

The Power of Prayer

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[0:00] If you're visiting today or passing through, my name's Corey. I'm one of the ministers here. And if you'd like to connect with us at all at the end of the service, I'll be down at the Connect desk. Would love to meet you. Would love to talk to you about getting connected here.

If you have a question, want to pray, anything like that, please do come and see me. We've got tea and coffee at the end of the service as well. So stick around for that. Hang out with one another. We are finishing the book of James today.

So we're in the very last look at it. And we end on a controversial passage. Controversial simply by way of interpretation. So there's lots of different ways to read the passage that David read for us. But at the same time, it is pretty clear about what it's about in general. So the text we read 13 to 20 and 13, we read, if you're suffering, pray.

And if you're cheerful, let that person sing praise. And sung praise is just prayer, sung. And then if you're sick, call the elders and have them come and pray for you.

[0:58] And then verse 15, the prayer of faith. And verse 16, pray for one another. And verse 16b, the prayer of the righteous person. And verse 17, Elijah prayed. And verse 18, Elijah prayed. So James wants you to pray.

That's what the passage is about. It's pretty clear. He's calling us to pray at the end of this epistle. And at the same time, the passage is pretty specific as well.

So in the short time that I've had in ministry, nine years, I think now I've been ordained. And I've gotten the opportunity in nine years to sit at people's deathbeds and to go visit the sick when they're very sick and pray with them.

So this is normal ministry. I know that David's, David Court's done that a lot more than me because he's a lot older than me. So he's done a lot of deathbed visits and prayers for the sick.

But my guess is probably every person in this room, if you're a believer and you've been in a church for any time, you've done the same thing. You've gone and visited somebody probably at some point who was sick. You prayed for them. That's normal ministry.

[1:59] So in general, this is talking about pretty normal ministry. At the same time, this passage is more specific than that. A few ways of reading it, and I'm going to give you one today. And we have to be responsible as we read the Bible to laws, rules of interpretation.

And that means that sometimes we come to passages where there are people in the same community of faith looking out at the history of the church that read the passage in multiple ways. And let me say that that's okay.

Today, the Westminster Confession comes to us and says something very helpful. It says, not every part of scripture is plain alike to all. The gospel is plain alike to all.

You can't help but find the gospel in the Bible. But you come to certain passages, and there are a couple different ways of reading them. But even in the specifics, if you read it slightly differently, you can still pull out the generalities and say, nevertheless, we see very clearly the main idea.

And the main idea today is to pray. And we'll talk about that in just a minute. But here, you know, if you don't read it carefully, and what I mean by that is read the subtext of this text in its context, then you would come to a number of different interpretations.

[3:10] A couple of those are, one, the Roman Catholic view of this passage. So, in Roman Catholicism and the Catechism of the Catholic Church from Vatican II, we learn that they regard this passage to teach something called extreme unction.

An extreme unction is when somebody is dying. You go, the priest goes and gives them the holy order of oil, consecrated oil. And upon their death, their sins will be remitted.

They'll have remission of sins because of that act of holy oil being given to them. And so, the prayer of the righteous person, a righteous person in verse 15, is the priest, the righteous person, who consecrates the holy oil.

That's called extreme unction. Or, on the very opposite end of the perspective, looking at this passage and thinking that it teaches faith healing, where you go visit the sick and you pray the prayer of faith over them, and they will be healed.

That's what the passage says, after all, will be healed. And the problem, of course, is that how many times have we gone and prayed for the sick and they didn't heal? They passed away, or they never recovered, really, from a chronic illness.

[4 : 18] And so, that's another way. And what happens in that scenario is we look up and say, the prayer of faith. That's what it takes to heal somebody. And that means somebody in this room who came to pray did not have enough faith.

And so, who's the, was it the elders that were doing the doubting or the sick person that was doing the doubting? Somebody. And then, that's a problem. Lots of ways to read this, but the problem is, is if you don't pay attention to the context, I think you'll get it slightly wrong.

And that's happened in those instances and a couple other ways in church history. So, let's think about it together. Let's look at the specifics. Understand what I want to suggest is the precise context here.

And then, that'll help us, secondly, to look at the generalities of what it teaches us. So, the way to talk about it specifically is under the heading, when God gets through to us. And then, secondly, the ministries that we're being given here, all of us, any Christian, the ministries that we have.

So, first, when God breaks through, when God gets through to us, through to our pride, really. Now, last week, we looked at the passage just before this. And in that passage, James is writing to a church, we learn, that's under pressure.

[5 : 28] He's writing to the rich. And I argued last week that the rich are not just material wealthy people. They are the religious elite that are actually oppressing the Jewish Christians that are scattered around the Mediterranean.

This week at General Assembly, we had delegates from different churches around the world. And one of them was from a country in Asia. And he said that a few years back, the government in his country came into his area of the country.

And they burned 300 churches and took away some of the pastors. And the pastors just disappeared. And he said this past year, 2026, I should say, in the spring, that one of his dear friends disappeared.

And they found his clothing and nothing else. Now, that's ministry oppression. It happens all over the world in different ways. And James is writing to some measure of that in different pockets around the Mediterranean to different degrees.

Now, that's why when you come to verse 13 in our passage, he gives you three different contexts you might be existing in. So, he says, is anybody among you suffering? Suffering meaning under the context of ministry oppression.

[6 : 39] Suffering, let him pray. But then he turns and says, but is anybody among you cheerful? So, are you living in a place, as James writes a letter that goes all around the Mediterranean, are you living in a place where things are okay?

Where you're not walking through hard circumstances like that? Well, sing, be cheerful. Sing praise to God. Pray as well. But then he turns, and this is different. He says, is anybody among you sick? And you can tell that it's not exactly the same as the first two. And the reason for that is because he camps out on it. I think that he spends the rest of the section on that question.

Is anyone among you sick? And the rest of the passage is dedicated ultimately to that. And so, he says, you know, it's different. Call the elders. Tell them to bring anointing oil.

Come and give the prayer of faith and you could be healed. So, this is, he spends more time on that more ink. And the question is, why? What's going on here that makes him do that?

[7 : 38] And we could spend the rest of the sermon just answering that question. How do you figure out what is going on underneath in the context, the subtext of this passage?

But I won't do it. Because otherwise, then we wouldn't have any application. And we need application. So, instead, let me just give you two ways to read this passage. Two proofs, I should say, from the text itself that help us to understand maybe what's going on here.

And the first is the fact that he goes to the story of Elijah. So, if you look down, you'll see in verse 17 and 18, when he's trying to get the people in the local churches to pray prayers of healing for the sick, he gives the example of Elijah.

And if you were to turn to this story that he mentions, 1 Kings 17, it would read a little bit differently than what you have here. Because he says, Elijah prayed fervently that it would not rain for three and a half years.

And it didn't. And then he prayed fervently that it would. And it did. But when you go to 1 Kings 17, Elijah nowhere in that passage prays for rain. He doesn't, it's not mentioned.

[8 : 47] So, we're being told through James by the Holy Spirit that he did pray fervently for rain, but it's not mentioned in the 1 Kings story. And instead, what you do have there is a different story that you would have expected James to refer to.

And that's the story where James visits the widow, Zarephath. And there, her son dies. And James prays fervently to God and the boy comes back to life.

So, James is talking about going, the elders going to the sick and praying the prayer of faith and healing them. And so, you would think, surely you're going to tell the story of Elijah going to the widow of Zarephath and raising that boy from the dead through prayer.

But he doesn't. He goes to a story that doesn't even mention prayer. And that's where God brought no rain to Israel for three and a half years and brought a famine.

And the context of that story was all about how the fact Israel had entered into idolatry and they had run away from God and they were wandering from the truth. And so, there was no rain for three and a half years.

[9 : 50] And we're told here Elijah actually prayed for that. And that's very true because we read about it here. Now, there's a little moment in that story that's very similar to the book of James. And it is when Elijah says to the people on Mount Carmel, how long will you waver between two opinions?

You are double-minded. And at the beginning of the book of James, James started talking to people under suffering, saying some of you are double-minded. Now, that means that there's a little thread running all throughout this book that we have not talked about at all.

And that's the thread that the way people are responding to ministry oppression in their culture has been different. And some people are wandering from the truth because of it.

Some people are double-minded because of it. And wandering from the truth, what does that look like? We don't know exactly, but it's got to mean at least these little hints and shadows throughout the whole book. He talks a lot about speech and he says, stop grumbling with one another.

I think what's going on here is that there is someone in some of the local churches that in response to the ministry oppression that's going on outside the church, where they're saying, hey, be patient, wait for the Lord.

[11 : 00] Don't play judge. Don't make an oath of vengeance. Don't seek vengeance against the oppressor. Inside the church, that is causing massive division. And he says, some of you are grumbling against one another.

And so it must be, you know, if you are struggling in your circumstances in life and you're having a really hard time at work, you're having a really hard time in any context of life, who's the person that you take it out on?

You come home and you take it out on the person that's closest to you. And in the same way, in the context of ministry oppression, there's something going on where somebody is destroying the local church from the inside.

They're grumbling. They're taking it out on everybody else. They're making oath of vengeance.

There's even a suggestion in some of the commentators that the reference in chapter four to murder is real, physical, that somebody has been murdered, perhaps even.

They're expressing themselves in violence in some way, and it's tearing apart some of the local churches around the Mediterranean. And so what's going on, I think, in this passage is something really significant, and that's this.

[12 : 00] To get the attention of whoever it is that's tearing the church apart from the inside, God has struck this person with sickness. And so this is a very specific moment where the elders of the church are being called in, pray for this person, tell them, confess their sins, anoint them with oil, and they can be healed.

They can be restored. And that's why verses 19 and 20 are there, because a lot of times people look at verse 19 and 20 in this passage and say, how in the world is this connected? It's almost like James is just giving you little proverbs of different ministries. But if you look at 19 and 20, he says, brothers and sisters, if anybody among you is wandering away from the truth, you go and reclaim them and bring them back.

And see, that helps us read the first part of the passage. He's saying that there is somebody wandering from the truth, and they need to go and be reclaimed and brought back. And that's the ministry to the sick. This person, I think, with a number of scholars, has been struck with sickness of some kind.

Now, that's a troubling thing to say. It's a startling thing, I know. Look at verse 15. Let me give you one more little proof, and we'll move on. Look at verse 15.

[13:15] 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. Sorry, let me back up to verse 14.

Is anyone sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church. Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. That's the practice. And then the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick.

Now, if somebody's sick physically, what word do you expect there? The prayer of faith will heal the one who is sick. But it doesn't say that. It says save. But then look down at the next verse, 16.

Therefore, confess your sins, pray for one another, that you may be, you think, forgiven. Pray and confess your sins to each other so that you could be forgiven. No, it says healed.

You see, he's intermixing the language between the spiritual plight and the physical plight. And that's because in this instance, somebody has been struck with physical illness because of their divisiveness in the local church.

[14:16] Now, that's a startling thing to say. Let me say a couple things about it to help us. Number one, in the Bible, let's be clear, very, very clear that in the Bible, overwhelmingly, our sickness, our colds, getting the flu, getting cancer, diseases, bad circumstances have nothing to do with your sins.

They come from the fact that this world has been corrupted by sin. And so, biologically, we're corrupted. And there's disease and there's disaster and there's death. So, overwhelmingly in the Bible, most of the time, like in the example of Job, having illness has nothing to do with your behavior.

So, you think about the example in John 9 where they come to Jesus and the Pharisees say, hey, what about this guy born blind? Was it him or his parents that sinned so much to make him blind? And Jesus says, neither of them. He lives in a fallen world. He's blind. That's it. And so, overwhelmingly, that's the case. But secondly, sometimes God does use sickness and hard circumstances to wake people up.

And there is a note of discipline in that from a loving father that is a repeated theme throughout the Bible here and there.

[15:32] So, let me give you the most famous example of that. 1 Corinthians 11, the Lord's Supper. And in 1 Corinthians 11, you had rich Christians, socioeconomically rich, who were coming to the Lord's table during a feast, during worship.

And they were eating all the food, drinking all the wine, eating all the communion bread before the poor would ever even show up to the feast. So, if you imagine something like that here, it would be that we email everybody this week, Wednesday email.

It goes out to some people, the 20% of you who are most wealthy. And we say, worship next Sunday is going to be at 10 a.m. And we have communion. And then we say to the 80% who are less wealthy, you come at 11.

And by the time you get there at 11, there's no communion left to be served. Why? Because the 20% give more. That's what was happening in 1 Corinthians 11. That would be, it would be akin to that today.

And what is, what happens in that passage is so divisive. This is what Paul writes. That is why some of you are weak, ill, and have fallen asleep. Some of you have died because of how divisive you have been in the local church.

[16:47] Now, the beautiful news here in this story, this specific passage is, thirdly, finally, we'll move on. Whoever, whoever is doing this and has been struck with this is in the process of being restored, being reclaimed.

And that's the heartbeat of the passage. Call the elders, bring anointing oil, pray the prayer of faith over them, have them confess their sins. Because anybody who's wandering away and destroying the church from the inside can be restored and will be restored when they confess their sins. And that's, you think about a passage like 2 Corinthians 2, where Paul talks about church discipline. And he says, there is some man in the church in Corinth who is doing something very evil. And I won't get into the details in here. And, but he says to them, as you have cast him out in tears and sorrow, forgive him and love him in order that you might bring him back again. And so here we're being told about this ministry, how serious God takes divisiveness in the local church, the sin that breaks the church apart, and how much God wants the people of God to chase and pursue and rescue and cover a multitude of sins.

[17 : 58] And anybody who's wandering away from the truth, it's the ministry of reclamation. The ministry like God does, Jesus does to us of bringing people back. And that's the invitation and calling here. Let me say something very general about this.

God, in this moment, uses sickness to wake somebody up. It's very specific. It's very rare. So today, don't go from here and think, I've got a cold.

I've probably done something very bad. Okay. Overwhelmingly, the answer is, no, you have not. You just have a cold. Also, don't go today and say, I have a cold.

I'm going to call the elders to come and anoint me with oil. Okay. So please don't do that either. Though we want to pray for you. But this is a more rare instance. And it's more specific.

And the practice is right. But in general, at the same time, we can say this. Sickness is humbling. And sickness strips us of the illusion of control.

[19 : 02] When we're sick, when we're laid down on our back, when we've got the flu, when we've got that very difficult diagnosis, it puts us down and it helps us realize that I'm not in control.

I'm contingent. I'm vulnerable. I'm radically dependent. And why does God, the loving Father, do things like this in this moment, this moment of discipline, but in sickness in general?

And what does Psalm 23 say? It says, he makes us lie down next to green pastures. You know, when you are walking, when you've been put into the valley of shadow of death, it forces you to lie down next to the green pastures.

And that's what sickness does to us. And so this passage is really, I think, asking everybody, well, have you ever had a moment where you are desperately sick? You thought of yourself as pretty healthy, but you get really sick.

And it brings you to a point where you think, I'm so sick, I need to get right with the Lord. I need to confess my sins. That's exactly what sickness does for us.

[20 : 03] It's a gift in that way. It humbles us. It tells us, I need to confess my sins before God. It's showing us, sickness shows us what's important. Now, secondly, finally, that is the specific context.

Let's move out to the general things we can learn here about ministry, the ministries that we've been given, two principles for ministry, two ministries to leave you from the epistle of James with, that James talks about here.

The first is this. He writes in this passage, call the elders, confess your sins to one another, pray for one another, bring the wanderer back, have a ministry of reclamation in your life for people who are wandering.

What do we learn? First principle, your spiritual formation is a community project. Every person's spiritual formation in this room is not an individual project, but a community project.

So there's a clear call to the one anothering, pray for one another, pursue one another, reclaim one another when we're wandering from the truth. So we're being invited here to look out and reject the culture of individualism that we live in the Western world and say, while the evangelical emphasis on the personal relationship with God is so important, so vital.

[21 : 18] Yes. At the same time, the New Testament has no place for saying that my personal relationship with the Lord is me and my Bible in my closet. Praying in the closet is very good, but we're being asked here to reject any sense of individualism in the Christian life.

And he takes that further and further here. He assumes, he assumes that it is normal to ask elders to pray for you here. He assumes that it is normal to ask somebody else to pray for you because of what you're going through.

He assumes here that it is normal to confess your sins to one another. And so we're being asked to reject any sense of Western individualism when it comes to our personal spiritual formation.

The second principle is, let me just take that a step further as James does. We need people in our lives who can tell the truth and love to us. And so if you look at just again, scan your eyes across the passage, call the elders in a situation where there's a sin that needs to be confessed. Verse 15, confess your sins to one another. Verse 17 and 18, the whole situation with Elijah was about him confronting idolatry in ancient Israel. There's a pattern in this passage and it is that confrontation, we need, we need to be willing to allow confrontation with the truth in order to restore us by seeking the truth and love.

[22 : 45] There's an assumption that's running all throughout the passage. And that's that the local church is a culture where you give people permission to tell you the truth and love. And I know that here in verse 15, when we're told to confess our sins to one another in order to pray for one another, that that is standing awkwardly against every cultural norm that we have in our culture here and in the West, in the frame of Western individualism.

But there is a command here to invite somebody into your life that is allowed to intrude, that is allowed to tell you the truth, that is allowed to come to you and you with them and talk about the sins that you're struggling with and have them regularly praying for you.

There's an invitation to that. Let me ask you today, do you have a person in your life that can tell you the truth? Do you have somebody that you've actually invited to intrude and say, I don't think you're walking in the right path?

Do you have somebody in relationship that's called Christian friendship that can come and tell you the truth about what they think is going on in your soul? And you do the same for them because of how deep the love is between the two of you.

That is the invitation here. It's that thick. It's that deep. It's the fundamental principle of Christian friendship. So who knows you here?

[24 : 07] Who knows you at St. Columbus? Who knows you enough to pray for the sins that you're walking through in the indwelling part of your soul? Now, how do we work that out?

Let me finish with the two ministries he gives you. Here they are. First, ministry number one, pray for one another. So the theme of the passage is verse 14, pray, 13, pray, 15, pray, 16, pray, 17, and 18.

Pray, pray. It's mentioned seven times. Pray for one another. It's all over the passage. And the ministry that we are being given, I should say here, is to pray for one another on the assumption, on the belief that prayer really does change things.

Prayer, James is saying, is effective. There's a preacher in the early church named John Chrysostom. Chrysostom, it was a nickname. It means golden tongue.

And he lived in Antioch. And I'm going to read you a quote from him about prayer. And you'll know why he was called Chrysostom at the end of this quote. We all, every preacher wishes they could be like this, but we're just not.

[25 : 18] And this is what he says. The potency of prayer has subdued the strength of fire. It has bridled the rage of lions, hushed the anarchy to rest, extinguished wars, appeased the elements, expelled demons, burst the chains of death, expanded the gates of heaven, assuaged disease, repelled fraud, rescued cities from destruction, stayed the sun in its course, arrested the progress of the thunderbolt.

Prayer is an all-efficient panoply, a treasure undiminished, a mine which is never exhausted, a sky unobscured by clouds, a heaven unruffled by the storm.

It is the root, the fountain, the mother of a thousand blessings. Now, Chrysostom, golden tongued, prayer is very powerful and effective. At the same time, I know that if we spoke like that in sermons all the time, more people would sleep than they even do.

So you can't listen to speech like that from the pulpit. You have to read it. But his point is that prayer is wildly powerful, wildly effective. What is prayer? Prayer is talking to God with love and gratitude while you're resting and trusting in Jesus.

Prayer is talking to God with love and gratitude while you're resting and trusting in Jesus. And you see, that means that you can say, is anybody suffering? You're in a situation of bad circumstances.

[26 : 40] Well, prayer is talking to God with love and gratitude, saying, Lord, I don't know why I'm walking through this, but I thank you for it, Philippians. Or if you're cheerful, if you're going through great circumstances, it's saying, I need to remember, Lord, right now to be dependent on you.

Or if you're sick, it's talking to God with love and gratitude, even for sickness and trust while you're trusting in Jesus for whatever he might do, whatever might happen in the midst of it.

And you see the heartbeat of prayer in this passage that is wildly effective. And that it is simply depending on Jesus in all circumstances, depending on God and talking to him about it in all circumstances.

That's the power of prayer. I love how he mentions, he goes to Elijah here and he gives that story from Elijah. And what does he say? He says, look at Elijah.

His prayers were so powerful. Why? Because he was such a great prophet. He was an amazing prophet. And none of you are like that. No, that's not what he says. He says, look at Elijah.

[27 : 42] You saw the passage. Elijah was a man with a like nature to you, a like nature. He goes out of his way to say, Elijah's prayers were not powerful because he was Elijah, the great prophet.

He's just a normal dude. He's just a normal guy. That's what he says. He's just a man. And what is he saying? Your prayer is as powerful as Elijah because the power is not in Elijah or you, the power of prayer.

Think about Elijah. He goes up to the top of the mountain and he dispels the idols. He destroys the 400 prophets of Baal and Asherah.

Great ministry heights, the mountain. And then if you flip the chapter and the next story, he is found under a tree in suicidal depression. And you think about Charles Spurgeon who filled up the metropolitan tabernacle in London.

And, you know, we couldn't get enough people in the door. We didn't have enough seats and revival came through that ministry. And he came up to the heights in terms of ministry power in every way.

[28 : 49] And Spurgeon couldn't get out of bed for weeks throughout his life regularly because of depression. And I love that, how he goes to Elijah because Elijah in 1 Kings 17 and 18 is the height of ministry power.

And in 1 Kings 19, the lowest seat of depression. And that's the spectrum we all live between.

Those moments of great ministry joy and power. And then you can't get out of bed because of how sad you are.

And he says, and you have the power of prayer. That's exactly the same as Elijah and Charles Spurgeon. The same ministry power, the same power of prayer. And so that leads then to just be slightly more specific as we conclude.

And that's this ministry of the prayer of the righteous person. So after calling on the elders of the church to come and to pray the prayer of faith and to anoint a person with oil.

I'm going to say something about that as we finish. Don't worry. He then comes and says, and the prayer of the righteous person availeth much, the King James says, or the prayer of the righteous person is very powerful as it is working.

[29 : 55] Now here we find him telling us that when you, when you come to depend on God and prayer in all circumstances, cheerful, suffering, sick, and it's dependent.

Dependent. And like Elijah, fervent. That is what makes it powerful. Dependency and fervency. The power was not in Elijah. The power is in God.

And so we are being told here that prayer becomes especially effective when it's dependent and fervent. When it's regular, when it's in all circumstances, all the time.

And very, very, uh, comes with tons of desire saying, Lord, we utterly depend on you in this moment. That's the example of Elijah. It's his fervency. That's being highlighted. That's the prayer of a righteous person.

So you say today, am I a righteous person with powerful prayer? And the answer is, do you come to the Lord in all seasons, sick, suffering, or cheerful with prayer fervency, with expectation, with real expectation.

[30 : 56] And that's what makes the prayer so powerful and effective. That's where God loves to hear and loves to, to answer it. And so here, when the elders are called out for this very specific moment, somebody sick, they've called, caused division in the church.

What makes their prayers powerful? Are they the righteous person? Well, yeah, because we all are.

If you are in Christ, you are righteous. And so the Roman Catholic tradition has it halfway right.

When they say that the priest comes, the priest comes and prays over the person. Well, they do because every single one of you that's a believer today is a priest. The priesthood of all believers,

you have access.

You have prayer power. The elders are simply the example of that. That's all. All of us, all of us are priests coming to represent other people, including the sick before God. You have the ministry of praying for people's healing because you are a priest of the kingdom, a priest of all believers as we enjoy that together.

And so here, what makes prayer so, so powerful? Well, think about it like this. If you have a relative who calls you once every three, four, five years, let's say a brother or sister, and you never talk to them otherwise, and they call you, and every time they call you, they ask for money.

[32 : 16] And, you know, you don't have any existing relationship, not really. There's never communication of love. They don't come visit. You don't visit them, and they just call. But when they call you, they say, oh, and by the way, I do love you, and I need money.

I'm in an emergency. Imagine on the other hand, you have your other sibling, and they are checking on you every month. I mean, you have a two-hour phone call with them all the time.

You see them at Christmas and Easter and through the summer, and you holiday together, and they couldn't have supported you more when you walk through that pain and that trial. They couldn't have. And they call you, and they say, I've lost my job.

I need help. Help. In the first instance, what do you say? You say, I am being used. Every time this person needs something, every five years, they call me and pretend to love me.

On the other hand, with this other sibling, you say, they love me so much. I want to pour myself out to them and help them in any way. Now, we have to be careful in not using that analogy to read it into God so precisely.

[33 : 21] Absolutely, we don't. We need to be careful there. At the same time, what is fervent and dependent prayer? It's not when you simply pray only in the moments where you're the most sick, where God is just the 999 line.

Fervent prayer, dependent prayer is when you're cheerful, when you're suffering, and when you're sick. And God says that fervency of consistent prayer, of depending on me, is exactly what I long for, what I desire, and I long to answer.

That's what makes the elders' prayer powerful. And so, what do they do when they anoint with oil here, as we conclude? Last thought. As they anoint with oil in this passage, and this is a good and right practice in the church, it's not common.

It's meant to be rare. What are they doing? What is that? Oil in the Bible is from the Garden of Eden. It's a sign of Eden.

There was oil in Eden from the trees, the bushes, the seeds. And in Eden, the great moment of creation, God condescended by the Holy Spirit. He came down into Eden.

[34 : 26] And so, throughout the Bible, in this fallen world, kings are anointed with oil, and priests are anointed with oil, and the temple is anointed with oil. Why? It's just prayer. It's just saying, Lord, like you did in the Garden of Eden with the great oils of Eden, the trees, the bushes, the seeds.

So, we need you to condescend. And so, when the elders go and anoint somebody with oil, all it is, is they're saying, this isn't magic. This is just a visible sign of us saying, Lord, Lord, this person cannot be healed or restored to your church without the Spirit condescending.

And that's what the oil does. It's just a prayer request. That's all it really is. See, when the elders do that, and they are fervently praying, God says, I will restore that person.

The prayer of a righteous person availeth much. Well, if the prayers of a righteous person are powerful, how much more the prayers of a perfect person?

If the prayers of a righteous person are potent, how much more the prayer of the righteous person? And you see, the reason that you, Christian, your prayers are powerful today is because you have the prayers of the righteous one.

[35 : 40] And what does Romans 8 say? Romans 8 say, who can bring a charge against you? Who can bring something before God against you? And the answer is no one, because it says Jesus Christ died.

More than that, he was raised from the dead. More than that, he is now interceding for us at the right hand of God the Father. The reason your prayer is so powerful is because Jesus Christ is actively praying for you, talking to God and interceding in all your prayers.

And so that means that because you have the great high priest interceding and mediating on your behalf, praying for you to God the Father, you can go and priest for others.

You can go and pray for other people and it has power. So friends, because the great high priest is praying for you, interceding for you, know today that when you go and you pray for somebody in this room, God listens.

He will answer that. He will heal. He will restore. He will forgive. He will bring them back. So let's go and do it. Let's have the ministry of prayer. Let's do it now. Let's pray. Father, we pray that you would give us a vision of ministry power through prayer.

[36 : 50] We ask for forgiveness for our unbelief in prayer. And we ask for the fervency of Elijah, knowing that we are like him, completely ordinary.

So in our ordinariness, Lord, teach us to pray, teach us to believe in prayer, to pray when we're cheerful, when we are suffering, when we are sick. And then Lord, we do pray in our hearts right now for those who we know, who may be underneath this specific position of wandering from the truth.

So we could all maybe name someone in our lives who we want to think about right now and pray for. Lord, you promised that you will restore. So give us the heart to pursue them.

And then we pray for them now and ask, Lord, that you would restore them. You would bring them back into the fellowship of your local church. And Lord, that you would grant them forgiveness and that we would celebrate that, that we would love them as much as you love them.

And so we, we pray for that now for a heart of pursuit like you have for us, through prayer. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.