

Righteous Prayer in an Unrighteous Time

by Carter Conlon

Righteous prayer is the key to tapping into the power of God and becoming unstoppable on this earth.

Duration: 46:39

Scripture: Numbers 23:8, Numbers 24:5-9, Isaiah 59:19, James 5:16-17, Jude 1:3-4

Topics: "Righteous Living", "Powerful Prayer"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of living a righteous life and engaging in fervent prayer in the midst of unrighteous times. Drawing from James chapter 5, the message calls for confession, prayer, and seeking healing through righteous living and powerful prayer. The sermon highlights the example of Elijah, a man of like nature as us, who through effective and fervent prayer turned a nation back to God, showcasing the impact of prayer empowered by the Holy Spirit and lived out in righteousness.

Transcript

This morning I want to speak to you about righteous prayer in an unrighteous time. Righteous prayer in an unrighteous time, James chapter 5, please if you'll go there in your New Testament Bible. While you do that, let's pray together.

Father, I thank you with all my heart for the presence of your Holy Spirit in this service today. I thank you, Lord, for your strength, for your word. Thank you, God, for bringing us, drawing us to you in a profound way that every heart knows though this is an unusual time, your power, you're willing to still make your power known to this generation.

God, help us to understand what you're speaking to us as a people. Help me to speak it, God. Help all of us to embrace it.

Lord Jesus Christ, you've given us an opportunity to make a difference in this moment of history. Would you help us as others have in the past to seize this moment and to walk in the pathway that you've laid out before us for the sake of your name and for the sake of men, women, and children that are yet to know you. Father, we thank you.

We thank you, God. Help us. Help me today, Father.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Righteous prayer in an unrighteous time, James chapter 5, beginning at verse 16, confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. The

effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

Elijah was a man with a nature like ours and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again and the heaven gave rain and the earth produced its fruit. Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.

Now you and I know something this morning, or at least we ought to know it, that there is no chance that God will allow something to be divinely inspired and written down in this Bible that sets something before us that it suggests that we can attain if it's impossible to attain it. There's something in this particular passage of scripture that talks about prayer in a way that we need to know it in our generation. Elijah was a man raised up of God at a season where the theological focus of God's people had turned inward and was Baalism it's called, but it really was all about self, it was about personal blessing, personal prosperity, personal aggrandizement.

And with this self-focus, the partner to this was a huge immorality, in other words the wall that kept God's people in a moral condition where they could pray and be heard by God and be a testimony in the earth was broken down. And God used this man to turn a nation back to the genuine worship of the one and true God for his moment in history. That's why in verse 19 and 20 it says, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, now I believe we're still speaking in a sense in the context of prayer and prayer that can turn things back again.

Let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. But folks, it's not just any kind of prayer. It's not the casual kind of prayer that we pray when we go to the dinner table.

It's not like that. The scripture defines the prayer of this man Elijah, a man who could be used of God to turn a nation back, to change a moment in history and society. And folks, you have to realize as I do, we're in a moral abyss now.

We're on a rapid slide down into behaviors that are almost unthinkable. And if you think it's going to end where it is today, then just wait another five to ten years. And it's the behaviors that people are going to become because the restriction when it's removed, humanity will always go back to the place that humanity goes to.

The utter depravity of the human spirit without God will come again to the fore. The scripture defines his prayer as effective and fervent. In the original text, what it means is that he was made strong to pray by the operation of the Holy Spirit within him.

He was given the power to pray. He was given the thoughts of God to pray. He was given the courage to pray what needed to be prayed.

It also tells us in order to be made strong in prayer, the scripture also describes him as a righteous man. That means that he was living in conformity to the truth that he knew and the purpose that God had for his life on the earth. And the two, when they go together, you find a person or a group of people or a moment in history when God's people can actually turn back the flood of evil that's trying to swallow the nation.

When our prayer is inspired, when our hearts are enabled to believe beyond what we're naturally capable of believing, and God's Holy Spirit can do that within us. When we make the choice to live a right life according to the word of God, we don't try to push the borders. We don't try to see how far we can get to fire without being burned.

We make the choice to see how close to the cross we can get in this life. We make the choice to walk in conformity. Now, I know we're made righteous by Christ.

I know that. When we came to Christ, the blood of Jesus Christ covers our sin, and we are the righteousness of God, the scripture says, in Christ Jesus. But there is an outworking of that righteousness.

May I put it that way? If I am righteous, then I start to live like a righteous man. I actually start to desire to look like what my actual position really is. I am in Christ.

Christ is in me. I've been cleansed of my sin. Sin no longer has dominion over my life.

So by the power of God's Holy Spirit within me, I now want to live a life that looks like who I am in Christ. Does that make it easy to understand? It's important for you and I to understand that when we're walking in relationship with God, as Elijah was, we become an unstoppable force on this earth. We do.

You and I do. We are the ones that God uses to restrain evil, and not just to restrain it, but actually push it back on the foundation of Christ, being all in all on the foundation of the truth of Christ, the cross of Christ, the victory of Jesus Christ. We become the church of Jesus Christ, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against the church of Jesus Christ.

This is a reality that you and I need to discover once again in this generation. For you know and I know that while we were in a season of peace, the enemy came in the back door and multiplied in our midst, and now we face the horrific consequences of becoming a nation that has abandoned the worship of the one and true God. Elijah knew this.

It was the passion of his heart. It was the burden of his life. It was everything that he was.

It was all. The only reason that he lived on the earth was to see the name of God glorified again in his generation, and to have the hearts of the people turned back again to God. You remember when he built the altar, when he had that confrontation on Mount Carmel with all of the false prophets that were spiritually misleading that generation? And when he built that altar, the scripture says when he had set it in order, and he stood back and he prayed, he said, Lord God, let it be known that I've done this at your word for a specific reason, that your people may turn back to you again.

And that's got to be the passion of your heart and my heart now in this generation. Oh, God, would you do something in my life that would cause people to turn back to you? Would you work in me in such strength and in such power that people would be compelled, compelled to deal with the living Christ? They couldn't just ignore you because your reality would flow with me and walk with me into my neighborhood, into my home, into my work environment, wherever it is. And even deeper than that, into the nation where suddenly I become aware with others around me that we have an incredible power in prayer.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man, as the original King James says, avails much. When we're walking in great relationship with God, we become unstoppable on this earth. There was a heathen king one time, his name was Balak.

And as the people of God were progressing on their journey, he began to fear them because he heard this report that God was with these people. Everywhere they traveled, there was victory. Every enemy that stood up against them was defeated.

And they knew it. And he hired a spiritist, a man called Balaam, who he believed had the power to curse the advance of the people of God. And Balaam was an unrighteous man.

But even though he was, God sovereignly opened his eyes to see something that he had probably never seen before. And Balaam hired him, or tried to hire him, to come in and said, look, these people are more or less trudging their way through the earth on a pathway that they've been promised this incredible place of blessing and life. And they would be a unique people that nobody could stand against the presence of God that is in their lives.

And Balaam took this false prophet Balaam and took him to three particular points, vantage points, to look at the people of God. And God opened this spiritist's eyes and he saw something that you and I need to see again today. He saw firstly in Numbers 23 and verse 8 that God, when God has blessed someone, no one, no matter how influential they are, has the power to curse what God has blessed.

God has blessed you in Christ. That's why the Bible says in the Old Testament that every voice that rises against you in judgment, you can condemn it. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord.

You possess a righteousness, that means a right standing, that's not of ourselves, it is given to us by God. And so we stand, and God says, I have chosen to bless you. Now, the inference is that we are sincere in our walk with him.

None of what I'm saying applies to the game player. If you're a religious game player, you only come to church for fire insurance. The only reason you're here, you don't really want to live for God.

You wanna enjoy everything the world's got to offer all week, and you wanna come in and get that good feeling back on Sunday morning. And get rid of the sense of guilt, because you know in your heart you've done wrong. You have no intention of turning away from doing wrong, but you do think that church gives you a measure of fire insurance.

Well, for you, everything I'm about to say does not apply. It doesn't apply. There's no covering for the game player.

It's only for the sincere believer in Jesus Christ. When God called Abraham in the Old Testament, in the King James, it says, now be, he made him this incredible promise. I'm going to increase you, I'm going to bless you, I'm going to bless the world through you.

And he told Abraham in the original Hebrew, he said, be perfect. But when you look at that, the word really means be sincere. That's all it means.

Abraham was far from perfect. He made some terrible mistakes along his journey. But when God has blessed you, no one has the power to curse you, no one.

There's a blessing that cannot be contravened. Balaam learned that God's promises were trustworthy, phenomenal. What he has said he will do, that's what he will do.

And that his people are covered even though they're not perfect. Imagine, here comes the people of God at that time around the corner, heading to a place of promise. They've got a failed leader who's not going into the promised land.

They've built a golden calf. They've murmured, they've been bitten of serpents. They've made all kinds of mistakes along the way.

Yet, God opened Balaam's eyes and he said, I hear in their midst the shout of a king. And I see no iniquity in Jacob. In other words, there was a victory won on the cross of Jesus Christ.

That's the shout he heard. When Jesus said it is finished, it was finished. There is no penalty, there's no power for sin any longer.

For those who are sincerely walking with God. And though we're not perfect, we are covered. And the shout of victory is among them.

And the strength of a lion is within them. Numbers 28 verses 18 to 24. Balaam also saw that the people of God will be found in many nations.

With strength to overcome unrighteousness when they're confronted by it. That's Numbers 24 verses 5 to 9. And he tops it all off with a final capstone. He said, blessed is he who blesses you and cursed is he who curses you.

Balaam, though knowing that God's people cannot be ultimately stopped, apparently though advised the king of a way in which they could be greatly weakened. And even rendered ineffectual on their journey. Here's what he told them.

He said, seduce them by enticing them to intermarry with and adopt the value system of the godless people all around them. And you will weaken them. Just like Samson, the mighty man of God, called to bring about deliverance in his generation.

Given the power of God's Holy Spirit, given clear instruction, given clear ability, unchallenged ability. But yet he was seduced by the society around him and all of its pleasures that it offered. And it ultimately took away his strength.

And when the theological focus of the house of God became about pleasure, personal pleasure, became about personal prosperity. And all of the self doctrines that got into the house of God, it took away our strength. It rendered us powerless, even though we are the majority still in this nation, do you know that? Yet we sit like sheep on the sidelines, as this parade of hell goes down the street in front of us.

Changing everything that is holy to that which is unholy. Challenging that which God has decreed is holy and declaring it to be narrow and bigoted and out of touch, undesired, irrelevant in this modern world that we now find ourselves living in. Moses said in Numbers 31 verse 18, he said, the women caused the children of Israel through the counsel of Balaam to trespass against the Lord, and there was a plague among the congregation.

It was because of the compromise, it was because of the self-seeking, it was because of the sensuality that got into the house of God, that the people of God became weak. There are almost no prayer meetings anywhere, you know that. It's hard to find a prayer meeting.

That's why we have 167 nations in online praying with us Tuesday night. Many people can't find a prayer meeting. I thank God for those churches that are starting to pray.

I thank God for the burden that's starting to come upon many people. You see, because prayer ultimately is about others. The power of prayer is in praying for the honor of God to be revealed in a society again, and for men, women, and children to be released from the grip of darkness and turned back to the worship of the one and the true God.

Jude warned in this small book just before Revelation in verses three and four. He said, beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered for all saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed who long ago were marked out for this condemnation.

Ungodly men who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, they take grace and they make it something other than it wasn't intended to be. They deny the right of Christ to be Lord of his people.

They turn this grace into a license to sin without consequence. Remember in the Garden of Eden, that's what Adam and Eve fell into. That somehow God's presence and God's favor is a license to do whatever you want to do and there will be no consequence to it.

And we know the lie of that and what it brought into the human race. And so it was in our opening text that God's people had once again been seduced into self-focused worship, which led to a moral breakdown of the nation. If it was left unchallenged, it would eventually lead to the downfall of an entire society.

That's where you and I are today. We are witnessing the downfall of this nation. We are witnessing the dissolving of our families, the destruction of structures that have stood for hundreds of years.

We're witnessing the eroding of the foundation which actually gave this nation preeminence in the earth. We are witnessing something right before our very eyes where day by day, evil is becoming good and good is becoming evil. The people of God are being vilified, not even allowed an opinion anymore in this society.

If you speak up in the workplace and you just simply stand for traditional marriage or you stand for the right to life, suddenly you're a bigot. Suddenly your job is in jeopardy. Suddenly just speaking the word of God has put so many people on the outs of a society that is in free fall morally at this moment.

And in the midst of all of this that was happening in Israel, God found a man called Elijah. And I think of the days where the prophet Ezekiel talked about the coming judgment on the nation of Israel and he says, I sought for a man that I should not have to judge the nation and couldn't find one. Is it possible that it gets so bad even in the house of God that God is simply looking for somebody somewhere who's walking in right relationship with him, who's willing to throw their lives in with their prayers, who's not trying to live this Christian life to preserve themselves, but are willing to enter the battle and pay the price that it's going to cost for the preservation of others.

For the sake of those that are coming after us, for the sake of a generation that are so morally confused, and that confusion is being sown at a deeper and deeper level all the time. Eventually, people are not going to know what's good. They're not going to even know there's a good.

They're going to embrace evil as good. The Bible says that in the book of James, that Elijah was a man with a nature like ours. Sometimes we look at people in the Old Testament or New Testament and we think that they're supermen.

Somehow they were just born with this divine strength and divine favor. Didn't have to fight the battles that we fight. They don't have to fight the sense of unworthiness, the sense of hopelessness, or what's this all about? What's the use anyway? Why should I do this? The whole nation's going in another direction.

Why shouldn't I just swim with them? Why do I have to go upstream? Elijah fought the same trials, the same struggles that you and I do. But yet he chose to live in conformity to what he knew of God. And he was enabled to believe that God would give him what he asked for.

Just like David, the king, Elijah had to win his private battles first. And folks, that's where we are at today. It's time for you and I to win our private battles.

It's time to make our personal decisions. How far am I going to go with God? How deep am I going to get into this battle? How much am I willing to have my life conform to truth? Am I willing to walk away from that which is weakening me? Am I willing to embrace that which will give me strength? Am I willing to live in this earth for the purposes of God? Do I believe that God can take this human vessel and use my life for his glory and to push back this encroaching darkness? Do I believe that God can put words in my mouth and courage in my heart that are not there today, but I'm willing to have them there? Do I believe that he can give me a passion for his kingdom, for his honor, for his glory? Do I believe that I can stand when confronted by darkness? Do I believe that my life will honestly make a difference? You look throughout the course of history, and whenever spiritual declension has set into a nation, there's never been a renewal. There's never been an awakening.

There's never been a revival without somebody, somewhere willing to make that stand. Saying, I'm not eating the diet of the king's table, and I don't care what decree is issued, I pray three times a day, morning, noon, and night, I open my window, and I pray towards Jerusalem. That's what Daniel did, because he knew the word of God said, if God's people find themselves in captivity and overrun by their enemies, if they would look towards this place, the place where the temple of God once stood in Jerusalem, and they begin to pray, I'll hear their prayer, and I'll move my hand.

Daniel knew that, and he wasn't going to let any decree take him out of the prayer closet. He wasn't going to let any threat take him away from the position that God had placed him in, because he believed that his life could make a difference. And historians say that Daniel was most likely the one that moved the heart of King Darius to eventually, or King Cyrus, rather, to eventually sign a decree and let the people of God go back and rebuild the testimony of God that had fallen down in their homeland.

The scripture tells us that he was a man, Elijah, was neither living or praying to escape personal hardship. Verse 17 says, Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. His theological focus was different than personal comfort.

If you pray for hardship to come in the nation, you're praying that you're going to go into hardship yourself. He was the type of a man who said, God, whatever it takes, whatever it takes, I don't care. Whatever happens to me, I don't care.

I can't live my life simply content to have food in my cupboard and things on my table and a paycheck coming in at the end. I just can't live that way if this generation is going to die in its sin. And I believe that if you and I have the heart of Christ beating within us, neither can we.

We can't live that way. We can't live self-consumed lives. It's simply not possible.

I know what this scripture's all about. I'm just like you are. I don't want to voluntarily go into conflict.

But yet for the sake of those who are not only dying but appointed to die, the scripture says, raise your voice for them. Let your voice be heard. Let it be heard in the prayer closet.

And then wherever God takes you from there, let your voice be heard. I believe that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. I believe that with all my heart.

I believe because I've seen it in the scriptures. I've read the testimony of God stopping the sun in the sky, literally for one man to finish a battle when he prayed and turned. I've seen what God can do.

It's clearly defined in the scriptures. I've watched it in my own life over the years. I know what God can do.

And he prayed, Lord, stop the rain. I find myself praying lately, God, whatever it takes, whatever it takes, that the people of New York City could have a chance, a chance to find you as Lord and Savior, a chance to hear that there is one way to eternal life through Jesus Christ, a chance to hear about a cross, a chance to hear about this incredible love of God. Oh, God, would you give them a chance? And would you throw my life into that prayer and use me whatever way you choose to use me? God Almighty, give this city a chance to find you as Lord and Savior.

Don't let the people die in their sin while we are still here, while we still have the power to pray and have God answer our prayer in a profound way. I happen to believe that when we pray, God can still transform society. I happen to believe that.

I happen to believe that when the enemy comes in like a flood, the spirit of the Lord can raise a standard against it. I happen to believe that even though the devil takes 100 years to build his walls and his plans and all of his theories, I happen to believe the spirit of God can put it to flight in a moment of days, can change everything. I happen to believe that God can sweep this nation with his mercy.

I happen to believe that churches everywhere across this land can be filled with men, women, and children seeking God again. I happen to believe that if we will cry out to God, he will send his Holy Spirit and people will want to be in the presence of God. I happen to believe that with all of my heart.

I have no doubt. I've been in places around the world. I've stood on a platform in Nigeria where there was civil war, where they said it was dangerous to bring that many people together in one place.

But I had a word from God in my heart that God was going to bring peace. There would be no harm come. I had a word in my heart that thousands were going to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

And it happened exactly according to the word that he had planted in my heart. I remember standing on a platform in Jamaica where they said it was suicide for anybody to go on that field where we had set up our stage to play, to worship God, and to preach the word of God. People told us, you're wasting your time.

This place has been in civil war for 30 years. Nothing's going to happen in this place. But I had a word from God, and I remember standing on that platform and in a field that was, the only thing that you found in that field were dead bodies and burning garbage, that's all that was on that field for a 30-year period.

There had been so many murders on that field, the government had lost count. But God gave me a word, and I saw houses built, brand new houses, nice houses built on the side of that field. Those houses are there today.

Those houses are there today. I saw the power of hell broken. I saw in my spirit long before it happened, children playing on that field.

I saw a church planted there. I saw the spirit of poverty and violence broken by the spirit of God. And God came, and God did exactly what he said he was going to do.

And so I'm simply unwilling to see all of these things over all of these years, and there's more I could tell you today, and then sit back and let America go to hell on my watch. No chance, because I know who God is. I know what God can do.

Elijah was a man who had the power to turn a nation back to truth, to save a multitude from the penalty of sin, and bring the nation back under the covering of God. Just like you and I have the power to bring this nation back to an awareness, at least, of the cross of Jesus Christ, as God did to the Apostle Paul in Acts chapter 227, all of the people on that vessel were spared for a moment, and they had an opportunity to see the power of God at work in the spoken word of the Apostle Paul and in the healing that flowed through his hands eventually. The scripture doesn't tell us they all came to Christ, but they had an opportunity to come to Christ, and you can be sure they were never the same after that.

If there ever was a time to pray, it's now. If there ever was a time to intercede, if there ever was a time for you and I to say, God, God, God, would you deliver me from what weakens me? Would you take me away from what is taking away my strength? Would you help me, God, to put away the compromise in my life that is robbing me of the passion for you and the faith to believe that you can, through my life, make a difference? God, would you lift me out of the lukewarm mediocrity that seems to have gripped this church age? Would you give me the grace to make a difference? Would you raise me up, O God, in whatever sphere of influence you give me, whatever place you take me, would you help me? Would you be my strength? Would you be my voice? God, would you call multitudes back to you through me? Would you just do it, Lord, the way you can? I don't have to know how, I just know who. I know you're able to do this, God, so I call out to you with all my heart.

And now we come back to the beginning of our text. Knowing all this, verse 16 says, confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed. That's the prerequisite, in a sense, to being used of God in a very, very powerful way.

And the question is, am I living in conformity to the word of God and Christ's purpose for my life? Can I honestly say that? Am I living a righteous lifestyle? Am I doing right? Am I speaking truth? Am I honest in my dealings with other people? Are my relationships clean? Am I setting anything wicked before my eyes? Am I involved in conversations that I shouldn't be involved in? God, I sincerely want to be used of you and make a difference in my generation, especially in this season of our nation's moral and spiritual decline. A people who look like the nation can't have any effect on it. We have to be set apart, radically set apart for God.

Is the Holy Spirit leading me to pray in a way that will change the future? What's my prayer life like? Do I have the passion of God in the center of my prayers? Is there faith in my heart? Am I believing God for something that is just so beyond human ability? When Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal, all they could do is what they could humanly do. They could build a human altar. They could give human effort into human worship, and they could cut themselves with human sincerity.

It was all flesh. There was nothing of the spirit in it. And even though it looked sincere, and it had longevity, apparently.

It went from morning till night. They gave it all they had. It was sincere, but it was sincerely wrong.

And when Elijah built that altar, he stood back, he put the stones together. He built the altar, he put the sacrifice and the wood in order, and then he doused it with water so there was no chance of any false spark ever igniting this thing. And then he stood back and he prayed and said, Lord God, I've done this at your word, you sent me to do this.

I've done it at your word for one purpose, that the people's hearts might turn back to you again. And the scripture says when he was done praying, and it wasn't a long prayer, but it was an effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man. You see, this is the point.

When you're walking in righteousness, when our prayers are empowered by the Holy Spirit, they don't have to be eight hours long, there's something in our prayer, there's something in the cry that comes from our hearts that says, God, I'm not doing this for glory, I'm not doing this to get known by men, I'm not doing this for money, I'm not doing this for fame. I'm doing it because you've called me to do this. And I'm asking, Almighty God, I'm asking you, Lord Jesus Christ, I'm asking you to come down for your holy namesake and for the people's sake, that you will turn them back to you again.

That's the reason I'm doing what I'm doing. That's the reason I pray the way I pray. God, fill my heart with faith.

Help me, Lord. Lead me, Holy Spirit, lead me to pray. Give me the power to pray.

The passion, the vision, the understanding of scripture. God Almighty, deliver me from the weakness of this age. Lord, take me out of that which has taken me captive.

Lead me into the power of Christ, the resurrection power of his life. And the other question is, am I leading others to healing or do I need to be healed? Which is it? Am I a voice that's saying, this way, this way. Follow me as I follow Christ.

Follow me. This is the way to freedom. This is the way to life.

This is the way to truth. It's the way to joy. It's the way to your future, an eternal future.

Am I leading them or do I need to be healed myself? And are you and I people that God can use or does he have to pass us by and look for someone else? This would be the one question that would make my heart tremble more than any other. If you are looking across New York City, if you are looking in America today, if you're just, as in Ezekiel's day, you're looking for somebody, a man, a woman, anybody, a church maybe, so that you don't have to judge the nation. That there could be, that people could be spared for a season to consider their ways.

Do we qualify? And that's a question we have to ask ourselves. Do we qualify? Can the Holy Spirit stop here? Can he brood over this congregation? Can he impart to us his strength, his heart? Are we willing to engage him on that level or does he pass us by? You see, all of the opulence of this place, the beautiful building that we have, the history and everything is worth nothing if we don't have a heart for Christ and for the work of God in Christ. And it looks like, you know, we're one of the bigger games in town.

But let me tell you, if we're not willing to walk in righteousness, if we're not willing to have the Holy Spirit empower us to pray, then God will pass us by and find some little storefront church with 25 people in it. And you see, they don't have the problems we have. Their only problem is paying the bills at the end of the month, but they know how to pray because that's the way they pay the bills every month and can find somebody that can pray somewhere.

That's the way he's always done it. But I'm not willing that he should pass me by. And so the constant prayer of my heart is whatever is weakening, may God show it to me and take it out of my life.

Whatever is making me hesitant to pray in a manner that could bring me into personal hardship, take that out of my heart. Let me live my life as our Bible school motto is at Summit, for the benefit of others. That's what the cross was ultimately about.

It was for the benefit of others that Jesus went to that cross. So God helped me to represent that Christ and to know the power of that Christ and to see the kingdom of that Christ advance in my generation. Help me, Lord, to live for the benefit of others.

Help me to live the rest of my life for the benefit of others. Help me, God, to throw my hat into the ring and say, I'm in. I don't care.

I'm not going to use the excuse of age or experience or past or past victory. I'm in. I throw my hat into the ring, as the old expression goes, says, I'm into this fight and I'm into it for the rest of my life.

As long as I have breath, as long as I have strength. That's why the whole story of Elijah in James chapter five starts with this statement. Confess your trespasses one to another and pray for one another that you may be healed.

Because if we're not willing to walk humbly before God, if we're not willing to start prayer at that level where we just say, God, would you help me, please, would you help me? Would you please help me to do right? Would you help me to step out of pride? And if I have to just have somebody pray for me. It's the type of person that says, would you pray that I might have the courage to get away from this practice in my life or get away from this relationship that is drawing my spiritual life away from me or to stop going to these places or doing these things because I know they're weakening me? Would you pray for me that I could speak truth? Would you pray for me that I could be honest in my financial dealings? Would you pray for me? You pray for me that I could put away all these side issues that are causing weakness to come into my life. You see, that's the way the whole story in James of Elijah starts and then finishes by saying the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

And so I challenge you today with all my heart as I've been challenging my own heart. Make sure, make sure of two things. Make sure that you are living in conformity to your position in Christ.

Make sure that your life represents the Christ who you claim has covered you. Make sure and seek to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit of God can give us the strength to do now what needs

to be done.

If you feel the Holy Spirit tugging at your heart today and you know in your heart there's a step you need to take towards God, you know that there's some people say, Pastor, there's just so much in my life that's bringing me into weakness. I don't know where to start. Start with the first thing.

Start with that which God has made known to you today. You're sitting here now and you actually know what it is. You know what it is you need to get away from.

Maybe you're just a sports watching couch potato and that's what you need to get away from. It's weakening you. I'm not saying you shouldn't watch a sports game.

Go ahead once in a while, but don't let that become your life. It'll weaken you. Don't let it become your life.

You and I both know because God's Spirit brings it to your mind and to your heart. And today, if you're just with me in this and I'm asking you, because I feel in my heart I'm going, I'm going all the way with this. And if you're with me and with the pastors of this church and the elders of this church, you say, Pastor, count me in, count me in.

I will, by the strength of God, walk a morally clean life. I will. I will get away from what is weakening me.

I know what it is. I will begin to pray and I will trust God for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in my prayers to make a difference in my generation. We're going to worship for just a few moments.

If that's the cry of your heart, I'm going to ask you to get out of your seat when we stand and just come and join me at the front of this auditorium. And then we'll pray together in just a moment. In the annex, you can step between the screens.

The same thing at home and in North Jersey. Let's stand together, balcony, go to either exit, main sanctuary. Just slip out of wherever you are and just come, join me and we'll pray together.

And let's believe God. You know, this is a solemn moment here this morning for many people. Come to this altar and as we're worshiping, I was reminded of the children of Israel, that second generation coming out under Joshua.

They were about to go in and become everything that God had promised that they should be. And would be. But before they went in, they had to be separated from the ways of Egypt and have that reproach that had attached itself to them, taken off of them.

They had to be clearly marked and identified as the people of God. And it was a painful moment for sure. It was embarrassing.

It was vulnerable. It was even humiliating in some cases, I have no doubt. But yet, after they made that choice, that suddenly the waters are parting in front of them.

They're walking through impossible places on dry land and they're facing these embattlements of the enemy, walls that are higher than they can be scaled and thicker than can be breached by any amount of human effort. And they walked around those walls for seven days and saw them brought down sovereignly by the power of God. And you see, this is where it all begins because I feel that the Holy Spirit is calling us into something deeper than we've known before.

And he's calling us to fight a battle that can only be fought by the Spirit of God. It can't be fought with any amount of human effort. We can petition all we want.

We can't fight this battle that way, but we can fight it in prayer. And when we do make the choice to be separated under God, then suddenly these impossible places are going to open and walls are going to start coming down. You've made a good choice today.

I saw some coming to the altar. I saw some in particular that you walked down so slow. It's like, it's just like, it's, oh God, could you ever use me? If that's the way you felt today, you are the first on the list for God to use.

May I just give you a word of encouragement? Don't limit God. Don't tell him what he can do with your life and don't tell him what he can't do. He's God, he can do whatever he wants to do.

It's the yielded heart that gets the victory. It's the person who decides to go with God that finds the incredible favor of the Lord. Father, I thank you, Lord, for my brothers and sisters at this altar today.

I thank you, God, for the word that you are speaking to us as a church congregation. You're asking us how deep we want to go into this battle. How sincere do we want our prayers to be? How yielded are we willing to be? And Lord, I thank you, God, for men and women who are at this altar, just as I am in my heart, saying, Lord, we are willing.

And where we're not, we're willing to have you make us willing. We acknowledge, Lord, it will be by your strength and by your power, not by ours. We could never do this in ourselves, but we acknowledge that you have blessed us.

We acknowledge that you've covered us. We acknowledge that the strength of a lion is inside of us. We acknowledge that we have a king who won an incredible victory over darkness and all the powers of evil of this world.

We thank you, God, for once again having the privilege to represent that king and that kingdom. God, take us to where we need to be and make us to what you need us to be. We yield our hearts to you.

We yield our lives. We give you the praise and the glory, God, for what you're going to do. Father, God Almighty, God Almighty, God Almighty, God Almighty, come down like fire again in our generation.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit, O God. God, fill our streets with your presence, Lord Jesus Christ. Fill our schools with your Holy Spirit.

God, we ask you to do what only can be done by the Spirit of God. We implore you. And we stand by faith, believing that we know your heart for this moment in history.

We praise you and bless you in Jesus' name. Amen and amen.

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