



## **Monday, May 6, 2024 - Pray for One Another**

### **James 5:16**

*Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*

One of the most powerful and encouraging things you can do for someone is to pray for them. Possibly the most powerful and encouraging thing you can do for someone is to pray with them. We know how powerful prayer is in our own lives. Likewise, we know how encouraging it is when someone says they are praying for us. Adding to that, we know perfectly well what an encouragement it is when someone prays with us. As followers of Jesus, we are called to be intercessors for one another. Let's explore that a little more from James' epistle.

James includes two critical actions for believers here regarding prayer. The first is confession. This usually makes us very uncomfortable. We rarely like to acknowledge our sins to ourselves, much less tell them to someone else. But notice the purpose behind confession - so that we can pray for one another. Until this level of vulnerability and accountability occurs in Christian relationships, the church will lack the power necessary to win the world to Christ. According to James, there is a certain level of healing that occurs through confession and intercession. One thing we know for sure about everyone else, and ourselves, is that we are all sinners. Not a day goes by that sin is not lurking at the door of your life. And there are often instances where sin wins the battle. Knowing this about ourselves and others, then, should make it easier for us to confess our sins and struggles to trusted brothers or sisters in Christ. We tell them so that they can join us against the battle of sin that rages in the life of every believer. So long as you are in the flesh, you will have some sort of struggle with sin. Notice that last part of this verse. There is great power in the prayers of the righteous. The basis for this verse is that there is power in the prayer of every born again believer and follower of Jesus. Through Him we are made righteous, and as such, it unleashes the power of heaven in the prayer life of the believers.

Who is someone or a group of someones whom you trust to share your struggles and sin with? Why do you trust them to pray for you? If you do not have a group like this, then who would you consider being a part of a group like this? At the same time, would you be willing to serve for someone else in the same way? Give serious prayer, thought, and consideration to encircling yourself with some righteous men (if you're a man) or women (if you're a woman) to help intercede for you and hold you accountable.

## **Tuesday, May 7, 2024 - Whatever**

### **Philippians 4:6-7**

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just,*

*whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*

Whatever is mostly used as a throw-away word in our culture today. We flippantly flip it out in situations where we know we are not getting our way. It is also another way of being non-committal in certain situations. However, when we read it in the context of today's passage, whatever takes on a much greater and deeper meaning. Let's see why whatever is a meaningful word when it comes to the life of a believer.

Paul wants to ensure that the Philippians have the right mind about them. He knows that as the mind is renewed by Christ, it will be reflected in the life of the Christ follower. To that end, Paul calls upon the Philippian believers to think about things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and praise worthy. When we consider that list of topics, it really provides us with a set of filters through which to move our thoughts. Your thoughts are powerful. In some ways they can make or break your day. In other ways they can make or break your relationships. Taking Paul's words and changing them to a set of questions is powerful. When a thought enters your mind, begin to ask this regarding the thought - Is it true? Is it honorable? Is it just/right? Is it pure? Is it lovely? Is it commendable? Does it lead me toward excellence? Does it cause me to praise the Lord? By simply employing this list of questions, and taking every thought captive (2 Corinthians 10:5), we take on the mind of Christ. As our mind becomes oriented toward Christ more and more, thought by thought, so will our lives follow. Filter your thoughts through the word of God and see how dramatically your life changes for the glory of God.

When it comes to your thoughts, are they mostly positive or negative? Why do you think that is? How do you think employing Philippians 4:8 as a filter to your thoughts can improve your life and relationship with God and others? Take some time to begin disciplining yourself to utilize this verse as a thought filter.

**Wednesday, May 8, 2024 - The God of Peace**

### **Philippians 4:6-7**

*6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

I think we can all agree that we are in need of peace. We need peace personally. There seems to be increasing amounts of internal conflicts that peel peace out of our lives. There is a need for peace among fellow believers. Sadly the church is better known for what it's against or who it's against than what it is for. There is certainly a need for peace on the national and global scale. All of the endeavors of humanity that strive for peace fall short for peace is only found in one place, better yet, one person - the Lord.

We are back in Philippians 4. In fact we are just a couple of verses back from where we were yesterday. Take a moment to consider the impact these verses have. Paul is encouraging the people toward peace. He

describes their position first, in that peace is not found in our anxious moments. To combat that, Paul calls the people out of anxious moments and to prayer, specifically, prayer for one's self coupled with thanksgiving. It's hard to be anxious when you are giving thanks to God. Notice the result - the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds. When we begin to feel anxious or worry about something, that serves as a warning that we have taken a hold of something that is squarely in God's hands and control. As we recognize all that God has already done for us, we find that worry and anxious thoughts melt away. Why is that? As God has been faithful, so will He be faithful again. The peace of God is not beyond our comprehension but it is beyond our explanation. When God's peace comes upon you it sets a guard over your mind and your heart, preventing worrisome or anxious thoughts from entering into a place where they are not welcome.

What are you anxious or worried about today? How do you see God at work in that situation? How is God at work in your life as it pertains to that specific area? How have you seen God work in the past in this situation? How are you trusting God to work this situation out now? Keep in mind that God is always at work and invites you to work with Him. As you rest and rely upon Him, He makes His plans and purposes known fullwell to you.

## **Thursday, May 9, 2024 - God's Will**

### **I John 2:15-17**

*15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

Every true believer and follower of Jesus wants to do the will of God. To the average believer, though, God's will is a mystery. In general, God's will is that He be glorified by those who profess faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. This is God's general will. There is also a specific will for each individual believer. Keep in mind that His specific will for your life will always be aligned with His general will for you.

John makes a clear distinction between those who love the Lord and those who love the world. He is very clear - the Father does not dwell in the life of the one who loves the world or the things of the world. John prohibits the love of the world or the things of the world for the believer. He is simply building upon what Jesus has already established in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:24). As followers of Jesus, we have been called into an abiding relationship with Him (see John 15:1-17). As we abide in a relationship with God through Jesus, the things of this world no longer have an appeal to you. Rather, God removes the desires for worldly things and replaces them with a desire for godly things. Think of it this way - worldly things are like empty calories. They taste good in the moment, but they do nothing to nourish your body. So it is with worldly things - they are enjoyable for the moment, but they do nothing to truly feed your soul. Notice the last phrase of verse 17 - whoever does the will of the Father abides forever. When you seek to and strive to bring glory and honor to God in and through

every aspect of your life, you discover the joy of the abiding relationship with God.

Would you say you are seeking after the desires of this world or the Lord? Why is that? What, if anything, needs to change? How have you found enjoyment and pleasure in your abiding relationship with God? Use the past pleasure of your abiding relationship with God to fuel the future of your relationship with Him.

## **Friday, May 10, 2024 - Grace and Peace**

### **2 Peter 1:2**

*May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*

It is amazing the connection that exists between grace and peace in the New Testament. In nearly every single one of Paul's letters, these two words are found in the opening salutation, whether it be to a church or to a person. These are definitely two things we need as believers and followers of Jesus - grace and peace. As we will see today from Peter's writing, there is an inseparable relationship between grace and peace.

In essence, Peter is praying for believers. He is calling upon the Lord to multiply grace and peace among them. For the time in which Peter was writing, this was a needed prayer (just as it is today). Where there is grace, there will be peace. Where the grace of the Lord is, His peace is right there as well. When you come under the grace of God's salvation, His peace rushes upon you simultaneously. There are many who have testified to the feeling of weight being lifted from them at the moment of confession and repentance. Peace that comes with grace. These two are multiplied through a growing knowledge and understanding of the Godhead. Peace comes with the presence of the Holy Spirit as we grow in our understanding of the Father and the Son. Grace and peace multiply in the knowledge of God. To apply this, the more you encounter the Lord (think biblical engagement, prayer, worship, etc.) the more peace will be multiplied to you. The reason is that our understanding of the breadth of God's grace becomes apparent to us, which ushers in greater peace. When you are in need of great peace, remember and relax into God's great grace.

Take some time today and reflect upon the ways you have encountered God's grace to you. Give thanks to God for His generous grace. If there is anything that is causing a disruption in your peace, go to the Lord and ask Him to give guidance for how to address the situation that you may have peace.

\*This week's devotions were prepared for you by Troy Allen.