

# Effectual Fervent Prayer

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[0:00] What an amazing thought to think we're standing on holy ground and, you know, there's nothing special about the ground in Arthur, Ohio. You know that, right? Other than it's sand and I've got clay at home, so I guess that makes it special. But what makes it special is not the ground. It's the fact that God is here. It's the fact that we are in the presence of God. That makes us holy ground and that makes this time that we have right now together very, very, very special.

And I know that we are good as people and I'm no, believe me, I'm no different than you are. So, we are good about getting into a routine and just going through motions and just, you know, it's something we do every week. We come to church, we hear the message, we sing, we pray, we go home.

But I hope that we find a way to break out of that, to realize that there's nothing like this time right now when we're in the presence of God. It is an amazing, miraculous, and special time to know that you're in the presence of the God who created everything, including us, and to know that God has a message for us this morning. And so, I hope that we can forget about all the, I know we got busy lives, we got schedules, we got jobs, we got all kinds of things. But for the next few minutes, set those aside and just think about the fact that God has something He wants to share with me from His Word. And just have your hearts tuned into God this morning. And to do that, get your Bible out because that's His message, that's His Word for us. And I encourage you, I know we've been in the book of James for a while, and last week we were in the last few verses of James, but there's more to say from the book of James, so we're not done in James yet.

So turn to James chapter 5. And I so much encourage you to follow along in your Bible. It's the Word of God. That's what we have to rely on. That's the truth that God gives us. James chapter 5. And as we read that together, I know you just sat down, but I'm going to ask if you're able, if you'd stand as we read God's Word together this morning. James chapter 5, just verses 16 to 18. And this is the truth that God's Word shares with us this morning. James 5, beginning in verse 16.

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah 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. Let's pray. Lord God, again, we just...

[2:43] Lord, we come before you, and I pray that we come before you with hearts that are humbled, recognizing how many things that you've given us that we don't begin to deserve, that we're humbled just by the thought of your tremendous love for us, that you care about us enough that you have a plan for our lives, that you care about us enough to be here in our presence, and to have a message for us this morning. Thank you for all those things.

And Lord, I just pray that as your Word is shared this morning, that it would sink and soak into our hearts, that our hearts would be soft, not hard, that we would be willing to change in areas that we need to change, that we would be corrected, that we would be inspired, that we would be challenged, that your Word would do all the things that you want it to do in our hearts and our lives today.

So thank you again, Lord, and just speak to our hearts. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ and all God's family together said, Amen. All right, you can be seated.

So last week, we started talking about at least verse 16. And we agreed that the beginning of it is something that, to be honest, we're not all that good at. That whole confess your faults one to another thing. Are we good at that? Why not?

We don't want to admit we have faults, right? Let alone let somebody else know that I have weaknesses, that I have areas where I fall short, that I have areas where I sin. We want to cover those up.

[4:19] And we want to present an image to other people that spiritually I've always got it all together, that I've got it figured out, that my spiritual life is strong. And yes, your spiritual life might be strong, but does that mean that you've always got it all together and all figured out and you don't sin? No. Guess what? You have faults, right? Right? Okay. We have faults. We've established that.

And it says, confess your faults to one another. That means tell each other your faults. And that isn't just so we can say, oh, you know what Ron told me? Do you want to hear about one of his faults? Let me tell you, because I want to share it with you. That's not the reason, is it?

It's so we all understand that we need to pray for each other, because that's what this whole section is about is prayer, isn't it? Confess your faults to one another, not so that we can ridicule each other, not so that we can think less of each other. But what does it say right after that? Confess your faults to each other and pray for each other. We confess our faults, our weaknesses, our sins so that then we can lift each other up in prayer for those things. And folks, that's what a serious family of God and believers, that's what they do for each other. And I pray that that's what we do for each other.

But we talked about that some last week. It goes on to say that you may be healed. And I think God's healing is in a lot of ways. God's healing can be physical, but most importantly, God's healing can be spiritual. And that's the most important kind of healing. But look at the latter part of this verse then. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. And that's kind of what we're going to talk about this morning. How to be effectual in prayer, how to be fervent in prayer, how to be a righteous man, how to have our prayer really avail much or make a difference. And as this scripture in James talks about this, it's an amazing thing because it gives us an example, doesn't it? It points us to a man by the name of Elijah in the Old Testament. And it's interesting to me that it really sums up the whole example in just a really short couple phrases.

[6:35] 17 and 18. Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are. What does that mean? That's an important part of this verse. Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are. That's not the way we would talk today or say it. So what does that mean?

He's an ordinary man. He's like you and he's like me. Because it's easy to think, oh, he was a patriarch of the Bible. That's not anything I can ever attain. That's not what the Bible's telling us, is it? He says he's just like us, subject to like passions. That means he had weaknesses and faults just like us. Look at somebody and say, just like you. Now say, just like me too. It's all of us.

He is no different than us as far as a believer in God that was not a perfect man. We sometimes need reminded there was only one perfect person that walked this earth. It's not us.

It's not any of the patriarchs of the Bible. It was Jesus, only one. It says Elijah though is just like us. Had frailties, had weaknesses, had faults. But then it gives the example, he prayed earnestly that it wouldn't rain and it did not rain on the earth for three and a half years.

These verses have a lot to do with today. And I'm not talking about the drought that we're in. That has nothing to do with it. This example is talking about a man that prayed and it had an impact.

[8:22] That's what we're talking about today. And I think that this story about Elijah, it just shares in a couple of verses here. He prayed, it didn't rain for three and a half years, and then he prayed again and it rained. I think it's important we look at this story just a little closer. So we're going to look in the Old Testament. And often I know we think the Old Testament, well, that's just, we want to focus on the New Testament. It's about Jesus. And it is, but folks, there's so much in the Old Testament that is important. God's interaction with mankind.

And here we look at Elijah and it's talking about it in the New Testament and saying, it's important we understand this. So look in 1 Kings, back in the Old Testament. The book of 1 Kings.

1 Kings chapter 16 is where I want to start. Beginning down in verse 30. You see, in 1 Kings, who do you think the people had to rule over them in 1 Kings? In the book of 1 Kings, who do you think ruled over them? A king. Very good.

The king at the time of Elijah that we're talking about here was a king by the name of Ahab. 1 Kings chapter 16, verse 30.

And Ahab, the son of Omri, did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, that he took as a wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him.

[10:11] And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove, and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

So this is the king of God's people, Israel, right? What did we learn about King Ahab from these verses? He was not a great man.

He was evil. And really, as we begin to look at how evil he really was, it's kind of remarkable. It says, he did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him.

Isn't that what it says? That's pretty remarkable because, to me, as you read through this chapter in 1 Kings, the kings kept getting worse and worse. Look back in verse 25.

Because Ahab's father was Omri, who was king before him. Look what it says about his father in verse 25. But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the Lord, and did worse than all who were before him.

[11:28] So guess what? They just kept getting worse and worse, to the point where each one could say, well, this is the worst one. They really were worse than all those before him. And then the next would come along, well, he was the worst, but we have a new first place.

They are now the worst. That is the situation that it was in. And it even talks about Omri, his father, how bad he was that he was influencing all of Israel to go against God.

That is the evil that was present in the time of Elijah. That is what was going on when Elijah had this prayer that we're reading about.

Now look in 1 Kings 17. Just keep going in 1 Kings. 1 Kings 17, beginning in the first verse. And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. And the word of the Lord came to him, saying, Get you from here and turn you eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith that is before Jordan. And it shall be that when you shall drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there.

[12:48] So he went and did according to the word of the Lord, for he went and dwelled by the brook Cherith that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening, and he drank of the brook.

Okay, so what do these verses tell us? King Ahab was evil. Israel was turning against God, not following their Lord God. What did Elijah do?

Remember in James, what did it say he did? He prayed. What did he pray for?

For no rain. Why did he pray for no rain? Why not just pray that all the people would just turn back to God?

Why pray for no rain? To get their attention? To show the power of God? Free will.

[13:49] What's that? People have free will. He prayed that there would be no rain. Now, if you remember in James, it says, the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Right? So let's look at Elijah. Was his prayer effectual? What does it mean to be effectual? Think of the word effectual.

What does it kind of sound like? Effective. Right? That's the root word. Was his prayer effective? Absolutely. He prayed that it wouldn't rain. And what happened? It didn't rain.

It didn't rain. For how long? Three and a half years. Do you want your prayers to be effective? I think we would all say, yes, I want my prayer to be effective.

Here's the thing. We often think of our prayer being effective, that that means we get what we want to make our lives better. Isn't that what we often think of as effective?

[14:47] That we pray that we are healed so we'll be healed. We pray for this situation to work out so it works out so our lives are better. Often we think of that as effective, don't we?

Well, Elijah here, his prayer was effective. But think about who was it really effective for? For Elijah or for God? Because for Elijah, it was effective.

But did it make his life easier? Why not? Look again what he had to do after the prayer was answered.

In verse 2, the word of the Lord came to him saying, came to Elijah, and God said, get you from here and turn you eastward and hide yourself by the brook.

So after this effective prayer of Elijah, what did God tell him to go do? Go hide. Why? Why did God tell him to go hide?

[15:54] How popular do you think Elijah would have been praying for no rain for three and a half years? Would the king have like that? Would all the rest of the people have like that?

No. His prayer being effective actually made his life much more difficult to the point where he had to go hide for his own life. Effectiveness in prayer is not meaning that our lives get better.

Effectiveness in prayer is truly about God's will being done. Being effective not for ourselves, but effective for God. Elijah's prayer was effective not for himself.

It made his life harder. It was effective for God and for God's kingdom. When we start to think about prayer, we need to think about our prayer in the terms of not our life, but God's kingdom.

That's what's the most important thing. The effectual prayer, it says the effectual fervent prayer. What does it mean to be fervent? Zealous, consistent, sincere.

[17:02] Aren't those all kind of synonyms for fervent prayer? And I think as we look at Elijah's life, you know, it says he was just like us, that he liked passions as we are, weaknesses and faults just like us.

But I think he prayed with a fervency. He prayed with a sincerity that God would act and that God would work. Look, Elijah had a fervent faith, he had a fervent belief, and he had a fervent trust in God.

Do you think he trusted God would take care of him? Yeah. Did God take care of him? Yes. He went out and hid in the middle of the wilderness. Who took care of him during that time?

Did it say Elijah went out and did a bunch of fishing to take care of himself to catch fish and survive? Who took care of him? How? The ravens. Who sent the ravens? God.

He was sincere in his prayer. Even though he was human like us, he was sincere. The effectual, fervent prayer of a what?

[18:05] Righteous man. What does it mean to be a righteous man? What's it mean? Being right with God?

Being right in God's eyes? Having a desire to be God-honoring? Doing things in our life that are pleasing to God? Was Elijah pleasing God here in his life?

Yes. Again, did it make his life easy? No. Pleasing God and making our life easy often doesn't go together.

Do we understand that? We like to think that those two things are always going to line up, don't we? That if I'm pleasing God, that my life is somehow going to go smooth and easy.

Don't we think those things should line up? That if we're really serving God, he's going to bless us and things will just go smoothly. Isn't that a great thought? Isn't it?

[19:02] Elijah was serving God here. Did his life go smoothly? No. Noah served God. Did his life always go smoothly? Moses served God.

Did his life always go smoothly? All the disciples, they followed Jesus Christ and they served God. Did their lives always go smoothly? Jesus was here, the Son of God, doing the will of His Father.

Was his life always smooth and easy? So why in the world do we expect our lives are always going to be smooth and easy when we're serving God? Being righteous is doing what's right in God's eyes regardless of the cost.

Paul, we just finished studying in Acts, following the life of Paul. And you know what? In other books of the Bible, it tells he was shipwrecked. He was robbed. He was snake bit.

He was beaten. He was thrown in prison. All these things multiple times. Why? Because he was a righteous man doing what God wanted him to do.

[20:09] Isn't that the truth? The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man does what? Avails much.

What does that part mean, do you think? That it avails much? It's effective. It makes a difference. Avails much means it makes a difference. Elijah, in praying for no rain for three and a half years, brought great difficulty in his life.

But do you think it made a difference? Yes. Yes. Because it showed people the power of God. His prayer and the results of that pointed people back to God.

reminded them that God was the one in charge, not them. Do we ever need reminded of that? Do you think the world around us needs reminded of that? Absolutely.

[21:10] That's what it means. Avails much. Again, not for us, but for God's kingdom. That is the availing much that we should be the most concerned about in our prayer life. What is it doing for God's kingdom?

Is it pointing people to Jesus? One more place in 1 Kings chapter 18. 1 Kings 18 beginning in verse 40.

This is right after Elijah and the prophets of Baal and all that. 1 Kings 18 verse 40. And Elijah said to them, Take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape.

And they took them and Elijah brought them down to the brook and slew them there. And Elijah said to Ahab, Get you up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain.

So Ahab went up to eat and to drink and Elijah went up to the top of Carmel. And he cast himself down upon the earth and he put his face between his knees. What do you think he was doing?

[22:14] Praying. Praying. And he said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up and looked and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.

And it came to pass at the seventh time that he said, Behold, there arises... What does it say? A little cloud. Out of the sea, like a man's hand.

And he said, Go up to Ahab and say, Prepare your chariot. Get you down that the rain doesn't stop you. And it came to pass in the meanwhile that the heaven was black with clouds and wind and there was a great rain and Ahab rode and went to Jezreel.

And the hand of the Lord was upon Elijah and he girded up his loins and he ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. So what happened here? Elijah prays again after the three and a half years and what's the result?

Rain. Rain. I said that I think this story has a lot to do with the world that we live in today and it's not about the rain. It's about the fact that these people were in the midst of a great difficulty, weren't they?

[23:25] Do you think three and a half years without rain would be difficult? Obviously. It would be extremely difficult. We look at our world and our nation today.

Do we have any difficult things happening? All the time. And not just all the time but even right now. We even think of this day today. I mean today there's a memorial service for Charlie Kirk.

And you know what? Think what you want about Charlie Kirk. He was a young man, 31, one or two? 31, thank you. He had a lot of views on a lot of things.

He had a lot of political views. And I don't know how much God cared about those political views. I think God cares that we care about the truth. I do believe that. But the other reality is so often political and spiritual can't be separated because sometimes they're one and the same.

I mean we think about things like transgenerism. Is that a political topic today? Yes. Is it a spiritual topic? Yes. You think of things like homosexuality.

[24:31] Is that a political topic? Is that a spiritual topic? Yeah. Yeah. It's the same. We think about things like abortion. Is that a political topic? Obviously. But at the heart and root is it a spiritual topic?

Yes. Yes. So what he had to think politically, he just needed to share the truth. And I don't know how God was concerned about his politics, but you know what I think God was concerned about? What he had to say spiritually. What he had to say about his faith. And we have a man that shared about his faith that was, what, a couple weeks ago, shot and assassinated.

But as I read about his life, and I've always listened to some of the things he shared, you know, when he was asking his life, what's the one thing you want to be remembered for? Do you know what his answer was multiple times?

I want to be remembered for my courage, for my faith. He didn't say for my political views, for my political power, for my political success. I want to be remembered for the courage, for my faith.

[25:41] He made multiple comments. Jesus saved my life. When he was asked about his beliefs, he shared the gospel.

And I love the thing he had to share. He said the gospel in four words. Jesus took my place. The gospel in three words, him for me.

The gospel in two words, substitutionary atonement. The gospel in one word, grace. Moments before he was shot, these were the words that came out of his mouth.

And again, think what you want politically. But think about shortly before he drew his last breath. These were the words that came out of his mouth. There is evidence in the Bible and out of the Bible that Jesus was a real person.

He lived a perfect life. He was crucified. He died and rose on the third day. And he is Lord and God over all. Boy, if I am going to die, I hope those are the words that come out of my mouth shortly before that.

[26:52] But here is the thing. We live in a difficult world. There is all kinds of debate. There is all kinds of anger.

There is all kinds of lots of things out there. It was a difficult time when there was no rain for three and a half years. But as Elijah prayed, what was it? And it said seven times he sent his servant back.

But in the end, what was the one thing he saw? Did he see a great black cloud bringing all kinds of rain on the horizon? What did he see?

It says he saw one little cloud. Look again. I don't even know if I can find it right here. Verse 44.

It came to pass on the seventh time that he said, Behold, there arises a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand. Not a big storm cloud, one little cloud.

[27:53] What did that cloud really signify? The hand of God. That God was about to do a thing. That God was about to show his power.

That God was about to point people to himself and say, Yes, I'm real. That God was about to do something amazing.

If you'd seen that little cloud, what would your reaction have been? Would you have said, I better keep praying. I don't know if God really heard me or not. We need a bigger cloud than that.

I mean, that might have been my response. I'll be honest with you. That cloud's not big enough. We need a lot more rain than that. But again, here was the faith of Elijah.

When he saw the little cloud, look in verse 44, The little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand.

Here's what Elijah said. Go up and say to Ahab, Prepare your chariot and get down from the mountain that the rain doesn't stop you.

[28:56] Elijah's response, Go tell the king to get down from the mountain because it's going to be raining so hard. If you don't go now, you might not make it. And all he had seen was what?

A little cloud. A little cloud. But that little cloud mixed with Elijah's faith and then that's the response. And did God do an amazing and mighty thing here? Do you think this pointed people to God and showed that God was the true God? Absolutely. We look in our day and age today and regardless of what you think about Charlie Kirk, but right now I think there's a little cloud.

God is always sending that little cloud. I've read in the last week about people going back to church that hadn't been in church. People buying Bibles that hadn't read a Bible. People having a desire to know more about Jesus because they're hearing the name of Jesus.

right now because of Charlie Kirk. But it's not about Charlie Kirk. It's about Jesus. I believe that God wants to do something. God wants to lift up the name of His Son, Jesus Christ.

[30:09] There's a little cloud there. What is our response to that little cloud? Folks, our response should be, we better get to praying. God used this. God used this to wake people up to their need for Jesus Christ.

Folks, if you are a believer, that should be your prayer. We live in a world that is lost. We live in a world where there are thousands of people all around us that don't know Jesus Christ.

Is that the truth? Is that the truth? Are you awake this morning? Is it the truth? Are you concerned about that? Then, if nothing else, be praying.

That God uses this and any other circumstance our nation goes through to draw people to Him. Because can God use any circumstances? Yes. Yes.

Folks, do you think Elijah was excited when he saw that little cloud? Behold, there arises a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand.

[31:22] And he said, Go up to Ahab, prepare your chariot, and get you down. Then in verse 46, And the hand of the Lord was upon Elijah.

Folks, we are called to be a people of prayer. Elijah prayed. But think about what his prayer was really all about.

It wasn't for himself. It was for God's kingdom. I hope in our prayer life that's the number one thing, that we're praying for God's kingdom. In the end, guess what?

That's the only thing that matters, isn't it? So many other things. And we can pray for all things. The Bible says to do that. But just keep in mind so many of the things we pray for, guess what?

They're temporary, aren't they? They're temporary. Pray for your health. There's nothing wrong with that, but guess what about your health? What's the reality?

[32:21] It's temporary. Pray for your family. That's a good thing. You should love your family. Pray for them. It's temporary. Pray for your jobs. Pray for your homes.

Pray for all those things. It's all good, but it's temporary. Pray for God's kingdom. Pray for people's hearts to be turned to Him. Guess what? That's eternal. That's eternal.

Folks, lift up this world we live in that eyes will be opened to what truly matters, and that's Jesus Christ. live in a way that points people to Jesus Christ.

Pray in a way that points people to Jesus Christ. I truly believe that that's what God desires. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

It avails much for God's kingdom, first and foremost. Let's bow our heads. Lord God, I thank You for this day that You've given us, and I thank You for Your Word. that we can look at a man like Elijah that was no different than we are, but as we can see in His prayer life, that the end result of His prayer didn't lift Him up, didn't improve His own life, but appointed people to You.

[33:37] I pray, Lord, that in our prayer lives and the lives that we live out each and every day, that each and everything we do points people to Jesus Christ. That in times of trouble and difficulty, that we don't get caught up in the anger and in the debate, but we point people to Jesus.

Help that to be our first and foremost goal each and every day of our lives. Lord, I believe that You desire that we make a difference in our lives for You, so help us to do that in any way that we can. Help us to be the people that You want us to be. Help us to never lose hope and to know that even when there's a little cloud, that's all it takes. Help us to know that You're a God that is ready to work, that You're a God that's ready to pour Your Spirit out.

Lord, just help us to desire it. And we ask and pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.