



Effectual & Fervent

Class Three

"Master, teach us to pray." James understood how and we can learn a lot from his thoughts.

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- We are trying to reacquaint ourselves with the message of James this week
- This message of Grace would have been received by the legalistic Jews of the time as something very **Radical & Different**
- Now we want to talk about what James has to say about Prayer

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- Specifically, about **Effectual & Fervent** Prayer
- About the kind of prayer that moves mountains...
- The kind of prayer that heals the sick...
- The kind of prayer that can change the weather...
- You have two choices when you approach verses in the Bible that are explicitly clear
- Verses that cannot be "spiritualized", but by their very nature have to be taken literally
- **Either they apply to us... Or, they don't**

- Either they are specific, unique messages written to a limited audience at a set time in history...
- Or, the Bible was written for our admonition, our learning, our instruction in righteousness...
- Which do you believe is true?
- Which do you really feel deep in your heart is correct?
- Sure, we all believe that every scripture is given for our admonition and learning...
- Now, let's look at this verse:

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- James 5:17 NIV

17) Elijah was a man **just like us**. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.

- Elijah was a man **just like us**...
- The clear implication here is that if we were to pray earnestly we could also do miraculous things like stop the rain from falling out of the sky
- Yes, but... It's at this point that all of the walls start rising up
- It's at this point that we all start to feel a little uncomfortable, a little lost at sea, a little like a duck out of water
- It's at this point that we start to think of all the reasons why we couldn't possibly cause the weather to change dramatically by our prayers
- Why this verse must be a specific, unique message to a limited audience...
- Well, let's consider a few of the possible arguments against us applying this verse to ourselves today

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- God talked to Elijah
- All right... We can't go so far as to say that Elijah was different than us, because James is quite clear that Elijah was **just like us**...
- So, we stress the different circumstances that Elijah lived under, and therefore imply that those circumstances were sufficient enough to warrant a difference in nature

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- But, do not confuse **God's revelation** with **God's interaction**
- Just because the times of open revelation have ceased, does not mean that God is no longer interacting with mankind on a daily basis

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- Elijah lived in Old Testament times
- Basically, the same argument, right?
- Because God relates differently with mankind at different times doesn't really prove anything

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- Don't confuse **God's relations** with **God's interaction**

- **SLIDE**

- Elijah had the Holy Spirit
- Ah... Now we're down to it
- This is really the crux of the matter, isn't it?
- Really, deep down inside I kind of feel like I'm really not going to be held to do the same kind of great things as Elijah, or David, or Noah or Samson
- Because they had the Holy Spirit
- The power of God moved in their lives and helped them to do what they did...

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- Elijah was a man **just like us**
- The King James says, "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are"
- The New American Standard says, "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours"
- The New Living Translation says, "Elijah was as human as we are"

- **SLIDE**

- James was trying to teach us something about **PRAYER**, not about possession of the **Holy Spirit**

- But, the two are connected

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- You **HAVE** to believe that God will do **miraculous things** when you pray
- Why else would you pray?

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- The whole idea and definition of **MIRACULOUS** is something that is **SUPERNATURAL**

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- Supernatural is defined as:
- Something that transcends or contravenes the known laws governing the universe
- Isn't that what we are doing when we pray?

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- Prayer is a means by which we ask God to change the normal course of events
- We ask God to intercede and stop things from happening the way they normally would

- **SLIDE**

- Prayer is transcending the normal laws that govern our universe

- **SLIDE**

- Prayer is **MIRACULOUS**
- From the smallest issues God helps us with in our daily lives to the amazing healings of the sick or injured
- God performs miracles daily in our lives and the lives of those around us

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- **WE** perform miracles through our prayers

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- We are **just like** Elijah
- Well, maybe you don't feel strong enough to take on this huge responsibility...

- Maybe you don't feel smart enough... Or wise enough...

- God can help you with that also!

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- James 1:5 NIV

5) If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who **gives generously** to all **without finding fault**, and it will be given to him.

- Look at how James describes our Father...

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- He **gives generously** to all

- **SLIDE**

- **without finding fault**

- God will bless us with the wisdom needed to use prayer correctly...

- Too often I think we forget this very clear and simple step

- It's too easy to say that we aren't capable or wise enough to be helpful to others

- But, we have to believe that God works in our lives

- If He tells us to ask for wisdom, then He is capable of giving it to us

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- Colossians 1:9 KJV

9) For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to **desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding**

- We also can be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding

- But, we have to pray for it

- And we have to have **FAITH** that God will answer our prayers

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- **FAITH** is **REQUIRED** for **PRAYER**

- Faith is the operating factor in all prayer
- You have to believe in what you are asking for
- It's not just a matter of asking, and God automatically grants your wishes...
- There is a prerequisite on your part
- Keep reading in James:

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- James 1:6-8 NIV

- 6) But when he asks, he must **believe and not doubt**, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.
- 7) That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord;
- 8) he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

- All prayer is guided by the same principle...
- Ask in **FAITH** and you shall receive
- Remember what Jesus said...

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- Mark 11:22-24 NIV

- 22) "Have faith in God," Jesus answered.
- 23) "I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but **believes that what he says will happen**, it will be done for him.
- 24) Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, **believe that you have received it**, and it will be yours.

- **SLIDE**

- *"I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but **believes that what he says will happen**, it will be done for him.*

- Either it's literal, or somehow we have to receive a spiritual lesson from the context...
- Verses like this have always been a struggle for me
- If I'm honest with myself, it really scares me into thinking whether or not I really believe what the Bible teaches

- Because either it's literal or it's spiritual
 - It seems so literal the way that Jesus says it
 - But, it must be spiritual, right?
- Which one is it?
- The beauty is that I don't think it really matters which way you choose to look at it
- The message that Jesus wants us to receive is the same...

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- I believe that Jesus purposely gave us a challenging example of a real-life literal event to push us a little bit further than we feel comfortable going
- I believe that Jesus really is trying to tell us that prayer can move mountains...
- But, even if you want to spiritualize the meaning of the verse...
- It's a huge statement!
- Even if it's not talking about the physical relocation of tons of rock and gravel, then it is talking about some very powerful and significant **MIRACULOUS** transformation

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- There might just be an issue that looms in front of you like a mountain, that can't be removed by determination, will-power and positive thinking
- Some mountains can only be removed by prayer
- Did you notice that it doesn't say that you believe that maybe it could happen...

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- Read Verse 24 again...

24) Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, **believe that you have received it**, and it will be yours.

- It says that you have to believe that you have received it
- The Greek here is Past Tense
- That's the kind of Faith that God wants us to have in Prayer
- Praying while all the while believing that you have received it...

- Is there a catch? Some kind of caveat?
- Of course there is...
- There has to be a Godly purpose to your prayer
- This isn't some sort of parlour trick that God has given us
- It has to be done according to God's Will...

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- 1st John 5:14-15 KJV

- 14) And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing **according to his will**, he heareth us:
- 15) And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

- If we ask anything **according to his will**, he hears us...
- **IF** we know that he hears us, we know that we have the petitions we desired of him...
- *Why is this so hard for us?*
- Why do we struggle with fairly simple, straightforward verses
- Is it because we feel that don't really know God's will
- That God is so far beyond us that we couldn't possibly know what He wants for us?
- But, in the end, is it really all that complicated?
- Or, do we really actually know all of these verses by heart...

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- Luke 12:32 KJV

- 32) Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

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- Romans 8:28 NIV

- 28) And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

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- Matthew 6:31-33 KJV

- 31) Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?
- 32) (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.
- 33) But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

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- Philippians 4:6-7 KJV

- 6) Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.
- 7) And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

- I don't think it's really that hard for us to understand God's will for us...

- So, why do we sometimes not pray according to God's will?

- Why does prayer not work for us sometimes?

- Let's go back to James for some help...

- **SLIDE**

- James 4:3 NIV

- 3) When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with **wrong motives**, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

- In reality, it's really not that hard for us to understand the mind of God

- Our God loves us, and is very clear with us about what he wants for us

- In reality, the hard part is for us to understand our own minds

- The real struggle is for us to be honest with ourselves

- To be honest about why we are praying, why we are asking for what we are asking for, and what we really want for the answer

- If we have God's will clear in our minds about what we are praying for

- And if we ask in faith... God will give it to us

- *But, do we really know how to pray?*
- I have to believe that the disciples were quite a bit more spiritual than I am, and we all know the question they asked...

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- ***“Lord, teach us to pray.”***

- Prayer is the most intimate form of communication that we have with God
- We benefit greatly from time spent reading God’s word and learning about who he is, and who he wants us to be

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- But, we can only really connect with God while we are in prayer...

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- And God wants us to connect with Him
- God wants you to reach out to Him
 - He wants you to develop a friendship with Him
 - A lasting, personal, intimate relationship

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- It gives God pleasure for us to develop this kind of close, intimate, personal relationship with Him
- I know that for me that was hard to swallow
- It really took me a while to believe that in my heart
- It’s hard to believe that God really wanted to be your “friend”, and not just your “God”
- It’s easier for us to understand a Creator / Creation relationship than it is for us to understand a personal, intimate relationship with the omnipotent God...
- But, that is what God wants us to develop with Him through Prayer
- So, how do we do it?
- How do you become best friends with God?
- How do you develop a healthy prayer life?

- I'd like to just talk about three suggestions today

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- **Be HONEST with God**

- The first building block of any close friendship is complete honesty
- God is always 100% honest with you
 - You must be honest with God about your faults and your feelings
- Look at Abraham, Moses and David...
- Look at virtually every person in the Scriptures who was a friend of God

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- **PERFECTION** has never been a prerequisite of having a relationship with God

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- But, being **HONEST** with God about your faults is
- Also notice how the friends of God in the Old Testament felt free to be honest about their **FEELINGS** also...
 - Complaining, second-guessing, accusing, and even arguing with God didn't seem to bother God...

- ***Instead He seems to encourage it***

- Abraham questions and challenges God over the destruction of Sodom
- David accuses God of betrayal, unfairness and abandonment
- Job vents his bitterness during his ordeal, and in the end God defended him to his friends for being honest

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- **What we sometimes see in the Bible as AUDACITY, God sees as AUTHENTICITY**

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- To become a friend of God, you must learn to be honest with Him about your feelings
- ***Sharing with God what you really feel... Not what you think you should say!***

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- If you truly believe that God uses **everything** for good in your life...
- Then you have to become comfortable bringing out the deep hidden areas of your life where you've harbored resentment to God over your past hurts, unanswered prayers, your appearance, your background and other things
- Hidden bitterness towards God creates a barrier
 - Why would I want to be friends with God if He allowed **this** to happen to me?
- You must come to have faith in the fact that **everything** God does is in your best interest...
 - Even if it's painful or if you don't understand why He did it
- Every character described in the Bible as being a friend of God is recorded as having battles with Doubt
- Instead of masking the doubt with clichés, they voiced them to God

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- ***Expressing Doubt is often the first step toward the next level of intimacy with God***

- Secondly...

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- Practice **CONSTANT CONVERSATION**

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- To truly develop a friendship with God through prayer you have to share **ALL** of your life's experiences with Him
- Of course, it's important to establish the habit of a daily prayer time with God...
 - ***But He wants more than an appointment in your schedule!***
- God wants to be included in every conversation, every problem and every thought
- Carry on a continuous one-sided conversation with God throughout the day

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- That's what is meant by **Pray *WITHOUT* ceasing...**

- The key to sustaining constant conversation with God is not to change what you do, but to change the attitude toward what you do
 - Include God in even the most menial parts of your day
- In the Garden of Eden worship wasn't a scheduled event, but a continual attitude
- **Don't worry if you don't feel God present every moment of your day**

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- **Your goal is not a *feeling*, but a constant awareness of the reality of God in your life**
- Learn to cultivate that awareness of God being real in your everyday life
 - Practice shorter, conversational prayers continually throughout the day rather than simply a long complex prayer at the end of the day
- Practicing this awareness of God being real is a habit that you have to develop
 - You must train your mind to remember God
- But, it will change your life

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- The third suggestion I have is to consider a **PRAYER MODEL**
- I can hardly even believe that I'm saying that in public...
- When I was young I always thought that there were two basic types of people in the world
 - Artists and Engineers
 - Artists were free thinking, emotionally motivated, impulsive, fun-loving people
 - Engineers were conservative, disciplined, schedule keeping automatons
 - Obviously, I thought of myself as an Artist
 - I didn't keep a schedule, I didn't follow routine, and I ate whatever I wanted...
 - Then, I grew up...
- Now I realize that there are all different kinds of people in the world, and every one can benefit from being a little emotionally motivated and impulsive, AND from being disciplined and keeping schedules... And eating right...

- That's when I really began to understand the value of Prayer Models
- It's a simple system to help you remember what you need to pray for
- Too often there are so many things to pray for, and there are so many unhelpful things rushing through your head that you find you might forget important things
- I was finding that my prayers were becoming these massive lists of requests, requests, requests, and I wasn't spending any time praising God

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- There are lots of different models, but the one that I like using is called **ACTS**

- **SLIDE** - ACTS is an acrostic that stands for

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- Adoration

- **SLIDE**

- Confession

- **SLIDE**

- Thanksgiving, and

- **SLIDE**

- Supplication

- There are lots of different acrostics to help you organize your prayers. I've seen simple ones like **ABC**, and I've seen complex ones like the word **PRAYER**.
- But, one of the reasons I like this acrostic is that it contains the several of the major elements given by Christ in the Lord's prayer, so I think it will be helpful to read that first.

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- Matthew 6:9-13 KJV

- 9) "This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
- 10) your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
- 11) Give us today our daily bread.
- 12) Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
- 13) And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

- Although Christ doesn't directly mention Thanksgiving in his prayer, we can see that he connected to the ideas of:

- **SLIDE**

- Adoration

- **SLIDE**

- Confession, and

- **SLIDE**

- Supplication

- These categories are broad enough to allow for adaptation to different contexts, but I would like to spend a few minutes and review them

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- **Adoration**

- The heart of Adoration is to spend time praising God and adoring Him for who He is
- Love and cherish His presence and work in and through your life

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- Be still before Him and enjoy His presence
- Use this time to allow God to speak to you through His Word and His Spirit
- If you can't think of what motivates you or inspires you about God...

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- Praise the Lord by praying scripture or hymns back to Him

* I would say that this is probably the hardest part of the prayer for many of us, as it is the part that we aren't very familiar with...

- That's why I like it right up front as the first thing
- Something that is important, that I don't do that often, that I want to get better at
- Think of this as writing a love letter to a girlfriend or boyfriend...
- When you adore someone you describe the things you like about them...
- That is how we start this prayer to God...

- Describing the things that we have noticed or thought about God during that day

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- **Confession**

- Confession should be a part of our continual walk with Christ
- We are all intimately familiar with our shortcomings, and need to ask God for forgiveness continually

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- But, spend time asking God to search out your heart for areas that displease Him
- Allow God to cleanse your heart of any unconfessed sin
- Be sure to spend time confessing and repenting of specific sins

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- And then **ACCEPT** God's forgiveness and cleansing
- This is actually hard for many of us
- We don't feel worthy and can't understand why God would love us
- Spend some time in your prayer accepting the **FACT** that God does forgive you
- * We'll talk more about Confession in a moment...

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- **Thanksgiving**

- Giving thanks for all things should be a part of our everyday lives as God's people
- This includes thanking God for specific things such as blessings, people in our lives, open doors, guidance, etc.

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- Also, give thanks for His salvation and the privilege to serve such a wonderful Savior.

- **SLIDE**

- Thank God for His goodness, loving-kindness, and faithfulness

- **SLIDE**

- **Supplication**

- We are called as believers to intercessory prayer
- We are to come before God on behalf of others
- Spend time praying for specific people, events, states, countries, missionaries, etc.
- This is the easiest part of our prayers, and probably one of the longest parts

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- And, the thing we are most familiar with, bringing our own needs and desires before our Holy Father

- **SLIDE**

- You might find it helpful to keep a running Prayer List, of the things that you need to ask your Father for
- Life is full of sorrow and suffering, and it's important to remember what is going on around you
- What else can we pray for?
- Let's go back to James, and we'll see some clear examples about what to pray for...

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- James 5:13 NIV

13) Is any one of you in trouble? **He should pray**. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise.

- It's clear to James, but, it's important that it is clear to us
- It really doesn't matter what kind of trouble that you are in...

- **SLIDE** • The NIV said, "Is any one of you in trouble?"

- **SLIDE** • The King James says, "Is any among you afflicted?"

- **SLIDE** • The New Living Translation says, "Are any among you suffering?"

- **SLIDE** • Other versions say, "Are you hurting?"

- **SLIDE** • "Is any one down?"

- **SLIDE**

- The answer is always the same... **PRAY**
- Turn to God in your times of need, your times of weakness, your times of pain
- There really is no better advice that you can be given
- But, what if you are seriously ill?
- James continues...

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- James 5:14 NIV

14) Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to **pray over him** and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

- The majority of historians and Bible commentators agree that in James day anointing with oil was a fundamental medicinal practice
- James isn't encouraging us to deny all medical attention in favor of faith based healing
- But, he certainly isn't encouraging us to put our faith in the medicine
- The prayer comes **FIRST - THEN** the anointing
- Our primary faith remains with miraculous healing powers of our Lord, and **THEN** the miracles of medicine
- Because James is also quite clear about what heals the sick

• ***And it ain't the medicine!***

- **SLIDE**

- James 5:15 NIV

15) And the prayer **offered in faith** will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

- The prayer **OFFERED IN FAITH** will make the sick person well
- And almost like a bonus, James throws in that his sins will be forgiven

• ***Amazing...***

- What about forgiveness of sins?

- James has advice for that also...

- **SLIDE**

- James 5:16 KJV

16) **Confess your faults** one to another, **and pray one for another**, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

- There really is only one good reason to confess your sins to another person
- Notice that the verse says, “confess your sins to each other **AND** pray for each other”
- It’s not just about sharing your burden
- It’s not really about being validated, confirmed or even heard
- It’s about **PRAYER**
- It’s about bringing someone else into your situation so that they can help pray for your healing
- But, who would you choose?
- The answer is there:

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- **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.**

- This is not the time to find someone who you think is going to console you, agree with you, or have pity on you
- This is the time to look around for a Righteous person who can effectively pray for you

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- Prayer is powerful, and the prayer of a righteous person can work miracles in your life
- I know what you’re thinking...

- **SLIDE**

- But, **WHO** is Righteous?
- I don’t think that the verse is saying you have to find a **PERFECT** Man

- **SLIDE**

- In my mind I always think that it's wise to find someone who you think acts righteously in this particular area of sin
- Are you having a problem with Lying? Find someone who you think is impeccably honest
- Find someone who you think is doing well in that one area
- Ask that person to pray for you
- **The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much**
- And we need every bit we can get!
- Confess not only to God, but to one another, so that you can pray for one another
- Because no matter of willpower, self-restraint or resolutions can really help you conquer your sins and live the life that God wants from you
- Only the miraculous power of prayer can throw that mountain into the sea
- Only the **Fervent & Effectual** prayer of a righteous man can truly set you free...
- And, only if you have the faith necessary to believe that it will happen
- Which brings us back to the verse we began with...

- **SLIDE**

- James 5:17 NIV

17) Elijah was a man **just like us**. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.

- *Now, you have two choices when you face verses like this...*
- Either you can believe that James wasn't really saying what it sounds like

- **SLIDE**

- Or you can believe that the **Fervent & Effectual** prayer of a righteous man can truly perform miracles