

The Principle Behind Prayer

James 5:16

The English word **fervent** simply means “**impassioned, forceful, passionate, heartfelt, powerful, or wholehearted.**”

This verse, as translated in the King James Version, seems to indicate that a **passionate, wholehearted prayer** will accomplish much, implying that a half-hearted prayer will not be as effective.

The word **availeth** in the KJV means “**produces an advantage**” or “**serves in a useful way.**” The original Greek word translated as “availeth” means “**is able,**” “**is capable,**” or “**has the power.**”

The **righteous person** is the one who has been made right with God—the one whose sins are forgiven. [Ephesians 4:24](#) [2 Corinthians 5:21](#)

So, the one who is forgiven and in right standing with God can pray in a “**useful, advantageous, powerful**” way and thus receive excellent results.

The immediate context speaks of praying for healing and says that the “prayer of faith” (prayer offered in faith) will be answered.

The **first part** of this verse says that we should confess our sins to each other and pray for each other to be healed.

The **second part** of the verse seems to summarize the thought. Then verses 17–18 give us an example of the kind of prayer that is there to encouraged us.

James refers to [1 Kings 17:1](#), This drought was punishment worship of **Baal**. for Israel’s [1 Kings 18:42–45](#),

On Mt. Carmel, Elijah made a pronouncement that it would rain and then prayed that it would. He prayed for rain seven times. After each prayer, he sent his servant to see if the sky looked like rain. When it did not, he would pray again. [Luke 11:5–9](#); [18:1–8](#)

Taking all the evidence into consideration, **fergency** may not be the most important issue in prayer. Certainly, Elijah prayed earnestly.

However, the point of James seems to focus more on the **efficacy of prayer** and the aspect of **righteousness** in the one praying.

The **admonition to prayer** starts with the command to **confess sins**. In confession, all mortal sins are required to be confessed in order for a confession to be valid and for God to forgive your sins.

James also makes a point that the **prayer** comes from a **righteous person**. Elijah was a righteous man, and the results of his prayer were beyond incredible.

The point James is making is that **prayer** is important and God answers prayer, so we must make it a priority. We don’t have to be “super Christians.

However, sin in the life of the one praying can block prayer’s effectiveness. Certainly, earnest prayer is important, and the prayer of faith is important, but this passage does not seem to indicate that the forcefulness with which one prays determines effectiveness.

Rather, the prayer of a righteous person is powerful (forceful) and effective. [Matthew 7:7–8](#)