

## Help for the Discouraged Pt.3

### James 5:13-18

James 5:13–18 (NKJV)

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## **Introduction:**

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## **Introduction:**

Being a Christian can be one of the most exhilarating, exciting and encouraging life's to live. There can be great mountain top experiences and joys unmatched by what this world can offer.

From the moment you are saved, and the realization that you have been so loved by God through the death of his Son for you, and that you have been forgiven of all of your sin is an incredible experience to say the least.

To know that you have eternal life and that death is not the end but only the beginning is profound.

To have the light turned on and to see clearly for the first time the whole meaning and purpose of life is hard to comprehend.

To read the Scripture and now instead of it being a cold book of meaningless stories, it comes alive and the words leap off the pages changing your mind and your heart about nearly everything.

To have relationships restored that were once fractured by hostility and unforgiveness is an added pleasure.

To have a level of love for God that you have never experienced now to seem to permeate our heart and soul so as to overflow in all directions.

And now to see every person in light of eternity and their soul in desperate need of salvation changes everything.

And I wish I could say that this is the constant experience of every Christian but I can't. It is usually the experience of most new converts to Christ. But

as is the case with most things, Life happens. The mountain tops can become the dark valleys. We live in a fallen world and as a result things don't always remain positive and encouraging.

The Bible often describes the Christian life as a battle. And the Christian as a soldier constantly engaged in the attacks from the devil and the evil enemy.

Early in my ministry, before my children were born, I was pastoring my first full time church. I was coming in on the heels of listening to 1000s of sermons by John MacArthur and learning the tools of preaching and exegesis from my professor, Dr. Richard Belcher. I found particular interest in the Biblical pattern for the church. Godly Qualified leadership, Elder government, Biblical church polity. What the role of Elders and deacons are. The Mission of the church scattered being evangelism and the method of the church gathered around Expository preaching. My heart was filled with enthusiasm, excitement and anticipation of what God was going to do. I gave myself wholly to study and preparation to preach the Word and to lead the church in the New Testament pattern. I would preach Sunday morning, Sunday Evening and Wednesday. I started a Bible study particularly for men, going through a Systematic Theology for the

sole purpose of raising up men for leadership. Back then, at least at that church, the women did everything. We had deacons but they were not engaged in ministry for the most part. Angela and I would spend every Thursday making cassette tapes of the sermons and personally delivering them to all our shut-ins who were at home or in the nursing homes who had been forgotten by the church. We would spend time with each one, praying with them and giving them a message from the previous Sunday with a brand new tape cassette player. Tuesday night would be visitation. We mapped the entire area and put pins on every member and inactive member and proceeded to visit everyone encouraging them to come to church. God blessed the effort not through any of the visits but through the preaching of the word verse by verse. Families started showing up and coming back and eventually joining.

I was thrilled, and motivated even more to give my all to this small church. I was seeing God use His word to grow the saints and save sinners. Everything I had hoped for was coming true. I had new blood in the church with some men who love the Lord and loved His word and wanted to see it obeyed and applied to the local church.

It just could not get any better... but what I didn't realize, is it could get a whole lot worse... and sadly it did.

Four years in, I decided to address a lingering problem that was serious on many levels. In that church, it was congregational governed. That meant that you didn't tie your shoe unless the church voted on it and these business meeting happened every month. It was a potential split every time we met. The elephant in the room for me was how they went about electing deacons. It was popularity vote. If you got enough votes you were made a deacon. It didn't matter what you believed, or how immature you may be in your christian faith. But the clincher for me was, it didn't matter if you came to church. You could be an inactive member, never coming or only coming on Christmas or Easter, and have your name placed on the list to be voted on. On one occasion, I was told that if we make him a deacon, he will start coming to church. It was incredible to me, astonishing, troubling and opposite of everything I knew the Bible was teaching.

So..... I attempted to correct this. All I did at the time was to make sure at least the list of men to be voted on came to church!

Well, that set off a chain reaction I was not prepared for. It literally exploded in my face and left me resigning and standing with a dear friend in the cemetery by the church weeping. I could not understand what had happened. Why so few were willing to stand for the truth and were unwilling to be obedient to the Word. All my hopes and dreams and expectations for this once flourishing church were destroyed.

But before it had reached a climax of conflict of the final business meeting where I resigned. I went through an enormous amount of discouragement and depression. I was at the early years of something I had never experienced. WAR. Spiritual War.

At the time of my deepest heartache and discouragement I attended a Bailey Smith Evangelistic conference in North Carolina. I didn't go because of Bailey Smith, I went because John MacArthur was one of the speakers. And I went specifically for that and that alone. I didn't care to hear anyone else.

The conference was on evangelism and winning the lost, Yet John did not speak on that subject. He spoke on perseverance in Ministry and his text was

2 Timothy 2:3–4 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

It was a message just for me. I needed that more than you can ever know. My world was falling apart and I was lifted up and motivated to keep fighting the good fight.

I did not know this till later after talking to John at another conference. But Bailey Smith rebuked John MacArthur for preaching that message instead of an evangelistic message matching the theme of the conference. He was told that he would never be invited back to the Bailey Smith Crusade.

In God's wise and merciful providence, I believe God orchestrated John to preach that message he did to men like me who were in the audience that day. We didn't need a message on evangelism. We needed encouragement from our leading officer to persevere. To keep on, to never stop. To understand as an enlisted soldier in the Army of Christ that we never give up, never shut down. The enemy is strong but our Captain is stronger. Greater is he who is in me, than he that is in the world. As a result of that message, my discouragement turned into



determination, my sadness turned to soundness. My heart was now fixed on the Captain of my soul. To this day, now nearly 30 years after that event. I have a cassette tape of that message in my desk drawer. Periodically I open the drawer and it reminds me of God's care for his soldiers and the reminder that this is WAR.

The Apostle Paul new this.

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup> For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, <sup>5</sup> casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

Ephesians 6:11–13 (NKJV)

<sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to

withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

The enemy is real and he does not sleep. But apart from the enemy himself the devil is the enemy within. The sin that remains. It is fueled and inflamed, in the fallen world in which we live. You've got graces you with many years in this world. You will have the battle scars to show it. Life often does not just happened, but it happens to you.

- I. The Power of Prayer and Praise
- II. The Place of Forgiveness
- III. The Prayer of Elijah

I.The Power of Prayer and Praise

<sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you **suffering?**

**P.A.I**

**κακοπαθέω *kakopathéō***; contracted *kakopathō*, fut. *kakopathēsō*, from *kakopathēs* (n.f.), suffering ill, which is from *kakós* (2556), evil, and *páthos* (3806), passion. To suffer evil or afflictions, to be afflicted (2 Tim. 2:9; James 5:13 [cf. 2 Tim. 1:8]). To endure, sustain afflictions (2 Tim. 2:3; 4:5), endure hardships (Sept.: Jon. 4:10).

Michaelis suggests that the term here denotes “not so much the distressing situation as such, but the spiritual burden which it brings with it.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, pp. 292–293). BMH Books.

the word refers to enduring evil treatment by people—not physical illness

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 275). Moody Press.

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

Those who manage to maintain a **cheerful** attitude in their suffering are **to sing praises**. **Cheerful** is from *euthumeō* and describes those well in spirit, or having a joyful attitude—not those who are physically well.

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**14** 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 sick, and the Lord will raise him up.

Here is the most misunderstood and disputed portion of this passage. At first glance it appears to be teaching that sick believers can expect physical healing through the prayers of the elders. But such an interpretation is out of harmony with the context. And as noted in the previous point, the suffering James has in view is evil treatment, not physical illness.

It is true that, apart from the present verse, *astheneō* is translated **sick** eighteen times in the New Testament (e.g., Matt. 10:8; 25:36, 39; Mark 6:56; Luke 4:40; John 4:46; Acts 9:37). But it is also used fourteen times to refer to emotional or spiritual weakness (Acts 20:35; Rom. 4:19; 8:3; 14:1–2; 1 Cor. 8:11–12; 2 Cor. 11:21, 29; 12:10; 13:3–4, 9). Significantly, in all but three (Phil. 2:26–27; 2 Tim. 4:20) of *astheneō*'s appearances in the epistles it does not refer to physical sickness. Paul's use of *astheneō* in 2 Corinthians 12:10 is especially noteworthy, since it there describes weakness produced by the sufferings of life—in a similar context as its usage in the present verse.

Translating *astheneō* “weak” here in keeping with its predominant usage in the epistles allows us to view this verse in a different light. James moves beyond the suffering believers of the previous point to address specifically those who have become weak by that suffering. The weak are those who have been defeated in the spiritual battle, who have lost the ability to endure their suffering. They are the fallen spiritual warriors, the exhausted, weary, depressed, defeated Christians. They have tried to draw on God's power through prayer, but have lost motivation, even falling into sinful attitudes. Having hit bottom, they are not able to pray effectively on

their own. In that condition, the spiritually weak need the help of the spiritually strong (cf. 1 Thess. 5:14).

That help, James says, is to be found in **the elders of the church**. They are the spiritually strong, the spiritually mature, the spiritually victorious. Weak, defeated believers are to go to them and draw on their strength. They are to **call** (from *proskaleō*, “to call alongside”) the elders to come and lift them up.

It is the same thought that the apostle Paul expressed in Galatians 6:1: “Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness.” The wounded, exhausted, broken sheep are to go to their shepherds, who will intercede for them and ask God for renewed spiritual strength on their behalf.

This is an important—and largely neglected—ministry of the church’s pastors and elders. The apostles acknowledged its priority when they said, “We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). But in today’s church, weak, struggling believers are often handed over to so-called expert professional counselors—who often have little power in prayer. Those who have been defeated in the spiritual battle do not

need to hear opinions of human wisdom; they need to be strengthened by the power of God through their leaders' prayers.

The **anointing with oil in the name of the Lord** done by the elders is not a reference to some symbolic ceremony. *Aleiphō* (the root form of the verb translated **anointing**) is not used in the New Testament to refer to a ceremonial anointing.

Noted Greek scholar A. T. Robertson comments, "It is by no means certain that *aleiphō* here ... means 'anoint' in a ceremonial fashion rather than 'rub' as it commonly does in medical treatises" (*Word Pictures in the New Testament* [reprint, 1933; Grand Rapids: Baker, n.d.], 6:65). Richard C. Trench agrees: "[*aleiphō*] is the mundane and profane, [*chriō*] the sacred and religious, word" (*Synonyms of the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983], 136–37). *Aleiphō* in the New Testament describes anointing one's head with oil (Matt. 6:17; cf. Luke 7:46), the women's anointing of Jesus' body (Mark 16:1), Mary's anointing of the Lord's feet (John 11:2; 12:3), and anointing the sick with oil (Mark 6:13). Perhaps the best way to translate the phrase would be "rubbing him with oil in the name of the Lord"; it literally reads "after having oiled him."

It may well have been that the elders literally rubbed oil on believers who had suffered physical injuries to their bodies from the persecution (cf. Luke

10:34). Medical science was certainly in a primitive state and there were few trustworthy doctors. It would have been a gracious, kind act on the part of the elders to rub oil on the wounds of those who had been beaten, or into the sore muscles of those made to work long hours under harsh treatment.

Metaphorically, the elders' **anointing** of weak, defeated believers **with oil** conveys the responsibility for elders to stimulate, encourage, strengthen, and refresh (cf. Luke 7:46) these people. Speaking of Israel, Isaiah wrote, "From the sole of the foot even to the head there is nothing sound in it, only bruises, welts and raw wounds, not pressed out or bandaged, nor softened with oil" (Isa. 1:6). Lacking godly leaders, the people of the nation had not had their spiritual wounds treated. David expressed God's gracious, compassionate, spiritual restoration of him in these familiar words: "You have anointed my head with oil" (Ps. 23:5).

The elders' ministry of intercession and restoration is to be done **in the name of the Lord**. Any truly biblical encouragement must be consistent with who God is (which is what His name represents). To do something in the name of Christ is to do what He would have done in the situation; to pray in the name of Christ is to ask what He would want; to



minister in the name of Christ is to serve others on His behalf (cf. John 14:13–14).

The blessed result of the elders' comfort and ministry of intercession is that their **prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick**. Again, **sick** is misleading and not the best translation of *kamnō*, which in its only other New Testament usage (Heb. 12:3) clearly does not refer to physical illness. As has been noted, James speaks here of a spiritual restoration of weak, defeated believers.

“The sick person” (*ton kamnonta*), a different term than that used in verse 14, renders an articular present participle that occurs only here in the New Testament with reference to physical illness. The verb primarily means “to be weary, fatigued”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [\*James\*](#) (Revised Edition, p. 297). BMH Books.

Hebrews 12:3 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

Nor does *sozō* (**restore**) necessarily refer to physical healing; it is most commonly translated

“save” in the New Testament. The idea here is that the elders’ prayers will deliver weak, defeated believers from their spiritual weakness and **restore** them to spiritual wholeness. Those prayers, of course, are but a channel for God’s power; it is the **Lord** who **will raise up** the weak. *Egeirō* (**raise up**) can also mean “to awaken” or “to arouse.” Through the righteous prayers of godly men, God will restore His battered sheep’s enthusiasm.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 276–278). Moody Press.

## I. The Power of Prayer and Praise

## II. The Place of Forgiveness

**15** And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. **16** Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

James’s note that **if** one of the spiritually weak believers **has committed sins, they will be forgiven him** provides further evidence that this

passage does not refer to physical healing. The Bible nowhere teaches that all sickness is the direct result of an individual's sins.

The periphrastic perfect verb “has sinned” (*hamartias ē pepoiēkōs*) supposes a condition where the sinner is now abiding under the consequences of his sins in the past. The plural “sins,” standing emphatically before the verb, implies repeated occasions in the past where he missed doing the known will of God.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 298). BMH Books.

Spiritual defeat, however, is often both the cause and result of sin. When that is the case, the antidote is to confess those sins to God and obtain His forgiveness.

“I acknowledged my sin to You,” wrote David, “and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’; and You forgave the guilt of my sin” (**Ps. 32:5**).

David's son Solomon echoed that comforting truth: “He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion” (**Prov. 28:13**).

In the familiar words of 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Sin can definitely play a role in the discouragement of believer, or can be the result of the discouragement and depression. What kind of sins be present in this context. They are almost too numerous to mention;

Murmuring, complaining, grumbling, Anger, Anxiety, Faithlessness, Worry and a lack of trust of God. Self pity, self centeredness. Laziness, slothfulness, unfaithful to your responsibilities as a husband or wife or employee. Drug dependency, substance abuse and addition. Isolation, neglect of spiritual duties. Emotional and mental abuse of others. All of these and much more can lead to discouragement and depression and can be a result of discouragement and depression.

So sins will need be recognized and repented of and forgiven.

So.....If sin has contributed to or resulted from the spiritual weakness and defeat of a fallen believer, that sin **will be forgiven him** when he cries out to God for forgiveness.

But God will not withhold the needed healing because of the past. “He will be forgiven,” literally, “it will be forgiven to him,” as an impersonal construction, lumps together the sins in question and assures the sick person that forgiveness will be extended to him. “Forgiven,” the standard New Testament term for forgiveness, pictures the sins as being “sent away” so that they are no longer held against him. The future indicative passive verb “means that this Christian did not free himself from his sins; but a power was needed that was outside himself, and that power was God. The same God who healed him also liberated him from the sins that bound him.” The promise implies that he has confessed his sins and has determined to turn from them because they are offensive to God.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 298). BMH Books.

The elders can encourage him to confess, help him discern his sins, and join their prayers for his

forgiveness to his. That is an essential element of their ministry of restoration.

<sup>16</sup> Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

**Therefore**, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed.  
(5:16a)

The KJV, following the Textus Receptus, omits the connective, but it has strong manuscript support, and modern editions of the Greek text include it as authentic Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition). BMH Books.

**Therefore** (in earlier manuscripts) marks a transition in the flow of thought. Turning his attention from the sins of those believers who have been defeated in the spiritual battle, James addressed the congregation as a whole, exhorting believers to continually **confess** their **sins to one another** and not wait until those sins dragged them into the depths of utter spiritual defeat.

“Confess” (*exomologeisthe*) is a compound verb that conveys the thought of an open, frank, and full confession. The root form means literally “to say the same thing”; hence, it means that in confessing sin we agree to identify it by its true name and admit that it is sin. Compounded with the preposition *ek*,

“out,” the verb denotes a confession that is open and full in acknowledging personal guilt.

James calls for a confession of specific sins—not just a general confession of personal sinfulness but of “your sins” (*tas hamartias*), the definite sinful acts of which they are guilty

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 299). BMH Books.

The inspired writer was well aware that sin is most dangerous to an isolated believer. Sin seeks to remain private and secret, but God wants it exposed and dealt with in the loving fellowship of other believers. Therefore James called for mutual honesty and mutual confession as believers **pray for one another.**

The two present imperatives, which might be rendered “make a habit of,” call for a general practice. The imperatives, both in the second person plural and co-ordinated with “and,” call for a group activity, whereas the reciprocal pronoun “each other”

with both verbs stresses a mutual activity where the members are equal, regarded as brethren.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [\*James\*](#) (Revised Edition, p. 298). BMH Books.

Maintaining open, sharing, and praying relationships with other Christians will help keep believers from bottoming out in their spiritual lives. Such relationships help give the spiritual strength that provides victory over sin. And they also provide godly pressure to confess and forsake sins before they become overwhelming to the point of total spiritual defeat.

Heb 10:22–25

let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

**23** Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.

**24** And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

**25** not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but



exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

[\*The New King James Version\*](#) (Heb 10:22–25). (1982). Thomas Nelson.

Romans 12:15 (NKJV)

<sup>15</sup> Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

Romans 15:1–2 (NKJV)

We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves.  
<sup>2</sup> Let each of us please *his* neighbor for *his* good, leading to edification.

Galatians 6:1–2 (NKJV)

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. <sup>2</sup> Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NKJV)

<sup>11</sup> Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

The purpose for the mutual prayer that James called for is that believers may **be healed**. *laomai* (**healed**) does not necessarily refer to physical healing. In Matthew 13:15 it symbolized God's withheld forgiveness of Israel's sins (cf. John 12:40; Acts 28:27). The writer of Hebrews also used it metaphorically to speak of spiritual restoration (Heb. 12:12–13), while Peter used it to describe the healing from sin Christ purchased for believers on the cross (1 Pet. 2:24). James uses it to refer to God's forgiveness, making the repentant believer spiritually whole again.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (pp. 278–280). Moody Press.

I. The Power of Prayer and Praise

II. The Place of Forgiveness

### III. The Prayer of Elijah

<sup>16</sup> Confess *your* trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.

.....The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

2 words are used for prayer in this text, the first is “pray for one another”

**33.178 εὐχόμεαι<sup>a</sup>; προσεύχομαι; εὐχή<sup>a</sup>, ἦς *f*;**  
**προσευχή<sup>a</sup>, ἦς *f*:** to speak to or to make requests of God—‘to pray, to speak to God, to ask God for, prayer.’

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 408). United Bible Societies.

The second is “fervent prayer”

**33.171 δέησις, εως *f*:** (derivative of δέομαι ‘to plead, to beg,’ 33.170) that which is asked with urgency based on presumed need—‘request, plea, prayer.’ μὴ φοβοῦ, Ζαχαρία, διότι εἰσηκούσθη ἡ δέησίς σου ‘do not be afraid, Zechariah! (God) has heard your prayer’ Lk 1:13.

Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). In [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 407). United Bible Societies.

By way of encouraging both elders and Christians to this kind of intercession for those in spiritual weakness, James reminds them that such **prayer is effective. Effective** translates *energeō*, from which our English word “energy” derives. The **prayer** of a **righteous man** (cf. 4:3; Ps. 66:18; Prov. 15:8; 28:9),

Psalm 66:18 (NKJV)

<sup>18</sup> If I regard iniquity in my heart,  
The Lord will not hear.

James 4:3 (NKJV)

<sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures.

Proverbs 15:8 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup> The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the Lord,  
But the prayer of the upright *is* His delight.

Proverbs 28:9 (NKJV)

<sup>9</sup> One who turns away his ear from hearing the law,  
Even his prayer *is* an abomination.

James notes, **can accomplish much** (literally “is very strong”).

.....The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.

A godly man’s petition “is powerful” (*polu ischuei*), more literally, “is strong, is able to do much.” The words stand emphatically at the beginning of the sentence,

“much availeth the supplication of a righteous man” (Rotherham). In Acts 19:20 the verb is used with the thought of prevailing over opposition: “So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed” (ASV). Such prayer is an active power producing amazing victories

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 300). BMH Books.

Weak prayers come from weak people; strong prayers come from strong people. The energetic prayers of a righteous man are a potent force in calling down the power of God for restoring weak, struggling believers to spiritual health.

“Prayer is not *itself* powerful; it is not magic. But its power is unlimited in that the child of God calls on a Father of unlimited goodness and ability.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 301). BMH Books.

To further demonstrate the power of righteous prayer and provide an illustration that captures the essence of his discussion, James turns to one of the most popular Old Testament figures.

There are many he could choose from like,

Both the Old and the New Testament provide varied examples of the power of prayer: Joshua's prayer and the sun standing still (Josh. 10:12–13); Elisha's prayer and the restoration to life of the Shaunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4:32–35); Hezekiah's prayer and the slaying of 185,000 Assyrian soldiers (Isa. 37:21, 36); the answer received by the importunate neighbor (Luke 11:5–8); the response to the persistent widow (Luke 18:1–8); and the answer received by the persevering Syrophoenician woman (Mark 7:24–30).

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 301). BMH Books.

But he chooses Elijah for a reason as we shall see.

James cites the story of Elijah, his fourth reference to an Old Testament character (Abraham, 2:21–24; Rahab, 2:25; Job, 5:11). “Elijah” (*Elias*), whose name occurs thirty times<sup>56</sup> in the New Testament, held a prominent place in later Judaism. His prominence is in accord with his dynamic personality, but Jewish interest in him was especially stimulated by the prophetic announcement in Malachi 4:5 connecting

his reappearance with the coming of the Messiah. He has been called “the grandest and most romantic character that Israel ever produced.” Numerous traditions grew up around him and exaggerated opinions developed, ascribing superhuman traits to him.

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 301). BMH Books.

**Elijah**, he reminds his readers, though a prophet and man of God, **was a man with a nature like ours.**

James thus disarms the natural reaction of his readers that common mortals like themselves could never expect to achieve the prayer results of a grand person like Elijah. He was “a man” (*anthrōpos*), an ordinary human being, “just like us” (*homoioopathēs*

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, pp. 301–302). BMH Books.

The Bible records that he was hungry (1 Kings 17:11), afraid (1 Kings 19:3), and depressed (1 Kings 19:3, 9–14). Yet when **he prayed earnestly** (lit. “he prayed with prayer”),

“He prayed earnestly” (*proseuchē prosēuxato*), literally “with prayer he prayed”; the reduplication of the root term conveys an intensive force

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 302). BMH Books.

Thus Adamson holds that James means “not that Elijah put up a particularly fervent prayer but that praying was precisely what he did.” Then the stress points out that in facing his situation, Elijah specifically resorted to prayer, giving himself wholly to it. Thus Hughes takes James to mean “that nothing else than *his prayer* produced the long drought.”

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 302). BMH Books.

incredible things happened: **It did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit.** Elijah’s prayers both created and ended a devastating three-and-one-half-year drought (cf. Luke 4:25). While 1 Kings 17 records the drought, only James gives its duration and links it to the prayers of Elijah.



This example of the tremendous power of prayer does not mean that Elijah could suspend the laws of nature at will. Rather, “the prophet’s communion with God was so intimate that the Spirit could reveal to him not only the purposes of the Lord in these respects, but also the very time when they would come to pass.” Measured by the test of its resort to prayer, the faith of Elijah revealed itself vibrant with life and dynamic in impact. What does this test reveal about *our* faith?

Hiebert, D. E. (1997). [James](#) (Revised Edition, p. 303). BMH Books.

The story of Elijah and the drought would certainly be a strange illustration if James had physical illness and healing in view throughout this passage. 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.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1998). [James](#) (p. 280). Moody Press.

## Hebrews 12:1–4 (NKJV)

**12** Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, <sup>2</sup> looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

<sup>3</sup> For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. <sup>4</sup> You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

## Hebrews 12:12–13 (NKJV)

<sup>12</sup> Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, <sup>13</sup> and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed.