

James Part 15

Prayer / Power

James 5:13-20

Memory Verses: James 5:16

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

As we come to the end of the book of James, let us quickly reflect on what we've seen here. The main theme is this; Faith works. Faith works in the midsts of every trial we will ever face. Faith works in every temptation we will ever endure. Faith works when we are doers of the word and not merely hearers of it. Faith works when we treat people equally with dignity rather than with partiality. Faith must work, because faith without works is dead. Without a working faith our tongues will spew curses rather than blessings. Without a working faith our wisdom will be worldly and our attitudes arrogant. How can we win the war against our flesh without a faith that works? How can we restore our brothers and sisters in the faith without a faith that works? How can we concede control of our lives to God without a faith that works? It is only through a faith that works that we can overcome the love of money which is the root of all evil. It is only through a faith that works that we can patiently wait for our coming savior. And it is only through a faith that works that we can keep our oaths to God by letting our yes be yes and our no be no. Simply put... if our faith doesn't work, then we don't have a real faith and we don't have real works.

Today will finish our study of James on a topic that couldn't be a more fitting end for this book or a better fit for the fourth of July, because today we will once again be looking at the subject of prayer. So go ahead and read with me in **James 5:13-20**.

Prayer is one of our greatest weapons, if not our greatest weapon. Just look at all it can do. And yet, we struggle with prayer don't we. We often come to prayer only after we've tried everything else. And that is why prayer is one of our core values here at Stone Creek Church, and it is why we say, "prayer is our first response, not our last resort." Prayer shouldn't be a hail mary, literally and figuratively... no, it should be the very first thing we do in any situation whether good or bad. Prayer is our lifeline, prayer is our power, and prayer shows that we depend on God rather than on our own strength. **As Angus Buchanan says; "There is power in prayer. When men work, they work, but when men pray, God works."** Today we must see that **We will never have more power than when we pray.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we see this morning is that... **There Is Power In Praying For The Suffering**. Look with me at **vs. 13**. This harkens us back to **James 1:2** where we see that we will all face various trials, various sufferings. When we face those times of trial, when our brothers and sisters in Christ, when our co-workers, neighbors, anybody goes through times of suffering... we should pray for them. And how do we pray for them? Look again at **James 1:5**. We pray for wisdom for those who suffering. We know that through prayer God may use his power to ease the suffering of others, but we also know that through prayer God may use his power to give them wisdom on how to navigate their suffering. We shouldn't be too quick to ask God to alleviate suffering because if God causes suffering, he usually has a plan for it. Therefore the suffering may need wisdom more than anything else. So, regardless if God takes away one's sufferings or merely gives wisdom to navigate the sufferings we know that **prayer turns trials into triumphs**.

Look again at **James 4:6** where we see that when needed, God gives more grace. We remember that Paul asked for his suffering to be removed three times and yet God said, my grace is sufficient for you. We also remember that Jesus asked that the cup of God's wrath would be removed from him, but instead, God gave him the strength to go on and save the whole world. Listen, we are to pray that God would ease the sufferings of others by either taking away the pain, by either giving wisdom to navigate it, or by giving more grace to make it through. In that way, prayer works. **We will never have more power than when we pray.**

Secondly, **There Is Power In Praying For The Sick**. Look at **vs. 14-16**. Everyone gets sick, or will get sick. Sometimes, depending on the severity of the sickness we may worry. **Philippians 4:6** tells us to not worry about your friends and family who are sick, but to instead, intercede on their behalf in prayer. Nothing is accomplished through worry, but through prayer we put it in the hands of the one who has the power to heal every sickness. The Bible tells us to intercede for the sick in prayer. We are to go to God on behalf of others begging for his healing power. Each and every believer can and should do this regularly. That's our responsibility. The responsibility of the sick is to ask for prayers. There is no room for pride. Humble yourself and get the church mobilized on your behalf. That's what we are here for.

In special circumstances those who are sick should call upon the elders of the church to anoint them with oil and pray for them. Now, there are a few things to consider here and in praying for the sick in general. There is no power in the oil. The oil is not magic. If we were to get technical, the oil here is most likely referring to medicine. Go to the doctor and get some medicine and also be prayed for by the church. Simple right?

But symbolically, the oil is a symbol of God's anointing; his love, care, and power. Also, the power is not in the elders. The elders are men. The elders symbolically represent the church and our obedience to God. In obeying God to be anointed with oil, in obeying God to have the elders gathered, it shows extreme faith. The power is in the prayer of faith.

Again, it says that the prayers of a righteous man works. But let us examine this righteousness. The power is not in man's righteousness but in who's? Gods. Remember, our righteousness is like filthy rags. The only righteousness we have that counts is the righteousness of Christ. So, the only prayer that works is the the prayers of those who have been washed by the blood and justified from their sins. It's not our righteousness but his.

So the power isn't in the oil, or the elders, or even our righteousness. So where is the power. The power is in the prayer of faith. But before we end there, let's examine this prayer. First, the prayer of faith is not some formulaic prayer that works every time, it's not a spell or incantation. And for those who come from a charismatic background, I mean no offense, but according to the Bible, the prayer of faith has very little to do with how much you want it or how much you believe God "will" do it. You can't just say, that God wills it, and thats it. No, we get into a lot of trouble when we start naming and claiming what God IS and IS NOT going to do beyond a shadow of doubt. I don't care how close you are to God... you aren't God, and therefore, you don't definitively know God's will for all situations. If you claim that you know that God want's someone to be healed and then they aren't – has God failed? Or you? Please don't make a fool out of God by claiming to know his exact will for someone's sickness, to be healed or not. It's not your place.

No, the prayer of faith means something else. Look with me at **1 John 5:14-15** which tells us that if we ask according to his will, he hears us. The prayer of faith is not based upon our faith, but upon God's will. It's a prayer that must be offered according to what we can know about his will. We discern this not in our minds, but in God's Word. So, what do we know about God's will for the sick? We know that God loves them like his own children. We know that God wants them to be saved. We know that God wants to forgive them of their sins. We know God wants them to draw nearer to him everyday. And, we know God wants them to have eternal healing in heaven. We can easily pray these things over them because we have assurance that this is God's will. It's hard to pray for those who are sick and dying, because in our flesh we want to see a miracle healing, we want God to show himself mighty as the great physician, but that may not be what God wants. **Therefore we pray, "God our desire is for complete healing but more than that we desire your will be done". We will never have more power than when we pray.**

Thirdly, **There Is Power In Praying For & In Confession** . We see this in **vs. 16, 19-20**. We must pray to Confess our sins. If we pray without confession we are stifling the power of prayer. It's like air through a dirty filter. We must clean the filter for the air to move freely. Look what happens when we confess our sins; we will be forgiven; we receive spiritual healing. But we will also be healed physically. And before we get ahead of ourselves, this is not the definitive rule. Not everyone who confesses will be healed, but there is a conjunction to confession of sin and healing. The way I see it is this... your positional righteousness grants the power of prayer, and your practical righteousness, through a confession of your sins, fuels the power of prayer. Confession of sins only helps, and can never hurt.

But we don't just pray confessing our sins, we also pray for others to confess their sins and turn back to Christ. Remember a couple weeks ago when we were discussing judgement being either condemnation or restoration. We have a responsibility as believers to try to restore the wayward brother and sisters. And get this... our prayers for restoration have more power than our attempts at restoring. So we do both. We work for restoration and in faith we pray for restoration. **When we work to restore and we pray for God to restore, no one is beyond the power of God's salvation. We will never have more power than when we pray.**

And lastly, **There Is Power In Praying For The Nation**. Look at **vs. 17-18**. Here we have an example of a righteous man who prayed for his nation. Elijah had both a positional righteousness and practical righteousness. He had confessed his sins and was walking in the freedom of forgiveness. And his desire was for Israel to confess their sins and come back to God. So he prayed. He prayed that God would get their attention through a three year drought. God answered. Then he prayed on Mount Carmel for the fire of heaven to come down and prove to that God was the one true God. Again God answered. Then he prayed that God would show himself faithful by sending rain again. And God answered. God answered Elijah's prayers so that Israel would be turned back to God again.

We need to pray like Elijah for America. That God would be able to get her attention one more time. That our leaders would turn to him, that our companies, news agencies, social media outlets, school boards, and teachers would confess their sins, and turn back to him again. We need to pray **2 Chronicles 7:14** . We need God to heal our land, we need revival. Only God can do it... so we pray for his power to do what we can't. **We will never have more power than when we pray**

Application

Listen, prayer works; faith works. We need to pray in all situations, continuously, consistently. There is power in praying. There is power in praying for the suffering, the sick, the straying, and our nation. So pray.

It's fitting to end James with this topic because when we have a faith in Christ we must put that faith into action... and there is no more powerful action we can do than to pray. The greatest work we can do is pray. **If you truly have a faith in God, it will be seen working in prayer. We will never have more power than when we pray.**

Conclusion

Our faith works. As we end the book of James let us look once again at the main passage of this book. Let's start in **James 2:14-18, 26**. You cannot say you have faith in Christ as your Lord and Savior, and never act upon that faith. The acting upon your faith, the work, is the definitive proof of your faith. The work doesn't save you... but if you don't work you aren't saved. A faith that saves... is a faith that works.

So how is your faith working? How has the book of James challenged you to take one small step in the direction of Christ?

1. How are you becoming more and more patient in the testing of life?
2. Do you play with temptation or resist it from the start?
3. Do you find joy in obeying the Word of God or are you merely reading it?
4. Are you shackled by your prejudices?
5. Are you able to control your tongue?
6. Are you a peacemaker or a troublemaker?
7. Are you a friend of God or a friend of the world?
8. Do I condemn, criticize, and slander the wandering brother or am I actively trying to restore them?
9. Are your plans built around the will of God or your own dreams?
10. Am I selfish when it comes to money or do I freely give it for the kingdom of God?
11. Do I naturally depend on prayer as my first response when I find myself in some kind of trouble?

How is your faith working?