

SRM14044

4/27/2014

“The Promise of United Prayer”

Jas. 5:16 (HCSB)

I was raised in a preacher's family. One of the hazards of that is becoming part of a sermon illustration.

I remember a funny time this didn't work out too well when as a kid my family was traveling, and Dad was asked to teach a lesson to a Sunday School group. He wanted to illustrate Eccl 4:12: "Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

He asked my brother Cal to come up, gave him a piece of string and asked him to break it, which he easily did. Then he put three strands together, and asked Cal to do it again.

Dad failed to account for the fact that a teenage boy is not anxious to be seen a failure, as Cal wrapped the strings around each hand, and snapped them with a seemingly effortless jerk.

His illustration a failure, Dad said something about Cal being a weight lifter or something, and tried to recover sufficiently to make his point that Christians need to work together to grow in the Christian life.

The incident reminds me that although we know in our hearts that quality Christian growth comes when we work to grow together spiritually, we have a tendency to try to prove we can do it on our own.

The theme for the 2014 National Day of Prayer, is One Voice, United in Prayer, emphasizing the need for individuals to join together in corporate prayer.

To highlight this theme, Romans 15:6 was selected as the Scripture for this year: "So that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The kind of sharing we need to do is spoken of by the Lord's brother, James, in James 5:16. I think the (HCSB) translates it best: "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The intense prayer of the righteous is very powerful."

I think this verse has 3 things to say to us:

1. Powerful united prayer begins in repentance.
2. Powerful united prayer intercedes for healing.
3. Powerful united prayer can change our world.

1. Powerful united prayer begins in repentance.

v. 16 "Therefore confess your sins to one another"

"confess" = acknowledge or agree fully.

The statement is part of James' urging them to "think Godward" in all of life: v. 13-15 (NKJV) "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven."

When someone is sick, because we are whole people, and there may be sin or guilt involved that needs to be dealt with, James recommends both physical and spiritual treatment.

"Confess" is used in Mat 3:6 of John the Baptist's ministry: "and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins."

It also appears in Acts 19:18 of the revival in Ephesus: "many who had believed came confessing and telling their [evil] deeds."

A. What is involved?

- not only private confession to God
- not private confession to a priest
- not public confession to the church

It is private confession in the Christian family, primarily, confession to the one wronged, and/or to a mature, trusted Christian.

It also involves humbly acknowledging before all our own brokenness.

B. Confession is an act of mortification.

Sin sometimes feels right at first, but is bitter in the remembrance & confession of it.

In the larger assembly of the church, we tend to "pose", presenting our best side, but if we are to grow, we need some place where we can be "real."

trans: Powerful united prayer begins in repentance, but in order for this to be helpful, there needs to be an appropriate response.

2. Powerful united prayer intercedes for healing.

James 5:16b "and pray for one another, so that you may be healed."

A. When we hear a confession from another believer, who should we tell?

Not others, not the world. Tell God.

B. The purpose of sharing your failures with others is that there is hope of "healing"

How should we intercede for each other?

This word refers to much more than physical healing. The preceding verse speaks of a redemp-

tive healing. The KJV translates correctly, "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

The word, "healed" in v. 16 means to "make whole." God is in the process of making us "whole and holy"

Sin is often a factor in sickness, and when we deal with sin, we have taken a vital step in making the person "whole."

There is no promise healing will happen instantly, it will happen when Christians share their failures, and begin to know one another well enough that you can begin to trust each other.

Even then, it will always be a risk, but without it, we will often suffer in our silent sins for years.

We are called to believe in and pray for the power of God in overcoming of failure.

trans: When we find failure in others, God wants us to seek the Spiritual healing of one another in prayer. Powerful united prayer begins in repentance. Powerful united prayer intercedes for healing.

3. Powerful united prayer can change our world.
v. 16c "The intense prayer of the righteous is very powerful."

A. The prayer called for is "intense."

The word, "energeo", means "active, powerful in action".

It is the kind seen as Moses prayed on the mountain, as Abraham pleaded for Sodom.

It is "hard-working Prayer".

B. There are two powerful forces at work in the world today -- the power of God and of Satan.

The power of God is infinitely greater, but we are affected by both.

Satan is bent on our destruction: 1 Pet 5:8 "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

God's power seeks our salvation, 2 Pet 1:3 "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness".

Prayer has tremendous power because it provides access to God's power.

Jesus, when the disciples argued about who was the greatest, says to Peter in Luke 22:31-32 "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that

he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren."

The purpose of uniting with others in prayer is so we can strengthen each other thru Prayer.

Someone has said, "there is nothing the devil dreads so much as Prayer. His great concern is to keep us from praying. He loves to see us 'up to our eyes' in work -- provided we do not pray. He does not fear if we are eager Bible students -- provided we are little in Prayer."

Another said, "Satan laughs at our toiling, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray."

C. "Righteousness" is both a cause and an effect here. As we pray together, our lives are sanctified, and we become Righteous pray-ers.

The example given is Elijah, "a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit."

How did he do this? He read God's Word, and prayed, "Lord, do as you have said".

You and I and our community needs spiritual healing.

We need to intercede for one another for Spiritual healing.

When Christians confess sin to each other and pray for each other, we will see healing in families, churches, communities and our nation.

Action: Meditate on God's word, humbly inviting the Holy Spirit to search your heart.

Make an appointment with God and others this week to pray for spiritual and physical healing.

Write down your requests so you can watch for God's powerful answers.