

May 23, 2021 Pastor James
Creating Community Series: Prayer

Acts 2:43-47 *Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all the believers were together and had all things in common; and they would sell their property and possessions and share them with all, to the extent that anyone had need. Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

This is the goal - that we would become a people that would operate in this way. We want to be in awe of the work that God is using us to bring about and to experience this kind of life with one another. We've been talking about the process to get to this goal. Today, let's focus on prayer as part of the process.

Acts 2:41-42 *So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

Prayer is the acknowledgment of God's control and our surrender. Prayer gives us access to what God wants to do. He wants us to ask.

James 5:13-18 *Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises. Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.*

God has an unconditional will and a conditional will. The unconditional will of God are things that God will do regardless of whether we get involved or not. His conditional will are the things that God wants our participation in. Sometimes it is hard to know what God's will is.

James 4:2b-3 *You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.* The goal of prayer is to draw from heaven unto earth. We need to be willing to pray!

I Thessalonians 5:17 *Pray without ceasing.* So don't worry about whether His will is conditional or unconditional - just have constant communication with God. Prayer is a weapon for God. Prayer gives us access to what God wants to do. He is ready and willing to give as we ask.

Isaiah 65:24 *It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.*

James 5:13 *Is anyone among you suffering? Then he must pray. Is anyone cheerful? He is to sing praises.* No matter who you are, you are in one category or the other - prayer or praise. Pray without ceasing. Sharing prayer requests is a part of our relationships that God desires us to communicate struggles and joy with each other. The value of community is to pray for each other, especially when we are weary.

James 5:16 *Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.* We all have areas of our lives that need confession. Sometimes because of fear, pride, condemnation, or not knowing how, we suffer alone. If we confess, then we also need someone to pray. To receive breakthrough, James tells us to not carry the burden on our own but find a community that prays! What are you carrying alone?

James 5:17 *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.* Elijah was obedient to God in asking to stop the rain. God's judgment was conditional on the obedience of His people to communicate with Him. Prayer for one another and a confession of sins to each other brings breakthrough in our lives. We need to be conditioned to bring everything to God in prayer. Elijah's story is in **1 Kings 17**.

1 Kings 17:1 *Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."* **1 King 18:1** *Now it happened after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth."* **1 King 18:42-44** *So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees. He said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go back" seven times. It came about at the seventh time, that he said, "Behold, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea." And he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you.'" In a little while, the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. Then the hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel.*

Like Elijah, when God begins to do something, He renews us with His strength to accomplish those things.

When you pray, pray with His Word open before you. The Psalms are filled with prayers given to us. How long should we pray? God only gives three answers: yes, no, and wait. What do you do while you wait? You pray till you get a yes or a no. Pray without ceasing.

-Prayer is the acknowledgment of God's control and our surrender. What are you trying to control that needs to be given over to God?

-Have you prayed for a heart for prayer?

-What Psalm have you used for prayer?

-What burden are you carrying that needs the prayer of others?