

## **JAMES: PRIORITY OF PRAYER**

Sunday, November 29

Reading: James 5:13-20

**James 5:16** *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*

Just before John Ashcroft was sworn in as a US senator, he met with family and friends for prayer. As they gathered around him, he saw his dad trying to get up from the couch where he sat. Since his father was in frail health, Ashcroft told him, “That’s okay, Dad. You don’t have to stand up to pray for me.” His father replied, “I’m not struggling to stand up. I’m struggling to kneel.”<sup>1</sup>

Prayer is becoming a lost art in the church. Too often we rush through our day forgetting to make God an important part of it! We struggle to kneel before God. Yet the Bible is clear that prayer is an essential to live the Christian life. In this passage, James gives us the personal side of prayer.

First, he deals with the “ups and downs” of life (5:13). Whether in times of trouble or times of triumph we need to pray. It is a reminder that prayer is not just a “Hail Mary” when we are in trouble. It is a daily relationship no matter what is going on in our lives.

Next, we are to pray in the frailties of life (5:14-15). The Greek word translated “sick” is a very interesting word. It literally means “weak” and can mean either physical illness or spiritual weakness. We need prayer in either case. When we are physically ill we need the prayers and support of others. “Anointing with oil” was often used for medicinal purposes, so James may be suggesting that prayer be accompanied by the proper medical treatment. Whether miraculous or through medicine, it is the Lord who “will raise him up.”

For the case of one who is spiritually sick, the need for prayer (and especially that of the leaders of the church) becomes crucial. We cannot battle spiritual sickness alone. We need the love and prayers of our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is why James says we should confess our sins to one another. Only in this way can we truly pray for the daily struggles with sin that we all face (5:16).

### **POINTS TO PONDER:**

Are we powerful and effective pray-ers? Have we built our relationship with other believers to a point where we can share in the joys, sorrows, and struggles of life? We need to get better connected to each other so we can better bring each other before the throne of grace. Let’s stop struggling to kneel!

<sup>1</sup> Dennis Fisher, “Struggling to Kneel” Our Daily Bread, Sept. 29, 2009