



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

THE PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN LIKE US! – JAMES 5:17-18

COLORADO

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James continues to instruct believers regarding suffering, affliction and the importance of prayer. Prayer is not only critical in our personal relationship with God, but also with one another as believers, for that prayer support will serve our needy brother or sister in the body of Christ! We must remember that the efficacy of prayer will always and only come from the power and grace of God and not the “goodness” or “merit” of the one who is praying.

I. THE PRAYER OF A RIGHTEOUS MAN LIKE US!

JAMES 5:17-18

James 5:17-18 “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. (18) And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit.”

We must always remember there is a God Who answers prayer and a faith that is real and genuine operates on the basis of prayer. James uses the prophet Elijah as an illustration of a man who prayed and calls us to be godly men and women of prayer as well.

A. ELIJAH WAS A MAN LIKE US– JAMES 5:17A

James 5:17a “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours...”

“Effective prayer” that James speaks of in 5:16 doesn’t just happen for famous people and so James begins with his example by reminding us that Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.

Of course Elijah was well known to the Jews with almost superhero status in their eyes. His exploits were spectacular and remarkable, and he was a celebrated prophet. If you will remember, it was through him the widow’s son was raised from the dead (1 Kings 17), the prophets of Baal and Baal were revealed as false when only God’s fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice demonstrating there is a God Who answers prayer, and then there was the unbelievable fashion Elijah was carried up to heaven in the fiery chariot (2 Kings 2). God gave him incredible assignments and Elijah held a unique place in history...but it wasn’t because of that God heard his prayers. James wants to remind us that Elijah was a man just like each of us. For following the amazing demonstrating of God’s miraculous power with the prophets of Baal, Elijah, exhausted and fearful runs from Queen Jezebel’s threats on his life. In his fear and depression he called out to God to end his life immediately. You see, he was a man like us.

Elijah was subject to the same feelings, experiences and weaknesses. And through his life, he learned that in prayer, a man can move God.

Every believer has access to the kind prayer illustrated here through Elijah and James wants us to know that if God answered Elijah’s prayers and he was no different than us, just so He will answer our prayers.

B. “AND HE PRAYED THAT IT MIGHT NOT RAIN” – JAMES 5:17B

James 5:17b “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain;”

Elijah prayed that a drought would afflict the land because of the evil King Ahab and Israel’s idolatry. They had turned to other gods and worshipped wood and stone rather than the true and living God. And so, Elijah prayed. James says that “he prayed earnestly”. The emphasis here is not referring to Elijah’s fervency, but simply to the fact that he prayed. Elijah just prayed a human prayer and God answered with Divine results. Other translations put it this way, “with prayer he prayed”. In other words, praying was exactly what Elijah did when facing this sinful situation with God’s people. His confidence rested in the Lord that He knew what was best. And God answered him and the drought came for three years and six months James tells us. (see also Luke 4:25) There was not one drop of rain. Elijah, an ordinary man like us, just prayed. To withhold rain is something only God can do. Elijah did simply what he could do and so must we.

C. “AND IT DID NOT RAIN.” – JAMES 5:17C

James 5:17c “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.”

The amazing result of Elijah’s prayer (1 Kings 18) is that no rain fell for three years and six months on the idolatrous kingdom of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. Essentially there would be no occasion when rain fell, not a drop. Again, the emphasis placed is on the prayer offered. Elijah’s prayers initiated the three year, six month drought. And these were the prayers of an ordinary man with a nature like ours. If God answered Elijah’s prayers and he was no different than us, just so He will answer our prayers in His time and His way.

D. “AND HE PRAYED AGAIN AND THE SKY Poured RAIN.” JAMES 5:17-18

James 5:18 “And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit.”

James tells us that that Elijah prayed again for the drought to end and the rains to come again and “the sky poured rain.” So Elijah’s

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prayers both initiated the drought and ended the drought on the land of Israel. Again, there was no long ceremonial prayer given. It is just stated that Elijah prayed, rested his confidence in the Lord and God heard.

E. “AND THE EARTH PRODUCED ITS FRUIT.” - JAMES 5:17-18

James 5:17-18 “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. (18) And he prayed again, and the sky poured rain, and the earth produced its fruit.”

So the dry and parched ground is satisfied with the rain which comes from above. And once again, the land bears fruit and is restored. Clearly the faith of Elijah demonstrates a vibrant faith revealed through prayer.

F. WHAT’S THE POINT? – JAMES 5:17=18

James 5:16 - “Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.”

James brings his letter to a close with an emphasis on prayer. All of life should be lived with immediate reference to God, bringing our joys to Him in praise and our sorrows to Him in prayer. There is no situation in life where prayer is not the proper response; every distress, every concern and every joy. James points to Elijah as an illustration who “just prayed” and we are called to be godly men and women of prayer as well.²

And in prayer we must remain patient. We must patiently trust in the Lord awaiting His divine response and knowing as Ephesians 3:20 says that God can do abundantly more than we could ever ask or think. And we must remember that prayer by itself isn’t powerful. Prayer is not magic. But it is powerful in that we can call on our heavenly Father of unlimited kindness and unlimited ability to help in time of need. We must remember that the efficacy of prayer will always and only come from the power and grace of God and not the “goodness” or “merit” of the one who is praying. So, just as God heard Elijah’s prayers, so he will hear ours. Remember, the “*effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.*” Elijah did simply what he could do, and that was pray, and so must we. The divine response is always up to God.

¹MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary on James*. Moody Press: Chicago, 1998. Pg.275.

²Motyer, J.A., *The Message of James*. InterVarsity: Downers Grove, Illinois, 1985. Pg.207.