

Effectual Fervent Prayer **James 5:16b-18 (NKJV)**

16b The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

Effectual prayers are prayers that effect results. There is nothing more clearly taught in Scripture than that prayer is a divinely ordered means of God's children obtaining blessing. *Lehman Strauss, Lehman Strauss Commentaries – James, Your Brother: Studies in the Epistle of James, (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1967), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 222.*

We like to be effective in everything we do. No one likes to fail at anything.

But when it comes to prayer there are other things involved other than what we bring to the table.

Things like, what if we pray contrary to the Lord's will in a certain matter?

If we always knew God's will it would make it much easier to pray according to His will.

Also as James has already told us sometimes we pray for things that only benefit ourselves.

Some times we pray far too generally. "Lord bless everyone." The Tiny Tim prayer.

Some people pray so generally that they would not know if God ever answered their prayer or not.

Some people pray to impress others with great flowerily prayers that they have no hope of God ever answering.

James gives us one example of effective prayer. Elijah, the prophet of fire.

Let us see what this is all about.

The background is that Elijah lived at the time of Ahab and Jezebel were ruling in Israel. They were a double trouble wicked duo.

They killed the prophets of the Lord, worshiped Baal, and were totally corrupt.

God told Elijah to pray that it not rain for 3 ½ years, so he did and it didn't rain.

We have no record of that prayer. But it happened. And Ahab would have killed Elijah if he could have found him.

At the end of the time Elijah prayed and it rained. We do have a record of that prayer in 1 Kings 18:42-46 (NKJV)

42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, 43 and said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked, and said, "There is nothing." And seven times

he said, "Go again." 44 Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, "There is a cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea!" So he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.' " 45 Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel. 46 Then the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

So as I was reading this week one author suggested several things that were necessary for this effective prayer.

I. Emotionally Engaged

A. Elijah

B. Jesus

1. Hebrews 5:5-8 (NKJV)

- a. 5 So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You." 6 As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek"; 7 who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, 8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

C. Hannah

1. 1 Samuel 1:9-11 (NKJV)

- a. 9 So Hannah arose after they had finished eating and drinking in Shiloh. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the LORD. 10 And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed to the LORD and wept in anguish. 11 Then she made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head."

D. Nehemiah

1. Nehemiah 1:4 (NKJV)

- a. 4 So it was, when I heard these words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned for many days; I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.

II. May Involve Great Struggle

A. Elijah

B. Jacob

1. Genesis 32:24-28 (NKJV)

- a. 24 Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. 25 Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. 26 And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!" 27 So He said to him, "What is your name?" He said, "Jacob." 28 And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed."

C. Jesus

1. Luke 22:39-44 (NKJV)

- a. 39 Coming out, He went to the Mount of Olives, as He was accustomed, and His disciples also followed Him. 40 When He came to the place, He said to them, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation." 41 And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, 42 saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." 43 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. 44 **And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.**

III. Persistence

A. Elijah

1. On Mount Carmel

2. With the widow's son

a. 1 Kings 17:19-22 (NKJV)

- (1) 19 And he said to her, "Give me your son." So he took him out of her arms and carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed. 20 Then he cried out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?" 21 And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD and said, "O

LORD my God, I pray, let this child's soul come back to him." 22 Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived.

B. The Canaanite woman

1. Matthew 15:22-28 (NKJV)

- a. 22 And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." 23 But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." 24 But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." 25 Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" 26 But He answered and said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs." 27 And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." 28 Then Jesus answered and said to her, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

C. The unjust judge

1. Luke 18:1-8 (NKJV)

- a. 1 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, 2 saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. 3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' 4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, 5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.' " 6 Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. 7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? 8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

D. Paul

1. 2 Corinthians 12:8-9 (NKJV)

- a. 8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. 9 And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the

power of Christ may rest upon me.

E. Moses

1. Deuteronomy 9:18-19 (NKJV)

- a. 18 And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, **forty days and forty nights**; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. 19 For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me at that time also.

F. Jesus before choosing the Apostles

1. Luke 6:12-16 (NKJV)

- a. 12 Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. 13 And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: 14 Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; 15 Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; 16 Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor.

G. Jesus in Gethsemane

1. Mark 14:32-42 (NKJV)

- a. 32 Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, "Sit here while I pray." 33 And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. 34 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch." 35 He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. 36 And He said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will." 37 Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? 38 Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." 39 Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. 40 And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. 41 Then He came the third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of

sinners. 42 Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand."

IV. But notice also it is the effectual fervent prayer of A RIGHTEOUS MAN

A. Notice what the woman said of Elisha.

1. 2 Kings 4:8-9 (NKJV)

a. 8 Now it happened one day that Elisha went to Shunem, where there was a notable woman, and she persuaded him to eat some food. So it was, as often as he passed by, he would turn in there to eat some food. 9 And she said to her husband, "Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly.

B. Psalm 66:18 (NKJV)

1. 18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.

C. Proverbs 15:8 (NKJV)

1. 8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD, But the prayer of the upright is His delight.

D. Proverbs 28:9 (NKJV)

1. 9 One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, Even his prayer is an abomination.

Certainly there are numerous clear biblical illustrations of healing he could have drawn from. But the picture of rain pouring down on parched ground perfectly illustrates God's outpouring of spiritual blessings on the dry and parched souls of struggling believers. And He does both in response to the righteous prayers of godly people.

John MacArthur, MacArthur New Testament Commentary – James, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 280.