

Fervent Prayer

3 of 3 | James 5:16 | Only Through Prayer

SLIDE 1 Introduction

Missing a couple of Sunday's has really thrown me off my game. It was not until Friday the Lord began to speak to me about continuing my series on prayer, but with some changes!

To quickly review, we talked about how we need to *"confess our faults"* to one another and ask forgiveness for anything we have held against someone else.

Last week we reemphasized that same issue and how passion in prayer originates from the confidence we have before God. This confidence finds its origin in our pureness of heart. A clean heart is precious in the sight of the Lord. Psalm 51 says:

SLIDE 2 Psalm 51:17 (NIV) *"My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise."*

King David wrote this Psalm after he was confronted by Nathan the prophet about David's sin with Bathsheba and having her husband killed.

Sometimes we let guilt over what we have done rob us of the renewing power of the Holy Spirit through God's grace and forgiveness. David also said just a little earlier in that same Psalm:

SLIDE 3 Psalm 51:10 (NIV) *"Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."*

The work of the Holy Spirit is a continual cleansing stream within us washing us from sin and creating a pure and confident heart in us before God. God does not want our prayers hindered by our past, nor by guilt and self-condemnation in our minds.

SLIDE 4 Only Through Prayer

So, shifting gears, my message today talks about things that can only be done through prayer. As 2nd Chronicles 7:14 starts out, *"If my people, who are called by my name, **will humble themselves...**"* We need to recognize and emphasize that we cannot do everything ourselves. Much of what we attempt will just be spinning our

wheels if we do not ask God for help.

I have found many times people have trouble asking for help. They see it as a weakness. That's why I always say, "Everyone needs help. No one makes it alone." In the same way we need each other, we also need God's help—in everything!

Sometimes we need to be reminded that Jesus himself said:

SLIDE 5a John 5:19 (NIV) *"Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."*

So if Jesus could do nothing by himself, why do we think we will fare any better on our own? We need to humbly ask for help. Jesus said of us:

SLIDE 5b John 15:5 (NIV) *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."*

Men are especially bad about this. So much so that it's a standing joke about how men struggle on the road, rather than to stop and ask for directions. The same goes for their prayer lives as well. Men always act like they know, but they don't.

SLIDE 6 Humility and Pride

Although there are some things we can lightly touch in prayer, asking God to bless our efforts, there are others that only prayer will accomplish.

On the one hand, humility is required to ask for help, but on the other hand, pride is at the root of not asking. We want to say to ourselves and to others that it was our own abilities, knowledge, and persistence that did it for us.

Rather than giving God the glory through prayer, we want others to give us the glory for our efforts. We want to be rewarded for what we feel we have accomplished.

If you don't think that's true, then fail to be grateful for what someone has done for you and you'll see their wounded pride rise up.

Jesus addressed this about the religious leaders of his day:

SLIDE 7 Matthew 6:5-8 (NIV) *"5 And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for*

they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full."

SLIDE 8 *"⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*

The KJV says, "he will reward you OPENLY," as I mentioned before in this series.

SLIDE 9 *"⁷ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."*

You are not trying to impress God with your knowledge of his Word, nor are you trying to persuade him. He is going to do what he said he would do if you will humble yourself and ask. Quit explaining things to God (and others) and just ask!

Finally, one more very important thing about prayer, and I alluded to it in the opening of this message. There are things which cannot happen for you or those you care about except through prayer.

The story I'm about to share is very controversial to some, but take it for what it says, and may God reveal the truth of it in your own prayer life.

SLIDE 10 Mark 9:14-29 (NIV) *"¹⁴ When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵ As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. ¹⁶ "What are you arguing with them about?" he asked."*

Start off by noticing that the disciples of Jesus and the Pharisees were more concerned about arguing about why God wasn't doing something for them than in asking him to move on their behalf.

SLIDE 11 *"¹⁷ A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸ Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."*

SLIDE 12 *"¹⁹ "You unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me." ²⁰ So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth."*

SLIDE 13 *"²¹ Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. ²² "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." ²³ " 'If you can'?" said Jesus. **"Everything is possible for one who believes."**"*

Jesus seems insulted by unbelief.

SLIDE 14 *"²⁴ Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" ²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again."*

SLIDE 15 *"²⁶ The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up."*

SLIDE 16 *"²⁸ After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" ²⁹ He replied, **"This kind can come out ONLY by prayer."**"*
(emphasis added)

The KJV uses the words *"prayer and fasting,"* but you get the idea. If you want to see the true power of God and not the results of your own efforts, you must pray. There are some things that only prayer can produce.

In Matthew's account of this story he notes this, when the disciples asked him why they could not drive out the demon:

SLIDE 17 Matthew 17:20 (NIV) *"[Jesus] replied, "Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. **Nothing will be impossible for you.**"*

It's not so much about faith in and of itself, but it's about whom is your faith in?

SLIDE 18 Series Conclusion

I hope this brief series on prayer helps you focus on one of the most important things we can do as a Christian—develop a private, personal prayer life that is fervent and effective and avails much for the kingdom of God.

Consider this the year of prayer at Calvary that brings the revival we say we want and so desperately need.

Now, a new thing:

SLIDE 19 A Labor of Love Prayerbook

Next Sunday we will be doing something special for Valentine's day. We will be creating a prayer book for each of us called *A Labor of Love*. It will contain high value names of people who you are passionate about in prayer. It will have their names on the front and a page for each of them inside where you can write all your prayers for them and recite them before the Lord daily.

(HANDOUT) To do this I need each of you to put their names on this card we're handing out. Start with your immediate family—your spouse, your children, and their kids. Then add anyone who you feel deeply about in prayer. We want to see this year avail much in prayer. I want to help that process by providing you with tools for an effective prayer life.

SLIDE 20 Persistent Prayer Series

After Valentine's Day, On the Sundays of the 18th and 25th, we will have a related two-part message series entitled *Persistent Prayer* to flesh out our series in Fervent Prayer.

SLIDE 21 The Psalm 119 Prayerbook

Earlier in my life when I intensely believed God was going to use me to raise up a Christian publishing company, I spent a lot of time writing. I outlined two books and developed this (The Psalm 119 Prayerbook). I had many resources planned in it. It explains the Hebrew alphabet and sections apart Psalm 119 according to each letter. It then teaches on those sections and includes a devotional for each eight verses of the Psalm.

Although it never came about, I still think I benefitted from researching it. I believe the same is true for you. You will benefit your personal, private prayer life by equipping yourself with resources and inspire you to prayer.

SLIDE 22 Altar Time

Let me pray over our church that our prayer lives will greatly increase this year. I also want to have dedicated times of prayer for us as a church throughout this year.

You are always welcome to come on Saturday night at 6:30 PM for corporate prayer here in the sanctuary. This year we hope to turn our Saturday night prayer meeting into a community-wide prayer service. Help us by praying about that.