

The prayer of faith

One characteristic of the modern church is prayerlessness. We attend programs, socials, general worship services, but when prayer meetings are called, they are normally very poorly attended. Prayer in itself is an act of faith declaring our absolute dependence on God for all of life; whereas a lack of prayer is a declaration that we don't need God at all as we have all our faith and confidence in ourselves and not in God.

James 5:13-18 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

¹⁷ Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

1) The call to prayer

- We are called to prayer
 - James 5:13-14 Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.
- We are called not to ritualistic prayer, but to enter into the presence of God by faith with confidence
 - Hebrews 10:19-22 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.
- God is never far from us; we're the ones who need to draw near to Him
 - He has done everything to make it possible for us to enter in to the Most Holy Place to draw near to Him
 - Jesus gave His life to cleanse us so that we can enter the presence of the Holy God, not as sinners, but as saints having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.
- God was more eager for us to come near to Him than we are
 - Even the apostles were weak in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. Each time Jesus went to pray on His own He asked them to watch and prayer, but each time He returned to find them sleeping.
 - Matthew 26:40-41 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."
 - Jesus knows that we are weak and that prayer is an effort, but He still expects us to do it.
- He calls us away from our busyness to spend time with Him to find our rest in Him
 - Mark 6:30-32 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.
 - We live in a time where everyone is busy. If you ask people how they are, you often get the answer: "Busy!"
 - Coming away from all the busyness of life to spend time alone with Jesus in prayer is an act of faith
 - It's an act of faith that He will give us rest
 - Matthew 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."
- How often we forfeit His grace and strength; how often we forfeit receiving His love and kindness; how often we forfeit His rest; all because we forfeit His call to come to Him in prayer

2) The characteristics of the prayer of faith

- The prayer of faith upholds the glory of God
 - 1 Kings 18:36-37 At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”
 - The people of Israel had forsaken the Lord, and Elijah challenged them to whom is God – The Lord or Baal.
 - Sometimes the prayer of faith is accompanied by actions of faith
 - This prayer was not primarily about the people turning to God as it was about upholding the glory of God - ...so that these people will know that you, Lord, are God...
 - Isaiah 42:8 I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols.
- The prayer of faith upholds the character of God
 - Daniel 2:19-23 Then Daniel praised the God of heaven and said: “Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king.”
 - Praying according to the character of God we have to not only believe in God, but believe in who He is, His character, His ways so we can pray according to what He will and won't do as He won't act contrary to His character.
- The prayer of faith upholds the will of God
 - Matthew 6:9-10 Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
 - God will never act contrary to His will, so we need to believe and understand what His will is, to pray with confidence
 - His will is always according to His glory and character and never contravenes them
 - His will is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, but we have to humble ourselves to know what His will is
 - Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will.
- The prayer of faith perseveres until an answer is received
 - Luke 18:1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.
 - Luke 18:6-8 And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷ And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸ I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?
 - Abraham persisted in his petitions for Sodom and Gomorrah

3) The confidence of prayer

- James 5:15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.
- James 5:17-18 Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.
- 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.