

We should count ourselves happy the day we discover a new fault in our life or character—not happy because the fault is there, but because we have discovered it that we may rid ourselves of it. —J.R. Miller

## The Baptist Catechism (Keach’s Catechism)

1677

*(Presented here as originally published – this does not constitute a full endorsement of the Riverside Baptist Church)*

Q. 114. What do we pray for in the third petition?

A. In the third petition, which is, “Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven,” we pray that God by His grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to His will in all things, as the angels do in heaven.

(Matt. 6:10; Ps. 103:20-21; Ps. 25:4-5; Ps. 119:26)

Q. 115. What do we pray for in the fourth petition?

A. In the fourth petition, which is, “Give us this day our daily bread,” we pray that of God's free gift, we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life and enjoy His blessing with them.

(Matt. 6:11; Prov. 30:8-9; 1 Tim. 6:6-8; 4:4,5)

### THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

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WXTH-LP 101.7 FM— In Richwood

#### Services:

Sunday Morning Bible Study -- 10:00 AM

Sunday Morning Worship -- 11:00 AM

Prayer and Bible Study Wednesday Evening 6:30 PM

WCWV 92.9 FM – 8:00 AM Sunday Morning

# THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST REPORT

## THE RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH

“The Pillar and ground of the Truth” -- 1 Timothy 3:15

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### EFFECTUAL FERVENT PRAYER

*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. (James 5:16-18)*

With reference to the weather, it is often said that “everybody talks about it, but nobody does anything about it.” Perhaps we might apply the same thing to the matter of prayer. There are many wonderful books dealing with the matter of prayer. Very early on I was blessed to obtain an old copy of Matthew Henry’s *A Method for Prayer*. In more recent years I have profited much by reading *Praying the Bible*, by Donald Whitney. I have profited much by reading the prayers of other men (especially the Puritans) such as *The Valley of Vision*. But I continue to be challenged by the words of this text and am made to wonder as to what is “effectual fervent prayer?” I must ask, am I engaging in it?

There is no righteousness except that of Christ and that which a man may be said to have must, of necessity, find its derivation in Christ and no other. Such is required to be both fervent and effectual. And so, we are first met with an essential qualification. To understand that qualification we would ask, what is effectual fervent prayer? Is it effectual because it is fervent; or is it the reverse of that; or is it to be taken as one thought? According to Strong’s dictionary these two words are translated from one word. Perhaps the aim of the translator here was to show the intensity demanded here.

John Gill describes it as having “...power, and energy, and life in it; which is with the Spirit, and with the understanding, with the heart, even with a true heart, and in faith; and which is put up with fervency, and not in a cold, lukewarm, lifeless, formal, and customary way...” He further adds that some would see it as daily and at the least continual and with importunity. It is this prayer that prevails and succeeds.

But then we come to the issue with the one praying as such. Here we encounter difficulty (at least I do) in the matter of searching out and confessing sin. True believers are sensitive to overt sin in their lives and will quickly address it in repentance toward God. James may very well have the strictest of perspectives in view here: *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: (Psalms 66:18)*. We would be reminded of David’s plea: *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalms 139:23-24)*. The issue is not whether we sin; it is rather how we deal with the matter in coming before the Lord. It is to be suspected that we are to a great extent unaware of our sin and need to be more conscious and so plead the blood of Christ Jesus our Lord.

We do well here to look back at the preceding three verses: *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? 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 shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.* (James 5:13-15). James encouraged a spiritual response to each of several situations. He addresses the matter of affliction or hardship. He is to pray. How easy it is to become caught up with prosperity and celebrate with no thought to the source of success. Paul had to learn to prosper. The singing of hymns in praise to the Lord is in order at such times. But then we come to the matter of prayer for the sick. There are many things that raise questions about this circumstance. But the one thing we do not lose sight of is the fact that the promise is recorded that such prayer would save the sick, that the Lord would raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they would be forgiven. Have we allowed the faith healers who have made a mockery of the Gospel scare us away from passages such as this? In any event, the matter of “effectual fervent prayer” follows this exhortation.

We are pointed here to the example of Elijah. We are familiar with the narrative of the prophet praying and stopping the rain for three and a half years. We actually learn more about the praying of Elijah here than in the Old Testament account. James would characterize the prayer of Elijah as being an effectual fervent

prayer. We delight in the attendance of the Lord with Elijah through it all. We read here that he prayed earnestly that it might not rain. The KJV margin is enlightening as we consider this text. Another rendering might be that “he prayed in his prayer.” The implication here is that we might understand a more desperate and importunate praying. Often our prayers are woefully superficial. Here the indication is that the prophet moved more deeply into the matter of his prayer. In any event his praying is above and beyond the typical concepts of praying.

As the display of the sovereignty of the Lord on Mount Carmel ended, the sacrifice having been consumed, he prayed again. This time we note the fervency as he prays until a small cloud appears and then directs his servant to take the message to Ahab that the rain is coming. In the same sentence James adds that “the earth bore its fruit.” Are we missing something here? Have we dismissed the fact that the Lord has not changed? Have our prayers for the sick degenerated into mere well-wishing ordered up in the presence of the Lord? How desperate are we in the matters of the sick and other issues that face us today?

Elijah prayed for rain and the earth responded to the blessing. Shall we not pray for “showers of blessing” with the thought of much fruit being born unto the Lord? If the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, should we be satisfied with so little? The challenge of James is that we should seek “the sound of abundance of rain.” O that our prayers might become more fervent and more effectual.

*bhs*

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"I aim to speak plain truths to a plain people! May it please the God of all grace, to accompany my feeble endeavors to promote the knowledge of His truth! If my letters are owned to comfort the afflicted, to quicken the careless, to confirm the wavering — I will rejoice." John Newton

The primary work of Christ in redemption is to justify, sanctify, and ultimately to glorify a company of persons salvaged from the ruin of the human race. For the convenience of any who may not be familiar with the words used here, I would explain that justify means to declare righteous before God, sanctify means to make holy, and glorify means in effect to remake the entire personality after the image of Christ. This will fit us to dwell eternally in that heaven about which the Bible speaks and which is both a state of being and a location. In that heaven, the ransomed will experience unclouded communion with the Triune God; and that will itself assure unalloyed blessedness. --A. W. Tozer

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How are we to think about these two realities? What difference does it make that God is both mighty and merciful, both powerful and gentle? All the difference in the world. It means he is able to deliver us from all our difficulties and sins, and it means he enjoys delivering us. If he were mighty but not merciful, he could save us but would not. If he were merciful but not mighty, he would like to save us but could not. And in Jesus, we see these two realities of who God is merge beautifully. Jesus is both lion and lamb, both omnipotent and gracious. He can be trusted. We can bank everything on him. He can rescue you, and he wants to.

--Dane C. Ortlund, *In The Lord I Take Refuge*

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This is what damns men! --("The Vanity of the World!" Ezekiel Hopkins, 1663)

"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?  
Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:26

What senseless folly it is to purchase a vain and fleeting world, with the loss of our precious eternal souls!

Oh, think what great losers they must be, who lose their souls to gain this poor world; and must at last lose the world too, together with their souls!

This is what damns men: they prefer the pleasures, honors, profits, and pitiful nothings of the world--before their precious and immortal souls, which are worth more than ten thousand worlds!

Think how dreadful and tormenting will be the reflections of worldlings in Hell, to consider that there they must lie and burn to eternity for their inordinate love to that world, of which they have nothing left to them, besides the bitter remembrance! What will it then avail them, that they have lived here in ease and delights--when all their mirth shall be turned into groans and howlings? What will the remembrance of all their earthly treasures and riches then avail them, but to increase their torment?