

Chapter 8

Deliver the Goods – Part 2

4. The Mode –
“Anointing with oil in the name of the Lord”

Now let's look at the mode of praying, and this is important.

Note the sequence here:

- 1) Elders pray over him
- 2) Elders anoint with oil
- 3) Elders lay hands on him
- 4) Elders pray in the name of the Lord.
- 5) Elders pray the prayer of faith
- 6) Elders pray fervent prayers

FIRST, THEY "PRAY OVER THEM."

We pray for them. That means when we are at home, we pray for them. We pray with them when we are in company with them. We pray over them when we are near enough to put a hand on them. To pray FOR someone you can do it at a distance. To pray WITH someone is to pray while they are standing or sitting near you. To pray OVER them indicates a hovering over the person through personal touch.

SECOND, THEY "LAY HANDS ON THEM."

I believe in the biblical teaching of the laying on of hands. The practice of laying on of hands was taught to the Levite priests in the Old Testament. It was the way of transferring blessing from one person to another. The priest, or in this case the elders, are in touch with God. They are intermediaries. They touch heaven for you. They lay hold of the throne of grace and plead your cause. I believe it is helpful for a pastor or elder to demonstrate this tangibly by laying their hands on the sick.

When an elder, or pastor, prays over you, he is not just praying for you. He is praying over you. He stretches one hand to heaven, where he touches the hem of Jesus' garment. The other hand is on the head of the one being anointed, thus illustrating a direct connection with the Father in heaven.

When we pray in Jesus' name, it means we do so by his authority and power. It is not the power of the elder. It is the power of God. Let the recipient see and feel this demonstration. The elder's hand reaches to heaven's throne. The power comes down through his hand, through his cleansed heart, then touches the recipient with his other hand. The elder makes and illustrates the connection.

I believe that “praying over him” means we lay hands on them. There's something immediate and visual about laying hands on someone. There's something intimate about being touched by someone. Some thirty years ago, researchers conducted a study comparing doctors who deliberately touched the patient with their hands in a kind way to a control group who did not touch patients. Researchers repeated the study in recent years. They have found that double the number of people get well when the doctor touched them. It makes them feel loved and cared for. A touch shows empathy with the person. There is a touch of the Lord's presence that passes from you to them. We pray over the sick, laying hands on them, anointing them with oil, and praying in the name of the Lord a prayer filled with faith and “The Lord will raise him up.” I make it a pattern for myself and elders to always ask permission to touch someone when you pray over them. I usually tell them why we are laying our hands on them. I've instructed my elders that we have three ways of praying for people in the church. We pray for, with, and over them.

THIRD, THEY “ANOINT WITH OIL.”

The elders are to anoint with oil. There's no magic in the oil. The oil is not a phenomenal thing. We usually have an oil jar near by in the pulpit or at the altar. There is no special formula for the oil. It usually is olive oil. It can be any oil. I have often used baby oil because it smells good. Jesus even used his own spittle to anoint a blind man. I wouldn't recommend that. You're not Jesus.

Is this the holy anointing oil in the Old Testament? **(See Exodus 29:7, 29:21,30:25, 31, 31:11 and 35:8)** We do not have the exact formula the priests used in the Old Testament. The priest had holy anointing oil which was scented. They anointed people, but they didn't put a little dab on them. People were doused with it. The priest really poured it on. So really, if we're going to do it the Old Testament way, we would have a full jar of oil and we would pour it on your head. I think we'd have fewer people get anointed.

There is no magic in the oil. The oil is not a magical formula. Beware of preachers and teachers that sell anointing oil as coming from Israel. The oil is a symbol of the blessing of the Lord, nothing more. It is a sign of being appointed for blessing. I explain that before I anoint with oil so they understand why we do it.

Remember the 23rd Psalm? *"He anoints my head with oil. My cup runs over."* That's what the Lord wants you to see. The elders anoint you with oil and declare in agreement that you are chosen for God's blessing. You will be marked for blessing and you will receive abundant blessings from heaven.

I think it is interesting that God has never given us any product that should be an amulet, charm, necklace, cross or a thing that we think has power in itself. The oil has no power in itself. It is just oil. We use it in obedience to the Lord, and so we do that because the Lord says, "This symbolizes blessing," and we ought to be happy to let God symbolically mark us as, "I am an instrument of blessing."

By the way, the enemy, the devil, is watching this anointing.

"We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the One who was born of God keeps them safe, and the evil one cannot harm them." – 1 John 5:18

FOURTH, THEY PRAY "IN THE NAME OF THE LORD."

When you are anointed, you are marked for blessing. It is an announcement to principalities and powers that this person is marked by God for blessing. That blessing is a wonderful thing. It should be a mark of pride and joy. There is a wonderful truth to pronouncing a blessing over someone in the name of the Lord.

Most of us are familiar with the benediction a priest is to give over the people found in Number 6:24-27.

23 *"Tell Aaron and his sons, 'This is how you are to bless the Israelites. Say to them:*
24 *" ' "The LORD bless you and keep you; 25 the LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; 26 the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace."*
' 27 *"So they will put my name on the Israelites, and I will bless them."*

Most of us have heard that blessing as a benediction at the end of a worship service. But it is more than that. It is the pronouncement of a blessing from heaven. Note the last verse, which is almost never mentioned in the benediction.

"So they will PUT MY NAME on them, and I WILL BLESS THEM."

I like to explain this when I pray for the sick. I am laying hands on them, praying over them, putting the name of the Lord on them, and sealing them with the promise of a blessing. An elder, functioning in the priesthood of the believers, is to pronounce a blessing over them.

**THEY ARE NOW MARKED FOR BLESSING BY THE NAME
AND THE OIL REPRESENTS GLADNESS FOR SADNESS.**

Listen to Isaiah 61:1-3 declare why Jesus came:

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, 3 and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.”

Some pastors make a form of a cross with it. I don’t. I think that’s superstitious. Just anoint and leave it there. So, what do you do with the greasy oil after someone anoints you? Is it like the ashes of Ash Wednesday that you shouldn’t wash off for 24 hours? I think it’s funny. I’ve watched people through the years who aren’t sure what to do with the oil on their forehead. What do you do once you’re anointed with oil? You’ve got all this sticky substance on your head. Often people will ask can they, or should they, wipe it off? You can wipe it off immediately. You can wipe it off when you get home. It’s just a symbol. I remember telling one person they could wipe it off, or wash it off, when they got home. He said, “No way! I want everyone to know I am marked for blessing!”

FIFTH, THE MANNER: THEY PRAY “THE PRAYER OF FAITH”

Step number five is the manner in which the elders do this. The manner is “the prayer of faith.” It is not a beseeching prayer, a begging prayer, a hoping prayer or a wishing prayer. It is to be a prayer of faith.

The manner needs to be “fervent prayer of faith by a righteous man.” God says this prayer of faith “avails much.” That means it works! This prayer is to be a believing prayer, not a half-hearted begging prayer that is not sure God will answer. That prayer carries the authority of Jesus Christ and claims God’s promises by faith and expects an answer.

Do you remember what James said when referring to praying for wisdom?

"If a man needs wisdom, he should ask of God nothing wavering, for he that wavers is like the wave of a sea tossed by the wind and driven by the waves. Let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord." – James 1:5

My friends, we are to pray in faith, believing God's going to do something. We don't know exactly what He is going to do, but He is going to do something. We pray with excited expectation. That's faith!

One Sunday morning, after praying with several people, I overheard an elder concluding his prayer by telling the person, "Now, God may not answer your prayer..."

I knew what he meant. His intentions were good, but it doesn't justify pulling the rug out from under someone's faith. That set me off! That's not biblical.

Where do we find that kind of counsel in Scripture? It's certainly not a prayer of faith. When we plant seeds of doubt in the mind of the sick person, we are defeating their faith. It's like telling them that God might not hear, help, or heal at all. It is treating prayer like you are playing the lottery—you might win, but you probably won't.

Not one promise of God prepares us to be disappointed. Promises are to be believed and clung to. 2 Corinthians 1:20 says emphatically, "All the promises of God in him are 'Yes', and in him 'Amen' for the glory of God."

I don't find any ifs ands or buts in those promises. There are no maybes, might's, perhaps, sometimes, or if God feels like it conditions in those promises. They are true and they are to be believed.

The prerequisite for effective prayer is faith. Genuine faith clings to the promise of God, like Abraham being fully persuaded that God had the power to do what he had promised.

Too often we want to prepare people to be disappointed by telling them things God has not said. Perhaps it is because we have been disappointed by some unanswered prayer. We want to give them a safety net, just in case God doesn't answer. We make up things that God has not said. We have devised an imaginary theology of unanswered prayer. We have made it a fact of life, an unavoidable and regular possibility, that God doesn't always answer prayer. I do not find that in the Bible.

Now we instruct our elders to prepare people to expect great things of God. We do not douse their faith or plant seeds of doubt in their minds. We believe God together for a miracle no matter how that may come.

Here's the secret: It's found in Ephesians 3:20-21

"Now to him who is able (and willing) to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

We must start with God's overwhelming willingness to answer our prayers and to do more than we ask or imagine. God has given us over 600 precious personal promises to assure us of his willingness and ability to do what we ask.

Here is how we teach everyone who comes to God to be blessed. We have them read Ephesians 3:20-21 out loud and mark it in their Bibles.

Then we say,

*"Based on this promise, God will either
give you exactly what you asked for,
or He will give you something better."*

Remember, there are no ifs ands or buts with God. He longs to bless you. He promised to bless you. Now let us wait for and expect the blessing!

We saw a phenomenal change in the hearts of God-seekers. They would go away expecting God to answer and to bless them, instead of being suspicious that He might not answer their prayers.

We also instruct them to ask God to give them a personal promise from His Word within 24 hours and send it to us by phone, text, or email. We assure them that if God does not give them a verse, we will share one with them. In all these years of doing this, not once has anyone ever called to say God didn't give them a promise. On the contrary, we get excited messages from people sharing what God said to them through His Word.

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17)
Their faith does not come from us or our promises. It comes from God through His Word. Let them hear the word from the Lord!

We began to see results at the altar. Instead of seeing people come to the altar just for prayer, we were seeing many come to tell us the great things the Lord was doing in their lives. God was answering prayer as never before.

You see, there's a principle here:

“Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he is (the same yesterday, today, and forever) and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” – Hebrews 11:6)

Do you see it now? It is not God who fails to answer prayer; it is we who fail to believe and hang on to His promises until the answer comes.

SIXTH, THE MANDATE: “THEY CONFESS FAULTS ONE TO ANOTHER.”

The mandate is that we are to *“Confess our faults one to another and pray one for another.”* I don't much like this mandate. I don't like confessing my sins in front of anyone but God. But the Lord Jesus has made it a part of praying for healing. Why do we feel this way?

Nobody likes to display their dirty underwear to others. It's embarrassing to expose your weaknesses.

1. We are ashamed of our secret sins.
2. We feel naked, exposed, and vulnerable.
3. We feel like our privacy is being invaded.
4. We feel exposed to condemnation, shame, ridicule, and gossip.
5. We'd like everyone to think better of us.
6. We are good at pretending.
7. We want to look good.

What does it mean to confess our faults one to another.

- It doesn't mean before the whole church.
- It doesn't mean just the sick person exposing his faults.
- It is an intimate setting, not public.
- It means elders need to be humble and vulnerable in admitting their own struggles and failures.

To confess is to admit without excuses, openly, honestly, and frankly. It means admit our failures, backslidings, hidden sins, slip-ups, bad habits, temper, weaknesses, struggles, temptations, etc.

Why do I need to confess to men when I've already confessed to God?

The Apostle John in 1 John 1:8-10 said that it is part of being honest with God. It is being vulnerable, honest, and transparent. It is opening your heart to another to admit you are not perfect. There is no shame in not being perfect. No one is. So why pretend? Confessing our faults to one another is a catharsis, a letting it all hang out. It is like bleeding a wound. It is cleansing the soul, the conscience, and the one dark blot.

Roman Catholicism used to have a confessional, a little booth where the supplicant could go behind a curtain and anonymously confess, admit and repent of sins committed that week. The priest would listen empathetically without judgment, then ask if they were repentant. If so, they would pronounce them forgiven.

They would usually quote 1 John 1:9,

"If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Get the Infection Out

I remember a time in Brazil where we served as missionaries that our son Andrew would frequently get infections from playing in the sand. On one occasion, he kept it hidden from us behind a bandage. When we insisted on taking the bandage off we were terrified. His finger was swollen and breaking open with puss oozing out.

We explained to him we needed to take him to a doctor so the doctor could get the infection out. He screamed and cried and didn't want to go. So, being the exaggerating father I was, I told him how the infection would go from his finger to his hand, then to his arm, then up his shoulder and finally to his heart. My wife didn't appreciate that, but it got Andrew's attention. We went to the doctor, and we watched as the doctor inserted a needle to flush out the infection. It was a horrible scene to watch, but it was necessary to cleanse the wound so that it might heal.

That is the way it is with confession. It is good for the soul. Confession is a good way to get the bad stuff out, let it drain away and be cleansed.

Many times we've missed this instruction and even in Bible preaching, we skip it because it makes us uncomfortable. Notice it says, "Confess your faults one to another." It doesn't say, "Sick person, confess your faults to the elders."

It's a mutual confession of weakness and struggle with the besetting sins of things that have gone wrong and how God is forgiving you. There's an empathy in realizing, "We are before the throne of God as sinners that are cleansed by the blood of Jesus. Jesus Christ makes it right so that we can come boldly to the throne of grace and know that we're heard, and God answers prayer."

Woe be to us if we ever think that the elders are beyond sin and have no weaknesses. These people are sinners, just like you. They are strugglers. They are sojourners. They are not perfect. They are fallible. They make mistakes. They sin. They fail. They are just like you and just like me. That was James' point in saying "*Elijah was a man just like us.*" We are all sinners being saved by the grace of God and the blood of Jesus. We all come to the Lord for His cleansing before we pray for other people. Look at your elders. These people are sinners too. There are not exceptions.

1 John 1:8-10 says,

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

SEVENTH, THE METHOD: “THEY PRAY FERVENT PRAYER(S).”

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. ¹⁷ Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. ¹⁸ Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. – James 5:16-18 NIV

The seventh step is most important and almost always overlooked. It is the method of prayer of godly men that makes a difference. James used the word “fervent” prayer of a righteous man. What is the fervent prayer of a righteous man of God?

Elijah was an example of this kind of prayer.

Let us define this “*effectual fervent prayer*”

The Greek word James used here is *energeo*. The translation of the Greek word James used here, *energeo*, is almost always “to work” in order to convey working hard or energetically. It often appears with the Greek word *dunamis* or “power.” It is the word from which we get dynamite.

Therefore, when James says, “*the fervent prayer of a righteous man is powerful in its effect,*” he means that God’s power is effectively working through that man when he prays. The Holy Spirit, who is God’s life-giving power in us, flows through the righteous man when he prays.

Ephesians 3:20 uses that same word when referring to the power of Christ that effectively works in us.

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,”

What kind of prayer is fervent and powerful?

Not all prayers are powerful like that. Not all prayers are fervent. Therefore, not all prayers are equally effective.

The Earnest Prayer – this prayer expresses the earnestness of the heart. It is a desperate prayer, a prayer that means business with God. It is a prayer like Jacob's when he wrestled with the angel until dawn, saying, "I will not let you go unless you bless me."

The Fervent Prayer – Jesus prayed a fervent prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane the night he was betrayed. It was a life and death kind of prayer. He sweat great drops of perspiration and blood. It is a prayer that strives to lay hold of God.

The Passionate Prayer – It is the prayer that is willing to go without food, without sleep, and without pleasure until the answer comes. It is the fasting prayer. It is the all night prayer vigil. It is the wilderness prayer pursuing God till He answers.

The Prevailing Prayer — It was expressed by Jesus in Luke 18:1-8. It is the stubborn prayer that keeps hanging on. It is a tenacious prayer, like the bulldog that won't let go. It is persistent. It is the prayer that asks, seeks, and knocks and keeps on knocking until the answer comes. It keeps on praying and never gives up. It takes seriously the command to

"ASK and you will receive, SEEK and you will find, KNOCK and it will be opened unto you. For whoever asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and the one who knocks, the door will be opened." – Matthew 7:7-8)

That is a promise of our Father in heaven. Now ask yourself. Have you ever prayed like that? Do you pray like that over your own sickness? Do you pray like that for other people's sicknesses?

Let us define what it means "*Elijah prayed earnestly.*"

Elijah was a human with frailties, just like you and me. He put his pants on one leg at a time, unless he wore a toga, in which case that analogy wouldn't work. He wasn't a superman. He had the same feelings, struggles, troubles, weaknesses, and

temptations as any of the rest of us. When James says he had like passions, he doesn't mean he had lusts. He means human frailties, weaknesses, and struggles. He got hungry, thirsty and tired, just like you and me.

Then James uses an unusual expression that is difficult to translate. "*He prayed earnestly*" could be literally translated, "He prayed prayers." James used the word prayer twice to express Elijah's earnest prayer. We might say "He prayed and prayed," or "He prayed real prayers," he never stopped praying.

This is why the King James Version and the New International Version both insert the word "*earnestly*" though that word is not in the text. The double use of the word prayer in the Greek, was a way of adding an exclamation point which the Greek language did not have.

I want to suggest another implication of that double use. One is a verb, the other is a noun. "He prayed God-prayers." "He prayed Holy Spirit inspired prayers." He did not know how to pray as he should, but the Spirit prayed for him with groanings that cannot be understood. (Romans 8:26) He prayed in the Spirit. He prayed as the Spirit gave him utterance.

Think about it. Who would be so bold as to ask God to stop the rain except at his word? Not me. Only Joshua's command for the sun to stand still is greater than this bold prayer. There is no hint here that we should pray such bold prayers according to our own whims and fancies. We don't command God! But God prays through the man of God, who is in the Spirit.

When we pray for the sick, sometimes we do not know how to pray. In fact, I would say most of the time, we do not know how to pray. The Holy Spirit prays through us and for us. We need to learn to pray in the Spirit and not in the flesh. In 1 Corinthians, Paul wrote about praying in the Spirit without understanding. I don't think he was referring to praying in tongues or angelic languages. I think he is referring to praying in the Spirit, praying the words God gives you, though you yourself do not understand where that inspiration comes from.

I have had that experience multiple times when I am praying for someone's healing. The Lord gives me the words to say as they pour out of me. They are not my own words. I was not thinking about what to pray. I was praying in the Spirit as He led

me and gave me the words to pray. The response of the people being prayed for is shock. They ask, “How did you know how to pray that? I’ve never told anyone what is going on in my life.” My response is usually that I did not know what I was praying. I was simply praying the words the Holy Spirit put into my mouth.

I have also seen a kind of praying that is fleshly, even devilish, that tries to impress people with made up prophecies and revelations, rantings and ravings and screaming at the devil. That is not what this kind of praying is.

This kind of praying does not come from a shallow prayer life. Typically, it occurs after a day of fasting and prayer, or maybe after days of a personal prayer retreat, when your heart is filled to overflowing with the presence of God. It is an overflow of a prayer-filled life. It cannot be faked. It cannot be programmed.

Elijah was a normal human being just like us but he was prayer saturated. He was Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, and Spirit-empowered to pray earnestly in the way he did. He spent huge amounts of time alone in the wilderness with God. He listened to God more than he spoke. He knew God. He dwelt in the secret place of the Almighty. (Psalm 91:1)

Think About It

Chapter 8:

Deliver the Goods

Part 2 – Mode, Manner, Mandate, Method

Do you think you would confess your faults to an elder?
A pastor? A priest? A friend? A stranger?

What would be one fault that you need to confess?

What do you think about anointing oil? Laying on hands?