

PRAYER
PRAYING EFFECTUAL PRAYERS-PART 1
JAMES 5:16; MATTHEW 6:5-8

Introduction:

After dealing with Christmas and New Year and Vacation, its time to get back to our study on PRAYER!

This morning I want us to begin dealing with the matter mentioned here in *James 5:16 "...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."*
—**PRAYING EFFECTUAL (FERVENT) PRAYERS!**

If we want results in our prayer life, we need to learn how to PRAY EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYERS. The word that is translated “*effectual fervent*” here comes from the same word we get our word “*energy*” from and means “*to put forth power; to be active, efficient*” or we might say “*it produces results.*”

Noah Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language defines “*effectual*” as “*Producing an effect, or the effect desired or intended; or having adequate power or force to produce the effect.*”
The word “fervent” is defined as “ardent or passionate; earnest”

Understand that any of us can pray in different ways and yet our prayers may not be **EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYERS!**

I don’t know about you, but I want the time that I spend praying NOT to be wasted with ineffectual praying.

When it comes to prayer, I BELIEVE WE ALL WANT RESULTS! There is nothing in this life any more disappointing than to pour our heart out to God, and have our prayers produce NO RESULTS! God’s Word teaches that the RIGHT KIND OF PRAYERS will get tremendous results.

When we do something, we want results!

Illus: For example, is there anything any more disappointing than to get into your car, put the key in the ignition, turn it on, and have nothing happen? Several more tries bring the same results, and each time you are disappointed.

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Someone may walk up and say, “*Try it again,*” but you respond, “*It is no use. I have tried it over and over, and it does not work.*”

That is exactly how some people feel about praying. They have tried it over and over again, and they have not gotten any results, and they are convinced prayer does not work.

Illus: At times most Christians have felt like the little boy in the cartoon who obviously was disgruntled with God. He was saying,

- *Aunt Harriet isn't married yet*
- *Uncle Herbert still doesn't have a job*
- *My brother is still picking on me*
- *Mom's back is still aching*
- *My sister still has an acne problem*
- *And daddy's hair is still falling out*

I'm getting tired of praying for this family without getting any results!

This is the way many feel about prayer today. They have tried it time and time again and they have seemingly gotten no results, and are saying that it is no use to pray any more and so they’ve given up on praying!

What we need to do is learn how to pray **EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYERS!**

Notice from the very start, that effective praying comes from the lips of a “*RIGHTEOUS MAN.*”

Look at James 5:16, we read, “*The effectual fervent prayer of a RIGHTEOUS MAN availeth much.*” It is the righteous man’s prayers that produce results.

The word “*righteous*” needs to be defined, because everyone has a different idea about what it is to be *righteous*.

There are two ways to consider it:

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1. RIGHTEOUSNESS APPLIES TO THE LORD JESUS!

For example, when we come to the Lord for salvation, He imputes His righteousness to us. From that time on, when God sees us HE DOES NOT SEE OUR SINS, but He sees the RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST!

We do not have any true righteousness of our own, our righteousness is as filthy rags. At conversion we take on Christ's righteousness.

The first way the word "*righteousness*" is used applies to the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ!

2. RIGHTEOUSNESS APPLIES TO US!

Once we have taken on the righteousness of Christ, it is our responsibility to live in HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS!

In James 5:16, both of these meanings are applied to the one who would pray **EFFECTUAL PRAYERS!**

That is, **EFFECTUAL PRAYERS** must come from the person who God's righteousness has been imputed to and who is living in His Righteousness!

We all have heard sinners tell us that they pray every night, but the Word of God says in Psalm 66:18—"*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*"

When we are speaking of "effectual" prayers, we are speaking of a RIGHTEOUS PERSON who knows certain things.

I. EFFECTUAL PRAYING INVOLVES AVOIDING SOME THINGS! (Matthew 6:5-6)

These two verses tell us a great deal about EFFECTUAL PRAYING. For example, they tell us what we SHOULD DO and what we SHOULD NOT DO!

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A. WHAT WE SHOULD NOT DO!

We should avoid being hypocrites. "*...when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the HYPOCRITES ARE:*"

He does not leave us wondering how they are, He tells us!

WHAT DID THEY DO? Notice, they did all their PRAYING in PUBLIC PLACES, not in PRIVATE PLACES.

The Bible tells us why they did this. It was not to get the attention of God, but the attention of man. Look at verse 5, we read, "*for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.*"

They pretended they were trying to get God's attention, when really they were trying to get man's attention.

They were hypocrites. GOD DOES NOT ANSWER THE PRAYER OF A HYPOCRITE! The Lord tells us that if we are going to pray EFFECTUAL PRAYERS, we can not be as these HYPOCRITES ARE.

WHO IS A HYPOCRITE?

Illus: Warren Wiersbe says, "*A hypocrite deliberately uses religion to cover up his sins and promote his own gains. The Greek word translated hypocrite originally meant, 'An actor who wears a mask.' The righteousness of the Pharisees was insincere and dishonest. They practiced their religion for the applause of men, not for the reward of God.*"

There are those today who do as they did. A week will go by and they will not spend one minute in prayer with the Lord, but on Sunday morning in church, (public place) they pray up a storm!

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Illus: They kind of remind me of many employees. The only time they work is when the BOSS IS LOOKING. And the only time some will pray is when MEN ARE LOOKING.

That kind of praying is INEFFECTUAL! It gets no results because it is not really directed to God. Effectual praying is when people are talking to God!

Illus: One time a particular man was called upon to pray before the meal at a gathering. He prayed so low that no one could hear him. Afterward, a man tapped him on the shoulder and said, *"You prayed so low, I could not hear you."* The man said, *"The reason you could not hear me was because I was not talking to you."*

The Lord teaches us NOT to copy the HYPOCRITES who pray to be SEEN and HEARD by men! Effectual praying is when our prayers are directed toward God!

He tells us WHAT WE SHOULD NOT DO...be as the HYPOCRITES are. Then He tells us...

B. WHAT WE SHOULD DO!

Look at *Matt. 6:6*, *"...when thou prayest, enter into thy closet..."*

The word, *"closet"*, does not mean that we are to wade into our closets and start praying.

Illus: Considering the way a lot of folks pack things into a closet, it might be a good thing if they did pray as they entered!

The word, *"closet"* here means: *"A private chamber."* Now the question is: *"IS GOD TELLING US THAT ALL OUR PRAYING SHOULD BE DONE IN PRIVATE?"*

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No! Jesus, Himself, often prayed in public.

In John 6:11 Jesus prayed publicly. We read, *"And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would."*

So we see, the Bible does not teach that all praying should be done in private.

The purpose of His teaching in Matt. 6, was to teach us about motives.

- These "hypocrites" GAVE to be SEEN by men
- These "hypocrites" PRAYED to be HEARD by men

When our motive is wrong, we can rest assured that our prayers will be wrong, and INEFFECTUAL!

EFFECTUAL PRAYING INVOLVES AVOIDING SOME THINGS (praying with the wrong motive.) Also,

II. EFFECTUAL PRAYING INVOLVES ADORING SOMEONE!

Look at *Matt. 6:9*, we read, *"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."*

Some never call on God's name unless they have an emergency. The only time they ever bow their knees in prayer is when they want something.

Illus: People like this remind me of those who visit their friends in the country only during HARVEST season. And it is always strange - when they visit them, they always happen to have a basket or a wash-tub in the trunk of their car.

No one likes to be *"used."*

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We do not mind helping people, but when we know they do not care a thing for us, and that all they want is our help, we do not care to help them! God feels the same way!

Illus: Effective praying is not using God as we use a spare tire in the trunk of our cars.

God knows our hearts! He knows when people do not love Him and just want to use Him!

Notice, when He is teaching us how to be effective in our praying, He says, *"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, HALLOWED BE THY NAME."*

- Many think they are showing proper respect for God's name because they do not take His name in vain by swearing.
- What they do not understand is that to "reverence" His name includes our THOUGHTS, our WORDS, and our ACTIONS!

HOW DO WE DO THAT?

Our THOUGHTS, our WORDS and our ACTIONS show whether or not that we adore the Lord Jesus!

Illus: Nancy Reagan was being interviewed. The interviewer said, "We notice that every time President Reagan made a speech and you were there, your eyes were focused on him. Is this something you have been advised to do?" She said, "The reason my eyes are focused on him, is because I absolutely adore him."

When we adore the Lord, our THOUGHTS, our WORDS and our ACTIONS will also show it.

- IT IS NOT A PUT ON WITH US
- IT IS REAL
- WE ADORE HIM

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"Hallowed be Thy name" means to "Let thy name be made holy."

HOW CAN GOD'S NAME BE MADE HOLY IN THE SOCIETY IN WHICH WE LIVE? We see two examples of that in the Life of Abraham.

- (1) WHEN ABRAHAM WENT TO CANAAN
 - His neighbors saw the way he lived
 - His neighbors saw him build altars to God everywhere he went
 - His neighbors saw he was honest and upright in all his dealings with them

The testimony of those who had watched his life is seen in *Gen. 21:22*, we read, *"And it came to pass at that time, that Abimelech and Phichol the chief captain of his host spake unto Abraham, saying, God is with thee in all that thou doest."*

- (2) THE CHILDREN OF HETH ALSO OBSERVED THE GODLY LIFE OF ABRAHAM

They said in *Gen. 23:6*, *"...thou art a mighty prince among us..."*

Abraham's life revealed the reverence he had toward God in his THOUGHTS, WORDS, and ACTIONS.

GOD KNEW and OTHERS KNEW that he loved the God he served. The name of God was made *"hallowed"* through the life he lived.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT WE REVERENCE GOD IN OUR THOUGHTS, WORDS, AND ACTIONS?

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Listen, if God answered the prayer of Christians who did not REVERENCE HIS NAME IN THOUGHTS, WORDS and ACTIONS, the lost world would come to believe EFFECTUAL PRAYING can be done by the ungodly as well as the godly. They would think that God will answer the prayer of anyone. HE WILL NOT!

Effectual praying always involves:

- AVOIDING SOMETHING
- ADORING SOMEONE

It also-

III. EFFECTUAL PRAYING INVOLVES ASKING SOMETHING!

Look at Matt. 6:8, we read, "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knowest what things ye have need of before ye ask him."

Many times people will talk to a Pastor about a problem.

Illus: For example, a man might say, "*Pastor, I need to talk to you about some domestic problems my wife and I are having.*" The pastor may respond by saying, "*I had no idea you were having domestic problems,*" and that would be the absolute truth.

But listen, no matter what kind of problem you have, you are not going to tell God anything He does not already know!

He tells us, "*...for your Father KNOWETH what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.*"

Now one of the reasons the Lord lets us know that He knows before we ask, is because the Jews were known for their long, repetitious prayers. They thought they would be heard for their lengthy speaking, but the fact is, before we get one word out of our mouth, God already knows what our needs are.

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Illus: Have you ever heard someone use a thousand words to say something when the same thing could be said in a hundred? We don't like getting stuck with someone like that, who goes on and on like a broken record, repeating things, and neither does God like it.

The question that arises then is, "*If God already knows, why would He want us to ask?*"

God requires that we ask for several reasons, such as:

- (1) There are many things **we think we have NEED of that we really do not NEED!**

When we ask Him, we are showing we trust Him and we are looking to him to do what is best for us, His children. We are to pray that God's will be done.

God requires that we ask for another reason.

- (2) **IT SHOWS OUR DEPENDENCE ON GOD!**

Many parents are foolish in giving their children everything they want. They will soon have everything that is imaginable, and guess what...they no longer need Dad and Mom.

It is a fact that we will spend more TIME at the foot of Jesus when we need something than we will when we have everything we need. God keeps us dependent upon Him through prayer.

And while we are asking these things of God we are spending time with God and He is glorified in our lives through prayer!

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Conclusion

Anyone can pray, but everyone can not pray effectual prayers. Effectual praying....

- I. INVOLVES AVOIDING SOME THINGS - MATTHEW 6:5-6
 - A. THINGS WE SHOULD NOT DO
 - B. THINGS WE SHOULD DO

- II. INVOLVES ADORING SOMEONE - MATTHEW 6:9

- III. INVOLVES ASKING SOMETHING - MATTHEW 6:8