

Why is the prayer meeting often the least attended meeting on the church calendar? I wonder if we actually believe in the power of prayer.

Samuel Chadwick once wrote, *“Satan dreads nothing but prayer. His one concern is to keep the saints from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil; he mocks our wisdom, but he trembles when we pray.”*

James, the half-brother of Jesus, was known as a man of prayer. Early church historians called him James the Just. He would enter the temple alone and be found kneeling and praying daily for the people's forgiveness. He was such a prayer warrior that his knees would be calloused; he was described as having camel knees because of his constant worship.

The activity of prayer does not come naturally to us. From the moment we are born, we are taught how to take care of ourselves and to be self-reliant through education and financial resources. But prayer, at its core, is dependence; it is based on faith and trust in the unseen realm. Prayer is offensive to our proud human nature.

We can never overemphasize the importance of prayer and the power of prayer. It is the life blood of every true believer, not just something we turn to when we run into problems in life. Prayer is so much more; we get to communicate with the creator of the universe!

James 5:13 states, *“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.”* No one will go through life without suffering. In this fallen world, we will have trouble (see John 16:33). And when trials come our way, usually the last resort is prayer.

Then James goes to the opposite end of the spectrum, the cheerful heart, and he instructs us to sing praises to God. James writes that from suffering to joy, across the entire spectrum of life, we should be praying, looking to heaven (see Philippians 4:6).

Then James narrows it down to sickness, James 5:14-16, *“Is anyone among you sick? 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 will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.”*

Translations differ on these verses, but the NIV seems to make a categorical statement in verse 15: *“And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well.”* James does not give a time frame, but he says the healing will take place, maybe not in the time we hope for it to happen. Sometimes healing takes place over a long time; sometimes it only occurs in

glory. We must never give up praying for the sick; we must be a people of faith and a people of prayer; we need to wrestle with this and apply it to our lives.

But what is the prayer of faith? We find the answer in 1 John 5:14-15: *“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.”* A prayer of faith is a prayer offered when we know the will of God, when we have spent time with God in prayer, discerning His will in the matter and then praying accordingly. This is how Jesus operated when he walked the earth (John 5:19-20). Jesus never did anything outside of the will of the Father.

Most of the time, we view prayer as a horizontal petition. But a prayer offered in faith is circular; we wait on the Lord, He gives us the direction and clarity of what to pray for, and then we pray accordingly. Faith is not something we muster up; faith comes from God, and we respond in faith by praying to him.

We now come to the two “One-Anothers” in verse 16: *“Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working”*

Confess your sins to one another.

This verse doesn’t mean that we need to line up in front of the church and confess our sins from the stage – although sometimes we might need to. A good rule is the following:

- Private sin requires private confession
- Public sin requires public confession.

James is not implying that we have the power to cleanse one another’s sins; only the blood of Jesus through repentance can do that.

Confessing to one another is a private confession with someone you can fully trust with your sinful mistakes; someone who loves you and is willing to hold you accountable.

Pray for one another.

This is such a vital part of the Christian community, not just praying for one another when they are sick or going through a hard time, but continually praying for one another.

Verse 16 ends with the phrase, *“The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”*T

The word righteous means our position in Christ. Firstly, as believers, we are covered by the righteousness of Christ. Philippians 3:9 states that it is not our own righteousness, but the gift given to us, that we are in right standing with God.

But we must never neglect personal holiness, daily walking in right relationship with the Lord, which brings power to our prayers.

Jimmy Draper wrote, *“A man whose life is a holy life, whose life is consumed with the desire to love and serve God, who walks with and lives for God, will have power in prayer.”*

Our personal holiness, or lack thereof, does affect our prayers (see Psalm 66:18).

May we seek to walk daily, repenting of our sin, living in communion with our Heavenly Father by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let us be known as a praying church.