

September 20, 2020
Willerup United Methodist Church
Sermon Notes
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The Book of James, Lesson 11
Prayer



This is the eleventh and last in our series of meditations based on the book of James. James was written by the brother of our Lord Jesus, who called himself a servant of God and Jesus Christ. It was primarily written to Jewish Christians who were scattered in many nations. James talks in this book about practical religion: trials and tribulations, how to apply the Word of God in our daily life, the worldliness in the church and Christian perspective.

Prayer

James 5:13-20

¹³Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. ¹⁴Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

¹⁷Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

¹⁹My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, ²⁰remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

James is giving us a practical suggestion for the church to be invited into each other's welfare by praying. People are not alone; the church is a body of believers who need the support of each other.

The Lord invites us to come to him in all circumstances, with our supplications and requests with thanksgiving, notwithstanding the sin that besets us. When we are going through trouble, we should turn to God for his help. We should turn to God with praise when things are going well. When someone has specific trouble, invite the righteous, the leaders to pray over him.

1. Vs 13: The prayer of a person in need. Sharing our concerns indicates a desire to be part of the church family. Two things are done:

- a. To pray to the Lord.
- b. To involve the church family.

2. Vs 14: Elders are invited to the homes of those who are sick to anoint them with oil and pray for them.

- a. Oil – is a medicine as described in the Good Samaritan story, Luke 10:29-37. *“He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine ...”* (vs 34).
- b. Oil is the symbol of the Spirit of God – used for anointing the kings, (1 Samuel 16:1-3, 4-13).

3. Vs 15: Prayer offered in faith. Our prayers are part of God's teaching process. God often waits for our prayers of faith before interfering to heal a person.

4. Vs 16: The Church. Christ has made it possible to go directly to God for our forgiveness. But confessing our sin to each other still has an important place in the life of the church.

Jesus gave an example of people going to the altar to pray. If sacrifices of prayers and praise are made to God without settling the issues with the fellow believers, the prayers will not be acceptable (Matthew 5:21-24). His word says go and settle, reconcile, confess, forgive, and then

come to the altar. We cannot take our grudges, unforgiveness, unreconciled relationship to God because He has forgiven us while we were yet sinners through the blood of Christ. Forgive others to be forgiven, as the Lord's prayer teaches us, "Forgive us as we forgive others," (Matthew 6:12). Reconciling with God is not possible if we are not reconciled with each other, especially the fellow believer.

5. Vs 16: Confession. If our sin is affecting the church, we must confess it publicly. We need loving support as we struggle with sin.

6. Vs 16: Prayer. A Christian's most powerful resource is communion with God through prayer. It is also the communion of saints when confessing our sins to each other. There should be accountability in our holy living and communion with God. John Wesley had accountability groups called "classes." There were eight to ten people meeting for fellowship and prayer. The first thing that was asked at the meeting was, "Have you grown in grace since the last meeting? If you have committed sin, confess and receive forgiveness from the Lord."

"In the latter end of the year in 1739 eight to ten persons who appeared to be deeply convicted of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption, came to Mr. Wesley in London. They desired, as did two or three more then next day, that he would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come, which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That he might have more time for this great work, he appointed a day when they all might come together; which from thenceforward they did every week, namely on Thursday, in the evening. To these and as many more as desired to join with them (for their numbers increased daily), he gave advices from time to time which he judged most needful for them; and they always concluded their meetings with prayer suited to their several necessities." *The Methodist Primer*. Methodist Evangelistic Materials, Nashville, Tennessee, pg. 16-17

John Wesley further wrote on prayer,

- “What is prayer, but the desire of the soul expressed in words to God, either inwardly or outwardly?” – Journal, Sept. 8, 1773
- “Who can deny that God heareth prayer, or that he hath all power in heaven and earth?” - July 4, 1743
- Nothing will avail without prayer. Pray, whether you can or not: when you are cheerful, when you are heavy, pray; with many words or few words, or none at all. You will surely find an answer of peace. - June 30, 1764
Methodist First Reader - On being a Christian. Nashville, Tennessee, pg. 63

7. Vs 17: Elijah’s prayer, 1 Kings 17:1; 18:41-45.

- a. He was a man **just like us.**
- b. **He prayed earnestly** that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.
- c. **Again he prayed,** and the heavens gave rain,
- d. And the earth produced its crops.

Go through the gospels and underline the times Jesus prayed. See how much time he spent in prayer.

- Prayer empowers us.
- Prayer encourages us.
- Prayer gives us wisdom to make the right choices.
- Prayer will lead us to overcome our wills and to submit to His will.

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for the saints.” Ephesians 6:18

Some notes taken from the *Life Application Study Bible*.