



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 474

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.”*

Prayer works! That's the point James is driving at. Throughout the book of James the subject of prayer is addressed. Often it's negative. He tells them earlier that they do not receive because they pray with the wrong motives. **(4:3)** Other times he tells them that prayer fails because they don't believe. **(1:6)** But here, James takes on the positive aspect of prayer.

The King James Version uses the expression "fervent" prayer. I like that. It's the same word for hot or fever. He is describing passionate praying. Not just mumbling some words, not repeating the same lifeless expressions, but praying that is intense, focused and heart felt. James is not addresses public prayers-although they ought to be fervent as well. He is talking about private prayers. It is interesting that the prayer follows the confessing of sins to one another. This is the natural process of things spiritually. When one has acknowledge wrong, he ought to seek forgiveness, first from God and then from others. Prayer is that avenue. James says to "pray for one another."

Pray for forgiveness. Pray for a restored relationship. Pray that the relationships can be repaired that have been ripped apart by sin. Pray for patience and kindness.

Following our verse, James tells of the prayers of Elijah. His prayers to God affected the nation as God withheld rain and then later, after another prayer, it poured rain on the earth. Elijah is the footnote, the proof that prayer works.

Prayer is one of those special spiritual tools that we always have with us. We can't always have our Bibles with us. We can't always have each other with us. But we can always pray. There are times, such as in meetings, or sitting on a table awaiting the surgeon, or stuck in traffic when we can pray. Pray is the roadway by which we can thank God for His care, mercies and blessings. Prayer can be the means to open doors that seem to be closed. Prayer can be the process in which we volunteer for God to use us in His service. Isaiah said, "Here am I, send me." **(Isa. 6:8)** Prayer is the means in which we can say the same to God.

Praying for one another, that's a big thing to do. The larger the congregation, the more you have to

pray for. The more friends you have, the more people you have to pray for. Family members, church members, co-workers, friends, neighbors-those going through tough times, those who are sick, those who are not Christians, those who are doubting-the list is long.

Paul did this, often. He prays for congregations. He names people at the end of his letters that he prays for.

There is something special about all of this. This is more than a duty we ought to do...more than a task that has to be done...it is simply special to take someone's name and lift it up to the throne of Heaven. There is no greater help than from God. There is no greater love than God's. When all seems impossible, don't forget God.

Have you ever prayed for strangers? It's harder to do, simply because you don't know much about them, sometimes even their names. For instance, you are sitting in a restaurant, and the busy waitress, who keeps your glass of tea filled and brings your food, say a pray for her. Or, how about the person at the check out counter at the store. They can seem bored and simply doing their job, how about a prayer for that person. How about the nurse who helps you get ready for your tests and scans...how about the guy who changes the oil in your car...how about the bus driver who takes your kids to school each day...how about the legendary football coach who was fired...or the senator you read about in the paper...or the guy who writes Jump Starts.

Expand your prayers. As Jesus told the disciples, "lift up your eyes and look upon the fields..."

Everybody needs prayers. We need God. Once you start thinking this way, everyone you see, you think about saying a prayer. You become as some call it a "Prayer warrior." Now understand, prayer isn't the end of my obligation nor responsibilities. Praying alone will not save souls. Praying alone will not raise my kids. Without praying, it's an uphill battle for sure, but after I have said, "amen," I need to get about doing what God wants me to do in those areas.

Pray for one another. We need that. We need each other. Through prayer, we are connected, to God and to each other.

Roger Shouse

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