

PREVAILING PRAYER

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Recently a pastor from Nigeria contacted me requesting clarification regarding this *type* prayer which is one of twelve types of prayer I briefly discussed 30 years ago in MSDK (*Mysterious Secrets of the Dark Kingdom*) from the section on Weapons of Our Warfare. After all, next to the Word of God, prayer is our most effective offensive weapon that we can use against the enemy in spiritual warfare and the battle for planet Earth.

Now as I stated back then, I'm no expert on prayer. In fact, my wife knows more about it than I do because she's an intercessor and has been used mightily by the Lord in that area over the years and has some supernatural experiences she's shared like the time she was taken by the Spirit to pray for Iraqi soldiers who were about to die in the Gulf War.

But this type prayer that I call prevailing prayer or continual prayer or sometimes I refer to it as "combat prayer" is very important and as I wrote in MSDK, "Most Christians would get probably a 75% improvement in their prayer lives if they would just do this type praying over certain situations." Now it's very important for you to

study prayer in the Bible if you want to improve your prayer life and spiritual results in your own life because you will discover as I wrote back then that there are different *types* of prayer and the Church has not been taught this so most Christians flounder in their prayers and quite often become discouraged and come to believe that God doesn't answer prayer. So the Lord is concerned about this condition and this morning He has been speaking to me about prayer and its importance.

After all, look how much time Jesus Himself spent in prayer—often praying all night! When was the last time that you prayed all night? Well, maybe that thing you were praying about wasn't really that important then was it?

Testimonies are important—they're a good source of learning. So let me share with you the testimony of how my dad got saved because it has to do with Prevailing Prayer. The year was 1983 (I knew you'd want to know); the month was January. My loving grandmother had just passed away and I had flown my junior brother out to her town for the funeral. We were staying there and I was sleeping in the front bedroom where I had slept so many times growing up as a child because I spent most summers with them riding horses, hunting and fishing.

I had just been there a month before for Christmas because the Lord had spoken to me that this "would be their last Christmas" and it was—my grandmother passed in January and my grandfather passed in September of that year. I had told both of my brothers this many months before that they needed to be there for Christmas but as you know you can tell your family members "the Word of the Lord" many times yet they don't believe you. We have told family members that they were going to have child, its sex and the day it would be born before they even knew that they were pregnant. We've told them about the impending death of family members when there was no indication that the person was ill. And I know many of you have had similar

experiences yet members of your own family don't believe you. Jesus rightly said, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own family and in his home town."

This was my dad's mom so naturally he was there for the funeral. Both his parents got saved—they were Southern Baptists—but not before he was grown so he grew up not knowing Jesus. The hardest thing I've ever done in life was to witness to my dad when I was growing up. So here I was faced with his mother's death and funeral and knowing that his dad would also die that year.

I sat in the floor of that small bedroom and began to pray—asking the Lord what to do and what to say to family members since I had always been the priest to my own family, rejected or not. So what do you do? Well, I've shared with our church and at many other churches what you do. You ask yourself, "What does the Word say?" After all, and don't forget this Scripture as long as you live, the Word says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105) That is *precisely why* I say to people all the time, "What does the Word say?" It should be the first thing we think of and is why you need to study and meditate in the Word each day so that your spirit knows the Word. After all—and this verse of Scripture rightly points it out—if you don't know what the Word says then you will walk in darkness. Jesus is the Word and the number one way He speaks to us—even if you're a prophet like Samuel was—is through the Word. (cf. 1 Samuel 3:21)

As I began to pray, the Lord directed me to James 5 so I turned there. It's in James and also Hebrews that we learn the keys to answered prayer—faith and patience. We get many requests—mostly from Africans because it's common in the churches there—for us to compose prayers and give "prayer points." And this is not a bad thing. But you just have to understand, my brother and sister, that you can list 50,000 prayer points and it may not get your prayer answered if you try to shortcut faith and patience. Remember, God gave us these

two keys for a reason. One of these reasons I mentioned in MSDK because the Holy Spirit pointed it out to me and others have preached on this in recent years—there is spiritual warfare going on in the second heaven to stop the answer to your prayers that God has already sent. Because of demonic opposition, it took Gabriel 3 weeks to get through with the answer to Daniel’s prayer even though the Word records that God sent the answer “immediately.”

But this wasn’t what the Lord directed me to that January morning back in 1983. No, He specifically called my attention to James 5:16b-18. He showed me in a quick vision of *how* Elijah prayed. The Word says, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” That verse of the Scriptures most of you know—you heard it preached many times no doubt. But like me back then, you probably don’t have a clue about what it really means. But when God *shows* you then you *see* the missing ingredient in your own prayer life. After all, this wasn’t the first time I’d prayed for my dad’s salvation. No, I was in my 30s and I’d prayed for him since I became a Christian at age 8.

So in verse 17-18 we learn that Elijah “was a man subject to like (or the same) passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”

And when I saw Elijah praying I understood a missing ingredient in my own prayer life and yet it’s given right here in James 5 if you study it. We hear preachers and people quote James 5:16 incorrectly just like they do John 8:32 and many other Scriptures that I hear all the time. Listen, when you spend time—a lot of time—reading and meditating the Word, then when people do this the Holy Spirit will rise up in you and say, “No, that’s not right!”

So, let’s look real closely at this scripture in James 5 and you’ll notice what I saw in Elijah’s prayers that quickly led to my dad getting saved

in 6 months by my praying correctly when I'd prayed for him for over 20 years without seeing any results. James 5:16b doesn't say what we hear all the time, i.e., "Well, brother Timmons, remember James 5:16 says, 'The prayer of a righteous man avails much.'" No, it doesn't. Get your Bible out and read it. Then say to yourself, "I must be stupid; I can't even read."

No, the Word says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Notice how, no doubt to the devil's delight and influence, we leave out the two words "effectual" and "fervent."

Now don't forget the subject of this teaching—Prevailing Prayer. So we learn three ingredients of "Prevailing Prayer" in these verses. They are: effectual, fervent and the person must be righteous. We don't often think about the last one, being righteous, because if we're born again we are righteous but it demonstrates a revelation the Lord gave me back in 1981 that I used to lead a man to the Lord in the jail house at Libby, Montana, on a Sunday night. He said he'd "been in and out of churches all his life and God had never answered one of his prayers."

The Holy Spirit showed me the problem instantly from a revelation the Lord had given me in 1981 when He spoke about *why* people don't receive from Him in prayer. He gave me an illustration from life which showed that if you're not in His family then He's "not obligated" to answer your prayers. And we see that James 5:16b is a "proof text" for that statement, don't we? If you're not in God's family through a relationship with Jesus Christ then you are not righteous and therefore you don't meet the requirements of James 5:16b.

But also notice the two words: "effectual" and "fervent." Even though you're righteous by the Blood of Jesus I think most of you will have to admit that your prayers more times than not lack both of these ingredients. I know mine did back in 1983 when the Lord showed me this. The word "effectual" means *unceasing* and you will find it in the margin of many King James bibles. The word "fervent" means with

great emotion and we will study some scriptures later to demonstrate this with even the Lord Jesus Himself. So then we learn the conditions of Prevailing Prayer. First, we must be in the family God through the Blood relationship. Second, we must pray unceasing, i.e., we pray until we get an answer and we don't stop praying until we do! Third, we must pray fervently or like I did on that day with great tears and anguish. In other words, we should pray like we mean it!

Years ago I was getting up to preach the Lord spoke to me and said, "You can get up in any church in the world and say, 'How many of you have unsaved loved ones?' and every hand will go up. But then I don't see faith when they pray. They don't pray fervently. They pray a prayer like, 'God save my mother' for 1 minute and then they turn on the T.V. and watch it for 5 hours and I don't see any faith in that."

So learn this lesson from my testimony and what's written here about James 5:16b-18. If you are serious with God about your requests then learn to pray "unceasingly" and "fervently." The literal Greek says that Elijah "Prayed with prayer." That means *fervently* or some translations use the word, *earnestly*. If you think about it, then earnest or fervent prayer is an attitude and emotion of praying as if our lives depend on the prayer being answered and often it does or in this case the eternal life of a person we are praying for.

And let's face it if we're honest, one of the reasons we don't pray this way today has to do with a prophecy the Lord Jesus Himself spoke in the Gospels concerning the Last Day Church. He said that their "love would grow cold." The Lord told me back in the 80s that "You can only populate Heaven with those you love." And, quite frankly, most churches have turned into entertainment hangouts complete with coffee shops, etc., and the main emphasis is not on the Great Commission and winning the lost but rather money and materialism and comfort. Many pastors in the USA today are dressing like 7th graders complete with their rolled up jeans and PF flyer tennis shoes;

often they wear T-shirts and holey jeans, presumably in an effort to make the congregation feel more “comfortable.” How silly!

But Jesus never emphasized a “comfortable” gospel and He certainly wasn’t “comfortable” for most of His ministry, especially near the end of His life on the earth and we are called to take up our crosses and follow Him.

Now before leaving James 5, turn to I Kings 18 and you, too, will see evidence that Elijah was praying unceasingly and fervently and with faith. In vv. 41-45 we read how Elijah first spoke the word to Ahab (faith) and then “he went up to the top of Carmel, lay on the ground and put his head between his knees” and began to pray *until* he saw the results that he’d spoke to Ahab by faith.

Now let’s look at the main scripture that I shared in MSDK regarding this *type* prayer as the Spirit pointed it out to me back in 1990 when I began writing MSDK. Acts 12:1-5 gives testimony of how the early Church saved Peter from an early martyr’s death through this type praying. Notice verse 5: “Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.”

That is Prevailing Prayer! The more literal ESV translation reads: “...but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.” So, again, we notice that the prayer was “unceasing” and that it was “earnest” or fervent. They stayed in the house John Mark’s mother praying ‘til they had an answer although if you continue on in Acts 12 you will notice that their faith was weak because after their prayer is answered they don’t actually believe it’s Peter standing at the gate!

You’ll see that Paul prayed this way for Timothy (cf. 2 Timothy 1:3-4) and he applied this plumb line to the prayers of others (1 Timothy 5:5), and 1 Thessalonians 5:17 is very emphatic in this regard—“Pray without ceasing.” And as I point out in the Prayer By the Spirit (or praying in other tongues), this is the most powerful way to pray

because Romans 8:26 indicates that when we pray “in (or by) the Spirit” we are praying the perfect will of God over a situation because the Spirit helps our “infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought.”

Your natural mind will run out of things to pray about a person or situation but the Holy Spirit knows everything about a situation and can often have you pray not only now but about events 10 years in the future about that situation such that you can “Pray without ceasing.” You should pray this way throughout the day, i.e., by the Spirit in other tongues. If this is new to you then you should read some of our teaching articles or books about how to receive this “Promise” that Jesus spoke about in Luke 24:49 that manifested upon the early Church in Acts 1:4-2:39. If you don’t pray this way then you should. Peter specifically said in Acts 2:39 that this “Promise” Jesus made was for you also if you’re a believer in the Lord Jesus.

Remember, Jesus Himself prayed this way (Luke 22:44) even to the point the Scriptures witness that “his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” I would say that’s the epitome of earnest or fervent prayer, wouldn’t you?

And don’t forget the key proof text of this type prayer that the Lord Jesus gave us in Luke 18:1-8 which we refer to as “The Parable of the Unjust Judge.” It is a crystal clear example of how we are to pray:

**“And he told them a parable to the
Effect that they ought always to
Pray and not lose heart ...”**

Jesus says that we are to pray “always” or continuously about a situation and to “not lose heart” if the answer doesn’t come right away. Remember, God’s timing is rarely our timing although I’ve seen Him answer many prayers the same day. Often, in fact normally, there are other free will human beings involved in our prayers and their

attitudes and lack of faith can also impact the answer. Just remember, God's timing is always perfect and often He is working out other matters involved with the prayer that we are not even aware of. Just trust the Lord and pray *until* you get an answer.

So I want to encourage you today, as does the Lord Jesus to begin to pray this way and you'll see a marked improvement and quicker answers in your prayer life. Remember, you hear people and even preachers talk about "unanswered prayer" and scores of books have been written about the *reasons* for "unanswered prayer" but most of them are not scriptural—they're just modern day examples of "The blind leading the blind." People tend to think that Dr. so and so is an expert on everything which is nonsense and you can tell if you read most of these books or watch them on unchristian T.V.

Don't forget Psalm 119:105—in every area of your life and those you're praying about, always ask yourself this question: "What does the Word say?" And then be certain that you yourself study and meditate what the Word does say so that you're not fooled by Scripture that is incorrectly quoted. It is one of Satan's oldest tricks and the main tactic that he used against Eve in the garden and tried to use against the Lord Jesus in the desert.

Remember, the Lord showed me this clearly back in 1981—Prevailing Prayer—prayer that requires God to act and to answer you—has 3 requirements: 1) it must be *spoken* by a righteous person, 2) it must be *effectual* (i.e., unceasing or continual), and 3) it must be *fervent* or *earnest*. And let me add here, even when I've been used in intercession when I didn't know what I was praying about, e.g., to save my junior brother's life one time, although I was praying in the Spirit (tongues) because I didn't know "how" to pray as Romans 8 says, there was still great emotion and tears. In other words, when you pray by the Spirit in intercession for others it will be earnest or fervent with

emotion and often tears and even groanings as if you are giving birth to the answer. Praise the Lord!

Maranatha