

EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYER

TEXT: JAMES 5:13-20

Introduction:

1. Tonight we are going to study one of the greatest themes in the Bible -- prayer.
2. Prayer is mentioned seven times in our text:
 - "let him pray" -- vs. 13
 - "let them pray" (vs. 14)
 - "the prayer of faith" (vs. 15)
 - "pray one for another" (vs. 16)
 - "The effectual fervent prayer..." (vs. 16)
 - "he (Elijah) prayed earnestly" (vs. 17)
 - ""And he (Elijah) prayed again" (vs. 18)
3. James has already touched upon this important subject earlier in his epistle. In James 1:5 and 6, James says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed."
4. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering...." (1:6). Here in James 5:15, James refers to "the prayer of faith."
5. James 4:2 says, "ye have not, because ye ask not."

I. THE BURDEN FOR PRAYER (5:13)

1. James is speaking here of being burdened to pray when trouble comes -- "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray" (5:13).
2. Job 5:7 says, "Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward."
3. Therefore, we ought to be praying all the time! I Thessalonians 5:17 says, "Pray without ceasing."
4. The other night, Bro. Klaus preached from Nehemiah 1. Nehemiah was in Persia and he received a group of visitors from Jerusalem who told him, "The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire" (Neh. 1:3).
5. How did Nehemiah respond to this sad report? The next verse says, "And it came to pass, when I heard these

words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven" (Neh. 1:4).

6. There are many examples of this in Scripture.
7. Second Kings 19:14 and 15 says that when King Hezekiah received the threatening letter from the Assyrians, he read it and he "went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD."
8. And the Lord answered King Hezekiah's prayer.
9. We should pray when we are "afflicted," and we should pray when we are "merry." James also speaks here of being burdened to pray (sing and praise God) when one is merry (5:13b).
10. James 5:14 and 15 says we should pray when we are sick.
11. Mark 5:25 and 26 says there was "a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse."
12. "When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague" (Mark 5:27-29).
13. James 5:14 says the elders of the church should pray over the sick person, and then anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.
14. There is only one other reference to anointing with oil in the New Testament. Mark 6:13 says, "And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them."
15. There are different opinions regarding the significance of the anointing oil. Some refer to oil's medicinal value. For example, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, our Lord said the Samaritan "went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him" (Luke 10:34).

16. In the Bible, oil is a picture and type of the Holy Spirit.
17. Our Lord Himself never used oil in His many recorded healings.
18. James says it is not the oil that is essential, but "the prayer of faith" (5:15a). The Bible teaches faith healing, but not "faith healers." Some of these charlatans sell "healing oil" to people who send them money.
19. John Phillips says, "The 'healers' who perform on television and at giant rallies nowadays frequently resort to all kinds of tricks. They specialize, too, in psychosomatic healings and frequently leave a trail of disappointment and disillusionment behind them" (*Exploring the Epistle of James*).

II. THE PROMISE OF PRAYER (5:15)

1. Here in James 5:15 we have the promise of prayer -- "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up..."
2. F.B. Meyer said this about the "prayer of faith" -- "The prayer of faith is that which is so sure of the Divine answer that it knows that it has received it, though there is no appearance of its having been granted to the sense. We can only pray that prayer when we have asked what is in God's will to bestow. But righteous men cannot always pray thus, because they do not know the Lord's will on matters not recorded in this book. There are some sicknesses which are unto death, and we cannot pray the prayer of faith for these. If you cannot pray the prayer of faith, take medicine, and use the best means in your reach."
3. Some people teach that all sickness is the result of sin. But James 5:15 says, "and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."
4. You may recall that in John 9 Jesus saw a man which was blind from his birth. "And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2).
5. "Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:3).
6. Not all sickness is the result of sin, though often that is the case. When King Asa got backslidden, the LORD sent him a disease in his feet. Second Chronicles 16:12 says, "And Asa in the thirty and ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his disease was exceeding great: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians."
7. First Corinthians 11:30 says many believers are weak and sickly, and many sleep (die) because of taking the Lord's Supper unworthily.

III. THE PASSION FOR PRAYER

1. Note these three words: effectual, fervent, earnestly (5:16, 17).
2. Thomas Brooks said, "Cold prayers are as arrows without heads, as swords without edges, as birds without wings; they pierce not, they cut not, they fly not up to heaven. Cold prayers always freeze before they reach heaven."
3. Paul R. Van Gorder said, "Indefinite praying by indifferent people brings little results."
4. On the other hand, James 5:17 says Elijah "prayed earnestly."
5. James 5:16 says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." A.T. Pierson said, "The idea is that such prayer has about it supernatural energy" (*George Muller of Bristol*).
6. Paul R. Van Gorder said, "Fervent prayer, if it be for God's glory and presented in the name of His Son, will accomplish great things for time and eternity."
7. Our Lord said in Matthew 21:21 and 22, "Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."
8. James speaks of earnest prayer, and effectual (effective) prayer, and fervent prayer, and he also speaks of intercessory prayer -- "Pray one for another" (James 5:16).
9. Elijah the prophet is mentioned as an example of a man who knew how to effectively pray (James 5:17, 18).).
10. Elijah knew that God was holding back the rain. First Kings 17:1 tells us that Elijah boldly announced this to wicked King Ahab, but it does not mention the period of three and a half years (cf. James 5:17).
11. Nor does the Old Testament tell us how Elijah knew this, but Elijah probably knew it from Deuteronomy 11:13-17.
12. This warning from the book of Deuteronomy would also explain how Elijah knew God would end the drought and send rain (cf. James 5:18).
13. Therefore, Elijah believed that it was God's will to send rain, and he also understood that he needed to pray, or the rain would not come.
14. "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2).
15. It was God's will that it would rain, but the rain would only come if Elijah prayed. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16).
16. We see here effectual prayer, fervent prayer, earnest prayer, intercessory prayer, and also persistent prayer. Elijah said to King Ahab, "Get thee up,

eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain" (I Kings 18:41), but it had not rained yet.

17. Then Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, "and put his face between his knees," and he prayed (I Kings 18:42).

18. Then Elijah said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." And the servant went up, and looked, and said, "There is nothing."

19. And Elijah said, "Go again seven times" (I Kings 18:43).

20. First Kings 18:44 and 45 says, "And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain."

21. Andrew Murray said, "In order that the will of God shall be accomplished, this will must on one side be expressed by a promise, and on the other it must be received and laid hold of by the believer who prays. He therefore must persevere in prayer that he may show his God that his faith expects an answer, and will not grow weary until it is obtained...Perseverance in prayer, a perseverance which strengthens the faith of the believer against all which may seem opposed to the answer, is a real miracle; it is one of the impenetrable mysteries of the life of faith. Does it not say to us that the Savior's redeemed one is in very deed His friend, a member of His body, and that the government of the world and the gifts of divine grace depend in some sense upon his prayers? Prayer, therefore, is no vain form. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, who intercedes here on earth in us and by us, and as such, it is as efficacious, as indispensable as the work of the Son interceding for us before the throne of God. It might seem strange that after having prayed with the certainty of being heard, and having seen therein the will of God, we should still need to continue in prayer. Nevertheless it is so. In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed three times in succession. On Carmel Elijah prayed seven times; and we, if we believe the promise of God without doubting, shall pray until we receive the answer. Both the importunate friend at midnight and the widow who besieged the unjust judge are examples of perseverance in seeking the end in view."

22. To these examples we can add the Syrophenician woman who would not stop asking until her request was granted. And our Lord commended her persistence by saying, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matthew 15:28).

CONCLUSION:

From *George Muller of Bristol* by A.T. Pierson:

No man can read Elijah's short history as given in the word of God, without seeing that he was a man like ourselves. Under the juniper-tree of doubt and despondency, he complained of his state and wished he might die. In the cave of a morbid despair, he had to be met and subdued by the vision of God and by the still, small voice. He was just like other men. It was not, therefore, because he was above human follies and frailties, but because he was subject to them, that he is held up to us as an encouraging example of power that prevails in prayer. He laid hold of the Almighty Arm because he was weak, and he kept hold because to lose hold was to let weakness prevail.

Nevertheless, this man, by prayer alone, shut up heaven's flood-gates for three years and a half, and then by the same key unlocked them.

George Müller was simply another Elijah. Like him, a man subject to all human infirmities, he had his fits of despondency and murmuring, of distrust and waywardness; but he prayed and kept praying. He denied that he was a miracle-worker, in any sense that implies elevation of character and endowment above other fellow disciples, as though he were a specially privileged saint; but in a sense he was a miracle-worker, if by that is meant that he wrought wonders impossible to the natural and carnal man.