

Fellow redeemed sinners, redeemed by the blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,

The general epistle of James from which our text is taken is a very practical portion of God's Word. James emphasizes the fact that true faith in Christ is fruitful in good works, and that God our heavenly Father is the Source of such living faith, for we read in James 1:16-22, "Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." Note well the importance of God's Holy Word through which we Christians were given faith in Jesus and are sustained in that faith, and which is our guidebook for living in a manner which befits our Christian calling.

Therefore, fellow Christians, since the Holy Bible is our guidebook and we are always in need of God's gracious help in following His will revealed therein, we can certainly benefit from pondering our Scripture selection as it supplies:

"IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS ON PRAYER"

With that as our theme may we, in view of our text and with the help of the Holy Ghost, see—

- 1) Who we are to address in prayer and how
- 2) Who we are to pray for and when
- 3) Why we are to pray

Verses 13 & 14, ----- (James 5:13-14)

For now, let's direct our attention to three phrases in particular found in the opening two verses of our text, those phrases being: *let him pray; let him sing psalms; and, in the name of the Lord.*

Take it to heart that singing psalms is rendering prayer musically. To pray is to supplicate, to entreat, to thank and to praise. The Greek original wording in our text reveals that to pray is an act of worship in making supplication to God. Hence, we note in the second verse of our text that prayer is to be made in the name of the Lord. Thus, we are only to address the true Lord God in prayer, for we read in Luke 4:8, "it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." Accordingly, it is sinful to utter prayers to false gods or departed saints, for such practices are idolatry. Furthermore, departed saints cannot even hear prayer, for the prophet Isaiah writes, "Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting." (Isaiah 63:16) Therefore, let us only pray to the Lord God.

Verses 15 & 16, ----- (James 5:15-16)

Consider the following two phrases: *prayer of faith, and, fervent prayer of a righteous man.* Thus, we observe that prayer is to be made to the Lord God in faith, fervently, by a righteous person.

Think about it. Faith in Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior and Lord is required if one's prayer is to be heard by God, because only people with faith in Jesus Christ are righteous in God's sight. We read in Romans 3:20-26, "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them

that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

Furthermore, the Lord Jesus says to His followers in John 15:16, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” So, I repeat, faith in Jesus Christ as one’s personal Savior and Lord is required if one’s prayer is to be heard by God.

Mere wordy lip-service by unbelievers is NOT prayer to the Lord God that will be heard, for Jesus declares in Matthew 6:5-7, “when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.” Realize that so-called prayer wheels and silly sets of beads are nonsense since the Lord God desires honest sincere prayers flowing from a heart that beats in faith and love toward Him with trust and confidence that He will hear such prayers for Jesus’ sake.

Take it to heart that prayers can be silent or aloud, spoken or sung, as long as they are addressed to the true God and flow from heart-deep faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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As we continue to ponder our text, let us see who

we are to pray for and when.

Again, verses 13-16, ----- (James 5:13-16)

When afflicted and sad, we are to pray for ourselves. When merry and happy, we are to pray for ourselves. When sick we are to call upon others, such as the pastor, to pray for us, besides praying for ourselves. Additionally, we are to be penitent toward one another as Christians, and are to pray for one another for forgiveness, knowing that such prayer is not in vain when made in faith to the Lord God.

Think about the fact that we are to pray for ourselves and our fellow Christians. My friends, we ALL need God’s help each and every day because we all sin each and every day, for Ecclesiastes 7:20 plainly states, “there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” Furthermore, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ says in John 15:5, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” Indeed, we can do nothing good without the help of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider the fact we are to pray when happy and when sad, for that indicates we need to pray at all times. No wonder 1 Thessalonians 5:17 instructs: “Pray without ceasing.” And, the apostle Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:1-6, “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” Accordingly, we are to pray at all times for all people.

My friends, we surely need to pray regularly for all people as we behold the world growing more and

more sinful as we approach the great day of Judgment. We need to pray for widespread repentance in our nation which needs to turn from wickedness and to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ for forgiveness and salvation, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18)

Let us all daily and sincerely repent of our sins; and, let us cling to Christ Jesus in heart-deep faith as our personal Savior and Lord, for 1 John 1:9 promises: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Let us pray for ourselves and for one another that we may hold fast to the true God and His true Word.

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As we continue to ponder our text, let us see why we are to pray.

Again, verses 13-16, ----- (James 5:13-16)

Notice that we are instructed to pray, and that's reason enough to pray since, as 2 Timothy 3:16-17 relates, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." Hence, God desires that we pray since He tells us to do so in His Word!

Additionally, we Christians should pray because prayer brings results, for verse 15 of our text informs us that upon praying for the sick and having the medicine of soothing oil applied to them by the elders of the church, *the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be*

*forgiven him*. Observe that the Lord grants healing of body and soul where and when it pleases Him in answer to proper prayer. I've experienced it personally, as have many if not all of you, that the Lord truly answers prayer and heals if it is His will to do so, in the time and manner He determines is best. So, take it to heart that prayer is not some useless exercise but is effective, for our text reports in verse 16 that *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*.

Notice also that verse 16 of our text begins by urging us Christians: *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed*. Our faults, our transgressions, bother us and burden our hearts because we Christians hate sinning against God who has been and is so very gracious and merciful to us. Hence, when we confess to one another and pray for one another we experience healing of our hurting hearts as we encourage each other in the faith, reminding one another that Jesus Christ has indeed paid for all of our sins in full with His holy and precious blood. Yes, "the blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7)

Verses 17 & 18, ----- (James 5:17-18)

We are given an example regarding how effective a prayer of faith rendered to the Lord can be, for Elias – Elijah of old – was a sinful human being as we are, and yet, since he was a believer, the Lord heard his prayer. It was in the days of wicked king Ahab who promoted gross idolatry in Israel that Elijah the prophet prophesied. We read in 1 Kings 17:1, "Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." Thus, there was a great drought in the land. Then, we read in 1 Kings 18:1, "And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth." Elijah then demonstrated that the idol Baal was a false god, for 1 Kings 18:21-24 relates, "Elijah came unto all the people,

and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken." The idol Baal could not answer by fire since Baal was in reality a false god, a mere figment of sinful men's imagination.

On the other hand, the Lord answered by fire in a big way, for 1 Kings 18:38-45 reports, "Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel." Thus, it is plainly evident that a prayer of faith rendered to the true God is effective and

avails much.

Verses 19 & 20, -----. (James 5:19-20)

The closing verses of our text indicate how important it is that we pray for those who wander from God's truth and fall from faith due to weakness because they have failed to continue in God's Word.

My friends, we all dwell in sinful flesh and are subject to temptations. For example, one may become obsessed with obtaining worldly wealth; nevertheless, 1 Timothy 6:6-10 states, "godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Note well that if one begins to love money and pushes away one's love for the Lord, one can fall from the faith. Therefore, when we see a fellow Christian going down that path, we had best pray for that person, for our text says: *Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.*

Let us therefore pray for one another, and share God's Word with one another, for Romans 10:17 relates, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And, in 1 Thessalonians 2:13 we learn "the word of God," is that "which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

Let us daily and sincerely repent of our sins; let us keep our full trust and confidence in Christ Jesus; and, let us go forward remembering the important instructions on prayer that we've pondered from our text, applying those instructions to our own practices in prayer. Amen. m.e.l.