

Sermon or Lesson: James 5:17-20 (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

TITLE: The Lord's Response To The Actions Of The Righteous Believer

INTRO: When a person comes with a request of you, does it matter what kind and condition of a relationship the person has with you in order for you to respond favorably to that person's request? Is your response affected by whether or not you like the person, whether or not you get along with the person, if the request aligns with your values, and etc.? The answer is yes, of course the kind and condition of your relationship with the person affects your response to that person's request.

As we study the last verses in James chapter 5, we will learn and know that the kind and condition of our relationship with the Lord affects His responses to our requests, our prayers, our doing of good deeds.

vv.17-18 - READ, with v.16b for context

[Lesson Question: Why is Elijah used as an example of the prayers of a righteous man (v.16)?]

SECTION POINT: We believers are to pray from a condition position of living righteously in order to get the Lord to respond with powerful and effective results, like Elijah did.

- - This account of Elijah is in 1 Kings 17:1; 18:1-3, 41-46.
- - Elijah "was a man just like us" (v.17), "similarly affected" (Strong's #3663) - suggesting he was ordinary in terms of nothing special, he was merely human, he was affected by hardships (v.13), suffering (v.10), and sickness (v.14) just like everyone else.
- - By implication, one way Elijah was unusual is that he was righteous (v.16) - in his living, in his faith, in his moral standing before God.
- - Also, Elijah prayed - earnestly. (vv.17,18)
- - Notice that Elijah was praying all by himself - just one person.
- - Elijah's praying proved to be "powerful and effective". (v.16)
- - Therein, God used Elijah's prayers for God's purposes; and therefore Elijah was praying in alignment with God's will.
- - Elijah's effective praying even resulted in powerfully affecting nature, specifically the weather, the rain.
- - Elijah's effective praying resulted in powerfully affecting the rain over a period of years.
- - Consequently, Elijah's prayers powerfully affected a nation, many people, their livelihoods, their crops, their animals, and their food availability during that time period.
- - This example of Elijah is being used here to contend that effective prayers are available to all believers who are regarded as being "righteous" before the Lord. (v.16)
- - Conversely, this implies that the prayers of a person not righteous before the Lord are weak and ineffective - i.e. God does not respond to them, nor do those prayers align with God's will.

- - By implication, this example of Elijah is being used here to disclose that the Lord wants and is encouraging us believers to pray from a condition position of living righteously before the Lord.

[ADDITIONAL LESSON QUESTIONS (optional if time allows):

Q: Why don't all prayers have this dramatic effect?

Q: Specifically, how do effective ways to pray differ from ineffective ways to pray?

Q: What are some of God's requirements for effective praying like Elijah did?

- - must be a believer in Jesus - John 14:6;

- - must be living a righteous life - James 5:16; 4:4; Proverbs 15:8, 29;

- - must be in a current condition of personal cleansing from sin through the confessing of sins - James 5:15; 1 John 1:9;

- - must be yielding to the control of the Holy Spirit - Romans 12:1;

- - must possess an alive active faith, which has consistent corresponding doing of good deeds - James 2:17;

- - must have no harbored or cherished sin - Psalms 66:17-20;

- - the prayers must be in accordance with God's will - Romans 12:2;

- - the prayers must be offered in faith - James 5:15;

- - must ask specifically - James 4:2;

- - must ask without doubting - James 1:6-7;

- - must have sincere, godly, unselfish motives - James 4:3;

- - must persist in praying - James 5:16.

Q: What kind of effect or response from God do your prayers bring?

Q: Have you ever had any prayers answered instantly, the very second you ended your prayer?

vv.19-20 - READ

[Lesson Question: How does the Lord regard and respond to the assisting of a wayward believer successfully back to righteous living?]

SECTION POINT: We believers are to know that assisting a fellow wayward believer to be successfully restored to righteous living will produce extraordinary results from the Lord, like Elijah's prayers did.

- - Verses 19-20 pertain to assisting a fellow believer who has "wandered" (v.19) or turned away from the truth and from living righteously, like what is described in verses 14-16 about what the elders are to do to a sick believer who has sinned.

- - The wayward believer has wandered from the truth or "strayed from orthodoxy or piety" into sinful living while deceptively posing as being righteous. (from Strong's #4106 - "error" v.20)

- - Essentially, the assisting believer is coming alongside to pray for, to reason with, to encourage, and to help the wayward believer to admit the truth about perpetrating this deception and about living in sinfulness, to repent, and to come back to genuinely living a life consistent with the faith.

- - Note that this intervention goes beyond only interceding in prayer for the person - it is taking action in accordance to one's faith for the benefit of a wayward fellow believer.

- - Also be aware that this intervention to restore the wayward fellow believer is to be done in a gentle manner, according to a cross-reference in Galatians 6:1.

- - For this type of intervention, we are to "know" that engaging in this good deed which proves to be successful in restoring the wayward fellow believer will produce extraordinary results, like Elijah's prayers did as cited in verses 17-18. (Strong's #1097 - "remember" v.20)
 - - One extraordinary result is that the successful restoring of the wayward believer will "save him from death" (v.20) or a terminal sickness due to his engaging in gross sin and his deception to hide and support the sin. (see v.15c within vv.14-16; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:27-32)
 - - Another extraordinary result is that there will be a "covering over a multitude of sins" (v.20) - i.e. obtaining forgiveness from the Lord (v.15c) for "a large number [of sins] in fullness" (Strong's #4128 - "multitude") and by extension thus halting the commencing of any death sentence judgment from the Lord that is about to occur (v.9).
 - - By implication, the assisting of a believer in being restored " is noble, is right, is pure, is lovely, is admirable, is excellent, is praiseworthy", and is reward-deserving in the eyes of God. (from Philippians 4:8)

 - - As a closing to the Book of James, the assisting of a believer in being restored as cited in verses 19-20 is a call to action, which is consistent with a general theme throughout the entire book for practical Christian living - faith without accompanying good works is dead (v.2:17); be a doer of the Word and not merely a listener of the Word (v.1:22).
 - - Further, the assisting of a believer in being restored is a call to action that goes beyond us personally living the truth - we are called to help others live the truth. (v.19)
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BIG IDEA: The Lord powerfully and effectively responds to the prayers and to the ministering restoration activities of a righteous believer.

APPLICATIONS:

- - For those of you who are true believers, do you pray from a condition position of living righteously before the Lord, like Elijah did? If not, why not? You do now realize that the Lord is not particularly inclined to respond powerfully and effectively to your prayers if you are living in sin, don't you?
- - Also, for those of you who are true believers, are you in some way helping wayward believers turn from sinful living and turn back to righteous living? What can you do to be active and helpful in this?
- - For those of you who are **not** true believers, you do realize that you currently have no "salvation", no "deliverance", and no "protection" (Strong's #4982 - "save" v.20) from eternally suffering the deserved punishment consequences of your multitude of lifetime sins, don't you? What are you going to do about this horrific future that awaits you? Perhaps now would be a really good time for you to repent and to place your faith in the God-man perfect Jesus Christ to pay the punishment for your multitude of lifetime sins

when He died on the cross and then rose from the dead on the third day (see Romans 3:23 and John 3:16).

Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

"Strong's Greek Dictionary." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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