

James – The Power of Prayer Js. 1:5-8

Introduction:

Prayer has always been important to the Christian. It is the way that we communicate to God our needs and our desires. It is the avenue that we have to talk to the Father.

As we look throughout the scriptures, we see where God commands us to pray.

Eph. 6:18 - praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—

Phil. 4:6 - Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

However, as we pray, do we really understand the power behind our prayers? Do we really understand the power that God has to give us the things that we ask? In this passage, James teaches us the “power of prayer” to the Christian.

I. In order to receive things from God, we must ask (1:5).

- A. In the immediate context, James is talking about wisdom.
 - 1. James goes on to tell us that the wisdom that we need is from above (3:13-18).
 - 2. However, in any context, if we want to receive from God, we must ask.
 - a. It includes all areas of life.
 - 1) Food – Mt. 6:11
 - 2) Forgiveness – Mt. 6:12
 - 3) Clothing – Mt. 6:25-34
 - b. We need to always remember to pray
- B. James goes on to remind us to pray to God (5:13-14).
 - 1. **Js. 5:13-14** - Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. {14} 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.
 - 2. We pray when we are suffering and when we are sick.
- C. The promise is that if we ask, God will give it to us (1:5b).
 - 1. This is a promise that Jesus Himself makes to us.
 - 2. **Mt. 7:7-11** - Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. {8} For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. {9} Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? {10} Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? {11} If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!
 - 3. **Jn. 14:13-14** - And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. {14} If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

- D. It should also be understood that we must ask according to His will.
1. **I Jn. 3:22** - And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.
 2. **I Jn. 5:14-15** - Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. {15} And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.
- E. In no way are we diminishing the power of God to know what we need.
1. God already knows what we need, but He also wants us to ask Him to meet those needs for us.
 2. **Mt. 6:32** - For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.
- F. In order to receive things from God, we must first ask.

II. When we ask things of God, we must ask in faith (1:6-8).

- A. When we pray, we must believe that we will receive things from Him (1:6a).
1. Notice also **James 5:15-16**.
 - a. **Is. 5:15-16** - And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. {16} Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.
 - b. It is the “prayer of faith” that will save the sick (**5:15**).
 - c. “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (**5:16**).
 2. Jesus taught His disciples to have faith when they pray.
 - a. **Mk. 11:22-24** - So Jesus answered and said to them, “Have faith in God. {23} For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will come to pass, he will have whatever he says. {24} Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.”
 - b. **Mt. 17:19-20** (After the Transfiguration when the disciples could not cast out a demon) - Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast him out?” {20} So Jesus said to them, “Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.
 - c. **Lk. 17:5-6** - And the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” {6} So the Lord said, “If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”

- B. Not only does James tell us to ask in faith, but he also gives us the warning of doubting when we ask something of God (1:6-8).
1. Notice what James says about he who doubts:
 - a. He is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind (1:6).
 - b. Do not suppose that this man will receive anything from God (1:7).
 - c. This man is double-minded and unstable (1:8).
 2. A person who doubts is one who is two-faced; he asks God for things but does not believe that God can fulfill his requests.
 3. Mt. 14:31 - And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him [Peter], and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"
 4. I Tim. 2:8 - I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;

III. To see how prayer is powerful, notice several examples of those whose prayers were answered.

- A. James gives us the example of Elijah (5:17-18).
1. Js. 5:17-18 - Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. {18} And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.
 2. Reference to I Kgs. 17-18.
- B. Notice some examples of others that prayed to God and had their prayers answered.
1. I Sam. 1:27 (Hannah about Samuel) - For this child I prayed, and the LORD has granted me my petition which I asked of Him.
 2. Solomon had his prayers answered.
 - a. I Kgs. 3:9 (Solomon to God) - Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?
 - b. II Chr. 7:12-15 (After Solomon dedicates the temple to God by offering sacrifices to Him) - Then the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice. {13} "When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people, {14} "if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. {15} "Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place.
 2. I Kgs. 18:37-38 (Elijah in his battle with the prophets of Baal) - "Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again." {38} Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice,

and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench.

3. The early church was a prayerful church.
 - a. **Acts 2:42** - And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.
 - b. **Acts 4:31** - And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.
 - c. **Acts 12:5** - Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.
- C. Of course, the greatest example of answered prayer that we have is Jesus.
 1. **Mk. 1:35** - Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.
 2. **Lk. 6:12** (Before Jesus selects His 12 disciples) - Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.
 3. **Mt. 14:23** (After feeding the 5,000) - And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray.
 4. Even before His death Jesus was found in prayer.
 - a. **Mt. 26:36-46** – Jesus in the Garden before His betrayal.
 - b. **Jn. 17:1-26**
 5. The example of Jesus in prayer can all be summed up in one passage.
 - a. **Lk. 5:16** - So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed.

Conclusion:

- I. In order to receive from God, we must first ask of him.
- II. We must believe that God will grant our petitions.
- III. We can learn from the examples of the Bible that God will answer our prayer if we ask according to his will.

Prayer is powerful! Do you believe in the power of prayer?