



VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Weekly Bible Study - 14:07:2010

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STUDY 43: THE PRAYER OF FAITH

James 5:13-18

For a life of patience (James 5:7-12) we are called to lay hold on the strength of prayer as previously highlighted (James 1:2-5). It means that the resource for a life of patience is a life of prayer. The prayer experience of many today is not that of constant victory (Mark 9:28; Luke 10:17-20; 11:1). Saul and David were men of similar position. Faced with similar problems, they came to God with a similar petition. God rejected one and answered the other (1 Samuel 28:4-6; 2 Samuel 5:18,19). Many today, when frustrated by unanswered prayers either turn to idolatry like Saul (1 Samuel 28:6,7), or to philosophy like the Greeks (1 Corinthians 1:22); rather than follow the noble example of the disciples who turned to Christ to discover the source of their failure and find grace to help in time of need (Mark 9:28; Luke 11:1; Heb 4:16). We need to come with a clean slate irrespective of our previous experiences in prayer and dig deeper as we examine from our text **individuals, elders, friends and prophet** at prayer.

INDIVIDUALS AT PRAYER

James 5:13 “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms” (See also Luke 18:1-8; 22:44; Ephesians 5:19).

Trouble and joy cover the whole of life's experiences for a Christian. Affliction and trouble easily give rise to an attitude of rebellion against God, leading to abandonment of all spiritual activities. Equally often, times of ease and affluence beget complacency, laziness and the assumption that we are able of ourselves to cope with life, and God is forgotten (Deuteronomy 32:15). But let none of these things move us (Acts 20: 24). Neither affliction nor ease should find us without a suitable Christian response in prayer and song. Although sometimes, prayer may not remove the affliction but it most certainly can transform it. 'When Jesus was in agony, wrestling with the forces of evil at the moment of their strongest attack, "He prayed more earnestly" (Luke 22:44). To pray is to acknowledge God's sovereign power to meet our needs, and to praise is to acknowledge His sovereign power in appointing our circumstances.

ELDERS AT PRAYER

James 5:14,15 “Is any sick among you? 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: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him”. (see also Mark 6:7, 12-13).

We see that the elders have a ministry to the sick in the local church. This ministry of healing is subject to the laws of prayer. When the elders come at the invitation of the sick, they anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. By the anointing they give him symbolic assurance that the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, is active and involved in his situation. Note also that this power to heal is promised each believer,

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not only the elders of the church (Matthew 17:20; 21:22; Mark 9:23; 11:22-24; 16:15-20; John 14:12-15).

FRIENDS AT PRAYER

James 5:16 “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much”. (see also Matthew 18:19; Psalms 103:3; 107:17-20; Isaiah 6:10; 53:4; 1 Peter 2:24).

We see here the two-fold secret of bodily healing, and that sin can be one of the hindrances to effective praying. We should be involving each other in bonds of confidence and prayer.

PROPHET AT PRAYER

James 5:16b-18 “.... The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit”. (see also I King 17:1; 18:1, 41-46; Matthew 21:22).

The case of Prophet Elijah is given to show that all men are alike in constitution and to encourage others to pray for miracles. Effective fervent prayers transcends problems and circumstances and ascend to the throne of grace bringing down divine power into human situations. **There is no mountain too high to scale, no road too long to cover, no task too difficult to accomplish by a man who knows how to tap the resources of heaven through prayer.**