

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth  
Sunday, October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Prayer  
Proper 25  
James 5:12-18

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

O Lord, our Lord,  
there are many places we could go this morning,  
**but we have desired to come to your house.**

There are many voices to which we can listen today,  
**but we desire to hear your voice.**

It would be easy to scatter,  
**but we have chosen to gather.**

We need to behold your beauty,  
**to inquire in your temple,**

to be wrapped in your love,  
**and to experience your renewing Spirit.**

Come close, Lord Jesus,  
**to fill us and renew us. Amen.**

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Ever present God,  
we thank you for calling us to meet with you today.  
We praise you for coming to us long before we first came to you,  
for knowing who would be here today,  
and for knowing even our motives for coming.  
By your Spirit lead and guide us during this service,  
to help us hear you when you speak  
and to guide our responses with hearts and voices

that rejoice in your presence. **Amen.**

### **Children's Hymn**

#### **Call to Confession**

Prepare the way of the Lord!  
Let us make our confession to God.

#### **Prayer of Confession**

**Merciful God,  
You created human beings with gifts of intelligence and imagination.  
Yet we confess we often use these gifts to exploit your creation  
and put others in their place.  
So often we think that we are great when we are small.  
Or we claim smallness when you set a challenge before us.  
We convince ourselves that our sin is not nearly as great as others,  
yet, every sin offends your purpose for us.  
Forgive us, we pray,  
and grant us a truer picture of ourselves.**

#### **Assurance of Pardon**

Friends in Christ, God is gracious.  
Christ has promised that those who humble themselves will be exalted.  
Having confessed our sin, let us trust the good news of the Gospel.  
In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Thanks be to God.

#### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.  
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
Forever and ever. Amen.**

#### **Hymn #300: "Father We Love You"**

Father, we love You,  
we worship and adore You,  
glorify Your name in all the earth.  
Glorify Your name, glorify Your name,  
glorify Your name in all the earth.

Jesus, we love You,  
 we worship and adore You,  
 glorify Your name in all the earth.  
 Glorify Your name, glorify Your name,  
 glorify Your name in all the earth.

Spirit, we love You,  
 we worship and adore You,  
 glorify Your name in all the earth.  
 Glorify Your name, glorify Your name,  
 glorify Your name in all the earth.

### **Responsive Reading**

#### **Psalm 119:49-56**

<sup>49</sup> Remember your word to your servant,  
 in which you have made me hope.

<sup>50</sup> **This is my comfort in my affliction,  
 that your promise gives me life.**

<sup>51</sup> The insolent utterly deride me,  
 but I do not turn away from your law.

<sup>52</sup> **When I think of your rules from of old,  
 I take comfort, O Lord.**

<sup>53</sup> Hot indignation seizes me because of the wicked,  
 who forsake your law.

<sup>54</sup> **Your statutes have been my songs  
 in the house of my sojourning.**

<sup>55</sup> I remember your name in the night, O Lord,  
 and keep your law.

<sup>56</sup> **This blessing has fallen to me,  
 that I have kept your precepts.**

### **Prayer for illumination** **(Congregant Prepared)**

#### **Scripture**

##### **James 5: 12-18**

<sup>12</sup> **But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.**

<sup>13</sup> **Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let**

them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. <sup>17</sup> Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. <sup>18</sup> Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.

## Sermon

Prayer is a critical part of the Christian faith and if there was ever a Biblical writer who could teach us about prayer, it is James. In church tradition James was known by the nickname 'Old Camel Knees'. This was because he spent so much time praying on his knees that they had calloused up and looked like the knees of a camel.

James talks about prayer multiple times. In Chapter 1 he told us if we lack wisdom we should pray.

### James 1:5

<sup>5</sup> If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

Then again in Chapter 4 he tells us that our prayers are often unanswered in our ways because we pray wrongly.

### James 4:3

You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

And here in the conclusion of his book he is going to focus on prayer. In just 6 verses James uses the word 'pray' 7 times.

### James 5:12-18

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<sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. <sup>17</sup> Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed

**fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. <sup>18</sup> Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.**

As you know, when you see something repeated in the Scripture it is important for us to pay attention. When a version of the word pray appears 7 times in 6 versus it would seem that James is saying that prayer is important in the life of a faithful Christian.

Prayer is of critical importance in the relationship that we have with God. James might have had Camel knees because he prayed so much. However, I am sure that many Christians in the world today find prayer one of the most challenging aspects of the faith.

Everyone is challenged to spend more time in prayer, if you ever want to know how to pray for me, pray that I will spend more time in prayer, because prayer is the most difficult aspect of ministry. I can easily spend time in study, in Bible teachings, in research and in writing, in preaching and teaching, but prayer time is easily allocated to other things when time crunches appear. I am willing to bet that many of us feel this way about prayer.

It is hard to set aside time to specifically get down on our knees and spend time talking to and listening for God in our lives. Most of us would probably better associate ourselves with Peter, who together with the other James and John went into the Garden of Gethsemane to watch and pray with Jesus on the night of his arrest. When Jesus went deeper into the garden to be alone and pray, they all fell asleep. Jesus had to wake them up and ask them why they could not just watch and pray for a single hour. The truth is that the spirit is often willing, yet the flesh is weak.

Remember last week, James told us that we need to be patient until the second coming of the Lord, enduring all that the world will throw at us as we stand strong in our faith.

We need to be patient and prayerful. A pastor once said that the Christian life without prayer grinds to a halt like a car without gas. If you do not have prayer then working like the farmer, witnessing like the prophet and persevering like Job becomes too difficult to continue.

So how do we learn to pray more like James and less like Peter? James is going to show us four key areas of our life in which we should learn to make prayer a priority.

The first area that James speaks of is no surprise to any of us. We should pray when we are in suffering, the second is in joy, when you are happy, the third is in sickness, when you are physically ill and finally when you are in spiritual darkness, when you are spiritually ill.

We live in a world that has made prayer secondary to so many other aspects of faith, and James is saying be prayerful at all times. Pray without ceasing, is what Paul tells us to do in the conclusion to his letter to the Thessalonians.

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

**<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**

We are meant to be always praying to our God in all seasons of our life.

James says to pray when we are suffering, when we are experiencing sorrow or affliction of some kind in our life.

**James 5: 12-13**

**<sup>12</sup> But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.**

**<sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise**

What does James mean when he tells us to not swear, by heaven or earth or any other oath? I will give you a hint he is not talking only about the use of profanity. For a Christian it should already be clear that profanity should not be part of their vocabulary. It is true when we start to suffer, we often curse and swear, which we should not, but James is speaking about oathtaking here. James is saying don't make frivolous promises to anyone.

This is one of the reasons why so many legal systems use the Bible in oathtaking. When a person is sworn into court to witness or testify, they place their hand on the Bible and asked, 'Do you solemnly swear to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help you God.' To which they respond, 'I do.'

There is more than a little hypocrisy in this process in the modern world. People who do not believe in God, who have rejected His Word and His ways, are swearing to a God that they do not believe that they will not lie.

People have to swear to God that they are not lying, because they are lying almost all the time. They are stretching the truth, lying, manipulating. Why do we live in a culture where people say things like, 'Let me tell you the truth', 'I am going to tell it to you straight.', 'I really mean it this time.' We need this because people are not straightforward and truthful most of the time, instead they are using their worldly wisdom to try to get ahead.

James is telling Christians stop doing that. Let your yes be yes and your no be no. James is saying let your speech be honest and direct. Be truthful with everyone, including yourself and God.

And when the world turns against you because of the truth, which it will, turn to God in prayer. When you are tempted to make promises to someone that you will change, do not give them words, instead turn to God to prayer so you can actually change. When you are tempted to try to make the truth more palatable, or to try to find the right language to manipulate or convince someone, turn to God in prayer and then speak the truth.

When you are in a place of affliction, a place of trouble, a place of misfortune, a place of difficult, turn to God in prayer and stand firm in the truth of his Word.

Life is difficult, it is hard, the Christian is not exempt from the realities of this world. Things will go wrong in your life, people will suffer, you will get in car accidents, some will get cancer, some will lose friends and family, people will go bankrupt, people will die, just like anyone else in this world. In fact, for a Christian the world is doubly difficult, because we are called to be truthful and living with Godly wisdom through all of this, which means we will often be ridiculed, mocked, persecuted and ostracized because of our faith.

Jesus told us that this would happen, they did it to him, so it is only natural that they will do it to us. So any trouble we go through, whether it is emotional, a time of sadness or a time of turmoil in our relationships, a struggle in our marriage, a child that is causing strife in the family or maybe it's physical or social, or even financial, a job loss, a struggle to pay rent, or bills or buy food, maybe it is a debt that is hanging over your head, maybe it is because of your faith, your being treated differently because of your Faith in God at work, at home or in the places you go and the things you do. No matter what the form of affliction we face, James says turn to God in prayer.

#### **Philippians 4:5-6**

**<sup>5</sup> Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**

Do not worry, do not be anxious, just pray and turn it over to God. Tell God your needs, and do not forget to thank him for his answers and you will find peace in your heart.

There is a story in the Old Testament in the book of Kings about King Hezekiah, the King of Judah around 700BC, who receives a letter from King Sennacherib, the king of Assyria. In his letter King Sennacherib defies God, telling King Hezekiah that God is not protecting them, that the Assyrian army will pillage the land and take everything they wish as they have done to so many other nations.

So, what does King Hezekiah do? He goes to the temple with the letter in hand and lays it on the altar at the temple. Then he bows down and prays to God. He says God have you read this letter? Do you know what it says? It says that you cannot do anything to protect us, that you have no power, it mocks you. It says that the Assyrians will cast you into fire because you are not a God. So, I am going to leave this letter with you, and let you deal with it. And then he got up and walked out of the temple.

He did what the Bible tells us to do. He cast his cares upon God. God actually cares about his people, he cares about our pains, our sorrows, our fears, our struggles, everything that we are going through and he wants us to cast them all unto him. He wants to bear our burdens in this world.

So, the first category that James tells us to pray in, is probably the easiest for us, when we are afflicted, we are to cry out to God and cast our burdens upon him, and then find peace in knowing that he cares for us.

Then the second category sneaks in at the end of verse 13, '**Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise.**' When you are sad pray and when you are happy sing. James is dropping us the reminder that even when things are going well, we should be praying to God. So many people find it easy to turn to God in times of trouble, but when everything is going smoothly in their life prayer is completely forgotten. The same way you will see people attend church faithfully when they are struggling in life and disappear for weeks at a time when things are going well.

James is saying that we need to maintain our relationship with God at all times, in the good and the bad. We need to have a constant dependence and reliance on God in every circumstance of life. Keep your eyes upon God in all times, in all places and in all things. Do not just cast your cares upon him in times of trouble, sing to the Lord thankfully in times of blessing.

**Psalm 34:1**

**<sup>1</sup> I will bless the Lord at all times;  
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.**

Singing praise is an important part of our faith. This means that the music we listen to and sing along with is important, especially in church. The worship music we sing needs to be focused on God, it is a praise and prayer, so it should always be doctrinally sound. As Christians we need to be aware of the words in what claims to be Christian music and see if it truly praises God or just makes us feel good.

So, we pray when life is filled with challenges, trials, and tribulations and we sing to the Lord in times of peace, blessing and joyfulness.

**James 5: 14-16**

**<sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.**

We pray when people are sick. Christians get sick. I want to make this very clear; good, faithful, obedient, loving, Christians get sick. We need to know this because there are too many people out there who believe that Christians do not get sick, they are twisting the Scripture to appeal to human nature, they preach health and wealth, which is not promised anywhere in the Scripture.



Christians get sick, because we live in a fallen world in an unredeemed body. Sickness exists because of original sin. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, they brought sin, sorrow, suffering and death into the world. All of our suffering and sickness is a result of original sin, but that is not the only sin in the world. We also sin individually, our own personal sins, and sometimes the suffering and sickness we experience in our lives is because of our personal sin.

Not all personal sin results in sickness, however. Remember the story of the man who was born blind that Jesus healed. The disciples asked the question if the man was blind because of his sins or his parents' sins. The disciples assumed that it was sin that had brought blindness unto the man. Remember that he was born blind, which would mean if it was his sin, he was a sinner in the womb. You might laugh at that, but it was a common Jewish belief at the time that all illness was directly related to sin, so if a child was born sick it must have been sinning in the womb, Jews believed in prenatal sin.

Jesus tells the disciples that the man is blind not because of his parents' sin, or his own sin, but instead so that God could be glorified in his healing. So personal sin and sickness are not always a correlation. You can get sick simply because someone coughs near you or sneezes on you. It has nothing to do with sin. Job got sick, Paul got sick, Timothy got sick.

When we are sick the Scripture tells us what to do. Call upon the church elders. For us gathered here today, that means going to the pastoral care people and asking for the elders to visit them and pray. This is what the elders do, pray over the sick, as a group. And then they anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.

What kind of oil? Is it 10w30? Do you just grab the dip stick from the truck and fling it at them? Is it canola oil, or sunflower oil, or olive oil? Is it pure or virgin? The oil does not matter, the oil is symbolic, the healing is not in the oil, it is in the power of God. Oil is symbolic of the Holy Spirit and could mean that we are asking for the Holy Spirit to come upon the person.

In the Bible we also know that wine was often prescribed for internal ailments and oil for external ailments, so perhaps it means that we are supposed to receive prayer and then go to the doctor.

This is a good reminder for the faithful, receiving prayer without going to the doctor is not wise, going to the doctor and not praying is also not wise. Prayer and going to the doctor are the wise choices, we trust in God and then trust in the people God puts in our treatment to being about his will in our life.

While we do not know what kind of oil they are to use, we do know that they are called to pray in faith. To pray knowing that God has the ability to heal, even the things that medical experts in this world believe are unhealable. God is the only one who can preform miracles. He can heal or not depending on his will.

I have prayed for people, and they have healed, I have prayed for people, and they have gotten sicker, I have prayed for people, and they have died. Prayer is not a guarantee of healing, even powerful and fervent prayer does not guarantee healing, because the healing is according to the will of God alone.

The part of Scripture that says,

**James 5:13**

**<sup>15</sup> And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.**

This is part of the reason for the idea that if you are faithful, you will not get sick. It would seem that this says that anyone who is sick and is prayed for will be saved. We interpret this to mean that God will heal the sick if we pray for them, so we just need to pray enough, and get the right oil.

But look at that verse in context again

**James 5: 14-16**

**<sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.**

We are talking about sin, and its relationship to sickness, not about any worldly illness. So, James is likely talking about sicknesses that are a direct result of personal sin. Alcoholics and drug addicts would be a good example of this, when they get rid of the sin, they get rid of many of the ailments that come alongside the addiction.

This means when you admit a sin, repent and turn away from that sin, when you pray for healing from that sin, God heals you. So healing is according to God's will and God's will alone. His primary focus in your life is your eternal salvation and not your worldly health and wealth.

So, we pray when we are under affliction, when we are happy and when we are physically ill. James adds one last time for prayer in the last few verses.

**James 5:17-18**

**<sup>17</sup> Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. <sup>18</sup> Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.**

We pray in times of spiritual darkness or spiritual challenges. Elijah is an example of this to all of us.

Elijah was a man just like you and I, and his prayer stopped the rain from falling for 3 and a half years, and then he prayed again and it rained. Does this mean that Christians control the weather, if so, let's all pray fervently for no snow this winter. Guess what, that will not work, because someone else could be praying for a record snowfall.

What it is teaching us is that prayer is powerful and can-do things beyond our control and understanding.

Elijah's prayer was powerful because he really prayed. He was dedicated to his prayer, his heart was engaged in it, he was not just going through the motions. Elijah was the prophet in the time of King Ahab and Jezebel.

King Ahab and Jezebel were the leaders who led the kingdom of Israel away from God into the worship of Baal. Elijah was sent to their kingdom to warn them to repent from their idol worship and return to God, saying that if they did not, God would stop the rains from falling on their lands and he walked out.

To get a better understanding of this you need to know that Baal was the God of weather, the God that was supposed to make it rain in the rainy season for the crops of his worshippers. So, God is showing that Baal is a false God. Long story short, they refused to repent, it stopped raining and three and a half years later on the top of Mount Carmel we have the showdown between the priests of Baal and the prophet Elijah.

The prophets of Baal prayed all day and could not light a fire, and Elijah built his altar, doused it in water and prays a simple prayer, and the Lord consumed it with fire. The people are told to slay the prophets of Baal, and repent, which they do.

Then Elijah goes up further on the mount and prays for the rain to return. He was pleading the promises of God when he prayed for the return of rain. Yet it was not instantaneous, he cast himself on the earth, he put his face between his knees, and he prayed. He prayed once and told his servant to check for clouds, his servant saw no clouds, so he prayed again. He sent his servant again and again he saw no clouds, so he prayed again, and sent him again, and prayed again. Seven times he prayed with his whole being, praying for God to fulfill his promises, humbly placing himself before God praying persistently and expectantly before his servant saw a tiny cloud on the horizon.

That is the type of prayer we are supposed to pray.

We are supposed to pray in sad times, glad times, sick times and dark times. We are supposed to pray for our friends, our families, our communities, our nation, even our enemies. The

government is not going to save us, social justice movements are not going to save us. Only prayers have the power to do the things needed to save us.

Our society has pushed God and prayer out of almost every aspect of life. When there is a tragedy there needs to be more Christians falling on their knees in prayer. It starts with us.

**2 Chronicles 7:13-14**

**<sup>13</sup>“When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, <sup>14</sup>if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.**

If we as God’s people would once again willingly submit ourselves to God in our lives and in our prayer, he can change the land we live in. However, we are all too busy to pray. We have time for a football game, a hockey game, a computer game, a sitcom, a reality tv show, a meeting with a friend, but never enough time to spend in prayer each day.

We are the people of God, and the only job we have as the Salt and Light of God’s Word is to get down on their knees and pray for this dark and broken world.

Let us pray,

**Work in Us True Obedience**

Almighty, eternal, and righteous God,  
 we humbly thank you  
 for revealing your divine will to us  
 in your law  
 about what we should do  
 and what we should avoid.  
 We also humbly pray, for Christ’s sake,  
 that you would work in us true obedience,  
 graciously forgive us all our sins of negligence,  
 and strengthen and lead us  
 by your Holy Spirit  
 that we begin to serve you  
 in new obedience here,  
 until we come to complete holiness  
 before you in that life to come;  
 through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.  
**Amen.**

Source: Attributed to Martin Luther, found in Allgemeines evangelisches Gesang- und Gebetbuch zum Kirchen und Hausgebrauch, Hamburg, 1846, p. 436#1.

**Hymn: "I Sing Praises"**

I sing praises to Your name, O Lord praises to your name, O Lord  
 For your name is great and greatly to be praised  
 I sing praises to Your name, O Lord praises to your name, O Lord  
 For Your name is great and greatly to be praised.

I give glory to Your name, O Lord glory to your name, O Lord  
 for your name is great and greatly to be praised.  
 I give glory to Your name, O Lord glory to your name, O Lord  
 for Your name is great and greatly to be praised.

I give honour to Your name, O Lord honour to your name, O Lord  
 For your name is great and greatly to be praised  
 I give honour to Your name, O Lord honour to your name O Lord  
 For Your name is great and greatly to be praised.

**Invitation to Offering****Offering****Offertory Prayer**  
**(Congregant Prepared)****Closing Hymn: "Jesus, All for Jesus"**

Jesus, all for Jesus; All I am and have and ever hope to be.  
 Jesus, all for Jesus; All I am and have and ever hope to be.

All of my ambitions, hopes and plans, I surrender these into Your hands.  
 All of my ambitions, hopes and plans, I surrender these into Your hands.

**Chorus**

For it's only in Your will that I am free.  
 For it's only in Your will that I am free.

Jesus, all for Jesus; All I am and have and ever hope to be.  
 Jesus, all for Jesus; All I am and have and ever hope to be.

**Pastoral Prayer**  
**Pastoral Prayer**

Almighty God,  
be gracious to us and bless us  
and make your face to shine upon us,  
that your way may be known upon earth,  
your saving power among all nations.  
Empower all the peoples to praise you, O God,  
that the nations may be glad and sing for joy.  
For you judge the peoples with equity  
and guide the nations upon earth.  
Enable all the peoples to praise you, O God,  
for the earth has yielded its increase  
and you, our God, have blessed us.  
We ask that you will continue to bless us  
so that all the ends of the earth will revere you. **Amen.**

### **Benediction**

May you, people of God, know that  
God our Father made you and guides your every step;  
Jesus Christ gave his life for you and brings you new life;  
the Spirit keeps you in the Lord's presence and empowers you to serve.  
May almighty God continue to bless you and move you to give thanks. **Amen.**