

Sermon on Pray with Intensity and Fire

Rev. Kwabena D. Akufo

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Text:

James 5:16-18 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

1 Introduction

Desire is something you wish or long for. It is something that stems from deep within and is an intense longing. Intense desire is not passive and is not something that comes and goes every now and then nor is it something that comes once and disappears forever. The thing you long for is rooted in the innermost part of your heart. It is something that you can lose your mind over and rational thinking cannot stop you. You refuse to accept the impossibility of attaining that which you long after. The most important thing to you is the thing that you desire.

When you are hungry your body desires food. You look for it and consume it. The physical need stimulates your desire and the desire drives you into action to fulfill that need. If your body has been starved for a long time then the hunger creates an intense desire that must be fulfilled at all cost. That is why during times of extreme famine people go to all kinds of extents to satisfy their hunger even to the point of cannibalism.

So, great need stimulates intense desire. Intense desire drives you to persistent fervent action. Persistent fervent action enables you to satisfy your need. Our passage talks about such intense desire that fuels persistent fervent prayer so that it enables an ordinary believer to get great and spectacular breakthroughs – the type that may be attributed to a prophet like Elijah.

2 Hannah's Intense Desire Translated to Fervent Prayer

Let's look at this principle in the episode of Hannah and her marriage rival Peninnah. Hannah was barren and her rival Peninnah, who had given birth to several children, provoked her each year they went to sacrifice at Shiloh. Hannah would pray each time for a baby. The provocation became so intense that Hannah just poured out her heart to the Lord. Her desire for a baby was so intense it stimulated her into intense fervent prayer as recorded in 1 Samuel 1:10, "In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD." In this prayer, her lips moved but no sound came out as her body visibly shook and her insides rumbled. Her whole being was surrendered to the prayer activity. Her prayer was fervent because her desire was deep and rooted in her fundamental need for a baby.

When Eli the priest accused her of being drunk she responded that she was not drunk and said, "I was pouring out my soul to the LORD." (1 Samuel 1:15) She was saying that her entire being was given to the prayer. So, her need for a baby stimulated her intense desire for the baby. Her intense desire then drove her to persistent fervent action in prayer that was witnessed by Eli as drunkenness. As James says in our passage the fervent prayer of a righteous person avails much so Hannah's persistent and fervent prayer gave her a great breakthrough – God opened her womb.

3 The Widow's intense desire translated to Persistent Prayer

Jesus taught his disciples this example of persistent and fervent prayer as recorded in Luke 18:1-5:

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: 'In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"

Beloved, we see from this teaching by Jesus that persistent and intense prayer yields results. You get your breakthrough if you don't give up.

4 Persistent Fervent Prayer Propels Prayer Request to Heaven

Intense desire is a deep longing in the soul that causes you to pour out your soul to the Lord. This is accompanied with fire and energy. E.M. Bounds once said, "By flame, prayer ascends to heaven. Yet fire is not fuss, nor heat, noise. Heat is intensity – something that glows and burns." (E.M. Bounds, p. 35) When a space ship is being launched it sits on rocket propellers. A rocket is sent roaring into the sky by a fiery explosion underneath the rocket that propels it upward with an awesome force. In the same way when desire is so intense it translates into fiery prayer, which is the rocket that propels the prayer request heavenward to the required destination. E.M. Bounds puts it this way, "Flame is the wing on which faith ascends; fervency is the soul of prayer. It was the 'fervent, effectual prayer' which availed much." (E.M. Bounds, p. 31)

E.M. Bounds continues and says, "No erudition [profound knowledge], no purity of diction, no width of mental outlook, no flowers of eloquence, no grace of person can atone for lack of fire. *Prayer ascends by fire*. Flame gives prayer access as well as wings, acceptance as well as energy." (E.M. Bounds, p. 32)

5 Persistent Fervent Prayer Yields Fiery Response by Heaven

If prayer ascends by fire then the response also descends by fire as we see in Revelation 8:3-5:

Revelation 8:3-5 Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

When your intense and persistent prayer ascends by fire into heaven, incense smoke is mixed with it on an altar and it becomes a great fire which is then hurled back onto the earth resulting in “thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake” to cause your breakthrough!

So whatever the situation, when your desire is intense and you respond with persistent fervent prayer, the request ascends on the rocket of the fiery prayer and the God sends thunder lightning, earthquake to change the situation. When you are in proper fellowship with God you don't need to be a prophet or evangelist to accomplish this. You need intense desire that results in fiery prayer. And that is why James told the twelve tribes 2,000 years ago, as recorded in our passage, that, “Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.” (James 5:17-18)

6 Conclusion

I call upon you today to pray with intense desire and fire to receive your breakthrough. Pray persistently. Knock on the doors of heaven until you get a response. In fact, don't just knock, but bang on the doors of heaven until you get a hearing. If that doesn't work throw your whole body against the doors of heaven until you have received your breakthrough. Pray without ceasing for your breakthrough. Pray without losing hope for your breakthrough. Pray without getting tired for your exceedingly great reward.