### Pastor Hyman Roth

I just feel very taken by the words we just sang. I don't know about you, but sometimes when you hear as a phrase of a song, "All I am is yours," and part of you wants to sing, a part of you struggles because you feel like, how can I honestly mean that? like I'm really honest. Sometimes, the best we can do is just want to want to mean it. Yet, God is so gracious that even that want to want to mean it pleases Him and honors Him and He works with us and He loves us and He adores us.

I just can't think of a better thing for broken, confused, scattered people like me and like you to do, but to raise our hands just as best as we can want to want to mean it. Now, we believe God is always moving. He is always working. But there are moments when it just becomes clear, God is at work in something.

Listen to what Apostle Paul writes in his letter to Philippians. He says, "For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose." Paul knows it's God who is at work in you all the time. Then, there are these moments when we get a glimpse that God has been working powerfully to do something He has been wanting to do.

We've been walking through the book of James. James concludes his very practical and often prophetic letter with a call to raise the bar. It's a call for community to raise the bar on how they live life with God, and he does so in a very particular way. Let me read what James says. This is James 5:13. This is how he closes the letter.

He writes – Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. 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 half years. Again, he prayed, and the heavens gave rain and the earth produced its crops. My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this – whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins. Then, the letter is over.

Now, at a glance, my first thought is – this is a rather odd way to conclude a letter. Most of the New Testament letters conclude with personal remarks, requests, and things like that, but James doesn't really give us a conclusion or a wrap-up. He continues to teach about how to exercise faith, in this case with a section that's often referred to as about the prayer of faith. Yes, this section of Scripture is about prayer. He uses the word prayer about seven times. So, we know he has in his mind around this idea of prayer.

If you look closely, what you see in this text is not just James talking about little moments of prayer or how to say grace or anything like that, he is raising the bar on how we encounter and experience God in our everyday lives, and he is quite specific about how we should do this. First, raising the bar in our life with God means involving God with what is really going on in your everyday life every day. Raising the bar in this spiritual life means involving God with what is really going on in your everyday life every day.

James says, "Are you in trouble? Pray." "Are you happy? Praise." "Are you sick or hurting? Seek a prayer." He is saying, "Look, everywhere you go, in any situation, in any circumstance, God can and should be involved."