

“Steadfast Part 12: The Power of a Confessing Community” (4-23-23)

Series Overview: We are called to be Steadfast (endure) which produces Maturity and Wholeness

Review: Final week of series, and Part 2 of a mini-series about a powerful & effective community

Introduction: James closes his letter on steadfast endurance towards maturity in Christ, he encourage us . . .

There is great power in a prayerful, caring community of faith that promotes righteousness!

James 5:15-20 (ESV)

(15) And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. (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. (17) Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. (18) Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. (19) My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, (20) let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

1) Power in a Confessing community

James 5:15 (ESV)

And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Note: Prayer of faith will save the sick - and James connects that with forgiveness of sins!

Reminder from last week . . .

- **Save** (vs. 15 & 20): To save, deliver, make whole, preserve safe from danger, loss, destruction. This word occurs 54 times in the Gospels: and it addresses the preservation of life, spirit, soul, and body!
- **Sick** means weary (to toil, tire, faint / the main idea: to be weary from constant work)
- **The Promise** - The Lord will raise up (resurrect / re-energize) the Weary! (including those struggling with sin)

Hebrews 12:1-3 (ESV)

(1) Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (2) looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (3) Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

Note: Endure and not grow weary from what? Read next verse . . .

Hebrews 12:4-6 (ESV)

(4) In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. (5) And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. (6) For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

Note: We are in a struggle to walk in holiness, and God - in His love for us - will discipline and correct us.

Correction is not rejection, in fact its a sign of intimacy! So, we too need to learn to walk in that together.

Notice what James call us to next as he encourages us to receive healing (including for our sin) as we pray for one another in faith . . .

James 5:16 (ESV)

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.

Note: There is great power in a community that confesses sin! It is an uncommon act & it is powerful.

1 John 1:7-9 (ESV)

(7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. (8) If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Note: There is fellowship (truly) when we walk in honesty. Otherwise we settle for false connection, and all kinds of damage follows:

- **Personally** - isolation, pride, shame
- **Relationally** - gossip, pettiness, bitterness, hurt.

Solution: Gospel Healing - Confession / Repentance / Forgiveness

It is so effective to be in a community where we confess one to another / which we can only do when we realize how much we have been forgiven, then we can be gracious with each other when we confess!

2) Power in the pursuit of Righteousness**James 5:17-18 (ESV)**

(17) Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. (18) Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

Note: James brings Elijah down to us / and calls us up to Elijah's kind of faith

1 Kings 17&18 (Elijah is a prophet during a season of great sin & compromise among God's people)

- Elijah predicts a drought - as a judgement because repentance is needed in Israel (17:1)
- Elijah needs provided for by God by the brook (17:2-7)
- Elijah invites a widow to join him in faith, and her & her son's needs provided for by God (17:8-16)
- Elijah prays and the widow's son is raised from death (17:17-24)
- Elijah prays and calls down fire / false prophets destroyed (18:1-40) *pours water on sacrifice in a drought!
- Elijah prays (7x till a small wisp of a cloud forms!) and then the rain comes like a flood! (18:41-46)

A Guide for applying this in our community life: **Psalm 32** - A Psalm of confession / repentance / forgiveness

- **Maskil** - song or poem of contemplation
- **Selah** - a pause of contemplation

Psalms 32:1-4 (ESV)

(1) A Maskil of David. Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. (2) Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. (3) For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. (4) For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah

Note: The blessing of forgiven sin / the curse of hidden sin (Power in confession / No strength when we hide)

Psalms 32:5 (ESV)

I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah

Psalms 32:6-7 (ESV)

(6) Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. (7) You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. Selah

Psalms 32:8-11 (ESV)

(8) I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. (9) Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. (10) Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD. (11) Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

Notice the joy and celebration that is found when we are forgiven and surrounded by steadfast love!

3) Power in the loving pursuit of others**James 5:19-20 (ESV)**

(19) My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, (20) let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

Note: This is what Luke 15 is all about - pursuing the Lost in love & embracing and celebrating their return!

1 Peter 4:7-8 (ESV)

(7) The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. (8) Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins.

Note: Does our community cover sin in love / or would you fear rejection?

Proverbs 10:12 (ESV)

Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.

Note: Can you cover (forgive) sins that have been done to you?

- Real love is always present prior to reconciliation (See Romans 5:8) . . .

Romans 5:8 (ESV)

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- And we are called to love like this too . . .

1 John 4:9-11 (ESV)

(9) In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. (10) In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (11) Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Note: This is Steadfast Maturity. Becoming the sort of person & becoming the sort of church - that understands God's love so much, that we are carriers of love in pursuit of those struggling along the way!

Conclusion: There is great power in a prayerful, caring community of faith & righteousness!