

James 5:16-20

Living Right in a World Gone Wrong

As the book of James comes to a close, the final instructions sum up how to live right in a world gone wrong. So many times we focus on visible outward actions instead of the invisible spiritual condition. The outward is merely a reflection of the inward and the visible is merely a symptom of the invisible. If we are going to live rightly, we must be right with God and others.

I. Our _____ - Being Right with Others (James 5:16)

- If we will not be right with _____, we are not right with God.

A. The _____

- If you have done someone wrong, then you need to make that right by _____ it, not only to God, but to them as well. (Matthew 5:23-24; Mark 11:25-26; Colossians 3:13)

B. The _____

- As brothers and sisters in Christ, we should _____ for each other all of the time. (Col. 1:9; Phil.1:4; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:11; 3:1 Rom. 15:30; Heb. 13:18; Phil.1:22; Philip. 1:19)

II. A _____ - Being Right with God (James 5:17-18)

A. The _____ of Prayer

- Powerful prayer is energetic prayer and _____ praying is hard work. (Matt. 26:40-41)
- Effectual fervent prayer requires _____ and _____. (Luke 11:5-10; James 5:17)

B. The _____ of Righteousness

- In order to know that God will hear and answer our prayers, we must know that our heart is _____ with Him. (James 4:3; Psalms 106:13-15; Luke 18:10-14)

C. The _____ of Right Praying

- Powerful prayer can do things that are out of the _____. (Matthew 17:20-21; James 5:18; 1 Kings 18:36-38)

III. A _____ - Helping Others be Right with God (James 5:19-20)

A. The _____

- We are to be on the lookout for errors in _____ and, to a lesser degree, in others. (Titus 1:9-11; Galatians 6:1-2; Matthew 7:3-5)

B. The _____

- Our goal in dealing with an errant brother is always _____ through repentance. (2 Timothy 2:24-26; Hebrews 10:25)

C. The _____ Blessing

If you have been instrumental in someones recovery from error, you have helped _____ them and bring them back into a right relationship with God. (Hebrews 12:6; 1 John 5:16; 2 Timothy 2:26; Psalms 32:1-2)

Conclusion

It is not easy to live right in this sinful world. But by God's grace and with God's strength we can follow the teachings of God's word. Our only hope for living right in a world gone wrong is living by The Book so that we are right with God and _____.

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I. Our Faults Confessed - Being Right with Others

Notice the phrases "one to another" and "one for another." there is an emphasis on our relationship with others. If we will not be right with others, we are not right with God.

A. The Problems

"Confess your faults one to another"

If you have done someone wrong, then you need to make that right by confessing it, not only to God, but to them as well.

Matthew 5:23-24 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Our relationships with others have a direct affect on our relationship with God.

Mark 11:25-26 And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Problems are going to come up in our relationships. What is important is that when they do come up, we deal with them quickly and in a Christ-like spirit.

Colossians 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

B. The Praying

"and pray one for another, that ye may be healed."

There is a connection here to the previous verses regarding those who are sick. Sometimes sicknesses do come as a result of sin. If that sin is an offense against another person, part of confessing that sin fully is to get it right with them.

But this instruction is not limited to praying for each other when we are sick. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we should pray for each other all of the time. When we look at the pattern of the New Testament, we find that Paul affirmed on many occasions that he was praying for the believers.

Colossians 1:9 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;

Philippians 1:4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

1 Thessalonians 1:2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

2 Thessalonians 1:11 Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:

But also, he requested that the believers pray for him.

Romans 15:30 Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me;

2 Thessalonians 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

Hebrews 13:18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

Furthermore, he expected God to work as a direct result of those prayers.

Philemon 1:22 But withal prepare me also a lodging: for I trust that through your prayers I shall be given unto you.

Philippians 1:19 For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

If there is anything that our generation of Christians has lost as a result of technology and connectivity it is the art of prayer. Tools that could be used to help us too often hinder us by becoming distractions from the most important things. We must take time to pray for each other that we can be right with each other.

II. A Fervent Calling - Being Right with God

A. The Work of Prayer

Our text verse stipulates what kind of prayer avails much. Two criteria are given and the first is that the prayer must be "effectual fervent" prayer. That phrase is translated from a single word that we get our modern english word "energy" from. Powerful prayer is energetic prayer and energetic praying is hard work. If you have been saved any length of time, you have probably found out that prayer is hard work. Even the disciples who were in the garden with Jesus Christ found that prayer was hard work.

Matthew 26:40-41 And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What could ye not watch with me one hour? (41) Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Effectual fervent prayer requires persistency.

Luke 11:5-10 And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; (6) For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? (7) And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. (8) I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. (9) And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. (10) For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.

Effectual fervent prayer requires consistency

James 5:17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

"Prayed earnestly" means "he prayed with prayer" or "he prayed and prayed." Many times we are serious about our prayers but we are not consistent with our praying. Powerful prayer is hard work and it requires persistency and consistency.

B. The Requirement of Righteousness

The promise of powerful prayer is not for just anyone because the second stipulation the verse mentions is that of righteousness. "Of a righteous man." It is possible to pray for the wrong things and the wrong reasons and not receive answers to your prayer. We cannot approach prayer like ordering off of a menu.

James 4:3 Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

What's even more frightening than that is that it is possible to pray for the wrong thing with the wrong motive in such a persistently rebellious way and actually receive the wicked request to the detriment of your spiritual well being.

Psalms 106:13-15 They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel: (14) But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. (15) And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.

In order to know that God will hear and answer our prayers, we must know that our heart is right with Him. Many people have the mistaken idea that your ability to "pray good prayers" gets your prayers answered. Perhaps you hear people pray in church and you think, "I can't pray like that, so what's the use in praying?" The power of prayer does not lie in your ability to use impressive words. The power of prayer is based on God's ability. If you will but do the hard work of prayer with a heart that is right with Him, you can see miracles happen in your life as well.

Luke 18:10-14 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. (11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. (12) I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. (13) And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. (14) I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

The pharisee was an expert at impressive prayers but the publican became an expert in answered prayer.

C. The Result of Right Praying

If you pray persistently and consistently with a right heart, then the result will be prayer that avails much. The idea of the word avail is to have power, even power to do extraordinary things. Powerful prayer can do things that are out of the ordinary.

Matthew 17:20-21 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. (21) Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.

Mountains don't normally move. But yet Jesus said even this was possible through prayer.

In James 5 we find an example of an Old Testament character that saw God do some extraordinary things in response to prayer. His name was Elijah, or Elias as it is written in our Bibles.

James 5:17-18 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. (18) And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

"Yeah, but that was Elijah the prophet of God. He could do things like that, but not me." Notice that James said he "was a man subject to like passions as we are." Elijah was no different when it

came to prayer than you and I except perhaps that he worked hard at prayer and kept his heart right with God so that he saw God do some extraordinary things.

Consider another time that Elijah saw God do some extraordinary in response to his prayer.

1 Kings 18:36-38 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. (37) Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. (38) Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

III. A Friend Converted - Helping Others be Right with God

A. The Error

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth,

There are various kinds of errors that people fall into. They can fall into doctrinal error.

Titus 1:9-11 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. 10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

They can fall into moral error.

Galatians 6:1-2 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2 Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

We are to be on the lookout for errors in ourself and, to a lesser degree in others.

Matthew 7:3-5 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? [4] Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? [5] Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

B. The Exhortation

"and one convert him;"

To “convert” means “to turn around,” or to bring to repentance. Our goal in dealing with an errant brother is always restoration through repentance.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

How we go about accomplishing that is very important. We are to exhort others. To exhort someone means to come along side them and assist them in their need.

Hebrews 10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

This is one reason that church is so important. This is the place that God has ordained that His children meet together regularly to help each other in their spiritual life.

C. The Everlasting Blessing

20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

If you have been instrumental in someones recovery from error, you have helped deliver them from the chastisement of God for their sin. (Hebrews 12:6) You have possibly even helped to deliver them from an untimely death because of their sin. (1 John 5:16) You have helped to deliver them from the Devil's trap. (2 Timothy 2:26)

You have also helped to bring them back into a right relationship with God. It is not just the absence of punishment, it is the presence of Divine fellowship that they will be able to enjoy.

Psalms 32:1-2 A Psalm of David, Maschil. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. 2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

Conclusion

It is not easy to live right in this sinful world. But by God's grace and with God's strength we can follow the teachings of God's word. Our only hope for living right in a world gone wrong is living by The Book so that we are right with God and others.