

# GRACE BIBLE MISSION

Hdqts Oke Onitii, P.O.Box 362,  
Osogbo.

## LESSON: WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD KNOW

### Study 5: THE POWER OF PREVAILING PRAYER

(Scripture Portion: James 5: 7-20)

Here is a subject concerning which we can turn to almost any portion of the Word of God for material, for the Bible is packed full of promises, encouragements and illustrations that emphasized the power of prevailing prayer. As a point of departure we shall base this study upon James 5:16-18. It is said that James had knees that were worn hard by his constant habit of kneeling. If this is true, we have the testimony of a man who had proved the power of prayer in his own life, and practiced what he preached. Notice that James 5:16 speaks about a particular kind of prayer – 'The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.' Do we know anything about this kind of prayer?

#### 1. THE INFERENCE OF THESE WORDS IS THAT THERE IS A KIND, OR QUALITY, OF PRAYER THAT ACHIEVES LITTLE OR NOTHING.

This kind of prayer is ineffective and useless. God does not hear this prayer – look up Job 27:8-9; 35:13; Isaiah 1:15-16; 59:2; Micah 3:4; Zechariah 7:11-13; Luke 18:10-14. How solemn this truth is! Consider the following kinds of prayer that achieve little or nothing:

1. *Prayer with a wrong motive cannot prevail.* See what James 4:3 says. Often we pray selfishly, but only prayer that is offered for the glory of God gains His ear and secures His answer.
2. *If sin is regarded, prayer cannot prevail.* Psalm 66:18 tells us that if we knowingly harbour sin in our life, God will not hear us. We need to pray the prayer that David prayed – look up Psalm 139:23-24, and if God reveals sin, thank God we may confess it and have it forgiven – look up 1 John 1:9.
3. *An unforgiving spirit will hinder prayer.* Look up Mark 11:25, and see what our Lord had to say about this; then read verse 26. Is this a possible reason why our prayers for the conversion of our loved ones are not being answered?
4. *An unwillingness to be reconciled to another hinders prayer.* See what Matthew 5:23-24 says. Here is a priority. It is of little use to pray, to worship, to go to meetings or to engage in the service of God and to expect His blessing if we are not willing first to be reconciled to our brother.

5. *A wrong human relationship hinders prayer.* Study 1 Peter 3:7 carefully. Perhaps our attitude to, or relationship with, the members of our family is not all it should be. According to this verse, that can be a hindrance to our prayers.

These are some of the ways in which our prayers may be hindered, but thank God, our prayers may be heard and answered! – And this is the main emphasis that the Holy Spirit makes in James 5:16.

## 2. THERE IS A PRAYER THAT IS ALWAYS EFFECTIVE.

It achieves much. It succeeds, and gains God's answer. James tells us this, and if we ask James, 'How much can prayer achieve?' his reply is, 'it is powerful and effective!' – but he does go on to say, 'I will give you an illustration of what prayer can do' – and this is in verses 17-18. So, if we want to get an idea of the power of prevailing prayer, we would do well to look at Elijah and ask, 'What can prayer do?'

1. *Through prayer God's servants are empowered to speak His Word.* We read about this in 1 Kings 17:1. Surely it was because Elijah knew what it was to stand before the Lord that he was able to go and stand before the wicked Ahab – look up 1 Kings 18:17. It was prayer in private that made him powerful in public. When we turn to the New Testament we find in the Book of Acts the very same thing – compare Acts 4:29, 31 and 32. The mighty power of prayer releases the power of the Holy Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Spirit we are made bold and courageous to speak for the Lord.
2. *Through prayer God's servants gain ample provision for all their needs.* In 1 Kings 17, we are given two glorious illustrations of this. First, God provided free accommodation for Elijah by the brook Cherith and fed him day by day by means of ravens (verses 2-6). Then the brook dried up (verse 7), so God provided free accommodation at Zarephath, and His provision was all-sufficient (verses 8-16) – compare Psalm 34:10.
3. *Through prayer God's servants experience the miracle-working power of God.* We are told about this in 1 Kings 17:17-24. Through prayer the dead can be raised, the sick can be healed, the lost can be saved; indeed, there is no limit to the miracles that God can perform when His people pray.
4. *Through prayer God's servants are victorious over the enemies of the Lord.* The whole of 1 Kings, chapter 18, is worth a very careful reading. How wonderful – the false prophets were put to shame, and afterwards put to death, and the Name of the Lord was gloriously vindicated! Prayer today can drive back the powers of darkness and overcome God's enemies – the forces of materialism, the flood of bad literature, the desecration of holy things, the spread of false religion etc. – look up Isaiah 59:19.

5. *Through prayer God's servants are kept safe, secure and steadfast in the time of testing, trouble and failure.* Please read the whole of 1 Kings, chapter 19. How tenderly the Lord dealt with His weary and failing servant; and how graciously the Divine Physician restored and recommissioned him! All this came about through prayer.

### 3. IN CONCLUSION, NOTICE THE CONDITIONS OF PREVAILING PRAYER.

1. *The prayer that prevails must be fervent, earnest and passionate.* A modern translation of James 5:16 reads: 'Tremendous power is made available through a good man's earnest prayer.' The emphasis is upon the word 'earnest'.
2. *The prayer that prevails is prayer that is given us by the Holy Spirit.* Romans 8:26 and Philippians 2:13 emphasise this. True prayer is the bringing of requests to God that have been born within us by the Holy Spirit.

*The prayer that prevails must be the prayer of a righteous man.* All of us by nature are unrighteous – look up Isaiah 64:6; but through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ we have been made righteous. The prayer that God hears is the prayer of one who is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ as his righteousness and who is seeking to live righteously day by day.