

The Power Of Prayer
Summary of James 5 Sermon
By Dr. Tony Evans
The Urban Alternative

Tony Evans says Christians have a habit of overlooking our most valuable spiritual resource – Prayer. Prayer is the most misunderstood and neglected aspect of the Christian life. If you want to read the thermometer of your spiritual life, look at the thermostat setting on your prayer life. God has so constructed the world, He has so wired the world that He has said there are many things He will not do in the life of a Christian apart from prayer.

First of all, let's look at **The Priority of Prayer** (v13). "If anyone among you is suffering, let him pray" this instead of complaining (v9) and instead of swearing and cursing and making false oaths (v12) open your mouth but not for those purposes. If you are going through affliction, let him pray. When you are going through affliction, prayer should be first, it should be a knee-jerk reaction.

What is prayer? Prayer is simply intimate communication with God. When you pray, you are gaining access to grace. This is a foundational start and why you should prioritize prayer. Praying does not necessarily mean the problem will go away, because the problem will not go away until God has finished teaching you the lesson that the problem was designed to teach you. Praying will give you the grace of God to help you deal with the problem you have encountered. Heb 4 tells us "God is waiting for us to come to the throne which dispenses grace."

When Paul asked for God to take away the thorn from his flesh, God basically said "I have a lesson to teach you Paul, in humility, because of the great privileges I am giving you, therefore I'm not going to take away the thorn even though it is sticking you, but My grace is sufficient. What I will dispense to you is the divine energy necessary to deal with the affliction I have you in until such time I decide to remove it. Many of us are mad at God for not removing it, but we have not utilized the grace he has given us to deal with it. Grace is available but only at the throne and you can only approach the throne through prayer. (James 4:6) He gives more grace if you will humble yourself and pray.

Also (v13) when things are going well for us, no suffering or trials, we are to sing praises. If things are going well and there is no trauma and things are smooth right now, praise Him because if He sends affliction to develop you, that's God and if He sends deliverance to deliver you, that's God. So whether you are afflicted or whether you are cheerful, it's all God. And since it is all God, you ought to be praying or praising. Therefore you ought to be in touch with God all the time. Maintain ongoing touch with God. If you are always praying or praising then either way you

are talking to God everyday of your life. Even Paul and Silas while shackled, as innocent people in prison, they prayed and sang praises.

Why don't you pray more? We want to pray, but we don't plan to pray. If we don't plan to pray, Satan will keep us busy enough to keep us from taking time to pray. Satan does not want you praying as a lifestyle. He doesn't mind a little quickie prayer at dinner, "Lord bless this food to my body in Jesus name, Amen," or that baby stuff at night which kids recite every night "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep, if I die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." Satan doesn't mind these prayers, because when you just recite repetitious prayer, Satan knows that you haven't really said a thing. What he doesn't want you to do is cultivate a lifestyle of prayer where you have intimate communication with God. Spontaneous prayer is OK, but also plan to pray.

Secondly, **The People of Prayer** (v14). The Greek word for "sick" can mean anything which weakens you. So if the suffering which you are enduring is beginning to weaken you (make you sick), then you are going to need support – help – so you should call the elders of the church – the spiritual leaders. If you feel your prayers are not being answered, you may need help. Therefore if you are weakened by your circumstances, then you need spiritual help. The spiritual leaders are to pray over you to lift you up and anoint you with oil. This oil in Greek times was used to refresh and groom people. Oil also helped heal wounds physically. So anointing with oil means to help lift people up physically, emotionally and spiritually to help relieve your weakness. Physically anointing someone's head with oil is also a symbol of God being with them. Churches should also have practical ministries which help people with their weaknesses.

When David said God anointed his head with oil, he meant that God encouraged David in the midst of his suffering. So the elders of the church are to pray for a believer's weaknesses, but also they are to bring practical assistance and encouragement from the church that they represent to the believer who needs the help. The church should be a place where people can get help through the prayers of other believers.

Sincere fervent prayer should be done in the Name of the Lord Jesus. What does "the Name of the Lord" mean? It means we are to plug into Jesus' authority which gives us access to heaven. It is identifying with Jesus – what He would do – His will. It is because of Jesus that we can get grace and access to the throne. It is our attachment to Jesus that will give answers to our prayers. When you don't pray and try to fix the problem on your own, you are not using the power which is available to take care of your problem. The name of Jesus means you have access to a power bigger than your ability to do it on your own.

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Summary of Matthew 6:13 Sermon
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This sermon covers the main points, and especially the last verse, to what we call “The Lord’s Prayer.” “... for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.” How should we end our prayers to God? Dr. Evans said that Jesus said when you finish praying, when you’ve gone through the process of prayer, when you recognize **the Paternity of Prayer** – that God is your Father, when you recognize that it is His kingdom that matters first and foremost, when you’ve gotten **the Priority & Program of Prayer** straight so that it is His will and not your will, when you are looking to Him for **the Provision of Prayer** – give me this day my daily bread, when you’ve looked to God and sought God for **The Pardon of Prayer** as you grant that same grace to others, when you go to God for **the Protection of Prayer** looking to Him to guide your paths as you face the challenges of life and it’s time to say *amen*, don’t say *amen* too quickly. What Jesus does at the end of His prayers is what we should do – He offers a doxology. A doxology is an utterance of praises, but it is different than regular praise. It is the kind of praise we give when someone hits the winning basket with one tenth of a second left on the clock. It still only counts two points, but it is different than all the two points made all game long. A doxology is like a volcanic eruption in the soul; it is where it shakes you up and you can’t keep it to yourself.

We should give a lot more praise to God than we give to a ball player. For we have seen God come through when all hope is lost. We’ve seen miracles performed in our lives. And when it comes to getting excited about someone making a winning shot, that is nothing compared to God making the universe and earth and all that is in them and sustaining them and controlling His creation as He wills. We have a lot to be excited about and we should shout with praise to God like we shout in excitement over the winning shot. Prayer ought to be an experience that bubbles up inside us. A doxology is when it gets too good for you and you can’t keep it to yourself – you have to let out your enthusiasm occasionally. We know we are winners because of God and what He has done and is doing for us. So praise God enthusiastically for what He and only He has done, is doing and will do in your life.