies. Which is his power, grace, mercy, righteousness, holiness, justice and salvation. We are aligning ourselves to God’s will and not our own. We do not know his will in every situation. So, we pray!

It is a prayer of faith!

Verse 15 says, “And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up.” It is not the elder’s faith alone though. The one that has come for the request of prayer is also showing faith. They are showing in their weakness their need for help.

They are coming before the Lord in faith, believing, and in that brokenness, that prayer of faith they will be restored, that broken spirit lifted up, strength brought back to that weariness and yes, receive the forgiveness of sin. Because again, sin can cause sickness, it can cause a broken spirit and as we call out to the Lord he will forgive and make us whole.

As we look again at verse 16, we see this goes beyond just the elders or the leaders of the church. We need each other. Being a follower of Jesus Christ was never to be lived out as a solo act! Look at verse 16.

James 5:16

Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

We as brothers and sisters in Christ need each other! We need to be accountable to each other! We need to share each other’s burdens; we need to confess our sins to each other so we can pray for each other. Not judge each other but pray for each other. Yes, point out sin if we need to. But pray!

What we see at the end of verse 16 is the crutch of this passage of Scripture. James had been talking about the struggles of being under persecution. He has been talking about being weary in our spirit. He has been talking about sin and it can make us sick also. What does he say? Pray! Pray! There is power in prayer and prayer works every time. There are two problems that I see.

One, we just don’t pray! Two! What does the end of verse 16 say? The prayer of a righteous person! The prayer of a what? The prayer of a what? The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working!

Psalm 66:16-19 says this:

Psalm 66:16-19

¹⁶Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he has done for my soul. ¹⁷I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue. If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. ¹⁹But truly God has listened, he has attended to the voice of my prayer.

Proverbs 28:13 says this:

Proverb 28:13

Whoever conceals his transgression will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

If we hold sin in our lives our prayers are weak at best, if they are even heard at all. We cannot be flippant about our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not about us! It is not how good we perform or how good we look. It’s about how surrendered we are.

We see this example in the verse 17 to 18 about Elijah.

James 5:17-18

¹⁷ Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

Pastor Dale, surely you are not going to compare us to Elijah. He was a great man of God! He was a prophet. Your right, I'm not! But God is! James wrote this under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and he said Elijah was a man with a nature like ours. He is just like us. But what is the difference that is being talked about here. He sacrificed! He set his life aside! He prayed fervently!

He grabbed hold of God and he prayed and powerful things happened! Do need comfort? Do you need restoration? Do you forgiveness for your sins? Pray! Call out to God! I am going to ask you another question! Do you really want to experience the power of God in your lives? Then read the Bible and Pray!

Because the prayers of a righteous person has great power as it is working!

Guess what we are going to do right now?

Pray!