

**Pray with Prayer**  
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I would like you to turn in your Bibles to James Chapter 5. Let's read verse 16. Find the very last statement of that verse. James 5:16B: The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. The NASB says "the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." I like that. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we thank you for this day to be in Your house once again. You have certainly given us another day to be very thankful for. Father, You are the Giver of all good things in our life. We acknowledge every good thing that we enjoy, every blessing is from Your hand. And Father, this day is a blessing to us to be here in Your presence with us with Your people to sing to You and to worship You and then to hear from Your Word today. Father, it is truly a blessing to be here. And Father, we ask that You will come and that You will minister to every heart. And Father, we are confident that You know every need here today. You know the things that are going on in our lives that are very private and personal. And Father, You know the needs of our heart today. And Father, we just present ourselves to You and ask You to meet every need here today. Father, there is value in just sitting before You, just hearing Your words. Father, we pray that the Holy Spirit will touch each heart today. And Father, we thank You for this scripture that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. Father, help us today as we study this verse, as we think about things relative to this verse. Father, help us to consider all of Your words today. We love you and praise You. Father, meet all of our needs. In Christ's Name we pray. Amen.

Charles Spurgeon, born in 1834, died in 1892. Lived to a ripe old age of 58 years old. He was a great preacher of the Gospel. He was called the prince of the preachers. He was a British preacher, a Baptist preacher, and the majority of his ministry was in London. He often preached up to ten times a week in public services. Now, that makes me feel kind of inferior. Throughout his lifetime of 58 years (not all of that was ministry), he preached to over ten million people. He led tens and tens of thousands of people to salvation in Jesus Christ. That's why he was called the prince of the preachers. At one point at his church in London, he asked his regular membership just to stay home. There were so many visitors coming into his church, there was not enough room for them to sit, so he asked his membership to stay home on Sunday and just pray so he could minister to people who'd never heard the Gospel before. Certainly, this man had great, great success in ministering the Gospel, but little did people know in the church in London, underneath the pulpit area, there was a basement. And in that basement, there were just a few men that gathered every time they had church services, just a few men. And they would begin praying as the service began, and they would continue praying on their knees until the service was over. They would pray for liberty for the preacher, and they would pray for liberty for the Word. You can see that they had an idea of the sense, importance, and urgency of prayer. There was a power to prayer in those days that they understood. And we see this great ministry of Spurgeon; it was bathed in prayer. Maybe in the day that we live in, the Gospel message is a little on the watered down side. Maybe even the prayer life of the saints may be a little watered down, too. I'm not judging today. God knows our hearts and how we pray, and He knows my heart and how I pray.

God has spoken to me clearly this week with this message and I'd like us to consider this subject of prayer in maybe a little different way. I told the kids at youth camp that one of my Christian strategies was to develop a habit of prayer and to be honest with you, when someone brings up the subject of prayer, my eyes kind of roll back in my head, you know? It's like, "I know I need to pray," but God has really spoken to me about this subject this week, and I'd like to talk to you about it this morning, the subject of prayer.

Spurgeon and these men understood the power of prayer. Let me make this statement – two words: Prayer works. Do you agree? Your agreement (which I expected) could be only emotional because who, being a Christian, would not agree that prayer works? It's part of the resume of being a Christian. You've got to say prayer works, even if you don't know whether it does or not. Because sometimes, prayers works, and we never see the outcome of it. So our agreement could only be emotional when we say, Amen, prayer works. But it's important to know that there is scriptural agreement that prayer works. We base our understanding of God on the Word of God, the Standard before us in the written record. James 5:16 is a great place: The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Or, the effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

It's almost as if the greatest singular thing you can do in your life as a Christian is to pray. Now, I said "almost." It's NOT the greatest singular thing you can do in your life. You know that, don't you? Jesus said "this is the work... that you believe upon Whom He hath sent." So the greatest thing you can do in your life as a Christian is to continue to stay in Christ, have faith, believe. That's the greatest thing. I think the next greatest work in your life is to pray. You know our culture today is not conducive to prayer, is it? To pray, there needs to be some stillness in our life, right? Some quiet time. There needs to be time to settle down and focus on the greater, higher realities, and our culture today is not conducive to that type of activity in our life. We stay so busy; we run all day long. So our culture is not conducive to prayer, but it is ALMOST the greatest thing we can do as a Christian. First is to abide in Christ. Then, it is to pray. To pray with prayer. Now that phrase is on purpose. To pray with prayer; you're going to hear that several times this morning.

Listen. In order to be and to do all that God has called us in our life depends largely on our will and our commitment to pray. And by "pray," I mean to pray with prayer. To pray with prayer is a Hebrewism, and I'll show you the root of it in a moment. It is an expression or construction distinctive of the Hebrew language. And this Hebrewism indicates and communicates a quality of praying... to pray with prayer. And sometimes, I'll just say for myself, I have been guilty of praying without prayer. When you understand what this means, it is communicating a quality of praying – a weightiness, a thickness to our praying before God – a seriousness of praying before God. Prayer with a sense of urgency. And that's what James 5:16 is speaking of. It's talking about the effectual, the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man does MUCH good; it accomplishes much. But it is praying with prayer that does it. It availeth much.

Now God helps us with this idea of praying with prayer through an example given through our text this morning. Look at verse 17: 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. Verse 18: and he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. Now the whole context of this illustration is based on the

words of verse 16, that the effectual prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. And then the illustration is given of Elijah, the prophet.

Now we know that Elijah is one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament, and he was also a man of prayer. I will quote some I Kings Chapter 17 to you that you know probably better than I do. I Kings 17: 1 says “And Elijah, the Tishbite, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before Whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word.” Now, who remembers that episode? Here is King Ahab; he is one of the most ungodly kings of all of Israel, and here is little Elijah, the prophet, presenting himself before the great mighty, ungodly King Ahab. And this is what he told Ahab. He was speaking for the Lord, and he said as the Lord God liveth, before Whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to MY word. Now, notice that statement: according to MY word. It was part of God’s judgment on Israel and King Ahab. There will not be dew nor rain across the land of Israel for YEARS. According to God’s word? Or my word? He said “my word.” He was speaking on behalf of God, and God is certainly the One who stopped the rain for three and a half years on all of Israel, and it was a desolate, barren place for three and a half years. “My word.” This was Elijah’s word. Certainly, God stopped the rain, but He did it at the confident request of the prophet.

Now, I’ll tell you. I’ve seen I Kings 17 so many times that I was closed to this. God stopped the rain; we’re not questioning that. But he did it at the confident request of the prophet – “according to my word” with God. Imagine Elijah with the confidence to stand before this ungodly king, knowing that his words had weight with Almighty God. His words meant something to God when he prayed, knowing that God would answer him. That is praying with prayer. It is a serious, a weighty, a THICK praying to God, knowing with confident faith that He will answer prayer. (I need to kick up my prayer life a little bit compared to Elijah.)

That’s beautiful. That makes that story so much more meaningful. Elijah, before the king, knowing with absolute assurance that his words meant something to God. Let me tell you this morning, your words when you pray to God, they MEAN something to God. They do. They mean something to God when you pray and ask Him for something. When you’re asking Him for help or guidance or leading in your life – or an open door or a closed door – or whatever you need in your life. Your words mean something to God. In our culture, everything today is so watered down and flaky, oftentimes, we might have the idea that our words mean nothing to God, but they MEAN something to God. God hears you when you pray with prayer.

I was thinking that, for Elijah, to stand before Ahab with such confidence to say that there will not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word, Elijah must have been pretty special. He was a great, great prophet of God. In another episode near I Kings 17 (I think in the next chapter), Elijah called down fire from Heaven to consume a burnt offering that had 12 barrels of water poured on top of it. And a fire came down and consumed it all. He must have been pretty special, you know, to call down fire from Heaven. He could stop the rain from raining. He must have really been a powerful man of God, right? Don’t you think? What kind of man was Elijah, really? Our text answers that. Look at verse 17. “Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are.” You know what that’s saying? It’s saying that Elijah was just like you and me. He wasn’t any different. He was subject to like passions such as we are. He did not have some special hearing from God that we don’t have. He was just like us, subject to like passions, and he prayed earnestly.

The construction of the text here is so odd. It's almost like you want to plug in a different word. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and yet, he prayed earnestly. He was just as weak, just as frail, just as feeble as we are before God, and yet he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it did not rain. So we can't say, "Well, Elijah, he was the great prophet, and look at us; we're just who we are. Elijah was the man! He was the man of God! He had a higher position; he had God's ear listening to him. You can't say that. He was subject to like passions, just as we are. We are just like him. And yet, he prayed earnestly. Now, you can study it and find out for yourself that he prayed earnestly. That's praying with prayer. That's the Hebrewism if you'll study that, and you can do that on your own. He prayed earnestly. That means he prayed with prayer.

Can I tell you how much Elijah was like us? Or how much we are like him? After many great victories from God, one human voice said, "Elijah, I'm going to get you," and it caused him to quake and fear. Jezebel told him that. "I'm going to get you, Elijah," and he began quaking with fear, and he ran for his life. That sounds more like me! See? He wasn't so different! He ran, scared for his life, forty days. He was so much like us that he fell into a deep, dark depression for many, many days. And all he would do was sleep. And the angel of the Lord came and woke him up and said, "Elijah, eat. You need strength. Eat!" He didn't want to eat. He was so much like us that he fell into a deep, dark depression. At one point, he felt like he was the only one trusting God. "God, no one else is serving you like I am. I cannot believe that all these things are happening to me. Nobody else is committed to you like I am." And yet, there were others. Remember the text? There were others. So Elijah was subject to like passions. That's a statement of weakness. He was subject to like passions, and yet he prayed with prayer – and got results! How much more can we pray with prayer and let God work through us?

The point today is that we can do the same thing Elijah did. In fact, we have the greater advantage than Elijah because we have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We have the completed written record of His revelation before us. Elijah didn't have that. We can do MORE than Elijah when we pray with prayer. Can you stop the rain for three years with your praying? It's a serious question. If that is God's will and it is consistent with His purpose and His program, you can. The Bible says, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you." And the caveat is "His will be done in all things."

But listen. The point is not: what can we do with prayer? The point is that you have the same hearing before God Almighty that even the prophet Elijah did. You have the same voice, the same hearing before God. Your words matter to God! Absolutely. I hope you believe that; it's true. Your words carry the same weight with God if it's being prayed with prayer... the kind of James 5:16 – the effectual fervent prayer.

There are many examples of praying people in the Bible. We don't have time for all of them, but Daniel was a man of prayer. The Bible tells us that three times a day, he knelt before his God, even when the king of the land said "no praying to any god." Daniel prayed like he always did before; he got into trouble. In the book of Daniel, Gabriel had come to Daniel, and he told Daniel "Fear not" (Daniel 10:12) "for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words." I've always been intrigued by that verse. Notice the statement "from the

first day” – from the very FIRST day – “that thou didst set your heart before God to understand, and you chastened yourself before God, your words were heard.”

Chasten – that’s the idea of “discipline.” Must we discipline ourselves to pray with prayer? Must we discipline ourselves to form a habit of prayer? Well, maybe so! We might have to discipline ourselves. “Hey, I need to spend some time in prayer with God. I’m so caught up, so busy. Life is so fast, and I need to stop, and I need to pray.” I think that’s what Daniel did. He chastened himself before God, and the angel Gabriel said to Daniel “thy words were heard the very first day.” Now, that helps me; I don’t know about you. “From the first day, thy words were heard.” That’s powerful. The moment you get serious with God and begin praying with prayer, God hears your words. You don’t have to hope and have wishful thinking that God is hearing your words; you can know for sure. God hears your words. You don’t have to be vested into a certain amount of time before God hears your words. From the first day, God HEARS. But listen to Daniel 10:13: Gabriel says, “thy words were heard,” but the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days, but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes on God’s side, came to help me.

Now there are things going on in the spiritual world that we never see when we’re praying. God hears your words the very first time you utter them when you’re praying with prayer. And when you pray with prayer, things are set into motion in the heavenly realm that we have no idea about. And there is opposition to God working on Earth through men. We have an enemy, and it’s made reference to in Daniel 10:13 – but the prince of the kingdom of Persia (a reference to the enemy of God) – he withstood me one and twenty days, and then God sent backups – Michael came, and Michael assisted me: “and now, we are here, Daniel, because of your words.”

Hopefully, we never give up on praying for something that’s important to God – and especially if it’s important to His work on this Earth. Because there is resistance to God’s will being done. There is opposition. I’m going to share this statement with you, and I have been toying with sharing it with you. I think it’s true. Lack of clear answers from God (Anybody know what that’s like?) is often related to spiritual resistance and warfare. It’s not because God wants to hang you out there and not give you an answer. It is often directly related to spiritual resistance and warfare. When we pray with prayer, there are things that are put into motion that we are not aware of. Imagine this: If we had the ability to see all the motions in play – offensive and defensive – when we are praying, if we had the ability to see all the things God is trying to do through our praying, and all the resistance the enemy is giving, we might be rooting God on daily, fervently, every moment. “God, you can do it!” But we don’t see that. And I’m afraid, oftentimes, we just give up. “It’s not God’s will.” That might be a cop-out.

There is spiritual resistance; there is warfare. That’s why, in Luke 18:1, these words are spoken: “Men ought always to pray and not to faint.” Don’t ever give up. Your prayer’s working. It’s coming before the presence of God. He’s hearing your words. From the very first day, God hears your words. Don’t give up! Don’t stop praying! This kind of praying is called consistent persistence. Don’t give up; keep praying. There’s something important in your life right now that you’re praying about, but you don’t have a clear answer. Don’t give up. You keep praying! You keep trusting God. There are forces working against each other in the spiritual realm, and ultimately, we want God’s will to be done in all things, right? Amen. We

do. In our local church, in our lives individually, personally, we want God's will to be done. But often, God's will is hindered by spiritual resistance and opposition.

Consistent persistence. In the face of spiritual opposition, consistent persistence is required. It is the essence of praying with prayer. Hebrews 4:16 says "let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may find grace in time of need." That idea of coming boldly to God makes me think of Elijah, going before the king. He put himself out there, standing before the ungodly, powerful king of Israel, and he got in his face and said, "You know what? According to my word, it's not going to rain for years." I mean, he really stuck his neck out there. He had confidence that God would hear him. I can see Elijah now, even though it doesn't show us in the record, when he left King Ahab, he probably went to some quiet place and got on his knees and said, "God, stop the rain. Show King Ahab who the REAL King of Israel is. Stop the rain, God." His words meant something to God.

Jeremiah 33:1-3. There's a simple formula in Jeremiah 33. Jeremiah was shut up in a prison because he was preaching to Israel. He was being the prophet, and he was shut up in prison, and God spoke to Jeremiah in his prison. Now, we may have prisons of our own making here today. A prison doesn't have to have walls. We can be in a prison today of our own making, or maybe choices of people we love have made decisions and we are in a prison because of that. God spoke directly to the prophet Jeremiah in his prison, and He told him three things: "Call unto Me." It is absolutely true that God knows your needs. He knows far more about you than you will ever know about yourself. Every hair of your head is numbered. For some, that's not too challenging for God. (Sorry – had to throw that in). God knows your needs, but God instructs us to bring our needs before Him in prayer.

So the first thing God told Jeremiah in his prison was "Call unto Me." If we never call unto God, God will not help. Well, I'll reverse that. God DOES help, but God does not help in the way that He COULD help. "Call unto Me." It is so important that we ask God the need of your heart – whatever it is. Ask God! Ask, and it shall be given. So this verbiage in the Bible – ask, seek, knock – those are things indicating that you must take the initial step. "Call unto Me." Ask. Ask for His help. The next part, He says this – verse 3: "I will (and notice the absolute) answer thee." It's a simple formula. Call unto Me, and I will answer thee. It is so clear that God WILL answer prayer. Like the text we read earlier this morning about the father who, when asked by his son for food, would surely not give him a stone instead, how much more will our Heavenly Father give good gifts unto you when you ask Him?

"I will answer thee." This is clear revelation of God. "I WILL answer thee." And then, the last statement of verse three – "and I will show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not." Sometimes, God uses the prisons of our live to elevate us to a higher level of walking with God. "I will show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not."

I want you to see the heart of God this morning, relative to praying. He WANTS to answer; He WANTS to show you; He WANTS you to be in a relationship with Him. He doesn't want to be a dictator in your life; He wants to be your loving Heavenly Father – Abba Father – a warm, tender, loving relationship with God the Father. And you can ask Him for what you need, and He will answer. We don't have to beg God. Consistent persistence is not begging God. God is loving, and He is generous, and He wants a relationship with you.

I want to share something with you that I treasure from G. Campbell Morgan's book, The Ministry. This has made such a profound impact on my life and what I do to study and

preach. I wrote one of his passages in the back of my Bible, and I often read this as I begin any study or work. He says this: "I can honestly say that I never have, and never do, settle down to a piece of work on my Bible without actual prayer for help. I do not mean that I kneel down or spend any time, but invariably, in what sometimes may not take a second, I seek that help. Having done that, without feeling that God needs a lot of hammering to persuade Him, I go straight to work, believing that the guidance is being granted." For some reason, that really connected with me. I think at times in the past, in my study routine, it's almost like I would be begging for God to help me. And that freed me of something; it freed me of bondage. He said, "I pray, but after I pray, I go straight to work." That really helped me. We don't have to beg God. We ASK God, and we have faith and confidence that He is working His will in us and through us.

Maybe you have a need this morning – one that God can only answer through prayer. You know what your greatest need is this morning? Your greatest need is to know Jesus Christ this morning. And guess what. You cannot meet that need by yourself. The only way you can meet that need is to come before God, praying with prayer. And then, God can meet your needs. Pray with prayer, and then God can meet you wherever you are. Whatever you need in your life, it is always accessed through prayer.

Now Rodney prayed for something in our board meeting Tuesday night, and God spoke directly to me through Rodney's prayer. Rodney prayed, "Father, you have a message for us this Sunday." And he prayed that God would give me the message. And God gave me the message. This is the message today. I don't know what kind of challenges are in your life today, but God knows, and He's asking you to call unto Him. Call unto Him, and pray with prayer. Amen.