

Faithful in Prayer

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning, church. Turn with me in your Bibles, if you have a Bible, to the book of James. We're looking at James chapter 5, verses 13 through 18.

This summer we've been going through this very practical book written by the brother of Jesus himself, who was the leader of the early church in Jerusalem, and we're coming to the end of it. So let me read James chapter 5, verses 13 through 18 this morning. Is anyone among you suffering?

Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? 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 will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another that you may be healed.

[1 : 15] The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. 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. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

I'm just going to say up front, I was outside all day yesterday. It was dusty, and I have allergies. So, just to hopefully reassure you.

Moving on. The sermon is about prayer. Over the years, I've had several conversations with people who have come to Trinity from all different parts of this country and all over the world.

And many people have shared with me about other churches that they've been part of in other places and how God has ministered to them and helped them through other churches that they've been part of in other places.

[2 : 25] And many people, especially, I've noticed a pattern that many people, especially from other parts of the world, have mentioned how important prayer is to their churches back home. So, in Korea, many churches have early morning prayer at 5 or 6 a.m. every weekday.

That's a common thing. Many people attend these daily early morning prayer meetings. In Africa, many churches meet to pray and worship for hours on end, multiple times a week.

In this church, for several years, we've had a ministry to Ethiopian and Eritrean immigrants. They worship in the Amharic language. And they often, I would say, at least a few times a year, they set aside a day or even a whole week where they encourage the whole church to fast and pray.

And when they do that, they usually set up prayer three times a day, morning, noon, and night.

They do it over a conference call because they live all over Connecticut. But that's just a normal, a pretty regular thing that they do.

And sometimes, as I've been talking with our brothers and sisters in Christ who've come to Trinity or come to the United States from other parts of the world, they'll ask me a question. Now, almost nobody asked it directly.

[3 : 41] But the question that they basically ask is, do American Christians really feel like they need to pray? Or why don't Christians here seem to value prayer that much?

And again, very few people say that directly, but many people over the years have raised that concern with me in one form or another. Now, we could say a few things.

I sometimes say that, you know, we can't completely measure our attitude toward prayer by the number and length of organized prayer meetings each week or even by the length of our own personal prayer time, right?

Jesus warned his disciples not to heap up empty words in prayer or think that they'll be heard for their many words. And at Trinity, we try not to over-program our life together, even when we're not

in the midst of a pandemic and a lot of the things we normally do we can't do.

Or have to limit in other ways. But we try not to over-program our church life, right? We don't want people to feel like I have to be at church every single night of the week for something or other. We try to integrate prayer into the rest of the things that we do.

[4 : 53] But even with all those caveats, I think that our brothers and sisters in Christ who have raised this question and expressed this concern are noticing a real problem, a real issue.

For many of us, if we're honest, prayer is not the engine that drives our spiritual lives. Instead, it's more like an afterthought. We sometimes get to it, sometimes don't.

We don't always feel much of a need to pray. Some of us might say, well, you know, I've tried to understand how prayer works. I mean, if God knows everything in advance and He sovereignly orders our lives, then He's going to do what He's going to do anyway.

Like, why do I have to pray? But here's the thing. Even if we don't completely understand all the mysteries of prayer, there are all kinds of things that we use and benefit from every day that we don't mostly understand how they work.

Right? Most of us, we go to the doctor and the doctor prescribes some medications. Okay, 10 to 20% of you out there are in the health professional field. You might understand it, but the other 80, 90% of us don't.

[6 : 02] At least, we don't really understand how all the chemical reactions work. Right? In depth. But we still take the medicine. And most of us don't really fully understand how our car engines work.

But we still get in cars or ride buses and benefit from them. Right? We use and benefit from all kinds of things that we don't completely understand.

And so why not with prayer? The passage we're looking at today does not explain all the mysteries of prayer, but it calls us to be people of prayer.

As we've said throughout this series, the book of James was written to people who are experiencing trials of various kinds. And really one of the questions James is addressing is, how do we not just survive, but thrive spiritually through trials?

And James begins and ends with two themes. The themes of patience and prayer. So beginning in chapter one, one of the first things he says is, let steadfastness finish its work so that you may become mature and complete.

[7 : 16] Patience. Right? Hanging in there. Persevering. And prayer. At the beginning, James says, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God.

And again, last week we looked at patience. And patience doesn't just mean being passive and not doing anything. It means actively trusting and waiting upon the Lord and sowing to the future, but waiting for God to do what only he can do.

And today we're looking at prayer. Patience and prayer, of course, go together. Right? It's hard to sustain a life of patience apart from prayer.

So what we'll see today is the importance of prayer for different people facing different circumstances. We'll see first, in verse 13, individual believers praying through life's ups and downs. Second, verse 14 and 15, we'll see the church elders praying for those in special need. Third, verse 16, we'll see fellow Christians praying for one another as we confess sins.

[8 : 21] And four, verse 17 and 18, we'll see the power of prayer in all circumstances. So first, individual believers praying through life's ups and downs.

Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. The pronouns in this verse are all singular. Right? So James is speaking to every one of us individually. And he uses two words that cover the whole range of human emotions. Suffering, which literally could be translated feeling bad. Right?

Some of us might be feeling bad. We're in pain or we're afflicted or troubled or anxious. And James says, pray. And the next word he uses is cheerful.

Right? It's a word that means confident, enthusiastic, happy. And James says, if that's where you are, sing praise. Right? Some of us pray when we're suffering.

[9 : 18] Right? When we hit a crisis. That's what really drives us to pray. God, help me. I really need you. But then once we're feeling better, we get complacent and we just, our prayer life dwindles.

Others of us might be the reverse. Right? Maybe you love to sing praise songs. Maybe you just thank God every day for your food and the daily blessings that he gives us.

But then when life really goes bad, maybe that's where you struggle to pray. Right? To be honest with God in the seasons of disappointment, to talk with, to submit to the Lord when we maybe don't like how things are shaking out for us.

Right? But whether we're feeling bad or feeling great, our faith in God is being tested. In both situations, the temptation is to retreat into ourselves and our feelings.

Right? Either retreating into our bad feelings and just sitting there in our own cave. Right? Or to retreat into our good feelings and become very self-satisfied and self-focused and all about self-fulfillment and that's all about what our life sort of revolves around.

[10:42] But James says, no, in both of these circumstances, in both of these feelings, there's an invitation from God to bring our emotions before him. Prayer helps us, one person said, prayer helps us to sanctify our pleasures and consecrate our pains.

And let me just say, prayer doesn't come completely naturally to any of us. Right? All of us are still learning to pray.

And we'll all be learning to pray until the day we see Jesus face to face. The one who our prayers are ultimately directed towards.

But one of the best ways to learn to pray in all circumstances is to spend time in the biblical book of Psalms. Now the Psalms speak out of all kinds of outward circumstances and inward emotions.

There are Psalms of Lament. About a third of the Psalms fall in this category. The Psalmist is crying out in agony, troubled by uncertainty, oppressed by enemies, betrayed by friends.

[11:48] And on the other hand, there are Psalms of Praise where the Psalmist is filled with gratitude and overcome with wonder and dancing for joy. And the Psalms help us to put, to verbalize our prayers and praises in all the seasons of life, in all the seasons of our soul.

Back in the 4th century, the Egyptian church leader Athanasius wrote a treatise on the Psalms. And it's a great, it's not that long. You can find it online if you just look for Athanasius on the Psalms.

And he wrote this. This is part of what he wrote. He said, in the Psalter, in the Psalms, you learn about yourself. You find depicted in it all the movements of your soul, all its changes, its ups and downs, its failures and recoveries.

Moreover, whatever your particular need or trouble, from this same book you can select a form of words to fit it so that you learn the way to remedy your ill.

He says, you can take its words upon your lips as if they were your own. You see, the Psalms can teach us how to pray over the course of our lives. Some people have said that the people who appreciate the Psalms most are elderly people who have been through a wide range of life's experiences.

[13:04] Because, you know, sometimes you'll read a Psalm and you'll think, boy, the Psalmist is really angry here. Or, you'll read a Psalm and think, the Psalmist is so happy and I'm not there.

Or, he expresses this pure trust in the Lord and I'm struggling. Right? So, but you see, the Psalms are teaching us.

Teaching us to pray over the course of our lives and so, many people who have been, who have walked with the Lord for a long time and walked with the Psalms for a long time have come to treasure them more and more because they help us put into words our prayers in all circumstances. So, that's the first thing. Our individual prayers help us remain steady and seeking the Lord through life's ups and downs. Second theme, verse 14 and 15, James talks about the elders' prayer for those in special need.

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church. Now, James uses two different words in verse 14 and verse 15, both of which are translated sick.

[14:13] The word in verse 14 can be translated either sick or weak. So, in other places in the Bible, the same word refers to people who were blind, lame, paralyzed, frail, needy, or weakened by old age.

The word in verse 15 has a sense of being weary and worn out. So, you know, think about that sort of set of ideas, right?

Being sick or weak, weary, or worn out. In this passage, James seems to be envisioning a situation where someone is pretty seriously sick or weak, right?

Possibly even bedridden, right? He doesn't say go to the elders. He says call for the elders. In other words, the elders are going to come to you because you can't go to them, right? Perhaps someone's even confined to bed, right?

They can't leave their house or the hospital. And when somebody is sick or weak, weary or worn out, whether it's physically, emotionally, or mentally, or spiritually, they can easily become disconnected from the Lord and from the rest of the church body.

[15 : 24] And so, James tells them call upon the leaders of the local church body to come and pray over them so their connection with the Lord is not weakened, but rather strengthened, right?

Their trust in the Lord can be not weakened, but rather strengthened through this trial. And James says the elders should pray anointing the sick person with oil in the name of the Lord.

Now, oil isn't magic. The book of Acts records some, several instances where people were healed through prayer and God's miraculous work apart from any oil. But oil was a symbolic act of setting someone apart for God's special attention and care.

Throughout the scriptures, oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit's presence and power. So, the elders in anointing someone with oil are very powerfully reminding them that God's Holy Spirit is with you and upon you and here with us as we bring you before the Lord.

Just like people would bring people before Jesus like the four men brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus, right? And lowered him down through the roof, right?

[16 : 34] That's what the elders are doing in a situation like this. It's bringing the sick person before the merciful Savior. So, let me say to you, right, for those of you who I can see here, right, you're all well enough to come out to church, right?

And many of you at home are still able to, you know, go for a walk, get outside of your house, right? But if you, let me say, you might become seriously ill someday.

Weak, weary, worn out. Maybe it's an acute and life-threatening illness. Maybe it's a chronic condition that just wears you down over time. And if, especially if you find yourself becoming more and more disconnected from the rest of the church body because of your illness or weakness, do what this verse says.

Call for the elders of the church. We will come and pray with you. If we can't come right away, we'll pray, or, you know, if we're prohibited from coming because the hospital isn't allowing visitors at the point, we'll pray with you over the phone at the very least.

Right? Some sicknesses are so debilitating that it becomes hard to think and hard to even put a sentence of prayer into words. Sometimes the mental fog is completely overwhelming.

[17 : 54] Right? And you, and it's, and it, it's hard to even pray for yourself. That's where you need to ask others to come and pray with and for you. So let me encourage you to, to, to ask for prayer.

Don't be too proud to ask for prayer when you really need it. In verse 13, verse 15, sorry, we see the result of the elder's prayer. 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. Now, this verse raises a few questions. So let me address three of them before we go on. First, what is the prayer of faith?

Some people say that this is a special kind of prayer where God on certain occasions gives his people a special kind of faith to confidently believe that the sick person will be physically healed in response to that prayer.

But you know, that's not how James describes faith in other places. Whenever James talks about faith, he's not talking about confidently expecting a certain outcome.

[19 : 03] He's talking about confidently trusting the character of God. You see, when we put our faith in outcomes, we may be disappointed. We may become very disillusioned.

But when we place our faith in the character of God, even when the outcome may or may not be what we want, God is still there.

And he's still with us. And he always is who he always has been. Now, if you look back at chapter 1, verse 6, James uses a similar phrase.

He says, if you lack wisdom, ask God in faith with no doubting. And we explained that phrase back then when we looked at that passage. But what James means there is ask in faith, in trust, trusting God's generosity and goodness.

And with no doubting. That means not wavering in our loyalty to him. We might feel uncertainty, of course, and worry at times. But James says, don't be double-minded.

[20 : 04] Right? Don't waver in your loyalty to the Lord. But ask God, trusting his generosity and goodness. So, the prayer of faith here, I think, means trusting that God will hear our prayer and give us, whether it's wisdom or healing or whatever it is that he knows we truly need.

So, I think that's the prayer of faith. Second question, what does it mean that the sick person will be saved and raised up by the Lord? Now, some people say this is a promise of physical healing as long as we pray in faith.

And then, if we don't see physical healing, then maybe we didn't pray with faith or with the right kind of faith. But again, that's not what James says here.

At the end of chapter 4, James has already reminded us that our lives and our circumstances are in the Lord's hands. He says, we should say, if it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.

So, our plans and our prayers are ultimately subject to God's sovereign will. And here, in verse, chapter 5, verse 15, James uses two verbs, save and raise up, that can mean a whole range of things.

[21 : 16] Sometimes, those verses refer to someone being physically healed or made whole or getting up out of bed. But those verbs can also have a spiritual and an eternal sense.

In fact, James uses the word save in four other places in the book and they all refer to eternal salvation. Right? Someone being right with God, being rescued by God forever.

So, what does this mean? The Lord will save and raise up the sick person. I think we need to let the Lord in every circumstance define precisely how and when he chooses to save and to heal, to raise up and to renew his sick and weak and weary children whom he dearly loves.

Right? Sometimes, God answers prayers with physical healing even immediately and there are people who can legitimately testify to that and we can pray boldly for that.

We don't have to apologize about praying for physical healing. But God also answers prayers by giving emotional healing or resilience that we, bringing us through a hard situation that we never thought we could make it through or restoring broken relationships.

[22 : 35] I've seen examples where relationships that had been broken or estranged for years were reconciled and strengthened through someone's physical illness or giving renewed spiritual insight and vitality.

Right? God sometimes answers our prayers in all kinds of ways that aren't always what we would expect but any and all of those are reasons to praise God. This week we sent out a written reflection to the church email list from Rick Schneider who Matt prayed for earlier in the service. Rick has been at home with ALS for almost two years now. So some of you may know him but some of you may not know him if you've come to the church more recently especially. And the elders of Trinity have done exactly what this passage says.

We've gone to his house, we've anointed him with oil, we've prayed over him, we've actually done so multiple times and many others have prayed for and with him as well. And the Lord so far has not healed him of ALS but the Lord has responded to our prayers and the prayers of many for him. Let me just share an excerpt from what Rick wrote recently. You can read the whole thing if you got it through the church email list or ask us for it if you didn't.

[23 : 52] He wrote this a couple weeks ago. He said, Recently I heard about a major breakthrough in ALS treatments. I was encouraged to think that maybe this would be the way the Lord might free me from this pestilence.

But I also was surprised to realize that my own hope did not seem to waver or change even after I discovered that the treatment probably wouldn't apply to my own specific type of ALS.

And then I realized that this hope within me that seems to have been produced over this last year has almost nothing to do with the certainty of my healing whether that is here or in eternity.

Instead I realized that I am more and more certain that God's love will still be alive in my heart tomorrow. That is a new sort of hope for me. Much of my life I've been amazed at God's gracious and loving work in saving me and giving me a wife and family and working some amazing miracles in our ministry.

But I have always been tempted to think that someday maybe that love would grow cold. My love would grow cold. And now I realize that my hope is not in any of these miraculous works or in the history of God's faithfulness to me but it really is in the fact that he will be faithful tomorrow.

[25 : 06] And in every tomorrow after that no matter what comes along. The prayer of faith will save the one who is sick and the Lord will raise him up.

And the end of the verse says if he's committed sins he'll be forgiven. Well that's the last question I want to deal with before we go on to the next verse. What's the connection James is making between sickness and sin? Now not every sickness is a result of sin that's why James says if. On the other hand some sicknesses are directly connected to specific sins otherwise James wouldn't make this comment at all. And if our sinful patterns have contributed to our physical illness or weakness we shouldn't ignore those sinful patterns.

We need to face them and deal with them. In fact sometimes dealing with our sinful habits is even harder than dealing with the unpleasant symptoms of a physical illness. But this verse gives us a great encouragement.

Even if our physical illness is completely the result of our foolish choices or ungodly habits we can come boldly to Jesus who is merciful and mighty to save.

[26 : 17] His power is sufficient not only to heal our broken bodies but to forgive our sins and save our souls. See Jesus didn't just come to heal people who get sick through no fault of their own.

He came to heal and save and show mercy to guilty sinners like us. And that is good news. We can come boldly before him and pray for all these things.

And that leads us to our third point. Right? We've seen individuals praying through life's ups and downs. We've seen the elders praying for those in special need. Third, we see fellow Christians praying for each other as we confess sins.

Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. James is going from specifically focusing on the elders praying for those in special need to generally focusing on any Christian praying for any other Christian.

And not just the sick person who has sinned can be forgiven but any Christian who has sinned can be forgiven through confession and prayer.

[27 : 23] So James' assumption here is that Christians will sometimes sin. Right? And he's telling us how to deal with it. And the right way to deal with sin is by acknowledging it for what it is and receiving prayer so that we are freed from its toxic influences.

Right? Now what does this look like practically? James doesn't spell out the details of what this looks like but from other biblical passages we can flesh this out a bit. So what might this look like if we have wronged another Christian?

Right? So example. Chapter 1 James says we should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Well, guess what? Probably many of us have fallen short in one of those ways.

Right? I can think of we can all probably all of us can think of times where we haven't lived up to that. Right? We've said things in haste and in anger that may not be completely true and certainly weren't completely helpful.

Now, what do we do? Well, as Christians we shouldn't just pretend it never happened and go on and just act like I never said it. Nope.

[28 : 39] And we shouldn't make excuses for ourselves. Right? No. The Christian way is go to the person that we have offended and say, I was wrong. I'm sorry.

Will you forgive me? That's a good way to begin an apology by the way. I was wrong. I'm sorry. And don't add the word but after that. Right?

You might need to explain exactly what you are saying that you're sorry for. So people know. but maybe if the person responds well especially you might even say, can you pray for me because I realize this is an area that I need to grow in.

Now, I just want you to stop and think about how unusual that kind of conversation is in the world that we live in. First of all, to confess wrongs without minimizing or making excuses.

That's pretty unusual. And second, for someone who has been wronged to not only forego retaliation but actively pray for that person's healing and growth.

[29 : 53] Extending forgiveness and blessing. That's also pretty unusual. And you know, both of those things are empowered by the love and transforming power of Jesus.

That we can honestly acknowledge our faults and shortcomings. And that we can graciously pray for someone, even someone who has wronged us.

Especially when they acknowledge that and repent, that we can pray specifically with them and for them in that way. We can even pray for someone who hasn't yet acknowledged it. Sort of from, that's more from a distance, right?

But that's a testimony to the love and power of Christ, right? Every one of our sins is a grievous offense against him, but Jesus doesn't only forgive our sins, he blesses us and prays for us and intercedes and advocates for us and seeks our healing and growth.

Now, what about secret sins? Right? Secret sins in our thoughts, in our hearts, or private sins that nobody else knows about? Things like jealousy, self-pity, lust, greed.

[31 : 10] What do we do with those things? How does this verse apply in those situations? Well, it is not wise or helpful to confess all of our secret sins to a large group of people, all at once, right?

Or to anyone indiscriminately, right? That's not wise. But if we are struggling with secret sins, if there are sins in our thoughts and our hearts that we are repeatedly falling into, that have a hold on us, it is unwise to keep that struggle completely within ourselves.

Because it's going to go one way or the other. And if those sins are, if we are not putting those sins to death by the power of God's word and prayer and his Holy Spirit, they will fester and grow within us and one day they will explode.

And that will be very ugly. And there will be a whole lot of damage to clean up. Especially when they've been festering and growing for weeks, months, years, without being brought into the light. So find a trusted brother or sister in Christ, tell them what sins you are struggling with or falling into and ask them to pray for you in the name of the Lord. Lord, you know, sometimes just doing that pops, it's like popping a balloon.

[32 : 35] It deflates the power of a secret sin that has become overwhelming. Right? And that's too big for us to deal with on our own. Sometimes simply bringing that into the light in the presence of a brother or sister in Christ who can pray for us and assure us of the truth of the gospel, God can work powerfully through that.

And if someone comes to you and confesses a sin that they are struggling with secretly, let me coach you a little how to respond. Don't just say, okay, that's really weird that you shared that with me.

Right? Don't say that. No. Right? You're, I mean, reality is, you might be no different from them. Right? You have things you're struggling with too.

So, but here's what you can do that is helpful. Remind them of the promises of God. 1 John 1 9, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

That's a good verse to share with someone who confesses a secret sin that they're struggling with in their thought life or in their hearts and remind them of that.

[33 : 57] And maybe you take a time to pray together. Maybe the person who starts by just confessing their sin to God while you listen, and then you pray for them and use the words of that scripture in your prayer for them.

Even read that scripture and pray that they would be assured of God's forgiveness and that they would know his purifying power prayer on an ongoing basis.

God can do wonderful things as we pray for one another in these kinds of ways. So, we've seen individual Christians praying through lives up and downs. We've seen the elders praying for those in special need.

We've seen fellow Christians praying for each other as we confess our sins. And finally, James concludes verse 16 through 17 and 18, a reminder of the power of prayer in all circumstances. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. It's one of the means through which God's power is displayed in our lives and in the world. And James urges us, don't neglect prayer, but exercise it.

[34 : 58] Right? The prayer, make prayer a personal habit, whether we're feeling bad or feeling great, call upon the elders if we have a special need, pray for one another that we, that God, we would not be led into temptation but delivered from evil.

And James concludes with the example of Elijah. Now, many of us think of Elijah and we think of him as a larger-than-life figure. Right? He did great miracles.

He even got taken up to heaven in the chariot of fire. That's pretty amazing. But James doesn't emphasize his heroic exploits. James says he was a human being with a nature just like ours.

You know, if you read the story of Elijah at the end of 1 Kings, you will see he boldly declared the truth to hostile audiences. He was resilient through trying circumstances. He was an example to other godly people of his time.

And God did powerful things through him. But he also got angry and depressed and afraid. One day he ran into the desert and he went into a cave and he said, God, I want to die.

[36 : 05] I'm done. Take me. No more. God said, go to sleep. God sent an angel to cook him a meal.

God said, eat and sleep. Sometimes that's what you need to do to recover from certain things. It's a means of grace, right? And then Elijah keeps traveling, but he's not totally in a right head space yet. The next thing he says is, I'm the only one left, Lord. I'm the only righteous person left in the whole world. Everyone's against me. Everyone's abandoned me.

You know, even your own people have left me in the dust. Now, that wasn't true. God said, uh-uh-uh. There's like 400 people who are still faithful and still trusting me and they're hiding out too, but I've got plenty of others.

Right? Elijah was dealing with self-pity. Right? I'm the only one left. Right? Here's the point. Like the rest of us, Elijah struggled with anger and fear and self-righteousness and self-pity.

[37 : 25] But through his trials and despite his flaws, he prayed. And James reminds us of a particular season in Elijah's life when the nation of Israel had fallen into great wickedness.

In fact, it says that the king at that time was the most wicked king that there ever had been in Israel. Worse than all of the rest. The whole nation was worshiping idols and all kinds of things were way out of whack.

People were, all kinds of people were being mistreated. God's name was not being honored. Elijah prayed that God would withhold the rain from the land to lead the king and the people to repentance and to acknowledge the one true God.

And God answered his prayer. And then after a season of judgment, Elijah prayed that God would pour out his mercy once again and restore the land to fruitfulness. And God answered his prayer.

You see, Elijah wasn't, Elijah had a big problem on his hands.

He wasn't just praying for his own ups and downs in life. He wasn't just praying for one other person in special need. He wasn't just praying for some other Christians or some other people in his fellowship or church.

[38 : 34] He was dealing with a national disaster. And God heard his prayer. Even for a huge problem, God hears and answers our prayer.

Whatever the circumstances we are facing, whatever the circumstances the world is in around us, he hears our prayer not because we're flawless, not because we're experts in prayer, but because Jesus has made a way for us.

Right? The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. What does it mean to be righteous? It means that we have been made right with God through the work of Jesus Christ. And that we can come before God through him with freedom and confidence.

And through him we can experience his power through prayer. So let's pray. Father, thank you for this exhortation and this invitation to prayer.

In all circumstances, on our own, with one another, we pray that prayer would come to pervade our lives more and more.

[39 : 45] Teach us, Lord, to pray in every season of our lives. Teach us to pray for one another and with one another. Teach us to pray for our nation and our world.

Thank you that you are a gracious and merciful God who hears and answers prayer. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.