The Secret Of Effective Prayer

James 5:16-18

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elijah 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. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

INTRODUCTION

What does it mean to confess your faults one to another? Does this mean that believers are to go around confessing all their sins in all their intimacies and ugliness?

No! This is not what this passage is talking about. It is referring to certain types of sins or to certain times when we are to confess our sins. We should confess our sin …

* when the sin has been a wrong or injustice done against someone else
* when we have misled or lied to someone
* when we have offended someone or caused someone to stumble and sin
* when restitution should be made
* when we have publicly committed some crime and public forgiveness is required
* when a trusted minister or Christian counselor may be able to help us in seeking repentance and restoration before God and man

Why should be confess one to another? So that we can pray for one another.

Have you ever had a prayer that was not answered?

Have you ever had a prayer that was not answered as expected or requested?

Do you have a prayer that you are still waiting on God to answer?

Is your prayer life or prayers effective? If the results of your prayer life are not resulting in a positive change in your life or situation, may you should consider evaluating the ineffectiveness of your prayers.

1. Five (5) Things That Will Cause Your Prayers To Be Ineffective.
2. Prayer with a wrong motive cannot be effective. We learn this from James 4:3, and how often we pray selfishly! Only prayer which is offered for the glory of God secures His ear and His answer.

* James 4:3, Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss (improperly), that ye may consume it upon your lusts.
* They focus on satisfying self-centered passions rather than honoring God and advancing his kingdom purposes.

1. If we know of sin in our lives, prayer cannot be effective. We learn this from Psalm 66:18. How easy it is to harbour sin! We need to pray the prayers that David prayed Psalm 139:23-24; Psalm 51:3-4, and act on 1 John 1:9.

* Psalm 66:18, If I regard (to see) iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me:
* The psalmist asserts that if he had been living an unrepentant, sinful life or desired sin, then God would not have heard him (Prov 28:9, He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination.). However, because he was innocent, God heard his cries and delivered him (Read Psa 17:3–7).

1. An unforgiving spirit will hinder prayer. We learn this from Mark 11:25-26. Is this a possible reason why our prayers for the conversion of our loved ones are not being answered?

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

1. An unwillingness to be reconciled to someone prevents prayer from being effective. We learn this from Matthew 5:23-24. It is of little use to pray, worship, go to meetings, or engage in God’s service and to expect His blessing, if we are unwilling first to be reconciled to another believer.

* Matthew 5:12-24, Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

1. A wrong relationship is a barrier in prayer. We learn this from 1 Peter 3:7. Perhaps our relationship with members of our own family is not all that it should be. According to this verse, that can be a hindrance to our prayers.

* 1 Peter 3:7, Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.
* Note from Global Study Bible: Peter’s advice to husbands is briefer, perhaps because they are less likely to be mistreated than bondservants and wives. The word likewise is a transition (compare v. 1; 5:5). It does not imply that husbands should submit to their wives the way that wives submit to them (see Eph. 5:21–33). To live . . . in an understanding way probably includes understanding the needs of the wife. Weaker vessel probably means that men are generally physically stronger than women and therefore they may be tempted to threaten their wives through physical or verbal abuse. heirs . . . of the grace of life. Peter does not think women are inferior to men, for both are equally made in God’s image (compare Gal. 3:28). If husbands do not treat their wives in a godly way, the Lord will pay no attention to their prayers.

1. There Is, However A King Of Prayer Which Is Always Effective.

James tells us that it is possible to pray and to succeed in gaining God’s gracious answer to our prayers. This is prayer that is “powerful and effective”, and James goes on to give us an illustration of what prayer can do (verses 17-18). If we want to discover the secret of effective prayer and of all that God is willing to do in answer to the prayers of His people, we need to look at Elijah, a man just like us, who proved the great power of prayer in an amazing way. As we look at Elijah, we should ask the question, ‘What can prayer do?’

1. Through prayer God’s servants are empowered to speak His word. We learn this from 1 Kings 17:1 (And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.) 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. It was prayer in private which made him powerful in public! When we turn to the New Testament we find the same truth clearly taught (Read Acts 4:29, 31-32). Effective prayer releases the power of the Holy Spirit, and by the power of the Holy Spirit God’s servants are made bold and courageous to speak for the Lord.

* Acts 4: 29, And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word,
* Acts 4:31-32, And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.

1. Through prayer God’s servants gain ample provision for all their needs. We see in 1 Kings 17 two great illustrations of this. First, God provided free accommodation for Elijah by the brook Kerith and fed him every day by means of ravens (1 Kings 17:2-6). Then, when the brook dried up (verse 7), God provided free accommodation at Zarephath, and he had all that he needed (1 Kings 17:8-16); compare Psalm 34:10 and Philippians 4:19.

* 1 Kings 17:2-6, And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.
* 1 Kings 17:7, And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.
* 1 Kings 17:8-16, And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spoke by Elijah.

1. (Through prayer God’s servants experience His miracle-working power. We learn this from 1 Kings 17:17-24. When we act in accordance with His will, God does truly great and mighty things in answer to the prayers of His people. (Also read Jeremiah 33:3, and compare Mark 11:22-24).

* 1 Kings 17:17-24, And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child’s soul come into him again. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.

1. Through prayer God’s servants can know victory over the Lords enemies. The whole of 1 Kings chapter 18 is worth very careful reading. How amazing! The false prophets were put to shame and afterwards put to death, and the Lord’s name was vindicated. Prayer today can drive back the powers of darkness and overcome God’s enemies the forces of materialism, the flood of obscenity, the spread of false religions (Read Isaiah 59:19).

* Isaiah 59:19, So shall they fear the name of the LORD from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him. (KJV)

1. Through prayer God’s servants are kept during times of testing and failure. 1 Kings 19 is also a great chapter. It tells us how tenderly the Lord dealt with His weary and failing servant and how graciously He restored and re-commissioned him. All this came about through prayer.

In conclusion

Notice the secret of effective prayer (James 5:16, Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.).

1. Prayer that is effective must be fervent and earnest; it must really come from the heart!
2. Prayer that is effective is that which is worked in by the Holy Spirit - Romans 8:26; Philippians 2:13; Jude 20.
3. Prayer that is effective must be offered by a righteous man – that is, by a man who is made righteous through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ