JM Jason Mayfield

SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

THE ONE THING THAT UNLOCKS GOD'S POWER

The Flow of Power: Why Prayer Is the Golden Pipe

> Prayer is the conduit for Pentecostal power. Jesus is the source and the Spirit is the oil, but without the golden pipe of prayer the oil never reaches the lampstand, and the way to pray more is to start by praying some.

MAIN TEXT
Zechariah 4:1-14

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SERIES
We're Openly Spirit Filled, Week 2 of 5

BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. Power in a Pentecostal church has a behind the scenes mechanism people never see, the way the grandson never saw the peanuts go into the ground. That mechanism is prayer.
2. Prayer is the conduit for Pentecostal power. Without prayer there is no Pentecost. Acts 2 is the model: they prayed and then the fire fell.
3. When you sow a seed of Bible reading you reap a harvest of revelation, when you sow a seed of worship you reap a harvest of exposure, and when you sow a seed of prayer you reap a harvest of power.
4. You cannot accomplish everything in your own strength. Zerubbabel had the know how but not the resources, and needed approvals, money and people outside his control.
5. In Zechariah 4 the olive tree is Jesus, the lampstand is the church, the golden oil is the anointing, and the golden pipe is prayer. Without the pipe the oil hits the floor.
6. The more you pray, the greater the capacity of the pipe. Prayer is a time investment with no point of diminishing return, unlike Bible reading.
7. The way you pray more is to start by praying some. Daniel had a baseline of three times a day, as he had done previously, and seven minutes a day is a workable starting baseline.
8. Expand prayer two ways: pray in the Spirit, since Romans 8 says we do not know how to pray as we ought, and pray Scripture by scanning the Psalms and praying what resonates.
9. Prayer is not a work. Supernatural gifts come by the same grace through faith ethic as salvation, and confessing Christ is a response rather than a wage.
10. Church experience is encouragement, not power. Church is charging your phone and leaving, prayer is a continuous power source.

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READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/the-one-thing-that-unlocks-gods-power

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This is the second message in a five-week series on the church's value that we are openly Spirit filled. Last week established that the Pentecostal experience comes from Jesus and cannot be earned. This week names the behind-the-scenes mechanism most believers skip: prayer. Next week is speaking in tongues, so touch praying in the Spirit here and save the full teaching.

The message works best as a mix of conviction and practical help. Expect the room to go quiet when you say most people do not pray. Name it with a smile, then give them something they can actually do: a seven-minute baseline and two ways to grow it.

Zechariah 4 carries the whole message. Read the whole chapter, then return to it for each point, and make sure the four images land: the olive tree, the lampstand, the golden oil and the golden pipe.

Introduction

The Lord comes through for His people. He works on our behalf. Today is about how His power flows.

Last week we began a series on one of our values: we are an openly Spirit-filled church. We are not closeted Pentecostals. We believe the power of God still works in the life of the believer.

Illustration: no peanuts in the field. A man who grew up in Ohio spent every boyhood summer on his grandfather's peanut farm in South Georgia. They got up at four in the morning, drank coffee, ate biscuits and worked the fields together. Years later his grandfather passed away and left him the farm. The grandson decided his family would spend every summer there to keep the legacy alive.

That first summer they did what he remembered: weed management and irrigation, all summer long. When school started, they went back to Ohio, and he hired a local farmer to bring in the harvest. A few weeks later the phone rang from a South Georgia area code. "I have never seen what I saw today," the farmer said. "Sir, you have no peanuts in this field."

He had watched the summer work for years, but he had never seen the peanuts go into the ground. So he spent a whole summer pulling weeds and watering dirt.

Prayer Is the Conduit for Pentecostal Power

Something similar happens in Pentecostal churches. We hear about power, we see demonstrations of power in our services, and we tie power to what happens in this room: a service, a revival, a famous preacher who came through. But there is a behind-the-scenes mechanism we ignore or never see, and it is the thing that causes power to flow.

It is prayer. Prayer is the conduit for Pentecostal power. It would be fair to say that without prayer, there is no Pentecost.

The model is the upper room. Before Pentecost, "all these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer" (Acts 1:14). Then the fire fell.

> **ACTS 2:1-4 ESV**
>
> [1] When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. [2] And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. [3] And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. [4] And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

A WORD IN PRAYER

Years ago, in prayer, the Lord spoke this to me:

- When you sow a seed of Bible reading, you reap a harvest of revelation.
- When you sow a seed of worship, you reap a harvest of exposure. When you make much of Me, I will make much of you.
- **When you sow a seed of prayer, you reap a harvest of power.**

Illustration: Charles Stanley's Bible. I love Charles Stanley's preaching, enough to own two collector's edition Charles Stanley Bibles. Not long after this word, Dr. Stanley passed away, and his son Andy Stanley posted a photo of the front page of his father's Bible. Written there: "More prayer, less notes. More power, greater results."

Tell the congregation that today is about prayer, and that if they do not start saying amen soon, people will know they do not pray.

The Text

> **ZECHARIAH 4:1-14** ESV
>
> [1] And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep. [2] And he said to me, "What do you see?" I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. [3] And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." [4] And I said to the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?" [5] Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." [6] Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts. [7] Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'" [8] Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, [9] "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also complete it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. [10] For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. "These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth." [11] Then I said to him, "What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?" [12] And a second time I answered and said to him, "What are these two branches of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil is poured out?" [13] He said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" I said, "No, my lord." [14] Then he said, "These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth."

Give the background as you read. After the exile, Zerubbabel served as governor of Judah. He was in the line of David, so in this prophecy he stands as a kind of king, and he was called to rebuild the temple of God. This was no small task, and it met opposition. The prophet's word to him: the mountain in front of you will become flat ground. You laid the foundation, and you will finish it, not by your own strength but by the Spirit of God.

The flow of power: how does it flow? Through the conduit of prayer.

1. You Cannot Accomplish Everything in Your Own Strength

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

You have a measure of power: ability, intelligence, strength. If your legs do not work, your arms do. Something works. But no matter how much power you have, there are things you cannot get done. You cannot make people pick up the phone. You cannot make people spend the money. You cannot make the government do anything, no matter how much you post about it on Facebook.

Zerubbabel's dependence is rarely talked about. To rebuild the temple he depended on the Persian government for permission, money, workers and time (see Ezra 5-6). Opposition came through officials who did not want the work done. Every day he needed approvals outside his control, resources outside

his pocketbook and help from people he did not command. He was a governor, but he was not in charge. **He had the know-how, but not the resources.**

Many of us live there: I know how to do this, if only I had that. Someone recently asked me what I need as a pastor. People and money. I know how to do a lot of this. But I cannot do everything.

But there is a power that comes from on high. Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit.

- You have been sitting on a house that will not sell. The Lord knows the person who needs to buy it. Your network is limited; His is not.
- You need a job and have sent out applications every day. God can cause someone to look at your resume again.
- You live on a fixed income. God can cause money to show up out of nowhere. I have seen Him do it more times than I can count.

A great exploit is anything you want to do that you cannot comprehend how to get done. For some, it is owning ten rental houses. For others, it is finding the strength to talk to the lady in the checkout line at Publix.

2. Prayer Is the Conduit Through Which Power Flows

> **ZECHARIAH 4:11-14** ESV
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> 11 Then I said to him, “What are these two olive trees on the right and the left of the lampstand?” 12 And a second time I answered and said to him, “What are these two branches of the olive trees, which are beside the two golden pipes from which the golden oil is poured out?” 13 He said to me, “Do you not know what these are?” I said, “No, my lord.” 14 Then he said, “These are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.”

The two anointed ones are two specific people. The first is Zerubbabel, the governor in the line of David, a type of king. The second is the high priest of the day, Joshua (Zechariah 3; 6:11-13). The king and the priest.

All through the Old Testament, kings were kings and priests were priests, and the two were never to be mixed. When King Saul offered the sacrifice himself, he lost the kingdom (1 Samuel 13:8-14). But two figures in Scripture are both king and priest. The first is Melchizedek, who blessed Abraham (Genesis 14:18-20). He points forward to the second: Jesus Christ, our King and our High Priest.

So when the passage speaks of “the two anointed ones,” we can see in them the Anointed One, Jesus Christ. That gives us four images:

1. **The olive tree is Jesus.** He is the source. 2. **The lampstand is the church.** Have them tell a neighbor, “You are a lampstand.” The lampstand needs oil to burn: no oil, no fire, no light, no heat. The church needs what Jesus has. 3. **The golden oil is the anointing.** It is the essence that flows out of the tree into the church: the power, the strength, the Holy Spirit experience the believer walks in. 4. **The golden pipe**

is prayer. It is not the anointing, not the Lord and not the church. It is the mechanism through which the source, the essence of Christ's strength, flows into the life of a believer.

Without the golden pipe, the oil never makes the trip. You burn dry, and the oil hits the floor.

Why is the church in America so often ineffective? Believers in persecuted churches risk everything to gather, and we skip months at a time. We are not a people of prayer. Some of us pray a little and think we are people of prayer, but thirty seconds a day is not cutting it.

3. The More You Pray, the Greater the Flow

With Bible reading there is a point of diminishing return: read so much in one sitting that your eyes cross, and it stops helping. **Prayer is not like that.** Prayer is a time investment. The more time you give it, the more the golden pipe opens up and the greater its capacity to carry power into your life.

A caution: be wary of anyone who preaches a prayer life that makes them sound more special than you, like the claim of three hours a day. That is not the point.

The way you pray more is you start by praying some. For most people, anything beyond saying the blessing would be an improvement. (My granddaddy prayed the same blessing at every meal: "Our Father, we thank Thee for this food and all our blessings. We rest in Thy name. Amen.")

SET A BASELINE

> **DANIEL 6:10** ESV
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> 10 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

Notice the words "as he had done previously" (Daniel 6:10). Daniel had a baseline. To increase the flow of power, you need a baseline for prayer in your daily routine: the least you will pray every day.

Back in the fall, the message "27 Minutes to Change Your Life" laid out a daily rhythm: 15 minutes of Bible reading (enough to read the Bible in a year), 5 minutes of worship and 7 minutes of prayer. Here are the seven minutes:

- **Thank God for one thing you are truly grateful for.** Not something you do not care about. Start honest.
- **Name three to five things you want to see the Lord work out in your immediate realm of influence.** Pray for peace in the Middle East if you like, but pray for your children first. You care about these things, and you will be able to see whether they change.

The first time, you may finish in two and a half minutes. Give it three weeks. Seven minutes is nothing to turn your nose up at. Here is a word from the throne: it is better than zero.

TWO WAYS TO EXPAND YOUR PRAYER TIME

Pray in the Spirit. We are a tongue-talking Pentecostal church, and next week is all about speaking in tongues. For now: "we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us" (Romans 8:26). Partner with the One who knows how to pray.

Pray Scripture. Open to the Psalms, scan, and pray whatever resonates. You can do it anywhere in the Bible.

Demonstration: praying Isaiah 12. Open to a passage on the spot and pray it out loud. When this was preached, the passage was Isaiah 12:

> **ISAIAH 12:1 ESV**
>
> 1 You will say in that day: "I will give thanks to you, O LORD, for though you were angry with me, your anger turned away, that you might comfort me.

"You will say in that day: 'I will give thanks to you'" (Isaiah 12:1). Lord, I thank You that a day is coming in this situation when I will no longer be hoping for breakthrough; I will be giving You thanks, because You are going to come through. So let me give You praise in advance.

Then model praying for a real need in the church. (When this was preached, the prayer was for a worship pastor: a young, anointed minister who needs a pastor to train them, finding the church online.)

Prayer is not about making perfect sense or filling out a purchase order. It is about time. When you come into agreement with God's Word and say back to Him what He has already said, it is hard for Him to say no. Children hold their parents to what they promised months ago. When you remind the Lord of His Word, He has not forgotten it, and it is hard to argue with.

Prayer Is Not a Work

Two weeks ago we said the Pentecostal experience is received. You cannot earn it. So is time in prayer a work? Does God owe me because I put in the time?

No. It only becomes a work if you decide in your heart it is a work: "God, I've done X, Y and Z, and You haven't done anything." That is a position of the heart.

The Lord showed me something: **the same ethic that applies to salvation applies to the supernatural gifts.** Every Pentecostal experience comes by grace, predicated on the finished work of Jesus, the same way you are saved.

> **EPHESIANS 2:8-9 ESV**
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> 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,
> 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Abraham did not earn what he received. “That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace” (Romans 4:16).

But there is a response. “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). Is that a work? No.

Illustration: owning Publix. Imagine walking into Publix, writing your name on a form, and being handed ownership of the whole multibillion-dollar company. No one would complain, “How dare you make me write my name down.” It is barely anything. Confessing Jesus is not a wage; it is a response to His goodness. And yet it is the way salvation comes, because “there is salvation in no one else” (Acts 4:12).

The same is true of Pentecostal power. You do not earn it, make it happen or generate it. But you reach out by faith and receive it, through the golden pipe of prayer. You need a power line from the pole to your house, and you need a line from the cross to your life.

Encouragement or Power

We have talked about Pentecost that falls off in the parking lot. The experience we have in here, a song that blesses us, good preaching, a supernatural moment, is limited to the moment. **Prayer tethers us to a continual flow of power. Church is like charging your phone and leaving. Prayer is like a continual power source, so you never have to recharge.**

Some say the Pentecostal experience is for evangelism, and we want to reach everyone in this region. But you need power for far more than that. You need power to go to Walmart, to deal with that person at work, to sit on hold with the cable company. If someone cutting you off in traffic can ruin your whole day, what happens when someone goes to the hospital, or there is a financial crisis, or the car dies? You need power.

Illustration: praying it in. Before coming here, I served for a year alongside Pastor George Sawyer at Calvary in Huntsville and Decatur, Alabama, a legend in the Assemblies of God in Alabama. Early on, when we talked about what the church needed to do, he said, “I don’t have the money for it. So me and you are going to have to get together and pray it in.” My first thought was: what kind of strategy is that?

We are wired differently. When I seek the Lord, I go to the Word first. When he seeks the Lord, he goes to prayer. He would start a prayer meeting and walk the room praying out loud for an hour. I watched him go into the secret place and come out to do things that defied the odds. We labor, “unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain” (Psalm 127:1). But certain things produce certain results. In the last months I was there, we saw what I can only call verifiable miracles.

Here is what I learned: **prayer taps into a power you get no other way.** Most of the church thinks it has power because it worships, sings, serves, takes notes, reads the Bible, listens to podcasts or switched to Christian radio. All of it is good, and you need it. But what you have tapped into is encouragement. You make it through the week, and then you have to plug back in. That is encouragement. Prayer is power.

Conclusion

In my own ministry, I have watched the supernatural rise and fall with my prayer life. My baseline is at least seven minutes; most days it is fifteen or twenty. But when I have been captivated in the secret place for 45 minutes or an hour, ministry becomes almost effortless, and people receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

As I prepared this series, I came to terms with something. I do not have a way to make happen what the Lord has shown me for this church. We are seeing positive traction, but not the growth I expected. Then the Lord spoke: **"Do what you're doing, but you're going to grow this church by prayer."**

That is not a new prayer ministry. It is the pastor on his face before God.

So when you see the harvest, it will not be because of a smart pastor or a great volunteer team. When you see the harvest: prayer. When you see God move: prayer. When you see power flow in the church: prayer.

When you sow the seed of prayer, you reap a harvest of power.



ABOUT

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