

Introduction

A farmer, who grew the best watermelon crop in his county year after year, was asked how he was able to do it. He said, "Well, I do some things that

ALL farmers do." For example:

- *At the right time, I begin plowing and getting my soil ready to sow the seeds*
- *At the right time I sow the seeds*
- *At the right time I fertilize*

I do everything every farmer does, but there is one thing I do that a lot of other farmers do not do.

After I have done all THAT I KNOW TO DO, I drive my tractor under a big tree at the end of the field, switch the motor off, take my hat off, and THEN I LOOK TO HEAVEN AND PRAY, "Heavenly Father, I have done all that I know to do and can do, now I leave the rest up to You!"

And he said, "Each year I end up with the most successful crop in the county."

That farmer could teach many Church people some very valuable things about prayer. He could teach them that when it comes to some of the needs in our life:

- We have a responsibility to do what we can do
- God has the responsibility to do what we can not do

This is one of the secrets to praying EFFECTUAL PRAYERS!
Some Churches have discovered that secret and others have not!

No Church is going to see the mighty hand of God work in their midst unless they-

(1) RECOGNIZE THERE ARE PHYSICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH THAT GOD EXPECTS US TO DO.

Illus: All over this nation we have congregations who build beautiful buildings to worship in, and they get on their old prayer bones and say to God, "God fill it!"

But some of the Church buildings are never filled! Because they are asking God to do something that God has asked them to do.

Luke 14:23 "And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."

That is something that WE CAN DO, and it is something GOD EXPECTS US TO DO!

So, there are PHYSICAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH that God expects us to do. And all the praying in the world will not do any good when we don't fulfill the responsibility that falls in our laps.

But when it comes to God's responsibilities we have to -

(2) RECOGNIZE THAT THERE ARE SPIRITUAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH THAT ONLY GOD CAN DO.

People can build Church buildings, but only God can build His Church!

Matthew 16:18, we read, "And I say also unto thee...I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

How does He do this? The only kind of growth the Church knows about today is numerical growth. When the Lord said, "*I will build my Church*", He certainly had NUMERICAL GROWTH in mind, but also he had something equally as important, and that is SPIRITUAL GROWTH!

God has promised to BUILD HIS CHURCH. He does this in two ways:

1. GOD BUILDS HIS CHURCH THROUGH BIBLICAL PREACHING!

Biblical preaching takes God's Word, and takes it apart and "feeds" it to the people, so when people leave they can say that they have been fed spiritually.

PRAYING EFFECTUAL PRAYERS-PART 6

JAMES 5:16-20

When God's Word is not preached, then that is NOT A GOD-BUILT CHURCH.

- Some Churches today are built on the "Barnum & Bailey" circus approach
- Other Churches today are built on the "Hollywood Entertainment" approach

And because they are able to draw a crowd, they feel that God is in the Church. Oh they do draw a crowd, but God has long since departed the scene!

God builds His Church through the preaching of His Word.

God's responsibility reminds me of the Church sign that said, "We CATCH THEM, God CLEANS THEM!"

Listen, it is our job to get them here, but it is God's job to work through the faithfulness of the preaching of God's Word to bring about SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

He has promised that if His Word is preached it would not return "VOID!"

You can have a CROWD without the preaching of God's Word, but you can not have any SPIRITUAL GROWTH without the preaching of God's Word.

God builds His Church through BIBLICAL PREACHING...

2. **GOD BUILDS HIS CHURCH THROUGH BIBLICAL PRAYING!**

We have very little BIBLICAL PRAYING these days.

Illus: A. C. Dixon spoke these wise words many years ago.

He said:

- *When we depend upon organization, we get what organization can do...*

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JAMES 5:16-20

· *When we depend upon education, we get what education can do...*

· *When we depend upon money, we get what money can do...*

· *When we depend upon singing and preaching, we get what singing and preaching can do...*

But when WE DEPEND UPON PRAYER, WE GET WHAT GOD CAN DO!"

What EVERY Church needs today, is SOMETHING THAT GOD CAN DO!

Listen, there are some things that only God can do.

And if God's people were to cry out before God to send revival, God would send it.

God's Word says, "You have not, because you ask not!"

God builds His church through BIBLICAL PREACHING and BIBLICAL PRAYING!

Dr. Herbert Lockyer records in his book "All The Men Of The Bible," that "James was a man who believed in the power of prayer, as evidenced by the space he devotes to it in his epistle. Because of his habit of always kneeling in intercession for the saints, his knees became calloused like a camel's; thus he became known as 'The Man With Camel Knees'"

James not only believed in prayer, he knew a great deal about praying. Let's look at some of the things God used him to teach us about prayer.

- I. **JAMES TEACHES US THE CONFESSION WE MUST MAKE!**
Look at James 5:16 we read, "*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.*"

PRAYING EFFECTUAL PRAYERS-PART 6

JAMES 5:16-20

Notice, CONFESSION is first on the agenda, even before prayer.

Illus: The Catholics practice CONFESSION frequently. Every week Catholics will go to mass, and go into the confessional booth and confess their sins to the Priest.

But one of the mistakes they make about confession is this: The Bible does not teach we are to confess our SINS to anyone, not even a priest.

The Bible admonishes us to confess our FAULTS one to another, not our sins.

We confess our SINS to God ONLY. Because ALL SIN IS ULTIMATELY AGAINST GOD!

But if we are going to pray effective prayers before God, we had better learn how to:

- Confess our faults one to another
- Confess our sins to God

We are much better at CONCEALING OUR FAULTS and SINS than we are at CONFESSING OUR FAULTS AND SINS.

However, if you check through the history books, you will find that great revivals always occurred:

- When people began confessing their FAULTS TO EACH other
- When people began confessing their SINS TO GOD

James mentioned some things that occur when sin is confessed.

A. **THERE IS RESTORATION!**

We read in verse 16, "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, THAT YE MAY BE HEALED.*"

The word "*healed*" here is TWOFOLD. That is, when we confess our faults one to another:

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JAMES 5:16-20

(1) **RELATIONSHIPS ARE HEALED**

Did you know that many times the best of friends used to be the worst of enemies? One day one of them took the initiative to go to the other one and confess his faults, and they became the best of friends.

Why? Because when we are willing to CONFESS OUR FAULTS, it makes way for the healing process in RELATIONSHIPS to start.

Not only does confession HEAL RELATIONSHIPS...

(2) **PHYSICAL PROBLEMS ARE HEALED**

Some harbor grudges or ill feelings for a person for a long time, and the grudge or ill feeling that is directed at that particular person does not hurt that person, but it robs the one who holds the grudge or has the ill feelings of weeks, months, and years of happiness!

Not only that, the ill will that the person has harbored in his heart has released poisons into his system, and may even bring about premature death.

James says that the moment we CONFESS our FAULTS "*...one to another...*" the healing process starts.

God cannot properly build His Church when folks hold grudges or have ill feelings one toward another! That is why He inspired James to say, "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed...*"

But, a word of CAUTION must be given when we consider CONFESSION. James DID NOT INSTRUCT us to broadcast all of our faults everywhere!

Illus: Some people think they have to do what the people on the national television talk shows like the Jerry Springer Show do, and broadcast all their sins before the whole nation. Not so!

Most Bible scholars concur that God intended us to use a certain wisdom in this area.

His Word seems to bear out this rule of thumb:

- PRIVATE SIN REQUIRES PRIVATE CONFESSION
- PUBLIC SIN REQUIRES PUBLIC CONFESSION
- PERSONAL SIN REQUIRES PERSONAL CONFESSION

Those personal sins that involve only you and no one else, are best confessed to God and left with Him!

Not only does CONFESSION bring RESTORATION, also...

B. CONFESSION BRINGS RECONCILIATION!

Illus: Two men who professed to be saved, went to the same church. At one time they had been good friends, but because of a business transaction that took place in the church that they differed strongly about, they became enemies. It was common knowledge to all at church that they despised each other. Every time they had a chance to say something bad about each other, they took advantage of it. The Spirit of God could not work in the church. Their hate for each other was like a dark cloud that hung over the church services. Then an evangelist came for a meeting, and he poured his heart out, preaching God's Word. He gave the invitation, and when everyone's heads were bowed the two men looked across the aisle at the same time. Their eyes were like magnets drawn to each other. Only a few seconds passed as they looked at each other face to face, when tears began to stream down their faces. They stepped out into the aisle, shook hands, and affectionately embraced. When they did that, two things happened:

- *Revival broke loose in that church. Everyone there knew that only God could cause those two to embrace in friendship*
- *A wounded friendship was healed immediately*

So, JAMES TEACHES US THE CONFESSION WE MUST MAKE.

It brings RESTORATION and RECONCILIATION.

II. JAMES TEACHES US THE COMMAND WE MUST MIND!

Look at verse 16 again, "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another...*"

Notice:

- He not only commands us to confess our faults "*one to another,*"
- He also commands us to "*PRAY ONE FOR ANOTHER.*"

There are several reasons, but **one is because you will never find anyone praying for a person and criticizing that person at the same time!**

Illus: When we hear people going around gossiping about the Church, they are telling us something about their private life. They are telling us they are not praying for their Church. If they were, they would not be putting it down!

This is why God's Word tells us to PRAY FOR OUR ENEMIES! *Matthew 5:44 "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."*

God says PRAY FOR THEM! Now, we might pray "*God send a bolt of lightning and take care of them!*" But that's not the kind of praying the Lord had in mind!

When you truly start praying for someone (especially an enemy), your feelings toward them begin to change.

- God builds His Church through prayer, and when Christians love each other enough to pray for each other, they are creating an environment where God can work!
- God cannot work in a Church where people are full of ill will toward one another!

We are to CONFESS OUR FAULTS one to another, and PRAY ONE FOR ANOTHER. These are NOT AN OPTION, they are A COMMAND!

JAMES TEACHES THE CONFESSION WE MUST MAKE, and THE COMMAND WE MUST MIND, but also look at...

III. JAMES TEACHES US THE CONDITIONS WE MUST MEET!

In verse 16, we read, "...*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*"

The word "*fervent*" has to do with our emotions or "*with feeling.*" The Christian life is not just a life of empty words.

Illus: Many Christians pray empty prayers all the time. Many use the same words and phrases over and over again with no real feeling. Their prayers are just empty, meaningless words!

You cannot pray EFFECTUAL PRAYERS using a bunch of empty words. God's Word says, "...*The effectual fervent prayer*" that avails much is prayed with FEELINGS!

- It does not mean that we "work up" our emotions so we appear to be fervent...
- It does mean that because we are deeply burdened about what we are praying about, our emotions are deeply stirred...

When James talks about the word "*fervent*", he is not talking about a PHONY DISPLAY, he is talking about the real thing deep within.

- You see everyone of us is emotional to some degree!
- The person who is not "emotional," is a dead person!
- Now one's emotions can be involved without an outward display but this is usually the exception to the rule!

The reason that some are not emotional in the house of God is because God is not real enough to them to get excited about.

It does not matter what your temperament may be, when you are concerned enough, YOUR EMOTIONS WILL SHOW IT.

What gets you excited? For some people it might be:

- Food · Cars · Golf · Hunting · Camping

Every one of us has something that we get excited about.

When folks come to know the Lord and love the Lord as they should, they will express it in their SINGING, WORSHIP, AND ALSO IN THEIR PRAYING.

If we love someone, we are FERVENT IN OUR FEELINGS!

On the other end of emotions, some people stir up their own emotions but God is not in it!

That is not the kind of fervency that James was speaking of in this passage. James was speaking of the natural fervency that flows from a person who is madly in love with the Lord.

We have looked at *THE CONFESSION WE MUST MAKE, THE COMMAND WE MUST MIND, and THE CONDITIONS WE MUST MEET...*

IV. THE CHARACTER WE MUST MANIFEST! (James 5:17-18)

We see in this passage that God used Elijah for a very specific reason.

From his example, we learn the truth of verse 16!

PRAYING EFFECTUAL PRAYERS-PART 6

JAMES 5:16-20

· In Proverb 15:29, we read, *"The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous."*

· In Psalm 66:18, we read, *"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."*

Prayer is a waste of time to the person who is living in sin, until he is willing to CONFESS HIS SINS and REPENT of them!

When Elijah prayed, he saw the hand of God move in a miraculous way.

· He prayed that it would not rain, and it did not rain for three-and-a-half years.

· Then, when he prayed that it would rain again, it rained!

In **1 Kings 18**, we see the example of Elijah praying effectual prayers!

A. WHAT WE SEE ABOUT THE PERSON OF PRAYER!

In 1 Kings 18, Elijah saw God do the supernatural, but it was because Elijah was a RIGHTEOUS PERSON who knew what to do when conflict came - HE PRAYED! He was that kind of person.

B. WHAT WE SEE ABOUT THE PLACE OF PRAYER!

Some people believe that the only place one can pray is in a Church building. This is why some Church buildings are left open, so people may enter and pray. But, sometimes when we need to pray the most we can't be in a Church building to pray!

Sometimes people face a crises at work, on the highway, or in their home, and they need to call upon God!

Elijah was not only a PERSON OF PRAYER, but he was a one who believed that any place could be A PLACE OF PRAYER. In 1 Kings 18, he prayed up on Mt. Carmel after Baal's people!

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C. WHAT WE SEE ABOUT THE POSTURE OF PRAYER?

In verse 42, it tell us that Elijah *"...he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees."*

Now some people think you cannot pray unless you are on your knees and have your eyes closed, but this is not so.

You may pray in that position, but God is not interested so much in the POSTURE of your body.

He is concerned with the posture of the heart of man, not the posture of the body of man!

D. WHAT WE SEE ABOUT THE PASSION OF PRAYER!

From what James tells us we know that this was an effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man!

E. WHAT WE SEE ABOUT THE PERSISTENCE OF PRAYER! (Vs 43)

Well, why is it that God does not answer our prayers when we pray only one time?

There are some times when He does.

- There are times when it seems that before we get the prayer out, the answer is on the way!
- There are other times when He does not answer as quickly and directly as we ask!

Verse 43 indicates that Elijah prayed seven times. Often we may sometimes ask more than that. Still it seems that we see no answer. We are just like our children, "Why?"

When we get to heaven we will understand more about this, but let me ask you something parents, did you or do you always respond to your children the first time they ask, by doing just exactly what they ask, every time they ask for something?

Children do not always know what is good for them, nor can they see the full scope of things. Sometimes the timing is all wrong for what they ask for and the parent is discerning of all the facts and circumstances surrounding the granting of the request!

F. WHAT WE SEE ABOUT THE POWER OF PRAYER!

Elijah had prayed that it not rain, and it did not rain for three-and-a-half years, and then verse 45 tells us that after he prayed again, "...the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was A GREAT RAIN."

That wasn't a mist...that wasn't just a small summer shower!

The power of prayer will bring what is needed!

The power of prayer will bring the showers of blessings!

Conclusion

All across this nation there are some Christians who are longing to see the hand of God work in their life time. But that only can be done through BIBLICAL PREACHING and BIBLICAL PRAYING.

Let me close with this illustration.

Illus: In London more than a century ago there lived a godly woman. She was a hopeless invalid and could not attend church, but she could and did pray. It happened that a Chicago newspaper was put into her hands. Her attention was drawn to the story of a young man by the name of Moody, who was having a revival in his church. Immediately she began to pray for God to send him to England and to her church. Her church was large and had many adherents but desperately needed a genuine spiritual awakening. Many months passed. One Sunday her sister came home from church, and said they had a surprise at church; a young man named Dwight L. Moody had attended and was asked to preach, and the whole congregation was strangely stirred. They had asked him to preach again that night. The invalid sister was thrilled at the answer to her prayers. She told her sister of her previous prayer, told her not to bring her any dinner, and asked her to join in prayer that God would come in great victory upon her church that night. What happened that night in history? Dwight L. Moody preached and then asked anyone there who was unsaved, and wanted to be saved, to raise his hand. A sea of hands responded. The evangelist thought they had misunderstood him, so he asked the unsaved to stand, and almost the whole audience responded. "But," said Moody, "You do not understand. I am not asking for the church members who are saved; I want those who are unsaved to respond." Finally he asked all who wanted to be saved to go with him to the large auditorium in the basement, which they would use as an inquiry room. The room was jammed and hundreds were saved. The revival went on there, and then spread over all England and back to America. The faithful intercessor had not only brought a revival to her church, but had thrust D. L. Moody out on his great career of evangelism that brought hundreds of thousands to Jesus Christ. ("Choice Illus,." W.W. Clay pg. 58-59)