

**THE POWER OF PRAYER
HARRINGAY UNITED CHURCH-BAPTIST
SUNDAY AUGUST 12, 2012**

Text: James 5:13-20

Reminiscence:

We started studying the book of James since May 20, and the main theme is for us to be mature. I now want to remind you the things that we must do to be mature. Trials will always come our way, but God intends to turn our trial into triumph. Temptations will come our way, but God wants us to overcome them. We discussed how to stop deceiving ourselves and confront ourselves with the truth of God as our mirror. Everyone is equal before God and hence there must not be favouritism in the Church. Our faith must be genuine, not half hearted one. The most important thing we must do is to tame our tongues. We must acquire heavenly wisdom rather than demonic one. We are also taught how to end wars inside and outside of us. It is good to plan ahead but let God be involved heavily and be pre-eminent. We have learnt that money is powerful and can be used for God or for evil purposes. Patience is powerful and it helps us through trials, suffering and tribulations. And today we are going to conclude the series on Be Mature by discussing the Power of Prayer.

In this last passage of James 5, James emphasises the use of our tongues again. You will recall that he has mentioned negative ways of using our tongues in complaining (5:9); in swearing (5:12) and he now gives us some of three best ways to use our tongues proclaiming God's words (5:10) praying and praising God (5:13).

Prayer for the Suffering

The word suffering may include trouble, affliction, difficult and trying circumstances. Christians will always find themselves in such circumstances due to the decision they have made or situations out of their own control and not their own faults.

Whenever we find ourselves in such situations, what James is saying to us is that we must pray about these circumstances. Instead of grumbling or complaining, we must pray about it.

The difficult situations may be people we work, relate and live with, we must pray. It could be due to health problems at any stage and age, we must pray about it.

It could be due to joblessness, financial difficulty or any other kinds of hardship people may experience.

Prayer changes things. He changes people and situations only if God wants to. And if He does not want to change the situation, He will give you the grace to go through it. This means that it is you that God wants to change through the situations or circumstances, therefore turning our troubles into triumphs.

A good example is Paul after he had been in the third heavens, heard and saw marvellous things that are not permitted to say. In order to check him, God allowed Satan to inflict what he described as a thorn in his flesh. He prayed to God and instead of God to remove the thorn, He gave Paul grace to bear it (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

Prayer for Rejoicing

James knew that not everyone would undergo trouble at the same time. While one is suffering another may be merrying and for such people their prayer should be singing psalms in praising God and giving Him the glory. Praying and singing are key elements of worship and its climax is the Word of God.

Our singing should be an expression of inner joy that only God can and has given. Our songs must be meaningful, Biblical and motivated by the Holy Spirit.

Prayer for the Sick

James move prayer arena to the sick. The sick here means physical infirmity but can be applied to emotional sickness. In this Church, we have seen God moved in a supernatural way to heal people that doctors have verified. And from the text, it appears that the person James had in mind was sick because of sin and this may be in line with 1 Corinthians 11:30.

The scripture says confess your sins to each other not all to one person.

I believe this is the way we should do it, if the elders visit the sick person through invitation, the person should willingly confess what he has thought, said and done wrongly in confidence and has to be treated as such. But it must be an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality as we do in Prayer Meeting on Mondays and Leaders' prayer meeting.

This is beneficial in several ways. First, you feel relieved when you get it out. Second, you feel happy that God has forgiven you and thirdly, you feel you can have a new start. An unconfessed sin is like pus in the bone, very painful, and can kill.

Psalms 66:18 "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;" **Read Psalms 32:1-5.**

Psalms 32:1-5 "Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

2 Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit.

3 When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord" — and you forgave the guilt of my sin."

The person should confess his sin does not justify everyone confessing their sins to the priests as practiced by some Churches. At no time either in the Old Testament or the New God commanded us to confess our sins to the High Priest or any other Priests. Jesus never told the people He forgave their sins to go and confess to the high priest. Zacchaeus in Luke 19 voluntarily confessed his sins to Jesus. Confession is between you and God on one part and between you and the person you offend or who offends you on the other part as stipulated by Jesus in Matthew 5:23-26 and 18:15-17. The second dimension is James' recommendation; therefore, confess your sins to each other, when it is impossible to practice the former.

I remember paying a pastoral visit about 11 years ago to a single woman who was desperate for a husband. Before we prayed, I was nudged by the Holy Spirit to ask her not to allow any man except the husband who will marry her see her nakedness again. I find it difficult to say it that way but quickly prayed for wisdom to put it in a better way. I then told her 'God wants you to make a covenant with Him about this situation'. She paused for few seconds and then came 'I pledge that no one except the husband God will give me will ever again see my nakedness'. About ten months later, God gave her a husband and is now happily married.

Pride and shame prevent us from confessing our sins to each other. Fear of the aftermath effects of our confession also prevents us.

But the benefits of confession which I have outlined above far outweigh its disadvantages.

Anointing the sick with Oil

Some people think this anointing implies massaging but not all sickness or disease can benefit from massage as it may even complicate their matter and make it worse. I consider it more spiritual than physical. Anointing is medicinal in meaning and because God has commanded it, He puts His power, might, name, glory and reputation behind the action and ensures it is accomplished. However, His sovereignty rules here, the prayer with the anointing depends on what God sovereign will is. As I have said earlier, if He does not heal you, He gives you enough grace to bear it. Obedience to this command makes the power of God to flow through to the sick to make him whole.

This means that God puts His power behind the prayer of the saints and application of medicines to make a person well. Therefore I do believe that wants us to apply medicine as well as our prayers.

Four years ago when my wife had a surgery at the Whittington, a woman came in unhappy and frustrated. I sensed the need to pray for her and she rejected it saying 'I don't do such things.' Few minutes later, she asked my wife what operation she was waiting to do and she replied that she had had it two days ago. She was surprised and commented 'your doctor must be very good. My wife replied, No not about the doctor but it was God. Then the woman requested for prayer and she was prayed for. By the time I went back in the evening, she was the one who welcomed me giving testimony that she was better and announced to everyone on the ward that the Priest is here, let him pray for you, you will get better as he has done for me.' God still heals today.

Prayer for the Nation

James did not stop in asking the Church through the elders to pray for individuals he asks us to pray for the nation. He gave Elijah's example who prayed for rain to stop for three and a half years because of the sin of the nation and after repentance and the followers of Baal has been put to shame, he prayed again and God opened the heavens and there was rain.

This is an example of a righteous man whose prayer release God's power and changes things. He said we are no different from him. Meaning our prayers too can release power and change things in our nation. 10 years ago, God instructed us to be praying for our ward, He gave us a map and we obeyed. We first did it for 7 days and on the night of the 7th day, the second biggest drug dealers in UK and his associates of this

area were arrested and have since been jailed. Maureen came on Sunday morning and said 'Dayo the street is clear' I did not understand her then she told me about the arrest. That is what God can do through the prayer of the righteous.

Our nation today is plagued with greed and corruption and its outworking of fraud and cheating with ignominy. The people we trust with the governance of our nation are letting us down. And we are asking other nations to tackle problems of fraud and corruption. We see the speck in other nations' eyes but we never saw the log in our own eyes.

We need to pray for our nation and the world and just as God honoured Elijah, He will also honour us.

Isa 44:26 "But I carry out the predictions of my prophets! By them I say to Jerusalem, 'People will live here again,' and to the towns of Judah, 'You will be rebuilt; I will restore all your ruins!'

2 Chronicles 7:14 "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" NKJV

Prayer for the Straying saint

Although James did not mention prayer specific here but it implied. An estranged person or backslider needs prayer and confronting him of the sin with gracious and merciful attitude otherwise we could fall into same thing.

A pastor told me about a new Christian whose friend told her to send her partner away because she was born again but he was not. The young Christian remarked "if this is what Christianity is all about she did not want to be anymore" The friend spoke truth without love and grace.

But the pastor counselled that they agree that they will be praying the partner and that she should not preached at him but let new love in Christ speak to him. 18 months later he became a Christian.

If the woman had followed her friend's advice, that man would never have become a Christian. The action will be a bad witness and it will be bad news and not the good news we are to spread.

Someone has said 'I want to see love rather than hearing it'. What this person is saying is 'don't tell me you love me, show or demonstrate it.

If we do this we will save the person from hell and we will get the reward.

Conclusion:

There are some practical lessons from this section that we must not overlook. First, Prayer works. Pray for those in trouble, suffering, those that are sick, for the nation and backslider Christians. Second, disobedience to God can lead to sickness. This was David's experience when he tried to hide his sins (Ps 32). Third, sin affects the whole church. We can never sin alone, for sin has a way of growing and infecting others. Fourth, there is healing (physical and spiritual) when sin is dealt with. Proverbs 28:13 "He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy. "NKJV

James wrote, "Make it a habit to confess your sins to each other" (literal translation). Do not hide sin or delay confession.

This brings us to the end of our study of the book of James these are the question I got from Warren Wiersbe as a checklist to test our maturity and I urge you to answer them honestly and make amendments.

1. Am I becoming more and more patient in the testings of life?
2. Do I play with temptation or resist it from the start?
3. Do I find joy in obeying the Word of God, or do I merely study it and learn it, pick and choose which to obey?
4. Are there any prejudices that shackle me?
5. Am I able to control my tongue?
6. Am I a peacemaker rather than a troublemaker?
7. Do people come to me for spiritual wisdom?
8. Am I a friend of God or a friend of the world?
9. Do I make plans without considering the will of God?
10. Am I selfish when it comes to money? Am I unfaithful in the paying of my tithe and offerings?

LET US PRAY.