

Sermon Notes: Elijah's Fervent Prayer

Perfecting Prayer Lesson 1b

Pastor Mike Bayer VillageAlive.com



How many would like an effective prayer life?

Introduction: Review From Lesson 1a

- **Fervent prayer is like childbirth**—something has been conceived in you. Childbirth involves waiting for a period of time—going through the pains of labor and then delivery.
- But there NEVER is a question of what a mother is expecting at the end of the process! Not a puppy, not a flower—but a baby.
- **Fervent prayer involves three things:**
 1. **Find God's will—pray in agreement with Him:** All that God has promised we are justified in expecting—and what he has promised, and expect, we should pray for.
 2. **Desperate prayers are effective prayers:** Becoming desperate starts when I understand I do not have the ability or resources to do something that needs to be done.
 3. **Effective prayer is enduring:** Effective fervent prayer does not give up. It is prayer that carries through labor and delivery.

Desperation is often born out of a burden. When I am burdened for something—and then desperate for it—I am also motivated with 'fervent' prayer.

James uses Elijah to illustrate effective fervent prayer that produced results.

Elijah's Fervent Prayer

1 Kings 17-18

To fully understand the kind of prayer-dynamics mentioned in James 5:13-18 we must understand Elijah's life and prayer.

Here is what we learn...

A. A Nature Like Ours

- Elijah was no different than you or I. *Jam 5:17*
- Behind a great prayer came failure. *1 Kings 19*
- Disciples sought to use Elijah's power for the wrong purpose! *Luke 9:54-56*

"Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him" *1 Ki 16:33*. It was a direct result of sin that drought came upon Israel for three and a half years.

Why did James use Elijah as an example?

Why not Isaiah or Jeremiah?

Ans: The character and spirit of Elijah typify what is needed for effective prayer.

The example of **Elijah** is given as an encouragement to us to pray for the wounded, hurting, sick and sinner with the same intensity, faith and power that Elijah had.

Elijah, though a prophet and man of God, was a man with a nature like ours.

he was hungry *1 Ki 17:11*

afraid *1 Ki 19:3*

depressed (in the cave)

1 Ki 19:3, 1 Ki 19:9-14

Yet when he prayed earnestly incredible things happened!

6 Characteristics of Elijah and prayer..

(1) B. Specific Request

1 Kin 18:41; Jam 5:17-18

Ineffective prayer is mostly **nonspecific**.

...bless my family

...be with me today

- Elijah declared—prayed very specifically—NO rain, not even dew. And after the drought also. We do not have his exact words—but he was certainly praying for the rain to come!

(2) C. He was Confident! He was confident in the drought and confident when he told Ahab to get ready for the rain. 18:41

- **Elijah had 12 barrels of water**—probably sea water or well water poured—three times (four pots each).

(3) D. Pray Priority While Ahab ate and drank, Elijah prayed. 18:42-44

(4) E. Fervent Pray He bowed on the ground with his head between his legs. 18:42

(5) F. Enduring Prayer He did not stop until there were clouds on the way. :43-44

- Tradition says this servant was the Gentile son of the widow who Elijah had prayed for and was raised from the dead.
- Elijah was going to pray through until it rained—the labor and delivery of an effective prayer mission.

(6) G. He Acted in Expectation

All the servant saw was a small cloud but that was enough to announce to Ahab to prepare to get away from the rain. 18:44

*"Effective prayer is prayer that attains what it seeks.
It is prayer that moves God, effecting its end."*

Charles Finney

Key Closing thoughts:

Elijah prayed for the sick (raised the son of the widow) and prayed for the drought to bring the Nation of Israel to repentance. These are the two primary prayer-purposes that James saw in using Elijah as an example of “fervent” prayer!

God is calling us to that same ‘fervent’ mission in prayer.

The story of Elijah and the drought would certainly be a strange illustration if James **ONLY** had physical illness and healing in view throughout this passage.

Elijah illustrates effective prayer that brings a full remedy to a problem.

The picture of rain pouring down on parched ground perfectly illustrates God’s outpouring of spiritual blessings on the dry and parched souls of struggling believers. And He does both in response to the righteous prayers of godly people.

1 King 18:41-46 Summary

The prophet advised **Ahab** to **eat** a meal because he would soon have to leave Mount Carmel to escape the oncoming **rain**. While **Ahab** sat down to eat, **Elijah** rose up to pray. He ascended **to the top of Mount Carmel**, **bowed down on the ground** with **his face between his knees**, and fervently asked the Lord to fulfill His word by sending rain. He continued in prayer until **his servant** reported a tiny **cloud** on the horizon. That was enough for Elijah. He immediately sent word **to Ahab** to make haste for **Jezreel**, a city in Issachar where the royal family lived at times. As a loyal subject and faithful servant, the prophet **ran** before Ahab's chariot in a drenching **rain** twenty miles **to Jezreel**.