**A Call to Pray**

**Part 3**

**“Honest Prayer”**

**James 5:16 “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” NKJV**

**“The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.” NLT**

**“The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working].” AMP**

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**This is our third week of talking about prayer, and I want to talk to you today about HONEST PRAYER—or *prayer from the heart.***

**Prayer is an incredible thing...It can move the hand of God in situations where there is no other hope.**

**Prayer is the most powerful force on earth!**

**One man wrote:**

**‘Prayer has divided seas, rolled up flowing rivers, made rocks gush into fountains, quenched flames of fire, muzzled lions, disarmed vipers and poisons, marshaled the stars against the wicked, stopped the course of the moon, arrested the sun in its rapid race, burst open iron gates, released souls from eternity, conquered the strongest devils, commanded legions of angels down from heaven. Prayer has bridled and chained the raging passions of man and routed and destroyed vast armies of proud, daring, blustering atheists. Prayer has brought one man from the bottom of the sea and carried another in a chariot of fire to heaven. What has prayer not done?’**

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**And so we come to James’ powerful verse about true, effective prayer, and what it looks like...**

**Let’s unpack it so we can learn more about the kind of prayer that brings results:**

**—He gives TWO CONDITIONS for answered prayer: Sincerity and being right with God**

**“The...fervent prayer (sincerity) of a righteous man (being right with God)...”**

**When a person is right with God, and prays sincerely from the heart, they are on solid praying ground!**

**Let’s deal with the FIRST condition—being,**

**I. Right with God**

**The NT recognizes only one kind of “righteous” person—those made righteous by faith in Christ.**

**It doesn’t recognize a person made righteous by good deeds, or pedigree, or education, or by being law abiding.**

**There is only one way to get right with God, that is through the shed blood of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ.**

**Listen to some powerful verses on this...**

**“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. 22 We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are” (Ro. 3:21-22 NLT).**

**“This Good News (the gospel) tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith” (Ro. 1:17 NLT).**

**“God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it” (Eph. 2:8-9 NLT).**

**“Christ never sinned but God put our sin on Him. Then we are made right with God because of what Christ has done for us” (2 Cor. 5:21 NLV).**

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**If God left us on this earth for a million years, we would never attain the righteousness God requires by our own attempts!**

**It is this kind of righteous person James is talking about when he says, “The...fervent prayer of a righteous man...”**

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**The moment we are saved, a brand new communication line is opened to us to the very throne room of God!**

**“And so, dear brothers, now we may walk right into the very Holy of Holies, where God is, because of the blood of Jesus. 20 This is the fresh, new, life-giving way that Christ has opened up for us...to let us into the holy presence of God. 21 And since this great High Priest of ours (Jesus) rules over God’s household, 22 let us go right in to God himself, with true hearts fully trusting him to receive us because we have been sprinkled with Christ’s blood to make us clean...” (Heb. 10:19-22 LB)**

**At the moment of your rebirth, Jesus says to you, “Until now you have not asked for anything in My name. Ask and you will receive. Then your joy will be full” (John 16:24 NLV).**

**So the first condition for answered prayer is being right with God through the shed blood of Jesus.**

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**The SECOND condition for answered prayer is:**

**II. Sincerity**

**“The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous person avails much...”**

**FERVENT means you’re SINCERE about it...you strongly desire to see the prayer answered—it’s heart-driven, passion-driven prayer.**

**The entire person is involved in straining, crying out to God for an answer.**

**Now, let me balance this out: FERVENT doesn’t mean out of control emotion, or screaming, or wild gesticulations, or acting crazy...**

**Nor does it require eloquent words prayed in King James English!**

**None of those things move God.**

**What DOES move Him is sincere, heartfelt, fervent prayer mixed with faith!**

**Sincere, fervent prayer is crying to God out of the depths; it is the pouring out of the soul before God from the heart.**

**The Psalmist said, “O my people, trust in him at all times. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge” (Ps. 62:8 NLT).**

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**Jesus said that that the prayer God answers is not some memorized, rehearsed prayer that we recite by rote with no real passion or heart or desire behind it.**

**He told us to avoid that kind of empty praying:**

**“And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen *do.* For they think that they will be heard for their many words” (Matt. 6:7 NKJV)**

**The NLT puts it: “When you pray, don't babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again.”**

**Vain repetition is when you say the same thing over and over again...There’s no heart to it, no feeling, no HONESTY, it’s empty and mechanical.**

**One commentator says it is to “blubber nonsensicalrepetitions*.”***

**For instance, the Lord’s prayer is powerful, and each of the six parts covers every need possible, but there are people who just pray it by memory thinking something will be accomplished by just reciting it.**

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**But James says, no: “The effectual, fervent, heartfelt prayer of a person right with God” is what moves God’s hand!**

**When there’s no emotional connection, our prayers are lifeless and dull——*God hears prayers on fire with true desire!***

**ILLUS: Let me show you some passion in prayer:**

**David is praying in Psalm 42: “As the deer pants for streams of water, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for God, the living God.”**

**I pant, I long, I thirst...do you hear some deep emotion, some fervency there?**

**Fervent prayer says, “I PANT for a breakthrough, I LONG for the answer, I THIRST to see God’s glory on this!”**

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**James goes on to tell us how Elijah prayed!**

**He says, “Elijah was as human as we are, and yet when he prayed earnestly that no rain would fall, none fell for three and a half years! 18 Then, when he prayed again, the sky sent down rain and the earth began to yield its crops” (5:17-18 LB).**

**Get that!! Elijah was human just like you and me!**

**He got hungry and thirsty, he battled doubts and fears.**

**At one low point in his ministry he was so depressed he asked God to take his life!**

**He ran in fear from wicked Queen Jezebel and wanted to give up his prophetic calling.**

**Yet James says, in spite of his human frailties, this one man prayed “earnestly” with passion, intensity, and persistence that it would not rain, and God answered for 3.5 years!**

**His fervent prayers brought the entire nation of Israel to its knees and almost single handedly destroyed the vile worship of Baal from among them.**

**And then he prayed again and God sent rain!**

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**Now, James is not telling us to go out and try to control the weather by our prayers, he’s telling us that great and mighty things happen when God’s people pray with faith and fervency!**

**“The effectual, fervent prayer of a person right with God produces great results, dynamic in their results!”**

**LET’S PRAY**