

“Powerful And Effective Prayers”

By E A Terry Delivered 07 01 18

Matthew 6: 5 – 15; John 16: 16 – 31; John 15: 1- 17; **James 5: 13 – 20 (Sermon)**

If I were to ask you if you believe God answers prayer, I would guess all of you would say yes.

If I were to ask you if you wanted to learn how to make your prayers be more effective I would guess all of you would say yes.

Well that is why all of the sermons in July will be on prayer.

We need to spend some time seriously evaluating our prayers.

This morning we will be seeing what the Bible tells us about powerful and effective praying.

First of all prayer is a conversation with The Lord.

And as you know for a conversation to take place you have to listen as well as to talk.

When Jesus began His ministry on earth most of Jesus’ followers were Jews.

God chose the Jews to be an example to the world so that all people would come to know, to love, and to worship The One True Living God.

However, the Jews failed miserably in their God given job.

Since the Jews wanted to be like the rest of the world they were unable to live according to God’s holy standards.

They reduced a loving servant relationship with God into a long list of religious rules.

In the 5th and 6th chapters of Matthew Jesus plainly tells His listeners that they are hypocrites in that their religion is phony and that their religious practices were only for show.

In the 5th and 6th chapters of Matthew Jesus plainly tells His listeners that they had missed the point of God’s Law, they had the wrong attitude toward human life, marriage, oaths, forgiveness, giving to people in need, prayer, and fasting.

The whole point of the Sermon on The Mount is to show every person that they are inadequate.

On our own we can never live up to God’s holy standards and everybody needs a savior.

Then Jesus identified Himself as the Messiah and Jesus offers Himself to be their Savior.

However, as you know, the Jews rejected Jesus and then Jesus offered Himself and His kingdom to the Gentiles.

You see Jesus came to earth to do what mankind could not do for themselves.

Jesus sums up the whole area of religious responsibility by saying worship and obedience must come from a person's heart.

True religion can only come from a loving personal relationship with our creator God.

That brings us back to our text in James.

“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

The key word here is **righteous**.

Righteous means being right with God.

You see anyone can pray but a person must be righteous for their prayers to be powerful and effective.

First and foremost, for our prayers to be effective and powerful we must be righteous or right with God.

And we know from The Sermon on The Mount the only way we can be right with God is by accepting Jesus as our personal Savior and making Jesus the Lord of our life.

Next, to be right with God we must confess our sins and be freed from all unrighteousness.

True confession involves a repentant heart; being truly sorry for your sins; turning away from your sinful acts and your sinful attitudes; and earnestly seeking the help of The Holy Spirit so you will not repeat any actions that are not pleasing to Almighty God.

Proverbs 15:29 tells us ***“The Lord is far from the wicked but He hears the prayer of the righteous.”***

In other words, our worship is empty if we have not been forgiven.

Additionally being right with God includes being right with our neighbors.

In Matthew 5:23 and 24 Jesus said, ***“If you are offering your gift at the altar and remember that someone has something against you, leave your gift in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother then come and offer your gift.”***

You cannot be right with God and be at odds with another person.

Again our worship is empty if we have not forgiven our fellow man

Being righteous or being right with God also means knowing God's will.

The only way we will know God's will is by studying our Bibles and by praying.

Praying is much more than giving God our wish list for the day.

Prayer is having a two-way conversation with God, talking and listening.

We are all pretty good at talking, but we all need to work at being good listeners in our prayer time.

To know God's will for us means for us to see ourselves as God sees us.
We need to see situations as God sees our situations.

We need to be in agreement with God.

We need to know God's will for our life.

God wants us to know Him and His will.

God gave us the Bible to know Him and His will.

Additionally Jesus did not leave us helpless.

Jesus gave His Holy Spirit to all believers to teach us, convict us of sin, and to help us to pray.

In Romans 8:26 we read that the Holy Spirit intercedes for us when we do not know what we ought to pray for when we are truly seeking God's will.

Being righteous or right with God means a close personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

In John 15:7 Jesus gave us this wonderful promise.

“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask what you wish and it will be given you.”

You see the problem is not on God's end.

The problem is with us.

You see, we can not live like we want to and expect God to always come through for us.

We can't pick and choose which of the commandments we don't like or those commandments that don't fit our life-style.

First and foremost, for our prayers to be powerful and effective we must be righteous people.

Not perfect people, but to love The Lord with all that we are and we are to make His righteousness and His kingdom our first priority.

When troubles come, where is prayer on your priority list?

Sadly many Christians think of prayer as a last resort that is tried when everything else has failed.

Sadly many times when I ask some Christians if they want me to pray with them, they say, *“Well, it wouldn't hurt”* or *“ Why not nothing else is working”*

Friends, the most powerful tool that we have is communicating with the Creator and the Ruler of this world in prayer!

Prayer should always be our first response to any and all situations.

In 1st Thessalonians we are told to *“pray continually and we are to give thanks in all circumstances for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”*

Prayer is much more than telling God our needs because prayer is based upon a personal relationship with The Lord.

Another very important part of prayer is acknowledging who God is and acknowledging our dependence upon The Lord.

So praising God is a very important part of prayer.

It is not that God has an ego problem nor that God needs you to continually tell Him how great He is.

Acknowledging God’s greatness and God’s power humbles us when we come into the presence of our Creator.

And praising God helps us to acknowledge our dependence upon Him.

God is the author of life and every breath we draw is a gift from God.

It is only by God’s grace that your brain and your body are functioning this morning.

It is only by God’s grace that you know who Jesus is and that you are assured of eternal life in heaven with Him.

So we all need to ask ourselves how much of our prayer time is spent praising God?

Another very important part of prayer is thanking God for all He has done for us in the past, thanking God for all He is doing for us, and thanking God for all He will do for us in the future.

We all need to ask ourselves if thanksgiving is a real part of our prayer.

We all need to ask ourselves how much of our prayer time is spent thanking God?

If you noticed the title in your pew Bible of our lesson from James was, **“The Prayer of Faith”**.

Hebrews 11:1 tells us that *“faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.”*

Our hope is in the promises of God.

I read somewhere that there are 7,000 promises in the Bible.

An important part of effective praying is knowing God’s will for your life, knowing God’s promises, and claiming God’s promises for yourself.

In Mark 11:22-25, Jesus tells us that we must believe in the power of God and trust in Him.

We cannot expect God to move the mountains in our life if we have any doubt in our heart. We are told to ***“walk by faith and not by sight”*** (2nd Corinthians 5:7).

In John 14:12 Jesus tells us plainly anyone who has faith will be doing the work Jesus did while He was on earth.

That work is telling people the Good News, God’s plan of salvation, so that they will be reconciled to God and bringing reconciliation between the people around us.

God always answers His children’s prayers.

Sometimes the answer is yes, sometimes the answer is no, and sometimes the answer is not at this time.

God has a wonderful plan for each one of us and God always does what is best for us.

You don’t give your children everything they ask for and neither does your heavenly Father.

God knows what is best for us.

In the 4th chapter of James we are told that many times ***“you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your own pleasures.”*** (James 4:3)

So we all need to examine our motives when we pray.

That is why it is so important to seek God’s will for us each time we pray.

That is why Jesus taught us to pray ***“not my will but thine be done”***

There is one more extremely important key to powerful and effective praying.

Our prayers must be made in Jesus’ name.

In John 14:6 Jesus said, ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”***

In our lesson from John we read, ***“My Father will give you what you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete.”***

A Christian’s prayer that is not offered in Jesus’ name is no more than wishful thinking.

Praying in Jesus’ name gives us access to God’s throne of grace.

Praying in Jesus’ name is much more than a phrase we tack on at the end of our prayer.

Praying in Jesus’ name claims Jesus’ authority and praying in Jesus’ name signifies our oneness with Jesus Christ.

We pray to God the Father, through God the Son, with the help of God the Holy Spirit.

Praying brings the unlimited power of God to our situation and gives us the strength to endure any and all situations.

Giving praise to God in our prayers keeps us in the joy of The Lord.

We started out by looking at the background of the 5th and 6th Chapters of Matthew where Jesus plainly told His listeners that they were hypocrites in that their religion was phony and that their religious practices were only for show.

Jesus plainly told His listeners that they had missed the point of God's Law, they had the wrong attitude toward human life, marriage, oaths, forgiveness, giving to people in need, prayer, and fasting.

God's word is timeless so our message today challenges each of us to examine our relationship with Jesus as well as our attitude and practice of prayer.

We must each ask ourselves:

- Am I abiding in Jesus?
- Am I obeying all of Jesus' commandments?
- Are my prayers from a pure heart?
- Am I truly seeking God's will for my life or am seeking my will?
- Is God's kingdom my first priority?

God wants to be a real part of our life and God delights in miraculously interceding in the day to day events of our lives when we have a close personal relationship with Jesus, when we are obedient, when we seek His will for our life, when we depend upon Him, when we come in faith, when we trust in Him, and when we act on His promises.

“The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

AMEN