

The Prayer that has an Effect

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[0:00] So we have Brother Woolley here from Southland Baptist Church down in Kansas City, down in Belton. And he's on staff there with Brother Gary Berry that many of you met and know.

! Brother Berry's a good friend and been a big help as I walk through the challenges of the cancer and all the things there. But Brother Woolley, why don't you come and share with us this morning what God has put upon your heart for us here today, Brother.

Thank you, Brother. Well, good morning. Good to see you all here this morning. It's always a pleasure to be able to come to the house of God and come to be able to fellowship and minister to folks that you're going to share heaven with.

And it's a blessing to be able to do that. And so, as a pastor mentioned, I'm on pastoral staff there at Southland Baptist in Belton, Missouri.

And I've been there for a few years. And so we're just excited to be able to be here to see what the Lord has for us this morning. How many would say, just honestly, I'm just a little bit weary, a little bit tired this morning.

[1:10] Anybody like that? Okay. All right. Well, not that many. So I ain't going to have you stand and sing Father Abraham for a few minutes, okay? Now, if you don't know what the song Father Abraham is, just ask somebody else.

And they may demonstrate that for you for a few minutes, okay? So, but it is good to be here. But I would like to have you stand as we read the Word of God this morning.

So if you would turn with me to the book of James. Book of James chapter 1. And as we look at this blessed book here, I want us to look beginning in verse 5.

And then we're going to turn a couple pages here to chapter 4, okay? So let's look here. James chapter 1, beginning in verse 5.

Scripture says, If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraided not. And it shall be given him.

[2:11] But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord.

James chapter 4 says in verse 2. Ye lust and have not, ye kill and desire to have and cannot obtain. Ye fight and war. And let's repeat the next phrase here to the end of the sentence here.

Here we go, ready? Yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask and miss, that it may consume it upon your lusts.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer and ask the Lord to help us now as we look. The title of the message is, The Prayer That Has an Effect. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we just ask now that you would meet with us this morning. May you come down and pour into our hearts what we need. For Father, without you, this is just a meeting.

[3:19] We want you to work. We want you to say to us what you would have us to learn, what you'd have us to know, what you'd have us to follow.

God, I pray that you would be preeminent in this meeting. May you get the glory and honor for all that is said and done. And we ask, Lord, these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thank you. You may be seated. The prayer that has an effect. I want you to ask you a question. And I want you to think about what the answer would be in your life.

The question is this. If the Lord stopped answering your prayers, how soon would you notice? You see, the answer to that question can give us a good barometer, a good idea of how effectual our prayer life is.

What God is doing, what God is not doing. And so, as we look here this morning, let me just say this.

[4:24] I've seen God work more in prayer meetings in my ministry and in the years that God has given me than in practically any other ministry that the church has.

Now, I hope that's not a shock to you. I hope that's a reality. Because God works when God's people ask, when God's people pray.

Charles Spurgeon said this. The condition of the church may be very accurately gauged by its prayer meetings. If God be near a church, it must pray.

If he be not near, one of the first tokens of his absence will be a slothfulness in prayer.

End quote. You see, the prayer meeting is what God would have us to do to approach the throne of grace to obtain grace.

[5:23] Hebrews chapter 4. In the time of need. So, what is prayer? And how can our prayers have an effect? Let's think of the first thing.

There's two words that I'd like to talk about this morning before we get into the meat of the message that has to do with prayer. The first one, we've already said a few times in the scripture.

The first one is ask. If we ask the question, what is prayer? The one word that comes out more often, it is the word ask.

Now, oftentimes, I'll hear something like this. Well, I don't know how to pray. Now, there's two different types of people that say that.

The people that say, I don't know how to pray, and I don't want to know how to pray. And then there's the people that say, I don't know how to pray, and I would like to know how to pray.

[6:26] So, how do we pray? Well, my response to those folks that ask that question over the years is, well, do you know how to ask?

Everybody asks questions, don't they? We ask questions almost every day, probably several times a day. Do we know how to ask? And then I might get a question like this. Well, how do I ask?

And then I will quickly respond, well, you just did. You see how easy that is? You see, we have a God who loves to hear from his children.

He wants us to ask. He wants us to come to his throne and ask. We have a great Heavenly Father. And he wants us to talk to him. And one of the main words here in prayer is the word ask. A few years ago, there was a church up in the middle of Michigan in a rural area.

[7:42] And the church sat in between two perpendicular roads, one going in one direction, one going in the other direction. And on down both of those roads, about a quarter of a mile, half a mile, there were a group of houses.

And some of the people that lived in those houses were members of that church. Well, one day, the women got together and decided that they were going to paint the side of the church or a section of the church that needed painting.

So they had a day in which they set up. And the ladies went out there and they had a good time fellowshiping and painting the church. The color was white, by the way, but that's why they painted.

And as they were getting finished up for the day and they were getting ready to go, storm clouds became very evident. They were rolling in pretty quick. One of the ladies looked at the other one and said, Oh, man, if it rains on the church, then all the things that we just did is going to be a wash. And it's going to be difficult because the paint's going to be ruined. Well, as the ladies were out there, some of the ladies brought their kids with them to play and things like that.

[8:59] There's a six-year-old that just happened to be the pastor's son. But he overheard the ladies talking about that. And he just looked at them and says, Well, why don't you pray that God would stop the rain?

And the ladies kind of looked at each other and looked at him. And then they watched this six-year-old boy get up and he went to the parking lot of the church.

And he tucked his head between his legs. And he began to pray that God would hold the rain. And as the ladies were watching the storm clouds rolled in, it appeared, based on what their testimony was, the storm clouds went in one direction and in the other direction and drenched the houses down those roads.

And not one drop of rain touched the church. Now, folks, if God can answer the prayer of a six-year-old boy in simple faith, would he not listen to his people who come to him in faith and pray?

Notice in James chapter 1, the Scripture says, Verse 6, But let him ask in faith. Now, we know that without faith it's impossible to what?

[10 : 32] Please him. It is impossible to please the Lord without faith. The Bible says, Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. So if we're not trusting God, if we're not walking with God, if we're not walking by faith, we're literally sinning against God because we're not trusting him.

And if we're praying a prayer not in faith, not believing God, then the Bible tells us here, verse 7, For let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord.

How effectual is our prayers. Now, the first word we talked about is ask. God loves to hear from his people.

The second word I want to bring out is the word breath or breathe. Now, if we stop breathing, we will eventually what?

If we stop praying, guess what? Our prayers will be ineffective if we stop praying. And we're not going to have because we don't ask.

[11 : 38] Right? We have not because we ask not. And our spiritual life is literally walking around on this earth without breath, without the Spirit of God moving.

And doesn't Ephesians chapter 5 tell us to pray in the Spirit? How often should we pray? Well, how often should you breathe? That's why the Bible says pray without ceasing.

All right? It gives us strength because we're constantly at the throne room of grace. We're constantly asking. We're constantly leaning on God, leaning on the Lord to help us, to give us wisdom, to help us to walk, to help us to talk, to help us to be able to share the gospel with those that God brings our way because he is the Lord of the harvest.

And if we cease to breathe, we will die. Spiritually speaking, we will be ineffective for the cause of Christ if we do not pray.

Now, one might ask, why is prayer so important? Well, let me just say that one of the reasons why prayer is so important is because the lack of prayer limits God.

[13 : 01] You say, wait a minute. You mean an almighty, omnipotent God is limited when we cease to pray? That's what the scripture says. In Psalm chapter 78, verse 41, it says, yea, they turned back and tempted God and limited the Holy One of Israel.

The Bible says in Mark chapter 6 that Jesus could do no mighty work there because of their unbelief, and he marveled because of their unbelief. Isn't it amazing that you can have a God who created the world and created the universe with just speaking the words, and he comes to earth, and he's amazed.

He's amazed at the people's unbelief in him. He was also amazed at the people's faith in him. There was one thing that amazed Jesus, and that was people's faith and people's unbelief.

You see, it limits God. Now, think of King Ahaz back in the Old Testament. God comes to King Ahaz and says, King Ahaz, ask of me anything.

Ask of me a sign. Ask of me anything and I will give it to you. King Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt God.

[14 : 26] You see, King Ahaz said, basically in his heart, because of his pride, I've got this myself. I can do this my own way. I've got this.

I don't need God. I don't need you and I will not ask. You see, the lack of prayer limits God.

Why? Because of the pride in our hearts when we say, I've got this. I can do this myself. This day, I'm just going to go about my day and God's not going to be in my thoughts.

God's not going to be in my ask and asking him for direction. He's not going to be there. He's there, but he's not going to be preeminent in my life today.

I've got this myself. There's a way that seemeth right unto a man and the in thereof are the ways of death. And King Ahaz, because of his pride, said, I will not ask.

[15 : 24] And so you know what? God didn't give him anything. God turned to the house of Judah and says, okay, Judah, I'm going to give you a sign.

I'm going to give you something that only I can do. You know what that sign was? Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son and ye shall call his name Emmanuel, God, with us.

Only God can do that. So he went from Ahaz to the house of Judah all because Ahaz says, I'm not going to. Now folks, how many times in our life or in the days in which God has given us that we go about our day and we lack getting anything from God simply because we don't ask, because we think we've got it ourselves, or just because we don't believe God will.

Have we ever prayed to God and before the prayer meeting was ever over, you didn't believe God was going to do what you just asked him to do? That's the prayer of unbelief.

Now, if prayer limits God, how can we have prayers that have an effect? if our prayers are going to have an effect, then we must, our will must come into union with God's will.

[16:56] Does that make sense? Now, let me give you an example. Remember when the disciples asked the Lord, teach us to pray, and the Lord said, Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Do you remember that? The Lord's prayer. And then he says, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Now, Jesus said, that's how we are ought to pray. It's a model prayer. Now, when he says to pray that God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven, that implies that God's will may not be done on earth as it is in heaven, and we need to pray for it to be done.

Make sense? All right, let me give you another example. In 2 Peter 3, verse 9, the Bible says, God is not willing that any should perish, but all will come to repentance.

Amen? That's what God is not willing to do. Or excuse me, he's not willing that any should perish. Now, are people perishing and going to hell on earth? Take a deep breath and let it out.

[18:10] two people have just went out into eternity on this globe. Where are they going? Folks, there are people that are dying and going to hell on this earth.

That's not God's will. So, let's think about this. Is God's will being done in heaven today? Amen.

God's will is being done in heaven today. Perfect. So, let me ask you another question. If sin, and I'll just give you a hint, if sin is committed on this earth, that's not God's will.

Is God's will perfectly being done on earth today? No. So, he's asking us to pray that God's will in your life will be done here as it would be in heaven.

And in order for that to happen, we must pray. Now, let's think about this for a moment. The Bible tells us in Isaiah 59, 16, a very solemn verse that says this, as God is looking around, the Bible says, he saw, he saw no man and wondered that there was no intercessor.

[19:29] God's looking around, he's saying, he's in amazement, he's in wonder, why is there not an intercessor? Now, I'm going to say this, I think there's Bible weight to it, I can't prove it necessarily 100% in the Bible, but I believe that when people get saved, oftentimes, God's people are praying for that soul in some way.

Ain't you so glad somebody was praying for you to get saved? Ain't you so glad God sent someone your way to tell you about the gospel?

Whether it was a family member, a friend, whether it was an invite to church, whether it was a pastor, whether it was a radio speaker, wherever it might be, God did something in your life, and oftentimes, he does it when there's an intercessor that asks.

There's a story that takes place in our life when my wife and I was engaged a number of years ago, way back, somewhere around 1989.

We were attending a church. The name of the church in Kentucky was Hard Money Baptist Church. It was in the town of Hard Money, so hence, that's the name.

[20:51] And of course, your reaction was the same reaction as mine, because I was from the south side of Chicago, we moved down to Kentucky because that's where my parents were originally born, and so they built a house down there after I graduated high school, and so we started attending there.

Hard Money Baptist Church, the dynamic there was they didn't have a lot of teenagers at the time. They had a number of college and career people, my age, 18, and up to 25 or so. and so there's a number of kids that some were, most of them were unmarried, and of course, Melissa and I was engaged at the time.

Well, during this time, one of the people in the church invited a man by the name of Rodney. Rodney was a tall man, 22, 23 years old at the time, and Rodney was very faithful to come to church, but Rodney was lost.

And every Sunday morning, every Sunday night, Wednesday night, he would be there. He would sit pretty much right over here in the auditorium, and when the invitation would come, everybody would stand up, and many of the members of the church who knew Rodney, knew Rodney needed to be saved, would look at, stare at the back of his head.

[22:16] Is Rodney going to come forward and get saved? Months went by. The Spirit of God worked in many of those services, if not all, and you could see Rodney grabbing the pew.

You could see Rodney swaying. You could see Rodney was under conviction, but Rodney would not move. One Sunday afternoon, the pastor got us all together in that age group, except for Rodney.

We went down in the basement, and we stood in a circle, and pastor said this, he said, let's pray for Rodney, that Rodney would get saved.

And so, the young people were going around in that circle, and they were saying things like this, oh God, save Rodney, oh God, don't let Rodney go to hell, oh God, please save him.

And as those young people were going around and praying for Rodney, the prayer began to change. And it changed from, oh God, please save Rodney, to oh God, thank you Lord for what you're going to do.

[23:35] You ever met in a prayer meaning that nurtured faith? That was one of them. Where God's people were praying, and God's people began to believe God's going to do it.

After that prayer meeting, we dismissed, and that Sunday night, an invitation call came. Rodney was there in the same spot he always was.

And as soon as the invitation hymn began to play without hesitation, Rodney came forward and got saved. You know what God was doing, I believe?

He was looking and he was saying, where are my intercessors? there they are. There's my intercessors. And therefore, Rodney gets saved.

God's people began to have the heart, earnest desire to see a soul saved and begin to cry out to God, and they that call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

[24:39] And Rodney did that that night. Folks, wouldn't it be a sad story for God to be looking around today and saying, there's your neighbor across the street and I don't see an intercessor.

There's your co-worker you've been working with for a number of years and I'm looking and I'm not seeing anybody. I'm not seeing an intercessor.

I'm not seeing one that's going to call out to me and ask. And we have not because we ask not.

What about your family members that may even be on the prayer list?

Friends, have we really had a get together where God's people got together and we got into an assembly and we prayed for God to move?

As God gives us burdens and he does that, are we lifting those burdens back up to him? Can God look down and say, yes, I see my intercessors?

[25:59] Wasn't that the case in the life of Elijah? James chapter 5, let's look here real quick. In James chapter 5, notice it says this in verse 16.

The last part of verse 16 says, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. And I've heard people say, well, I'm just not righteous enough, so I don't believe God's going to answer my prayers.

I'm just not, I'm not Elijah quality. But folks, do you realize if you're born again here this morning that God calls you righteous?

God does that. He calls you righteous. The Bible uses the word saints some almost 60 times in the New Testament. You know what saint means?

Holy ones, righteous ones. God calls us righteous. Now he says, the effectual prayer of a righteous man avails much.

[27:11] And then he goes on to give us an example of a man by the name of Elijah. And he goes on to say Elijah was just like any other man like we are.

He had the same passions as we do. I mean, he laughed like we do. He probably told jokes like we do. I mean, he was just a normal, you look at him, he's just a normal person.

The difference is he had a prayer life that had an effect because he believed God.

Now think about this. The scripture gives us an example. Verse 17, notice the last part. It says he prayed earnestly that it might not rain. And it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

You say, wait a minute. What happened here in this story? Well, Elijah looked around one day and says, you know what, God?

[28:14] Your people are apostatizing. They're worshiping idols. They're going off in their own direction. They're not believing you. They're not following you. They're not worshiping you.

And so God, that's a problem. So then he began to look at what God says, his will. And in the book of Deuteronomy, it says this.

God said to his people, if you apostatize against me and you commit idolatry, then I'm going to shut up the heavens and it will be like brass. That means this, the heavens are going to be like an orange kind of glow in the skies.

There's not even going to be a cloud in the sky. I'm going to shut up the heavens, God said. But the problem was this. Elijah was living in a time when they were apostatizing and it was still raining. That's why Elijah prayed. Isn't it interesting that God did not follow through with his promise until one man lined up his will with God's will.

[29 : 21] There's God's intercessor and God shut up the heavens. You see that? God's waiting for his people to say, are you going to believe me? Are you going to trust what I said in my word?

And so Elijah prayed earnestly. It wasn't some just formal prayer or repetitive prayer. It was an earnest prayer. God, will you shut up the heavens?

This is what you promised to do. Do it. God did for three and a half years. People were dying. Animals were dying. There was an extreme drought.

People were suffering. And at the end of three and a half years, close to it, God comes to Elijah and says, Elijah, I'm going to make it rain again. This was before the Mount Carmel experience.

Do you realize Elijah went to Mount Carmel knowing that God was going to give the victory because he knew God's people were going to repent and get back with God because he knew God was getting ready to send the rain.

[30 : 26] And so he went to Mount Carmel knowing God was going to give the victory. And God did. Amen? Now, think about it this. After that, after that, Elijah's looking around and it's not raining.

There's a revival. the nation of Israel. They get right. They begin to worship God. Once again, the prophets of Baal have been destroyed. And so Elijah turns to his servant and says this, go up over here on the hillside and I want you to look at the skies.

I want you to come back to me and let me know if God's sending the rain. You know what Elijah did? Elijah got on his knees, his hands between his knees and he began to earnestly pray that God would send the rain.

You say, wait a minute, why would Elijah pray something that God already told him he was going to do? Because God's waiting for an intercessor. You see that?

He's waiting for somebody to believe him. For we walk by faith and not by sight. God's God. And so Elijah earnestly prayed one time.

[31 : 43] Servant comes back, no, nothing's going on in the sky. Two times, three times, four times, all the way up to seven times, Elijah's like, God, send the rain, you promised, you promised to do it, your nation's coming back to you.

And the servant went up to the hill and he says, there's a cloud forming like the shape of a man's hand. And Elijah says, oh, amen, praise God, we can get up now, we can stop praying.

Why? Because God's given the answer. See, prevailing prayer doesn't have to be long, drawn out, and complicated. Prevailing prayer just needs to prevail. It just needs to be prayer of faith, of believing God.

And Elijah prayed, and the rain came. And it came in such a way that there was flash flooding.

Amen? Man, we know about that. God was sending the rain. And let me ask you this. As you study God's word and God gives you burdens, are you lifting them back up to the Lord?

[32 : 54] Tell you another story real quick. In our ministry in Kansas, I pastored a church church for about 17 years, began to have Tuesday night prayer meetings.

And so seven o'clock, and so we began those prayer meetings, and the prayer meetings was basically, God, we have a number of needs.

Don't we all have needs? We have a number of needs, God. We're going to just give them back to you. I have you deal with them as you will. One of the needs we had was we had an organ over here on this side with no organist.

We had a piano player, prayer. And so we began to meet on Tuesday, and one of those needs was mentioned. So the first night we came, we had a couple people show up.

One of the ladies walked in and says, where's everybody at? And folks, that didn't startle me, because you see, prayer meetings, there's usually only 2% of the people in the congregation show up to prayer meetings.

[34:06] And that said, it should be 92%, amen, as God gives the allowance. But it's usually, across the board, 2%, same way with witnessing, going out and telling people about Christ, 2%.

And so I didn't respond to that, because that, you know, you can get in the flesh and that, and start complaining. Folks, listen, complaining does nothing to please God.

So we sat down and we began to have a prayer meeting. One of those needs were, Lord, you had thousands of musicians, and the temple.

We're just asking for one. Organists are hard to come by, especially out in the country, when you're 15 minutes away from nothing. And about two, maybe three weeks later, a lady about the age that I met now comes into the church.

She says, yes, I was driving by the other day, came by this country road, looked up, seen your church, thought I'd give it a shot. Amen. Great to have you here.

[35:14] Hope you get a blessing. About two, three weeks later, she joined the church. In the middle of that, she said, hey, I noticed you don't have an organ player. I can play the organ. Amen.

Let's go. And she played it beautifully. You see how the Lord works? If we just ask. People were saying, wait a minute, what's going on in the Tuesday night prayer meetings?

People were getting changed. People were getting moved by God. Folks, we began to run more on Tuesday night prayer meetings than we had on Sunday night services because God was working.

I remember the end. I mean, we would be in a prayer meeting, start seven o'clock, it would be 930 before we would get done and people would be looking around and say, where did the time go?

Folks, when you're with an eternal God, time is of no essence.

I remember the end of one prayer meeting, one lady said this. She came up afterwards as people were leaving and she said this, Pastor, God was here today.

[36:21] God was here. Folks, I've been in prayer meetings where God was not there. Folks, when God is there, God's moving, God's changing hearts, people are getting saved out of prayer meetings.

Amen! Let me ask you this, is your prayer life one that has an effect? Can God come down and look at you and say, yes, I have my intercessors?

Do you have any burdens here in this church? I can think of some. Are we going to the throne room of grace and asking God to help in the time of need?

Let's go to the Lord in prayer. As our heads are bowed and eyes are closed, let me ask you this.

Maybe you say here today, you know, the Lord moved upon my heart and speaking to me this morning about a few things.

By upraised hand, I just say, yes, the Lord was working on me. Anyone like that this morning? The Lord burdened my heart. Thank you for that hand. Lord, bless you. Anyone else? Thank you for that hand.

[37:37] Anyone else? Lord, it was moving upon my heart. Anyone else? Maybe you're here this morning saying, well, you know, I had a prayer life, but I just stopped praying.

I didn't see God working or there was something wrong. I just don't pray like I should. I'd like for you to pray for me. Anyone like that this morning?

I need help. Would you pray for me? Father, we thank you for this time. We thank you, Lord, for the message that you've given us.

We just ask God that we would take this message. And Lord, I pray that we would, in faith, believe you. And believe what you will do. Believe what you can do and pray in accordance with thy will, that you would work.

May the power of God work mightily in our lives, simply because, just like that six-year-old boy, we ask in faith. God, we'll turn the service over to your decisions and your work.

[38:53] God, will you do it? We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Let's all stand as we have a hymn of invitation. If you need to come to pray, if the Lord's directing your heart to pray and ask God for anything that he's burdened your heart for, will you do that as the instruments play?