

The Prayer Of Faith

James 5:15, *“And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.”*

This month is another Month of Prayer at Cornerstone, and therefore, I thought it would be helpful if I taught on the subject of prayer. There are various types of prayers and many ways to pray. So it is important that we know 'how' to pray and what our prayers can achieve. Prayer is a subject we hear about on a very regular basis. We are told to pray daily or to pray continuously. We are also told to pray at certain times, and on specified schedules, or to "pray it through." Unfortunately, most of us receive very little instruction on exactly how we should pray. It can be very frustrating for new believers, and experienced believers alike, when they know that they should pray and yet they have no idea of what to say or do. Last Sunday evening we studied "Prayer that Prevails" and I felt it was beneficial in helping us to understand why we should Pray in the Spirit.

It has been said that God answers every prayer. Sometimes He says, "Yes." Sometimes He says, "No." And sometimes He says, "Wait." While there is a lot of truth in that statement, why would you ever pray a prayer that God would say "No" to? There are, of course, reasons why we do that (mostly due to a lack of knowledge); but the purpose of this series is to teach you how to pray prayers that God will say "Yes" to. This study is not intended to give you all of the answers to every circumstance that you might face. But if you will learn the principles we will be examining, you will have the tools you need to develop an effective and rewarding prayer life.

As mentioned, there are many different kinds of prayer that may be used at various times under differing circumstances. There are prayers of thanksgiving when you thank God for His goodness and mercy. There are prayers of praise when you tell God how good He is. There are prayers of petition and supplication in which you will make a special request to God. There are scripted prayers, spontaneous prayers, and ceremonial prayers. The prayer that we'll focus on today is the Prayer of Faith. The first thing you must accept is that the Prayer of Faith requires zeal and confidence.

Yes, your praying should be bold and strong. Praying that moves God is prayer that moves you. If you are not moved by your own prayers how do you expect them to move God. Galvanising ('faith filled') prayer is what's needed in the lukewarm laid back Christianity of today. A famous commentator once said: *“Prayer requires more of the heart than the tongue.”* And I totally agree! Praying shouldn't be a pretentious spiritual exercise, but a passionate and fervent encounter with God. It was said of John Fletcher (the early Methodist preacher) that he stained the walls of his room by the breath of his prayers. Sometimes he would pray all night, frequently and with great passion. Martin Luther had a motto: *“He that has prayed well has prepared well.”*

The Prayer of Faith is a "prayer that changes things." But note that it changes things and not people. Too often we try to help someone by praying that they will change their behaviour. But people do not change against their will. The Prayer of Faith changes things or circumstances. Anything that can be seen is subject to change and can be affected by a Prayer of Faith. *“...for the things which are seen [are] temporal; but the things which are not seen [are] eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:18)* The Prayer of Faith changes things like physical ailments, lack of

wisdom, even your employment status.

Through the Prayer of Faith, you can receive healing and health for your body, wisdom for your mind, and even a good job. But before you get the wrong idea, the prayer of faith is not a magic wand or a genie in a bottle. It is a tool that we can use to implement God's will in our lives. Through the Prayer of Faith, we can have the things that God desires for us to have. God desires us to be healthy, wise, and prosperous, etc. Although these good things may not be a reality in your life right now, with the Prayer of Faith, these things that you are hoping for can become reality.

I'm sure we will all agree that prayer is a vital part of the Christian life, but how does prayer and faith work together? Charles Finney said this, "*Faith is an indispensable condition of prevailing prayer.*" He went on to say, (quote) "*There is such a thing as offering well-meaning desires, which are acceptable to God as such, yet do not include the exercise of faith in regard to actually receiving those blessings. But such desires are not prevailing prayer - this is not praying in faith. God may see fit to grant the things desired, as an act of kindness and love, but it would probably not be in answer to prayer. I am speaking now of the kind of faith that insures the blessing. Don't misunderstand me, as I'm not saying that there is nothing in prayer that is acceptable to God without this kind of faith. But I am speaking of the faith which secures the very blessing it seeks.*"

Praying in faith gets results! To prove this it is only necessary to repeat what the apostle James expressly tells us: "*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and without reproach; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no wavering. For he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed to and fro.*"

We know that personal prayer engages us in intimate conversation with God and that this is very pleasing to Him. However, we also know that it's impossible to please God without **faith (Hebrews 11:6)**. Therefore, faith and prayer must be synonymous with each other. When praying you must believe, and you must also believe that you've received the answer to your prayers. "*Therefore I say to you, What things soever you desire when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them*" (**Mark 11:24**).

Notice, the first thing you must do is believe. You are to believe in the existence of God - "**He that comes to God must believe that He is**" - and in God's willingness to answer prayer - "**and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.**" There are many who believe in the existence of God, but do not believe in the effectiveness of the Prayer of Faith. When you come to God in prayer you must first believe that God exists, and thereafter, believe that He does want to reward your faith. Why else would you come to Him?

The next step is this - you must now exercise your faith by believing that you have received the answer to your prayer. Notice, you are to believe that you have "already received" - something - but what? Not something, or anything, as it happens, but some particular thing you asked for in prayer. And when exactly are you expected to believe that you shall have the very things you pray for? The answer... When you have evidence of it! Faith must always have evidence. A man cannot believe a thing, unless he sees something which he has accepted as proof. He is under no obligation to believe, and has no right to believe that anything will happen, unless he has found evidence. It is the height of fantasy to believe without the existence of evidence.

Therefore, before applying **faith** you must first find proof - conclusive, infallible proof. This is the only way you'll be able believe that you have received what you've asked for in prayer. And where do you go to look for this proof? You search the promises of God. I guarantee that you will find a promise of God which relates to you present situation. The Prayer of Faith obtains the blessing due to the fact that your faith relies on real evidence! Evidence that says, *"to grant you that thing you desire is the perfect will of God."*

James 5:16 says: **"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."** (The word "man" means mankind and therefore includes women.) There are three elements here that are required for a prayer that avails much; that is, a prayer that God will say "Yes" to.

First, the man praying must be righteous.

Second, the prayer must be fervent.

And third, the prayer must be effective.

The first two have been widely taught to believers so we will look in depth at the elements of an "effective" prayer. If you are righteous (right with God) and your prayer is fervent (heart-felt and taken seriously), then it must also be effectual in order for it to avail much; that is, in order for God to answer "Yes". If the words of your prayer are ineffective, then you have not given God much to answer. In fact, some prayers are so horribly ineffective that God will answer "No" in order to protect us from ourselves. Consider the man praying for a loved one who was stricken with cancer. In his prayer, he said, *"Dear God, I ask you to help his cancer."* The prayer was not effective because his loved one's cancer did not need any help. It was already killing him. Now, of course, he did not mean it that way but that is what he said.

In this situation, it would have been "effective" to ask God to remove the cancer and help the man's health recover swiftly. You can see then that it is important to choose your words carefully so that you are praying for the thing that you actually want.

At other times, we pray ineffective prayers by asking for the wrong things. The Bible says, *"...Yet you have not, because you did not ask. You ask, and do receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume [it] upon your lusts."* (**James 4:2-3**) For example, if you ask God to make you rich so you can have nicer things, your prayer is ineffective. A more effective prayer is to ask God to meet your needs and give you extra so that you can be a blessing to others with your generosity. There is nothing wrong with having nice things, but if your motivation in prayer is greed, then your prayer is ineffective.

Still more prayers are ineffective because you might pray with wrong motives. If your purpose for praying is based in pride, bitterness, anger, etc., then your prayer will be ineffective. You should continually examine your own motivations so that you are praying prayers that will accomplish God's will rather than your own selfish ambitions.

So what are the elements of effective prayer? We have shown that in order to pray prayers that God will say "Yes" to, we must be righteous, fervent, and pray effectively. So let us look at some of the fundamental elements that make a prayer effective. There are four things that will always make your prayers effective. Those things

are:

1. The Word of God
2. The Name of Jesus
3. The Holy Spirit
4. Activated faith

If these four things are employed properly, your prayer will bring God's will into reality no matter what your need may be. Remember, God's will is for you to prosper in all matters of life, and be in good health, even as your soul prospers! Also, He has said that He wants to reward those who diligently seek Him. That is, those of us who believe that His promises are absolute evidence that He desires to reward us. So, whenever we stand praying, and dare to **believe** that we **receive** whatever we **ask** for - we WILL have whatever we've asked for!

God does want to say "Yes" to our prayers. *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" (Matthew 7:11)*

However, we do not give our children everything they ask for. Children learn which things they will get from us and which things they will never get. We should be as smart as our children and learn those things to which God will say "Yes" to and avoid asking for those things to which He is obliged to say "No." Faith pleases God! The Prayer of Faith pleases God because it is effective and effectual! Here is a check list. Ask the following questions:

1. Am I righteous?
2. Is my prayer fervent?
3. Is my prayer effective?
 - (a) Is my prayer based on God's Word?
 - (b) Am I praying in the name of Jesus?
 - (c) Am I seeking the assistance of the Holy Spirit?
 - (d) Is my faith active?
4. Am I trying to violate someone's free will?
5. Is there any sin in my life?
6. Are my motives pure?
7. Has my relationship with God developed to the point that I know which things He will say "Yes" to?