

James 5:13-20
ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PRAYER
EBC - June 17, 2012 (pm)

A. INTRODUCTION

1. One of the Most Basic Things That the Gospel Believed & Received Changes IS Prayer
 - a. Changes it from mere petition to fellowship and the praise of His glory.
 - b. **Galatians 4:6-7** teaches
 - 1) When we believe the gospel, we not only become God's children legally, but we receive the Spirit in order to experience our sonship.
 - 2) Spirit leads us to call out passionately to God as our tender and loving Father.
 - 3) We do not just know and believe that God is holy and loving BUT we actually experience contact with his holiness and his love in personal communion with him.
2. Epistle of James
 - a. Considered to be the 1st NT book written - circa 47-49
 - b. Very practical - sometimes called the *Proverbs of the New Testament*
3. One Such Practical Subject James Addresses is Prayer
 - a. Chapter 1 - Addresses necessity of faith in prayer **SEE 1:5-8**
 - b. Chapter 4 - Explains why some prayers are unanswered **SEE 4:3**
 - c. Chapter 5 - Encourages prayer **SEE 5:13-20**
4. Encouragement to Prayer
 - a. Prayer is a subject most of us can be made to feel guilty about. - - No matter how often or sincere one prays - **IS IT ENOUGH??**
 - b. My goal tonight is NOT to cause guilt BUT encourage prayer

B. SOME GENERAL THOUGHTS ABOUT PRAYER

1. Job Said - (23:3-4) - **Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat! I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments.**
2. Job's Statement Expresses a Universal Truth About True Believers
 - a. Believer's have a desire to commune with God
 - 1) **Ps 42:1 - As a deer longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for you, O God.**
 - 2) **Psalm 61:2-4 - from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I, ³ for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy. ⁴ Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings! Selah**
 - 3) **Psalm 63:1 - O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.**
 - 4) **Psalm 84:1-2 - How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! ² My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.**
 - b. Believers desire to pray - alone AND with other believers
 - c. This desire for communion & prayer is intensified

- 1) When sense of God's presence is lost - such loss is tangible
- 2) Other sources of consolation fail
- d. God's absence was real to Job & he cried - **Oh, that I knew where I might find him**
- e. Job had been disappointed & failed by others
 - 1) Failed by his wife - **Job 2:9** - who said to him - **"Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die."**
 - 2) Failed by his friends - Perhaps when he saw them he was encouraged but they had not spoken too long when he said, **"miserable comforters are you all" (16:2)**
- 3. Job's Statement Teaches Us Much About the Nature of Prayer
 - a. Job said - **I would lay my case before him and fill my mouth with arguments**
 - b. Job's statement reveals the careful & deliberate nature of prayer
 - 1) Spurgeon noted - *There is a vulgar notion that prayer is a very easy thing, a kind of common business that may be done anyhow, without care or effort.*
 - 2) It is true that prayer can be short & sweet - hurried & not thought out or deliberate
 - 3) BUT a balanced prayer life in the individual or church I think should include seasons of deliberate & directed prayer

C. ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PRAYER

- 1. **Vs 13-15** - James Encourages Prayer in All Situations
 - a. **vs 13a** - Is anyone suffering?
 - 1) Means to suffer misfortune - to have hard experiences
 - 2) Speaking about any kind of trouble - bodily, mental, personal - spiritual
 - b. **vs 13b** - Is anyone cheerful?
 - 1) Greek word means to be in good spirits - a happy mood
 - 2) Christians have times of affliction BUT also happy times
 - c. **vs 14-15** - Is any sick?
 - 1) Word more specific than suffering
 - 2) Indicates a sickness which incapacitates a man for work
 - d. Calvin notes from vs - *"There is no time in which God does not invite us to Himself"*
- 2. **Vs 13-14** - James Encourages Private & Public Prayer
 - a. **vs 13a** - Let HIM pray
 - b. **vs 14** - Let THEM pray
- 3. **Vs 16** - James Encourages Prayer by Noting Remarkable Power of Prayer
 - a. Phrase is variously translated

*The fervent supplication of the righteous man has much power.
The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

- b. Point is Elijah's prayer stopped & started rain
 - 1) Manton - "*Elias seemed to have the key of heaven, to open and shut it at pleasure*"
 - 2) John MacArthur commenting on James 5:16 - "*I'll put it really simply straightforward to you, I think if the people who are trying to get their problems solved by having some counseling would get together with a godly righteous man and get on their knees and spend time in prayer, they would find the power is in prayer, not in the counseling.*"
 - c. BE clear
 - 1) Power is not in the prayer per say BUT in God who answers prayer
 - 2) Prayer is the ordained means God uses to bring His sovereign will to pass
4. **Vs 17** - James Encourages Prayer by Noting Humanity of Elijah
- a. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours
 - 1) He was prone to discouragement & even depression
 - 2) Elijah was a sinner
 - 3) YET God heard and answered his prayer
 - 4) Des not require sinless perfection or great faith BUT faith
 - b. Point - ALL BELIEVERS ARE ENCOURAGED TO PRAY

D. CONCLUSION

1. Prayer More Than Measure of Last Resort
- a. We often use prayer as a response to situations
 - 1) I'll do all I can and everything I can but when the task gets too big for me - then I'll pray about.
 - 2) We make our plans THEN we pray the Lord's will be done
 - 3) We get sick THEN we pray and ask God for health
 - 4) We make a decision THEN we pray that the Lord will bless it
 - 5) Someone gets in trouble THEN we ask the Lord to help & have mercy
 - b. Certainly we should pray in response to things
 - 1) Church prayed after Peter was arrested
 - 2) Jonah prayed after the fish swallowed him
 - 3) Moses prayed when Israel was cornered against vthe Red Sea
 - c. Prayer more than a measure of last resort
 - 1) Prayer more than making up the difference between what I can do & what I need God to do.
 - 2) Prayer is to be made at all times and in all situations
 - d. Prayer needs to be front & center in our private & church lives
2. Concluding Encouragement to Prayer - Jesus Christ Our Great High Priest
- a. **Contrast James 5:17 & Hebrews 4:14-16 (esp vs 15b - yet without sin)**
 - b. Both passages encourage us to pray - BUT encouragements based on opposite truths
 - 1) Elijah a man with a nature like ours - he was a sinner - so pray
 - 2) Christ a man with a nature unlike ours - without sin - so pray