

- **\*Read James 5:13-18/Prayer\*** Seven times in these six verses prayer is mentioned in connection with something that benefits man. If a person is suffering then he is to pray for relief. If a person is sick then he is to call for the elders who will pray for him. Those prayers, James says, will help to restore the one who is down. When we are in need of forgiveness, James says that we must confess and pray to God. He says we are to do so because the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Then the example of Elijah is put forth to show just how much power there is in the prayer of a righteous man.
- The example of Elijah and these other writings of James ought to leave us with one simple realization. There is great power in the prayer offered up by man to the God of heaven!. The awesome benefits of prayer are numerous (comfort, aid, blessing, etc.) and its powerful goes far beyond what we might even be able to comprehend as humans. However, what happens when we don't see the power of prayer in action in our lives? Let's be honest, there have probably been times in our lives where things have gone poorly and they haven't gotten better or we haven't been comforted as quickly as we think they should have been. Does this mean that prayer has lost its power?
- Let me suggest that the power of prayer is only hindered when there is some sort of failure on our behalf. Our God is certainly powerful enough to bring about great results in our lives when we lean upon Him, but it is our shortcomings in regards to prayer or other areas in our lives that hinder it from having its proper working in our lives. Let's take some time this morning to consider 4 ways in which we might hinder the great power of prayer.

### **I. We Don't Pray**

- A. The first and most obvious way in which we might hinder the power of prayer in our lives is if we don't even pray to begin with. A lack of prayer in our lives means there is a lack of communication and communion with God. How can we expect for our lives to be blessed by a God that we refuse to acknowledge and lean upon.
- B. Well known denominational preacher Charles Spurgeon said this accurately about the Christian who fails to be dedicated to prayer. "As well could you expect a plant to grow without air and water as to expect your heart to grow without prayer and faith." Spiritual growth is reserved for those who are dedicated to constant prayer to their heavenly Father.
- C. Hopefully, it has become apparent to you as we have been reading through the Psalms this week just how dedicated David and others were to prayer. Many of the Psalms we have in Scripture are simply prayers set to music, and what blessings these things are to the life of the Christian. To step back and take time to acknowledge God, to praise God, and to beg before His throne of mercy puts us in the one place where mercy can be obtained. Certainly David's words in **Psalms 6** show us the power of prayer in the life of the brokenhearted.
- D. But again, what is the easiest way for sin to take over our lives to the point where we are brought lower than we could've ever imagined?...Just don't pray. Forget about God and do everything in your own way. James mentions that the one who is lacking and being overwhelmed in sin is in that place because they simply fail to ask for help from God. **(James 4:1,2)** When we are lacking in this life, especially from a spiritual perspective, the advice from James is so clear....ask of God! **(James 1:5)**

### **II. We Lack Confidence In Prayer**

- A. The very next verse gives us our next hinderance to being able to experience the power of prayer...it might be that we ask, but we might still fall short because we do not ask in faith, we don't ask with confidence in our heart that God can work through our prayers! **(James 1:6; I John 5:14,15)**
- B. Why is it or in what ways might we lack in confidence when it comes to prayer? Consider that we might lack confidence that God hears us. Maybe we feel as if the sins of our past life hinder God hearing us. This just isn't the case according to John. John is writing to faithful Christians and as faithful Christians we can have confidence that He will hear His children.
- C. Or it might be that we lack confidence that God cares enough for us to even act upon our requests through prayer. Is this true? Does God not care enough to help us? Certainly God does care for us! He wants us to cast our cares upon Him through prayer because He does care for us. **(I Peter 5:6,7)**
- D. Or maybe we are offering up nothing but empty words because we don't even believe that God is there to begin with. If we don't have confidence that there is a God who hears us and cares for us then why are we even wasting our time praying to nothing? Brethren, We can and must have confidence that our God hears us and cares for us! In doing so then we will experience the great power of prayer.

### III. We Continue To Live In Sin

- A. The power of prayer is a wonderful blessing to be enjoyed by those who are faithful and obedient to God. The unfortunate flip side to this is that those who fail to obey in faith to God don't enjoy the blessing of God working in their lives through prayer. This isn't because God doesn't care or love them, but it is because effective prayer is a result of fellowship with God. **(James 5:16)**
- B. It might be that an individual isn't seeing the result of the power of prayer because he continues to live in sin. God is very clear that He has the ability to hear and assist those who seek His aid, but that hearing and aiding is contingent on the faithfulness of the asker. **(Isaiah 59:1,2)**
- C. Now, let me take just a moment to clarify what this means. Firstly, this does not mean that we must not have ever made a mistake in our lives or else God won't hear us. If this is the case then none of us would ever be able to go to God in prayer. However, what this does mean is that we must approach God in humility **(I Peter 5:6,7)** and faithfulness. Even if we have sinned, we can still go to God and beg for His mercy that He might forgive us of our sin. This is what Peter instructed Simon to do. **(Acts 8:20-23)**
- D. So what does it mean that God will not hear the sinner? We cannot openly and willfully rebel against God in sin and expect for Him to still show us favor! We cannot bite the hand that feeds us. This is just foolishness and a quick way for the power of prayer to be taken out of our lives. The powerful blessings of prayer are reserved for the one whose heart is not set on wickedness. **(Psalm 66:18-20)**

### IV. We Possess A Poor Attitude

- A. Lastly, we might not enjoy the power of prayer because we simply possess wrong attitudes in regard to prayer. We might pray fervently. We might do everything we can to live according to God's Will, but we might see prayer as something that it is not.
- B. It might be that we incorrectly see prayer as status symbol. We might have an attitude like the Pharisee who stood on the street corner in front of every one so others might see how "holy" or "spiritual" they are. **(Matthew 6:5,6)** Or maybe we craft these long and intellectual sounding prayers so that we might seem smart or more righteous. **(Matthew 6:7)**
- C. It might be that we see prayer as nothing more than a magical wishing well where we go simply to gain something good for our enjoyment from our genie...I mean God. **(James 4:3)**
- D. Maybe we go to God in prayer with an entitled mindset that since we are so good and not as bad as other people that God must listen to us and give us anything that we ask for. **(Luke 18:11,12)**
- E. Approaching God with these inappropriate types of mindsets will do nothing but smother out the powerful work of God through our prayers. We must be sure that we recognize and always remember that approaching God's throne in prayer is a blessing and a privilege and not something that we deserve or are owed as God's people.

Do you find yourself in a place in your life where you just don't feel as if your prayers are effective? Do you feel as if God is not as active in your life and faith as He once was or could be? If this is where you find yourself, then might I encourage you to honestly consider how it is that you approach your prayers. Consider whether you are praying as frequently as you ought to. Consider whether you actually have confidence in what you are doing in your prayers. Consider your life and examine whether you are living as you ought to in the light. Take some time and consider your attitude and see if it is what it ought to be. I feel confident that if we can correct these shortcomings in our prayer lives then God will always be there to show us His great power in the prayer of His people. May God help us to be a people of prayer. May we live lives that show our confidence in God that He will work through us in our prayers to useful instruments in His Kingdom. At the end of the day, may God be glorified above all things in everything that we do.