

17. The Hot Line

During the Cold War, between America and Soviet Russia, there was a special phone line connected between America and Soviet Russia to prevent some accidental misunderstanding would have resulted in World War III. This line was very busy during the Cuban Crisis in John F. Kennedy time. It also was busy when one of our U-2 spy airplane crashed into the Russian territory. So, that was the physical "Hot Line" between two super powers. But we have a different kind of HOT LINE as born-again Christians and our God. We call it PRAYER.

A. A FEW FACTS ABOUT PRAYER

1) **Prayer is not ritual** so that we pray for a few moment once in a while to keep the thing going between us and God. God forgave us for our sins because of His love, grace and mercy not because of our goodness or ritualistic prayers which don't mean a thing to God.

2) **Prayer is not mandatory** in Christian life. If we don't do this, God is not going to send us to hell. But we want to serve Him, love Him, so we want to get to know Him. One of the way to get to know Him is through prayer. God does not need our prayers to get the things done. He has power and ability to do whatever He wishes to do so.

3) **Prayer is not 911**. We should not call out God only when we are in tight corner, not because He doesn't hear our desperate cries to Him. He hears all. Our prayers should be more than that. Our prayers need to be a way of consistant communications between God and us.

Our prayers should be regular, day to day, hour to hour, moment to moment conversation with our Creator, Author and Finisher of our lives and faith. We need to talk to Him, not only to ask for what we need like most of people would think, but also we need to talk to Him so that we may know His heart and do His will and please Him and glorify Him.

B. THE RESULTS OF RIGHTEOUS MAN'S EFFECTIVE PRAYERS

In this portion of study, we are not going to go into the structure of prayer. I am sure that you heard how to pray to God for many times. Such as, Adoration and Praise, Asking forgiveness, Thanksgiving and Partition. But we are going to look into the results of righteous man's effective prayers.

James 5:13-15 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.

For us, it is quick to come to His Throne and cry out to Him for our needs. Nothing wrong with asking for what we need. When we go through the mountain top experiences, everything around us is going so smooth. That is good time to come to His Throne giving praises of thanksgiving to the One who provided all that wonderful things for us and for our loved ones.

It is right thing to come to God asking for His healing power to be manifested.

Unlikely some TV preachers' claim, God does not heal everyone who ask for healing.

2 Corinthians 12:9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Sometimes healing happens to those who don't have any faith at all contrary to those faith movement teachers' doctrines. Apostle Paul was the prime example in 2 Cor. 12:9. Joni Erickson Tada is another good example.

Yes, God has power to heal them instantly. But He sometimes chooses not to heal people for His glory. It is not your part or my part to figure out why. Many times, God uses His own miracles to show His awesome power, as well as actual medical interventions. When He chooses not to heal people, He gives courage and wisdom to those people to deal with their sickness and difficulties. It is not easy to watch those people whom we love and care about suffer through infirmity. But our God is sovereign God. He has infinite wisdom. I am sure that when we get to heaven we will know why He didn't do what He was asked.

C. ANOINTING WITH OIL

Using oil is one of the best-known ancient medicines. But here oil is used as an aid to faith, an outward sign of the healing to be brought about by God in response to "Prayer offered in faith".

Anointing with oil was for four diverse purposes:

1) Wounded people and animals were anointed for the soothing and curative effects of the oil (Psalms 23:5 and Luke 10:34-the story of Good Samaritan).

2) People anointed themselves with oil for its cosmetic value.
Psalms 104:15 And wine that makes glad the heart of man, Oil to make his face shine, And bread which strengthens man's heart.

3) Most notably men were anointed as an official inauguration into high office. Priests (Ex 28:41, 29:7), prophets, and kings (1 Kings 19:15 & 16) and were called 'messiahs.'

4) Anointing the head of a guest with oil was a mark of high courtesy (Luke 7:46).

Another important thing in v. 14, the Bible is not telling us that the elders of the church have power to forgive somebody's sins. The elders or anyone in human form other than Jesus Christ do not have the power of forgiveness, only God does. James doesn't mean that because of the elders' prayer, people's sins have been forgiven. It is people's broken hearts and their confessions brought their sins to the feet of Almighty God. It is not oil or the elders of the church that heal people's sickness, but it is God who heals because His people ask for His healing power through the release of faith in prayers.

D. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SICKNESS AND SIN

All the sickness come from man's sins directly or indirectly. When Adam & Eve fell into their sins, they inherited this earth where it has sickness. When a man goes out to a bar and pick up a girl. He has sex with her and gets sexual disease. That is direct result of sin. God won't heal our sicknesses or grant our prayer requests unless our hearts are broken in front of Him and confess our sins to Him.

James 5:16-18 Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails 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 land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

True strength in Christian life lie in the relationship with God through disciplined prayers and Bible reading daily. Whenever we hide sinful secrets in our hearts and feed them with more ungodly thought and actions, we are pushing ourselves further from God. But when we become honest to our God, ourselves and to godly people whom we can be accountable, we are reducing chance of possible sins. We need to starve our flesh from ungodly things, and feed our spirit with the Word of God.

We often forget the power of prayers in Jesus' name according to His will. Here is the result of Elijah's fervent prayers (1 Kings 17:1 & 18:41-46).

1 Kings 17:1 And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."

1 Kings 18:41-46 Then Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain." So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked, and said, "There is nothing." And seven times he said, "Go again." Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, "There is a cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea!" So he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.'" Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel. Then the hand of the Lord came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Again, it is not us nor our prayers make the difference, but it is our God who does.

James 5:19-20 Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

Here we can go on with that famous 'ETERNAL SALVATION, IS IT SECURE?' argument. It is an argument. Nothing more and nothing less! Why do we want to find it out? To show off how much Bible knowledge we have in comparison with others? Or to push God as much as we can and still want to go to heaven? Let's stick with Jesus, then we don't have to worry about it.

E. APPLICATIONS

1) It's God who make the difference through our prayers.

Let's remember our God changes our hearts and attitudes while we fervently seek Him even though the circumstances may not change.

2) We don't need to seek a special person to pray for us.

We all have the same access to the Throne of Grace through Jesus. No one is superior or inferior in the presence of God.

3) Before we come to the Lord in prayers, we must turn from our sins and repent.

Otherwise, our prayers will not be heard by the Lord.