

## This Means War – Part 4

### 2 Corinthians 10:4

**For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.**

I really enjoy watching movies about our nation's history, both documentaries and historical fiction. One time I was watching **The Patriot** and was struck by one particular scene. In case you have never seen this movie, it is set in the time period of the Revolutionary War. The main character is a widower with seven children. Having fought in a previous conflict, he knows the horrors of war, and now his main goal is to keep his family out of the war. Thus he plays it safe and refuses to take a stand; he is now pledged to peace at any cost. His older sons are anxious to fight, anxious to engage the enemy, anxious to take the stand their father refuses to take. But though they argue and pressure him, he remains firm in his resolve: "I will not engage the enemy for the safety of my family."

### **But the enemy comes and finds him.**

This man tries at one point to be humanitarian to some injured Colonial soldiers. Just then he turns around to see the Redcoats marching through his fields to his home. Enraged at his kindness to their enemy, the British soldiers shoot all the Colonial wounded, take the man's oldest son captive and set fire to his home. In an instant, his life has changed, and he has no choice but to enter the battle.

**Sometimes we do the same thing when it comes to our Adversary, the devil.** We act as though if we play fair, the devil will leave us alone. But we need to come to grips with the fact that the devil is not just some little character that sits on our shoulders telling us to steal the cookie out of the cookie jar. **He is vicious, relentless and completely committed to the destruction of humankind.** Like the man in the movie, we can go about our lives and refuse to take a stand, but the point will arrive when the battle comes to us.

In this message we will look at effective **fervent prayer** that engages the battle against the kingdom of darkness with the power of the

Kingdom of God. This kind of prayer calls for earnestness and **fergency** in prayer that moves into the invisible realm where evil has dominated a situation, and then breaks the yoke of bondage over those circumstances. **This is prayer that confronts the work of hell and casts down the rule of darkness that is hindering God's intended blessing for that situation.**

**I want to say to you pointedly that every believer needs to face the responsibility of letting his life be enlarged by this dimension of prayer.**

If you want to see release or breakthrough happen in your life and in the lives of those you pray for, then there are times when you will need to enter the battle in a **fervent** pursuit of prayer—breaking in on the works of darkness and seeing them shattered by the power of the word of God that comes forth from your lips. There is no substitute for that kind of confrontational prayer.

Throughout the New Testament, the apostle Paul uses the metaphor of battle. Indeed, Jesus alluded to it when He talked about taking the Kingdom by force (see **Matthew 11:12**). So the concept of warring against the works of darkness is not some sensationalistic idea that someone came up with to whip people into a frenzy of prayer.

Nor is it something to stir us against people. Scripture pointedly teaches that **“though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh” (2 Corinthians 10:3)**. We are not fighting against people.

So what are we doing? First, we are **fighting “the good warfare” (1 Timothy 1:18)**.

Second, we are waging that war against the powers of darkness (see **Ephesians 6:12**). We have already studied the fact that this has to do with the invisible, spiritual realm. **But we have to be convinced not only that that realm exists, but that we have been commissioned to do battle there.** We often look at prayer warriors as people who are particularly called or anointed to ministry in this way. **Yet God calls all His children to this kind of prayer.**

## Who Can Pray This Prayer?

**The Bible says that “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16, kjv).** The Message version words it this way: **“The prayer of a person living right with God is something powerful to be reckoned with.”**

“Well,” you might say, “if that’s the criterion, it automatically excludes me! It says that ‘righteous’ people are empowered for this kind of prayer. It says that ‘right living’ makes us powerful in the Spirit.”

**Again, it has to do with recognizing that God has called and authorized all His children to pray this kind of prayer.** According to Scripture, the righteous person is anyone who has been forgiven and made right with God through the blood of Jesus Christ and is following in the way of the Lord.

When we are clothed in the glory of the Lord, it is as though we have traded in our own garments and received the garments of righteousness (see **Isaiah 61:10**) through Jesus Christ.

Then we can come before Him boldly and with a sense of confidence. He has called us to live like fully forgiven, fully accepted, fully empowered sons and daughters of the Most High God.

Once we accept His gift of righteousness, we can pray the **“effectual fervent prayer”** that James talks about.

As we begin our study on **fervent prayer**, it is best for us to look at two initial points that James introduces.

**The first** is that he describes this kind of prayer as **“effectual fervent”** prayer. The Greek word used here is **energeo**. The literal definition is **“to be active or efficient”**; but you can see the obvious connection to our English word energy. This is prayer that is energetic! In fact, for the concept even to be communicated in English, the translators used two words to translate **energeo**—**“effectual fervent.”**

It may also help our understanding to look at the English definition of those two words. **Fervent** is defined as “**exhibiting or marked by great intensity or feeling,**” and effectual as “**producing or able to produce a desired effect.**” The kind of prayer James is writing about here has great intensity and great passion—but it produces the desired effect!

**The second point** James introduces is an Old Testament example of this New Testament truth. James tells us that Elijah was a man of “**like passions as we are**” (kjv) and yet he prayed that it would not rain, and it did not rain for the space of three and a half years (see **James 5:17**).

**This is prayer that transforms circumstances and releases the blessing of God into a time and place where it has not been moving.**

So James turns us toward **Elijah**, describing him as “**a man subject to like passions as we are.**” This is a man like us; in other words, every one of us, according to James, has access to this same kind of influence through prophetic prayer. Just like Elijah.

The story of Elijah is told in **1 Kings**, and the episode we are going to look at is found in **chapter 18**. The first verse gives us a basic outline of what fervent prayer is all about, and the later parts of the chapter show us the principles that apply.

### **1 Kings 18:1**

This account begins telling us **that “it came to pass after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, ‘Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth’ ”.**

There are three important concepts present in this one verse: the concept that **sin and drought are connected**; that God uses ordinary people just like us; and that the Word of God confronts evil. Let’s look at how these concepts are lived out.

### **Evil Invites Drought**

No rain had fallen for three years. This is exactly what Elijah had prophesied. He had reminded Israel’s King Ahab of a principle God had

proclaimed to Moses long before. God had said, **“If the people do not obey My commands, I will change your rain to powder and dust” (see Deuteronomy 28:15, 24).**

God is depriving people of blessings as it is God’s releasing them to their own desires.

**When people continually choose sin,** God releases them to what Satan will give them.

**Satan is the god of drought.** He lives in a dry place. We know this because Jesus said that whenever demonic spirits pass out of a man they go into **“dry places” (Matthew 12:43).** Remember, we are talking about the spiritual, invisible realm. I am not saying that the devil lives in the Sahara Desert or any other physical dry place.

Consequently, in **1 Kings**, we see that the rule of King Ahab was a manifestly evil rule that defied God’s blessing and invited drought.

Ahab was king of Israel and the husband of Jezebel, who was the daughter of a pagan king. Jezebel brought the worship of Baal with her, and Ahab joined her in enthroning her Canaanite god and its companion god, Asherah.

The worship of these gods was sinister, merciless, manifest evil. It was what we would call in our time Satanism and involved the sacrifice of human life. **The word Baal means, “Master.”** It was a religion of fear, perversion and death.

This principle suggests an important parallel for our own experiences. The dry spell described in **1 Kings** was a result of a manifestly evil rule.

**Every single one of us either has experienced or is experiencing or will experience a time when we can see nothing growing.**

It is a dry spell. Those dry spells can show up in many different ways and different circumstances. There can be a downturn in your business. You may see something wonderful beginning to take place in your life, and it suddenly . . . dries up.

**When we face these kinds of situations, where drought is ruling, we can step in just as surely as Elijah did.**

The description of Elijah is one of a man who was subject to life's passions as we are. He was not immune to depression, despair or despondency. I am sometimes convinced that Elijah was the kind of guy who woke up irritable some mornings.

Elijah was passionate about God, blunt in how he addressed people and, well, kind of quirky. We see a lot of these same attributes in John the Baptist who, Scripture tells us, came in the spirit of Elijah. Bottom line—these guys did not give you the warm fuzzies.

**This is who James chooses to illustrate how effectual fervent prayer works.** The New Testament application of this dramatic Old Testament story should come as no surprise to any of us.

**The life of Elijah is just one example of the miracle workings of God that can be claimed by any of His children. It is Elijah's story; it is James' story; and it is designed to become my story, and your story, too.**

Here was a man who understood, before Jesus ever explained it, that whatever we bind on earth has been bound in heaven, and whatever we loose on earth has been loosed in heaven. Elijah was saying, **"God told me, and I'm telling you. This is what He has determined in heaven, and when it comes down to earth, it will be exactly as He has said."**

**This is not arrogance.** Praying with fervency and expectancy requires that we live as people becoming more and more familiar with the voice of the Lord, so that we know how to pray.

**Expectancy hears the voice of the Lord and then moves into prayer to see His will done on earth.**

When the Lord was ready to end the drought, He told Elijah to go show himself to Ahab. **He was sending His prophet to confront the one who was ruling in the realm of evil.**

The objective? **To release blessing.**

God wanted rain upon those people and He wanted to give evidence of His blessing upon His prophet. But that cannot happen without the confrontation with evil.

Elijah, in obedience to the Lord, showed himself to the king. The situation is almost humorous in its predictably accusing response of the enemy. Here is a man who has heard the voice of the Lord and obeyed Him; and he is immediately challenged, accused and blamed by Ahab. As soon as King Ahab saw Elijah, he challenged, **“Is that you, O troubler of Israel?” (1 Kings 17:18).**

How often has that happened to any one of us? We are listening for the voice of the Lord, praying in obedience to Him, and the Adversary takes that moment to begin to accuse and remind us of everything wrong we have ever done.

In essence, the Adversary is right: We are not worthy. But when we stand as penitent and forgiven sons and daughters of the living God, the Accuser has no right to us.

Elijah stood his ground: **“I haven’t troubled Israel. It’s you and your father’s house. It’s all of you who have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed Baal. You’ve got the wrong guy. It’s you.”**

Elijah then proposed a test to prove who was the true God. Ahab readily agreed. With the 450 prophets of Baal and the additional 400 prophets of Asherah in attendance, they would cut up a bull and lay the pieces on an altar up on Mount Carmel.

Beginning in the morning, all the prophets of Baal went through their contortions and their rituals and their incantations to try to make some miracle power happen. Scripture says that Elijah actually started to mock them.

He was bold because he knew their god was not going to be able to deliver. He said, **“Call a little louder—he is a god, after all. Maybe**

**he's off meditating somewhere or other, or maybe he's gotten involved in a project, or maybe he's on vacation. You don't suppose he's overslept, do you, and needs to be awakened?"**

From morning till evening the prophets called on the name of Baal, cutting themselves with knives and lances until blood gushed from their bodies. Let me just point out that when Scripture says **"there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9)**, it is really true.

When we look at young people cutting themselves in self-destructive behavior, make no mistake that the demon beings behind the idol Baal are still at work in our world. They may present themselves differently, but when the result is the same, it is the same principality behind the action.

The prophets of Baal did their best, but there was no response from heaven. Toward the end of the day, Elijah stepped forward, and Scripture says it was **"at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice" (1 Kings 18:29)**.

They are perhaps some of my favorite words in Scripture. Elijah stepped up and said, **"Now it's my turn."**

In order to give evidence that there was no chicanery or fraud, he commanded that water be poured three times into a trough around the sacrifice he was offering. Then in a prayer of some sixty words, he called on God for an outpouring of His power.

**The Bible tells us,  
Kings 18:38**

**Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!"**

It was a proven point of victory, but there is more to learn from Elijah. This victory did not come about without certain things taking place. **And**

**in this passage we can also see four ways the prophet modeled for us to confront darkness with fervent prayer.**

### **1. Rebuild the Broken Altar**

Once the prophets of Baal were finished, Elijah began “his turn” by calling the people to him and directing them to repair the altar of the Lord that had been broken down. If you seek breakthrough when confronting evil, then begin by rebuilding the places where there are broken altars.

While broken altars can be in a nation (as this one was), or within a church or a family—really within any group of people—the first place to look for a broken altar is in your own life.

**These can be any area that we have let slide—disciplines or obedience that the Lord has called us to. One important one, if we will learn to enter into confrontational, fervent prayer and see the workings of evil broken down, is to begin by building an altar of prayer.**

**Jesus made the commitment to build a Church that the gates of hell could not prevail against, and we see here evidence of that principle in operation.**

Now we do experience times in prayer that are very simple, times that are refreshing, times that call for rejoicing. But here we are talking about the times where fervency—the energized, impassioned prayer—of a redeemed and made-righteous person avails much.

**The Lord is calling His people to ever-deepening dimensions of prayer in which we are on our faces before Him and seeking hard after Him.**

Triumph in all spiritual conflict begins with a person who will build an altar to confront evil with prayer.

### **2. Call on the Name of the Lord**

The second way Elijah modeled for us to confront darkness is to recognize that our only ground of authority is the name of the Lord.

**First Kings 18:32 says that Elijah “built an altar in the name of the Lord.”**

The New Testament tells us that it is only in the name of Jesus that we can be saved (see **Acts 4:12**), only in His name that we have been given authority over principalities and powers (see **Mark 9:38–39; Acts 16:18**), only at Jesus’ name that every knee will bow—that is, acknowledge and yield to His will (see **Philippians 2:10**).

Not one of us could be saved except for the sacrifice accomplished by Jesus. We come to God through His Son, the Lamb that was slain for us. By the same token, no spiritual victory is ever accomplished without drawing on the resource of that sacrifice.

**“All power is given to Me in heaven and earth. You go and extend My Kingdom” (see Matthew 28:18).**

**That directive is accomplished as believers move in the power of prayer.**

Elijah’s actions thus foreshadowed the power of the cross where the blood of Jesus Christ flowed to break the yoke of bondage. Through the cross Jesus made an open show of the works of hell. As surely as Elijah came to offer the evening sacrifice in the name of the Lord, we come in Jesus’ name.

The Bible says that at Elijah’s prayer, the fire fell and consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, even the water in the trough. But that was not the end of it. Elijah immediately directed the people to take the prophets of Baal down to the Brook Kishon, where he slew them.

If this seems a bit intolerant or narrow-minded, we need to remember that God’s dealings with Israel are uniquely within the covenant He made with them, a covenant to which they agreed. The was covenant with Israel as they are getting ready to go into the Promised Land, and clearly state the blessings on obedience and curses on disobedience before all the people.

**The understanding was foundational that there were consequences for not walking in the way of the Lord as the new nation was about to step into her inheritance.**

Please understand, the application for us is not the decision to fight evil by going around burning up pornography studios or bombing abortion clinics. Ours is not to believe that the Church will ever be assigned the task of exacting judgment on evil. God reserves that task entirely as His own.

**Our battle, again, remember, is not—nor ever will be—against flesh and blood.** We are talking about confrontation in the spiritual arena. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

**The third way, then,** that Elijah modeled for us to confront darkness was to pursue the enemy to complete overthrow. Once we begin to see God answer, don't stop there. We are to go on and pursue the enemy until he is brought completely underfoot.

Let me challenge you: How often do you begin to see the breaking of the enemy's hold over a situation in your family, your workplace or your town, and you become so excited about what has begun that you stop praying? Yes!

**We should thank the Lord for the beginning signs of victory, but that does not mean we should stop pursuing the battle.**

We accomplish such pursuit by continuing to set aside time to say, **“Lord, I continue to press in regarding that battle until the enemy is trodden underfoot, as You said. Jesus promised in Luke 10:19 that we will trample on serpents and scorpions, not just chase them. We will pursue them to the ground.”**

If what happened to Elijah had happened at some prayer meetings when the blessings, the power or “the fire” falls, that would have been the end of the prayer meeting right there.

Everybody would have become caught up in the excitement of manifestations that are simply the beginning. **But the goal is not the beginning of a victory; it is in seeing the victory become established.**

The Lord has called us beyond simply experiencing a demonstration of His power. He wants to achieve a total release of His blessing.

**Finally, Elijah knew that dealing with the enemy was not the final step.**

If you have ever studied any of the rebuilding that had to take place in Europe after either of the twentieth century's world wars, you will understand when I say that the end of battle can leave a pretty barren landscape.

This is what Elijah faced. There had been no rain for more than three years. He knew that facing down the enemy cleared the stage for God to begin His redemptive action within the culture. Now it was time for rain.

**The fourth step outlined here is this:** After the previous three things have taken place, we still must seek God until the final breakthrough comes.

After the confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal, Elijah said to King Ahab, **“Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain” (1 Kings 18:41).** At this point in the story there was not even a cloud in the sky. Where did Elijah hear thunder? Where did he hear wind and oncoming rain?

**He heard it in the Spirit;** he saw it in the invisible realm. His prayers were not out of desperation, hoping that everything would work out. Rather, Scripture tells us that he cast himself on the ground and put his face between his knees. That was nothing other than the squatting position taken in that culture for a woman laboring to give birth. Elijah was entering into travail.

Elijah prayed for a while, then said to his servant, **“Go up now and look toward the sea. Look out toward the Mediterranean and tell me**

**what you can see.” His servant came back and said, “There’s nothing.” Elijah said, “Go. Go again.” He said this seven times: “Go. Go again.”**

**Finally, the seventh time** Elijah’s servant trudged back to his vantage point of the horizon, he saw a cloud. He reported that there was **“a cloud, as small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!” (verse 44).**

It was just one cloud, and he could block the view of it with his fist.

Elijah said, **“That’s enough. God is in action.”** The blessing of rain was evident and Elijah’s task was completed. The next verse tells us that **“it happened . . . that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain” (verse 45).**

**The effective fervent prayer of one person like you, like me—like us—effected the entry of God’s hand of power unto the working of miracles.**

If we are going to see the birthing of Kingdom life into present circumstances, I believe the Bride of Christ, **the living Church, needs to enter into participation.**

**This is no small thing! And it is the reason we need to grow in our faith and boldness in prayer. God is calling us to employ forceful, sustained praying to see His will done “on earth as it is in heaven.”**

**The point is not that our energy or zeal compels God to act. We are not manipulating God; we are being invited to partner with Him with the same passion He has.**

When we deal with great issues that occupy our passions and we begin to seek the Lord fervently in the dry spells, then we confront the powers of darkness. As we do that, we will begin to see evil broken and the rain of God’s blessing fall.

**The power of God is released in proportion to the energy with which my petition is delivered?** The answer is yes. There is clearly a connection between the passion in prayer extended from our earth side

of things, and the release of God's operational power from the heaven side.

So let's be well advised: There is no reason to feel that bold, passionate or urgent prayer should be trivialized on the grounds that emotion is either unimportant or inappropriate. **There is a biblical connection between prayerful, humble yet bold faith and the breaking of the powers of hell.**

**I want no one to conclude that by your works or my works we can manipulate God into doing anything.** Never, never think that!

**But neither allow yourself to think that bland, halfhearted prayers are going to accomplish much.**

**This is the kind of prayer that confronts the works of darkness—** God is calling for people who, like Elijah, will come before Him in a spirit of travail, setting themselves to pray . . . again and again and again and again. You and I must seek God until the answer comes. We don't stop. That is the kind of prayer that can turn any situation around.

#### **1 Kings 18:41-45**

**41 Now Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink, for there is the sound of the roar of an abundance of rain." 42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down to the earth and put his face between his knees, 43 and he said to his servant, "Go up, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked and said, "There is nothing." Elijah said, "Go back" seven times. 44 And at the seventh time the servant said, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea." And Elijah said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the rain shower does not stop you.'" 45 In a little while the sky grew dark with clouds and wind, and there were heavy showers.**

The King James Versions say, "Great Rain".