***The Effective, Earnest Prayer of the Righteous Avails Much***

1. introduction
   1. James’ main principle on prayer is that the earnest prayer of a righteous person avails much.

15And the prayer of faith will save [heal] the sick, and the Lord will raise him up…  
16Confess 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. 17Elijah…prayed earnestly… (Jas. 5:15-17)

* + 1. ***Prayer of faith***: includes prayer with confidence in the *authority of Jesus* over sickness and the works of darkness, in the *blood of Jesus* to qualify weak people to be vessels to release His power. and in *His desire* to bless His people*—*to heal, deliver, and empower.
    2. ***Confess your trespasses***: speaks of believers in strong relationships—such that they open their heart in confession of their faults and invest time to pray for one another.
  1. ***Effective prayer***: is prayer that is in agreement with God’s will and offered in faith (confidence) and in commitment to the family of God. The context of effective prayer is strong relationships.

14…if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. (1 Jn. 5:14)

* 1. ***Fervent or earnest prayer***: is prayer that is persistent and engaged with God from our heart (Mt. 7:7-8; Lk. 11:5-10; 18:1, 7). The word *earnestly* inverse 17 is inserted into the NKJV text as *fervency* in verse 16. The word *earnestly* is only found in verse 17, and does not actually appear in the Greek manuscripts in verse 16. The Greek word *proseuch* (translated *earnestly* in verse 17) literally means “he prayed with prayer”—it is an idiom that expresses persistence in prayer.
     1. Jesus’ taught a parable about the Father’s willingness to answer prayer (Lk. 11:5-10). Jesus called us to ask and keep on asking, and to seek and keep on seeking (v. 9). The verbs are in the present continuous tense, indicating that we are to do this consistently.

8…because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs. 9“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find…” (Lk. 11:8-9)

* + 1. We do not *earn* answers to prayers by our persistence or obedience. Prayer is not about informing or persuading God, but about connecting with Him in relationship. Paul called us to pray with all perseverance (Eph. 6:18). When we ask casually, with little focus or effort, it shows that we do not greatly value what we are praying for. When we highly prize something, we will search for it with all our heart (Jer. 29:13).
    2. Do not disregard your prayers because they are not offered with intense expressions of emotion or physical energy. Passionate fervent prayer is mostly about being persistent and engaged with God, not about the style of delivery. Some conclude that they lack the necessary “passion” for God to answer them, because they compare their *prayer style* to those who pray with great energy on a microphone. I guess that 99% of my prayer life is not on a microphone. Most of my prayers are offered to God as whispers from my heart.   
       I urge you to not conclude that earnest prayers are only those offered with great energy.
  1. ***A righteous person***: is one who sets his heart to obey God. We must seek to live in agreement with His heart and character. What we do or neglect to do affects our prayer life (1 Jn. 3:22). Prayer is no substitute for obedience. Sin hinders our love for Him. Jesus connected our prayer life and love for God to our pursuit to obey and see God glorified in our life (Jn. 14:13-24).

22And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. (1 Jn. 3:22)

13Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified…14If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. 15If you love Me, keep My commandments. (Jn. 14:13-15)

2…your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. (Isa. 59:2)

7Husbands…dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife…that your prayers may not be hindered. (1 Pet. 3:7)

* 1. Elijah was a weak man with a nature like ours. He was prone to discouragement and the same temptations we face; yet his prayer life was effective (1 Kgs. 17-19). If God used a weak man like Elijah to heal a nation, how much more will He use weak people to heal individuals (Jas. 5:15)?

17Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain…for three years and six months. 18And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain… (Jas. 5:17–18)

* 1. ***Summary***:Prayer is agreeing with *God’s will or purpose*; being righteous is agreeing with *God’s character*; and being fervent is agreeing with *God’s priorities* with urgency, and is demonstrated by our persistence.

1. prayer that Avails much
   1. James assures us that our prayer avails, accomplishes, much—in this age and in the age to come. We cannot fully measure the effectiveness of prayer in impacting our heart, others, or the nations.

16The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (Jas. 5:16)

* 1. Every prayer that is prayed in accordance with God’s will is stored in bowls by the throne (Rev. 5:8; 8:1-6). Our prayers remain effective, or *alive*, in God’s sight long after this life.

8…the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (Rev. 5:8)

3He [angel] was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. (Rev. 8:3)

* 1. God never forgets anything that we do in obedience to His will and out of love for Him. The Lord would consider it injustice if He forgot even one act of love done for Him in ministering to the saints, and this includes our prayers. He does not forget our prayers that are offered in love.

10For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. (Heb. 6:10)

* 1. An angel told Cornelius that his prayers and financial giving would be remembered forever.

4He [angel] said…“Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God. (Acts 10:4)

* 1. None of our prayers are wasted—He sees them according to the riches of glory (Eph. 1:18; 3:16). The glory of our life in Christ is *hidden* from our eyes in this age, but will become evident to us and others when Jesus appears at His second coming (Col. 3:3-4).

18…that you may know…what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints… (Eph. 1:18)

3…your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (Col. 3:3-4)

* 1. Prayer for others always results in multiplied blessings on the life and family of the one praying. The law of the kingdom requires that we receive more than we give in faith (Lk. 6:38). This principle applies to all that we do, not just to finances. The measure we give in prayer for others is the measure that we will receive back. We can never, ever out-give God. He is so generous, and possesses infinite riches. We receive a 100-fold return from Him (Mk. 10:30).

38Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down…will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you. (Lk. 6:38)

* + 1. Through intercession we have an *inheritance* in the people and places we pray for—it begins in this age and continues in the age to come.
    2. People in the age to come will remember the love (money and prayer, etc.) that you gave them, and they will invite you into their homes (Lk. 16:9).

9I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. (Lk. 16:9; NIV)

* + 1. The people whom Paul served will remember his labor for them in the age to come.

19What is our…crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? 20For you are our glory and joy. (1 Thes. 2:19-20)

* + 1. We ourselves receive blessing when we pray for our enemies, e.g., when we pray for the spirit of revelation for someone, we too become the recipient of that prayer.

44I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you… (Mt. 5:44)

* + 1. There is great continuity between what we do now and what happens in the age to come. Many verses on eternal rewards support this truth. Eternal rewards are Jesus expressing how He feels about the way we love and obey Him in this age. Our prayers for cities and nations also have an impact in the age to come and contribute to Jesus’ possession of nations. We reign with Him over the nations in the age to come (Rev. 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6).

8Ask of Me [prayer], and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance… (Ps. 2:8)

1. Principles of prayer
   1. God calls us to offer ***holy, believing, persevering prayer*** that flows from our relationship in His family. Many of His promised blessings are invitations, not guarantees, and are released by prayer.
   2. A foundational principle of the kingdom is that God releases more blessing if we ask for it. This means verbalizing our prayers, not just thinking them (it helps us control our thoughts in prayer).

2Yet you do not have because you do not ask. (Jas. 4:2)

* 1. God knows all our needs (Mt. 6:32), but still requires that we ask Him for them—asking causes us to connect with His heart, and to associate specific blessings from God as His answer to our specific prayers. It causes us to know that what we say moves His heart—it matters to Him.

6In everything by prayer…let your requests be made known to God… (Phil. 4:6)

* 1. There are blessings that God has chosen to give, but *only* as His people ask Him in faith. It is easy to *think* of our need without actually verbalizing it, but the Bible makes it clear that we have *to say it*. We can whisper it, mutter it, or even groan it—these are all forms of asking. God protects His relationship with us by not answering our needs until we ask Him for them.

18The Lord will wait, that He may be gracious to you...19He will be very gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. (Isa. 30:18-19)

* 1. ***The value of 90-second prayers***:Short prayers are effective. Even 90-second prayers matter and can connect our heart with God and release the answer to us. Do not put off praying until you have an hour to pray. Even while we are rushing to an appointment, waiting at a stop light, or standing in line at a store we can offer 90 second prayers that will make a difference in your life.
  2. ***The value of “unanointed” prayers***:Some assume that if they do not feel anything when praying, then God does not feel anything either. They conclude that such prayers are ineffective. The good news is that though we offer our prayers in weakness, they ascend to God in power because of the sufficiency of the blood of Jesus and because they are in agreement with God’s heart. Instead of measuring the effectiveness of our prayers by the emotions that we feel when we pray, we must measure them by what God says about them in His Word.
  3. ***The value of poorly worded prayers***:God values our prayers even when we do not say them in just the right way. Some assume that they must have perfect theology and terminology when praying, but we come to the throne of grace, not the throne of literary accuracy (Heb. 4:16). The Lord hears the groan of the prisoner, not just the prayers of eloquent Bible scholars (Ps. 102:20).

16Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb 4:16)

* 1. ***Summary***: Prayer is God’s brilliant strategy to include the saints in ruling with Him in power. It also impacts us greatly: draws us into intimacy with Him, protects with humility, anoints with power, transforms with holiness, unifies in community, releases revelation, increases our inheritance, and trains us to rule with His wisdom.