

PRAYER AS TAUGHT IN THE BOOK OF JAMES

BIBLE TEXT : James 5:13-18.

LESSON 468 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

James 5:13-18

13 Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms.

14 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:

15 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.

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.

17 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.

18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

Notes:

Prayer

When we read the Bible, God is talking to us, because it is His Word. When we pray, we are talking to God. Prayer is the only way in which we can reach God and tell Him our needs, or the needs of others. In prayer we can praise and thank God for all His mercies, His love and His blessings to mankind. He is always ready to listen to us. Prayers can be uttered to God at any time, morning, noon or night. "He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psalm 121:3, 4).

We love to be upon our knees when praying. But God hears an earnest prayer wherever we are, at work or school, or walking along the street. Prayers are prayed by many from sickbeds. God heard the prayers of Paul and Silas in prison, at midnight, with their feet fast in the stocks God hears the silent prayer as well as the ones spoken aloud. The prayer that reaches the ear of God and receives an answer, is the one prayed in faith from a heart that echoes, "Thy will be done." "Be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6).

Times of Affliction

James said, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray." Affliction is often sickness; other times it may be trouble, trials of faith, false accusation, persecution, or anything that might try the child of God. The remedy that James suggested for all these things was prayer.

Jesus is the great Burden Bearer. If our load becomes heavy, or our trouble severe, we can go to him in prayer and He will solve our problems.

"The Saviour can solve every problem,

The heavy as well as the light.

Our faith is made perfect in weakness,

In Him there is power and might."

It must indeed be difficult for those who do not believe in God, and who have no comforter when great troubles and tragedies enter their lives. But how blessed for the child of God to be able to pray and feel God as his refuge and strength!

Young people who are brought up in Christian homes, taught to pray and to lean upon God, are very fortunate. To know that you need never bear the cares of life alone is a truth that many of the world's wisest men have failed to find. "Casting an your care upon him; for he careth for you" (I Peter 5:7).

Singing Psalms

James said when in affliction, pray; and when happy, sing psalms. Paul also encouraged singing: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).

Orchestras and choirs were used in Old Testament times, some being very large. One mentioned in I Chronicles 25:7 had 288 members. Another great company of musicians, including 120 trumpets, played at the dedication of Solomon's Temple. "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and

instruments of musick, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was fined with a cloud, even the house of the LORD; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God" (II Chronicles 5:13, 14).

We can see from God's Word the blessings that are to be had when we sing and make melody unto the Lord. A song that is sung by a consecrated child of God often brings comfort to the sad, and conviction to the sinner, causing him to seek God. Singing of songs is a glorious way to praise the Lord.

In Sickness

James also recommended prayer for the sick. Today many other things are recommended when one is sick: remedies, patent medicines, surgery and so forth. James taught instead that one must call for the elders, or ministers, of the church. He said they would anoint the sick one with oil and pray over him, and the prayer of faith would save the sick, and the Lord would raise him up. He said that if the sick person was a sinner, God would forgive his sins, also.

Not all sinners who receive healing have their sins forgiven, but if they were to confess as James said, the Lord would certainly forgive. Prayer by righteous men can avail much, but there must also be a faith on the part of the one being prayed for.

It should not be hard for the Christian to trust God for the healing of his body, because he knows God's Word is true, and God has said "I am the LORD that healeth thee" (Exodus 15:26).

Clear Faith Channels

James knew that for one to have his prayers answered he should be clear before God and man. That is why he said to confess our faults one to another, then to pray one for another. Jesus also taught us: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23,24). If you have been having trouble with your friends or family, even though it may not be your fault, go and ask forgiveness and then pray and see how God will bless you.

Elijah's Prayer

Elijah was an outstanding example of one who could pray and receive the answer. Elijah lived when there was much trouble, sin and backsliding all around. He felt, at times, as if he were the only one left who was serving God. He had to stand against as many as 850 prophets of Baal and false prophets at one time. The 850 prayed hard and long to their gods but no answer came. When it came time for Elijah to pray, he arranged the altar and the offering as God wanted. He made all things to be in order first, then he stepped out and prayed just a short prayer and fire fell from Heaven as an answer, and burned the offering.

God was honoured, and the backslidden people fell upon their faces and said, "The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God" (I Kings 18:39). Sinners and backsliders will be convicted if there are those who will be faithful to pray for them.

Elijah had seen how the Israelites had backslidden from God. He had prayed earnestly that God would send no rain for three and a half years. It caused suffering and hunger. But Elijah would rather see the people suffer from a famine, which might cause them to repent and seek God, than to go on in their sins and be lost, to suffer forever in eternity. It did not rain again until Elijah prayed seven times and God sent rain.

God's people do not like to pray for anyone to have trouble, but often one is led to pray, "Lord, You know what is best, save

souls at any cost send whatever it takes to bring them to God."

Some testify and thank God for trouble or sickness that He permitted. It caused them to turn to God, to repent and to be saved. Many have said that as long as everything went along well they were careless and ungrateful, and neglected to seek the Lord.

Jesus' Prayer

Some who claim a Christian profession do not feel it necessary to spend time in prayer. Such a one is weak in the faith, and when trials and temptations come he is easily defeated. In sickness he finds that he cannot trust God.

Jesus, the Son of God, could not get along without prayer. The Word tells of the nights He spent in prayer. He also prayed so earnestly in the Garden, before His arrest, that He sweat as it were great drops of blood. In His prayer He cried, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."

If Jesus had to pray, surely we should see the necessity of prayer. It has been said that prayer is to the Christian what breathing is to the body. The body dies when breathing stops. If the Christian does not pray, he dies spiritually and he becomes a sinner, "dead in trespasses and sins."

Value of Prayer

Daniel prayed three times a day and it gave him grace to go into the lions' den. Moses prayed, and his sister was healed of leprosy, a disease, which is still without an earthly cure. Elisha prayed, and the son of the Shunammite woman was raised from the dead. Abraham prayed, and Lot was spared when Sodom and Gomorrah were burned with fire and brimstone. Peter was set free from prison by an angel, while the saints were praying.

Jesus prayed over the five loaves and two fishes; they were multiplied to feed five thousand. After Jesus went into Heaven 120 people gathered and prayed for ten days. God poured the Holy Ghost upon them, and they were the first to receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost and fire. After Saul became blind on the Damascus road, he was taken to the home of Simon, the tanner. He put his hands on Saul and prayed for him and he received his sight. The Lord told Ananias to go to the street called Straight and pray for Paul.

There are many more answers to prayer in God's Word. God is still answering prayer among His people; many are being saved and healed. Let us believe Jesus as He said, "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:14).

QUESTIONS

1. What are afflictions?
2. What did James suggest to do when we are happy?
3. What type of music and singing brings God's blessing?
4. What did James say to do when we are sick?
5. Why did James refer to Elijah in this lesson?
6. Tell of several answers to prayer received by Elijah.
7. Ten something of the prayer life of Jesus.
8. For how long did they pray before receiving the baptism on the Day of Pentecost?
9. How important is prayer to the Christian?