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Keith Warrington

The Significance of Elijah in James 5:13-18

The importance of the reference to Elijah in the last chapter of James is sometimes overlooked. Mr Warrington here uses some of the fruits of his research in the letter to show that Elijah's role may be rather more significant in buttressing James' argument than is generally realised. The author is a lecturer at the Elim Bible College, Nantwich.

'Elijah was a man of like nature with ourselves and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth its fruit.' (vs 17,18).

To conclude his advice concerning ministry to the member of the fellowship who is suffering, the author again turns to the Old Testament. He refers to a well known and much admired Jewish prophet and uses him as a final encouragement to his readers to seek after righteousness in order that their prayers be as effective as the prayer of Elijah. But why does he choose Elijah?

It is uncertain whether James obtained his account from Jewish tradition¹ or whether he deduced it from the OT text itself.

The length of time allocated to the drought by James of 3½ years differs from the OT account in that the latter only mentions a period of more than 3 years between the respective prophecies/prayers.² Adamson³ suggests that 3½ years accommodates the whole period of drought for it would be longer in some areas than others. However, Martin⁴ offers the suggestion that James (and Luke) may be presenting a more accurate statement than was intended in 1 Ki.

¹ So F. W. Mussner, *Der Jakobusbrief* (New York, 1967), 228; J. H. Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James* (Edinburgh, 1954), 311; H. Bietenhard, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (NIDNTT), (Exeter, 1975), 1.544.

² 1 Ki. 18:1.

³ J. B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids, 1976) 200.

⁴ R. P. Martin, *James* (Waco, 1988), 213.

18:1. Bishop⁵ remarks that 3½ years may be 'reckoned from the end of the latter rain one year to the start of the former (rain) 3 years later' while Mayor⁶ comments on the Jewish custom of counting part of a period of time as a whole period. It may be that James uses the term as a symbol of a long period of time⁷ though Thiering⁸ states that James may be offering this information simply because he is acquainted with Lk. 4:25. Since no other examples may be cited as evidence for this tradition, it is possible that it was part of an oral tradition and appropriate for James' use because of its apocalyptic overtones.⁹ Similarly, with his supportive statements to those suffering in 5:1-6, he reminds them that the coming of the Lord is at hand (5:7ff).

Although it is clear from the rest of the letter of James that the author was well acquainted with the OT, the choice of Elijah in this context seems unusual. In a context of prayer for suffering believers, he chooses an incident from Elijah's life that refers to prayer for events in nature and not for healing (1 Ki. 17:17ff). Also, if the author is attempting to encourage his readers to realize the power of prayer, it may be wondered whether the example of Elijah would lead to their immediate discouragement; in their understanding, he enjoyed an exalted position of power and prestige quite superior to their own.¹⁰

Because of these apparent inconsistencies, a case may be made out for vv. 17,18 being regarded as an interpolation into the section that properly reads from vv. 13-20. Thus, verse 19 would naturally follow on from the encouragement to mutual prayer and confession in v. 16

⁵ E. F. F. Bishop, 'Three and a Half Years' *ExpT* 61, 1949/50, 126f.

⁶ J. B. Mayor, *The Epistle of James* (London, 1910), 181.

⁷ So S. Laws, *The Epistle of James* (London, 1980), 237; H. L. Strack, P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (SB) (Munich, 1956), 3.761.

⁸ B. E. Thiering, 'The three and a half years of Elijah' *NovT* 23.1, 1981, 41-55.

⁹ Dn. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 11:3; 12:6; B. Reicke, *The Epistle of James, Peter and Jude* (New York, 1964), 61; P. H. Davids, *The Epistle of James The New International Greek Testament Commentary*. (Exeter, 1982), 197; Mussner, 228; SB 3.760f; G. Kittel, *Rabbinica* (Leipzig, 1920), 31ff; Laws, 236f.

¹⁰ In his miraculous deeds . . . 1 Ki. 17:23f; 18:37ff. In his obedience to God . . . 1 Ki. 17:2-5. In his courage . . . 1 Ki. 18:37ff. In his ascent to heaven . . . 2 Ki. 2:11f. He belongs to God's immediate entourage . . . *Haq.* 15b; *Git.* 6b; *Bab. Mes.* 59b. The power of God on behalf of Elijah was greater than for anyone else . . . *Midr. Lev* 15:1.

and provide an extra stimulus to engage in such pastoral activity. However, as well as there being no manuscript evidence for this possibility, other reasons for rejecting this proposal may be offered.

1. It is no surprise to find another OT character in this epistle after his inclusion of 4 others.
2. The connection between v. 16 and vv. 17f. is not as tenuous as it may appear. Two aspects of v. 16b may have prompted the memory of Elijah to the author. The one relates to his powerful prayers which achieved significant results; the other to his righteousness which was beyond doubt. Inasmuch as the author intends in vv. 13-18 to emphasize the connection between potentiality in prayer and lifestyle, he chooses a well known character to finally confirm it.

Having concluded vv. 13-18 with a parabolic example, as he did with Job at the end of a previous section,¹¹ the writer then returns to the pastoral theme of vv. 19f. that becomes the final hortatory statement of the letter. Thus, vv. 17f. may be regarded as only a partial digression within the flow of the presentation; not as external to it.

3. The major reason for locating the Elijah pericope in this section and recognizing it as integral to the message is that in it a number of important issues, presented in vv. 13-16, receive final confirmation and the illustration acts as a summarizing conclusion including within it reminders of the more vital features of the healing scenario earlier presented by James. As such, it acts as a helpful prompt to the readers to recall the salient aspects of the healing scenario outlined in vv. 13-16:

(a) *The Power of Prayer*

One of the major purposes for the inclusion of this incident from the life of Elijah is surely to remind the readership that prayer effects changes. Remarkable examples of this feature are revealed in the ministry of Elijah, one of which is revealed by James. Such an example would have been of great encouragement to those who have been advised to pray for the restoration of suffering

¹¹ 5:1-11 (see also Abraham, Isaac, Rahab at end of the section 2:1-26).

members within the community.¹² As Elijah saw God respond dynamically to his prayer, so the readers are also encouraged to expect the in breaking hand of God into their suffering. James is offering to his readers the potential to achieve similarly powerful answers to prayer as did Elijah.

(b) *The Value of Fervent Prayer*

Before the contents and results of the prayer are described, James describes the action of Elijah as προσευχή προσηύξατο. This form of Greek was fairly common,¹³ being a popular method of presenting the Hebrew Infinitive Absolute. However, although some assume that this is to be translated as representing the simple fact that Elijah prayed,¹⁴ more prefer to assume an element of urgency or fervency associated with the prayer.¹⁵ Such a feature is associated with prayer in the Jewish tradition¹⁶ and is also recorded in Elijah's life.¹⁷ As long as it is not assumed that persistence in prayer is equivalent to insistence, then it is to be noted that James is seeking to inform his readers that when they offer prayers to God, they are to do it actively and wholeheartedly. They are not to leave the responsibility for praying for one another to the Elders but develop in this direction themselves as instructed in the previous verse. Building on his exhortation to pray, he clarifies the quality of that prayer.

(c) *The Relationship between Righteousness and Prayer*

Throughout his letter, James has demonstrated the value of a righteous lifestyle. It benefits mankind and is rewarded by God

¹² Davids (197) notes the parallel between life giving rain on dead land and life replacing illness; Martin (213) interprets the fruit referred to in v. 18 as the productive life of the sufferer restored to the community again.

¹³ Gn. 2:17; 31:30; Ex. 3:16; Dt. 7:26; Jos. 24:10; Is. 30:19; Lk. 22:15; Jn. 3:29; Acts 5:28; 2 Pet 3:3.

¹⁴ Ropes, 312; J. H. Moulton, W. F. Howard, N. Turner, *Grammar of New Testament Greek* Vols. 1-4 (Edinburgh, 3rd. edition 1985), 1.176.

¹⁵ C. F. D. Moule, *An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek* (Cambridge, 1953), 178; F. Blass, A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the N.T. and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, 1961), 198; Moulton, 75; Mayor, 180; M. Dibelius, *James* (Philadelphia, 1976), 257; D. J. Moo, *James* (Leicester, 1985), 188; D. K. Johnson, *James' use of the OT* unpubl. Ph. D. (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1973), 315; Reicke, 57; S. J. Kistemaker, *James & 1-3 John* (Wetwyn, 1978), 182; Laws, 235; RSV; RV; AV; NASV.

¹⁶ Ps. 27:14; Midr. *Deut* 2:12; *Ta'an.* 8a.

¹⁷ 1 Ki. 17:21; 18:43f.

because it acts as a practical proof of faith. Now, he establishes the relationship between a righteous lifestyle and the power in prayer. Not only is Elijah revealed as a man of prayer in the OT; he is also depicted as a righteous person. His life is presented in the OT in close relation with God. It is as a result of this strong relationship with God that Elijah stands against powerful people,¹⁸ that he readily obeys God¹⁹ and that he naturally and honestly presents himself to his Maker.²⁰ He is described as being zealous for the Law and for God.²¹

Similarly, as a result of Elijah's righteous lifestyle, his life is associated with divine power operating through him as well as on his behalf.²² He was a man endowed with the power to anoint kings, to rebuke them and to prophesy their downfall.²³ He was also granted the authority to appoint prophets.²⁴

Subsequent to his rapture, legends were developed in great numbers by the Jews, and Elijah enjoyed a prominent position in Jewish writings as well as the N.T. and Early Church Fathers.²⁵ It was recorded that he still ministered to people providing them with comfort, visiting them, sometimes in their dreams.²⁶ It was believed that he would be involved in the resurrection of the dead²⁷ as well as being able to remedy simpler issues, including

¹⁸ 1 Ki. 17:1; 18:21, 30; 20:17ff.

¹⁹ 1 Ki. 17:2–5, 9f; 18:1f; 19:15–19.

²⁰ 1 Ki. 19:10.

²¹ 1 Ki. 18:40; 19:10, 14; Sir. 48:2; 1 Macc. 2:58. (See T. J. Ter. 8:46c for an illustration of his superlative righteous standards).

²² 1 Ki. 17:1–7, 8–16, 17–24; 18:30–39; 19:11–13; 2 Ki. 1:10–17; 2:8, 11.

²³ Anoint kings: 1 Ki. 19:15f; Sir. 48:8. Rebuke kings: 1 Ki. 20:17ff. Prophecy concerning kings: 2 Ki. 1:3f.

²⁴ 1 Ki. 19:16; Sir. 48:8.

²⁵ Mal. 4:5f; Sir. 48:1–4; *Test. Reub.* 17:44; *Test. Gad* 59; 4 Ezr. 7:39; *Deus Imm.* 136, 136; *Ant.* 9.23; 14.21; A. Weiner, *The Prophet Elijah in the Development of Judaism* (London, 1978), 38–77; SB, 2.765ff; Mt. 11:14; 27:46ff; Mk. 9:4f, 11f; Lk. 1:17. Justin (*Dial.* 8.3; 49.1) records that the Jews believed he would come to anoint the Messiah; Origen (*Contra Cels.* 2.57) notes that the belief in the resurrection is suggested by his raising the widow's son; Such a man is worthy to be called a man of God (*Contra Cels.* 8.25); His exaltation was such that he was often compared to John the Baptist (Mt. 11:14; Mk. 9:11ff; Lk. 1:17; G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1961), 603ff; J. A. T. Robinson, *Elijah, John and Jesus: An Essay in Detection in Twelve New Testament Studies* (London, 1962), 28–52; J. Jeremias Ἠλείας in TDNT 2. 928–941 ed. G. Kittel, transl. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids 1964).

²⁶ Comforting: *Midr. Deut* 6:7; *Ned.* 50a; *Sanh.* 113a; *Yoma* 19b; *Sabb.* 109b; *Git.* 70a.

Visiting: *Midr. Gen* 35:2; 94:9; *Deut* 5:15.

Visit in dreams: *Midr. Gen* 83:4.

²⁷ *Sotah* 9:15.

toothache!²⁸ His miraculous deeds in the OT were extended and developed in Jewish tradition, such activity confirming his prophetic status.²⁹ It was believed that he would restore the tribes of Israel, which in Is. 49:6 is defined as a Messianic task.³⁰

It was clear that Elijah was a man with considerable authority and therefore highly regarded.³¹ The powerful authority that accompanied Elijah is particularly noticeable with regard to prayer.³²

Thus when James incorporates the example of Elijah, his readers are encouraged to recognize the power that is available through prayer and the necessity of a righteous lifestyle to experience it.³³ As both elements were realized in the life and ministry of Elijah, it is to be expected that similar features can and should be revealed in the lives of the Jacobean community. For James, it is not sufficient to stress potentiality in prayer; the personal righteousness of the one who prays is also of crucial importance. The example of Elijah emphasises this feature.

(d) *The Potential in Prayer*

Having established the value of prayer and demonstrated the necessary relationship between the power in prayer and a righteous lifestyle, James now encourages his readers to recognize that they also can realize this potential in prayer. It is possible that the inclusion of such an exalted figure may have led to discouragement on the part of the readership because of the honoured status of Elijah in contrast to their own perception of themselves. Thus, they may have felt unable to relate to his example. Consequently, James reminds them that fundamentally, Elijah was similar to them.

In keeping with the aim of the author to encourage his readers

²⁸ *Midr. Gen* 33:3

²⁹ *Sir.* 48:1–11.

³⁰ Bietenhard (*NIDNTT* 1.544) notes this aspect, drawing from *Sir.* 48:10.

³¹ *Midr. Num.* 14:1; *Eccles.* 3.14.1 note that when he built the altar on Mt. Carmel, he was acting in contradiction to God's Law because a Temple existed in Jerusalem. However, he had the authority to do this for he acted in response to God's word and as his spokesman against Baal; *Midr. Esther* 7:13 states that he rescued Israel in the days of Ahasuerus by persuading Moses and the patriarchs to act on its behalf; D. Zeller, 'Elija und Elischa im Frühjudentum', *BuK*, April 1986, 154–160 traces the significance of Elijah in Jewish writings especially in terms of his return in the eschaton, though a number of references that he offers do not specifically refer to Elijah.

³² 1 *Ki.* 17:17–24; 18:36f; 19:10–14; *Midr. Ex.* 44:1; *Lev.* 31:4; *San.* 113a.

³³ J. M. Nützel, 'Elijah und Elischa Traditionen im Neuen Testament', *BuK* Apr. 1986, 161; B. Lindars, 'Elijah, Elisha and the Gospel Miracles' in *Miracles* ed. C. F. D. Moule, (London, 1965), 72.

to adopt a pastoral concern for one another which becomes increasingly effective on the basis of a developing righteousness, he reminds them that although Elijah was a hero of the faith, both to Jews and Christians, fundamentally he was no different to them. This forms one of the reasons why Jesus would not have been a suitable example for James to use in the context of encouraging his readers, for he is so clearly and inevitably removed from them in character. It is unlikely that James is providing a veiled description of Christ despite proposed similarities.³⁴

That which needs to be clarified is the particular aspect of similarity between Elijah and the readers. The term itself is not used often in Greek writings.

In secular Greek writings, the root ὁμός and its derivatives are generally used to mean 'of the same kind/character' or 'resemblance', ὁμοιοπαθής originally meaning 'suffering the same', though later being used to describe similar dispositions.³⁵

The term ὁμοιοπαθής is not found in the LXX³⁶ but the adjectival use of ὁμοιος provides a meaning of 'compared to, of the same kind'.³⁷ Philo only uses the term once with the meaning 'similarity'.³⁸

The term ὁμοιοπαθεῖς occurs in the N.T. only in Acts 4:15, where Paul and Barnabas inform the people of Lystra that they are not gods, but men, such as they. The references to other forms of ὁμοιος provide the interpretations of 'like, compared to, resemble'.³⁹ James himself uses ὁμοίωσις in 3:9 to describe men who are made in the likeness of God.

The Early Church Fathers use the term, but mainly in a Christological context,⁴⁰ to mean 'like, similar, same'.

In conclusion therefore, although ὁμοιοπαθής and other forms of the adjective are rarely used, the general meaning of the term to define 'similarity' is clear. However, the specific aspect of that similarity differs from instance to instance.

³⁴ Robinson, *Elijah, John* . . . 29ff; J. L. Martyn, *We Have found Elijah in Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity: Jews, Greeks and Christians* ed. J. Neusner, (Leiden, 1976), 182ff, 191f, 195–219.

³⁵ E. Beyreuther, G. Finkenrath, *NIDNTT*, 2.500f; *Liddell–Scott*, (1225) though not providing a reference in which ὁμοιοπαθής is used, point to a general meaning for ὁμοίω and its derivatives of 'similar to, to be like, resemble'.

³⁶ Only in Wis. 7:3; 4 Macc. 12:13.

³⁷ Lv. 11:14ff; Ps. 143(144):4; Is. 46:5.

³⁸ *Conf. Ling.* 7.

³⁹ Mt. 13:31, 33, 44, 45, 47; 20:1; 22:2; Acts 14:11; Rom. 1:23; 1 Jn. 3:2; Rev. 1:13; 14:14.

⁴⁰ Lampe, 954f; Moulton–Milligan, 448.

That James is attempting to remind his readers of the fact that they share a similar humanity with Elijah is claimed by a number of writers.⁴¹ Others suggest that James is specifically drawing a comparison between Elijah and the readers in the characteristic of suffering.⁴² In support of this, it may be argued that the OT record portrays the suffering of Elijah in his discouragement, his fear and the opposition towards him.⁴³ Coupled with this was the belief that Elijah would precede the coming of the Messiah and in that role would suffer.⁴⁴ That the illustration itself is located originally in a context of total opposition where Elijah stands alone, helps the readers identify with him in their experience of suffering, either as a result of the rich, because they are Christians or because of some illness or weakness that has incapacitated them temporarily and caused them distress. As such, the inclusion of the illustration would have had a powerful impact on the community. In their context of suffering, they also can achieve similarly powerful results through prayer.

(e) *The Significance of the Will of God in Prayer*

It is this final topic that is most interesting to the message of James in this section and provides the most likely reason for his adaptation of the OT account of Elijah. Consequently, he is able to remind his readers of the fundamental importance of praying in the will of God. In this respect the illustration from the life of Elijah is very significant and his adaptation of it most apposite. James presents his argument thus:-

(i) He describes God's response in the provision of drought and then rain as being subsequent to prayer. However, in 1 Ki. 17:1, the provision of the drought by God follows Elijah's prophecy and although 1 Ki. 18:42 may imply that Elijah prayed for the rain, it is not certain. Nevertheless, James specifically presents the action of God in the context of prayer.

(ii) However, whatever action Elijah undertook, and he may have taken both, the determining factor recorded in Jewish/Biblical tradition was that he responded to a preceding and

⁴¹ H. Windisch, *Die Katholischen Briefe* (Tübingen, 1952), 34; Moo, 188; Davids, 197; Adamson, 200; Dibelius, 257; Vouga (F. Vouga *L'Épître de Saint Jacques* (Geneva, 1984), 144) believes that it refers to the responsibility of believers in terms of vv. 15b, 16, but this is unproven.

⁴² So Martin, 212; Reicke, 66; D. P. Scaer, *James. The Apostle of Faith* (St. Louis, 1983), 134.

⁴³ Discouragement: 1 Ki. 19:14.
Fear: 1 Ki. 19:3.

Opposition: 1 Ki. 18:17; 19:2.

⁴⁴ Mk. 9:12f, Rev. 11:13ff. See Jeremias, Ἠλείας, 939ff.

initiatory word of God, both with regard to the drought (Sir. 48:3) and the rain (1 Ki. 18:1). Inasmuch as the OT⁴⁵ warns of the withholding of rain as the customary punishment for idolatry, Elijah has a precedent for his actions. Similarly, after the confession and repentance of 1 Ki. 18:39, the restoration of rain by God is expected. Thus, Elijah may be seen to be acting in accordance with the will of God and not presumptuously.

(iii) The value of the incident to James in the context of prayer for the suffering christian is precisely this. As Elijah acted in the will of God and saw dramatic changes effected, so also his readers, when they function in accordance with the will of God, can experience similar events. He interprets the incident in 1 Kings to accommodate this latter principle. In order to support this, he offers the account in a context of prayer, rather than prophecy, though it is to be remembered that 1 Ki. 18:42 is suggestive of Elijah's praying for the rain to return. Nevertheless, Laws suggests this is a fundamental change in the course of the story. She notes that 'as a prophet, Elijah declared the prior decision of God communicated to him; when his activity is seen as prayer, it is rather God who responds to his intercession'.⁴⁶ However, it is preferable to interpret James anticipating the prayer being prompted by God in a similar fashion to prophecy; thus, the change in presentation of the account is not as fundamental as suggested by Laws for whether by prayer or prophecy, Elijah may be seen to be acting in response to God. What is significant to James therefore is not the change in the account of Elijah, but the underlying principle of the prior activity of God in determining the outcome. Both prayer and prophecy are secondary and, in this context, equivalent in value: the will of God is primary.⁴⁷

(iv) The prayer/prophecy activated the response from God, but it was God who initiated them. The significance of the prayer/prophecy lies in the fact that they effected the will of God. Thus, there is no distinction in principle between the record of James and that of 1 Kings, only a difference in methodology and presentation: the hermeneutic remains constant in both. The determining factor for a positive response by God to prayer or prophecy is whether they were initially prompted by God. As a righteous man, Elijah would be expected to maintain a close relationship with God that would be rewarded with his being

⁴⁵ Lv. 26:19f; Dt. 11:16f; cf. *Ta'an* 8b.

⁴⁶ 237.

⁴⁷ So Nützel, 'Elija . . .' 161.

privity to the mind and will of God. As such, he is a most appropriate example for James to use in a section in which he is seeking to illustrate the necessity of an active righteousness in the life of the one who prays. The value of the principle of righteousness to prayer is that the righteous person is most able to pray according to God's will. Thus, James identifies a righteous prayer as one that is offered in the context of the will of God.

James has chosen to adapt his OT material to suit his purposes before. Thus, in 2:23 he applies a quotation from Gn. 15:6 to the offering by Abraham of Isaac on the altar. However, its original setting is in the context of God's promise to Abraham of numberless descendants. Similarly, he deduces that Rahab was deemed to be righteous by her actions (2:25) although the OT text is not so forthcoming. With regard to the Elijah incident also, he adapts it to suit his present purposes.

Thus, questions as to whether James thought the information was part of the OT text or part of tradition are not only impossible to determine but also less significant to an exposition of the passage. What matters is that Elijah is portrayed as having acted in response to God.⁴⁸

In this respect, James continues the theme that is fundamental to the passage concerned. Thus, he refers to the prayer of faith, which I have elsewhere argued should be interpreted as a prayer offered in accordance with the will of God.⁴⁹ Such a prayer is activated by righteousness, the latter principle being repeated throughout the letter.⁵⁰ The incident from the life of Elijah provides support for both of these aspects.

Similarly, James uses the term, 'in the name of the Lord', in the context of prayer. This is an expression most appropriately used when the action/prayer associated with it has been commissioned by God. Furthermore, it is specifically because of the context of the will of God that he is able to offer a comprehensive guarantee of restoration to those receiving prayer.⁵¹

Thus, finally, he chooses to use Elijah as the classic example of the righteous man who prays in accordance with the guidance

⁴⁸ So A. Weiner, *The Prophet Elijah in the Development of Judaism* (London, 1978), 7; Johnson, *James' use of . . .* 314.

⁴⁹ K. Warrington, *An Exegesis of James 5:13-18* Unpubl. M. Phil. (London, 1992), 87-106.

⁵⁰ 1:5, 12, 25; 2:23; 3:17f; 4:7-10, 15, 17; 5:7f; for the converse see 1:10f, 14f, 23f; 2:9, 15f; 3:8-12, 16; 4:2f; 5:12.

⁵¹ His use of *καρπὸν* (5:18) may be reminiscent of its inclusion in 3:17f; 5:7 and thus be a reminder of the connection between doing God's will and seeing the positive results that follow.

offered by God, his righteousness being most clearly exemplified in his reliance on the will of God.

Conclusion

As a result of including this particular incident from Elijah's life, James is able to confirm a number of important issues already referred to. The power of prayer is stressed, the significant relationship between righteousness and prayer is emphasized, and the particular importance of the will of God to prayer is confirmed. Elijah is presented as a man fundamentally like the readers who saw his prayers being answered because of his righteous life. Such a righteous life enabled him to know when and how to pray appropriately. The readers are encouraged to emulate him in their prayers for one another and in their reliance on the sovereign advice of the Master Healer.

Abstract

The fact that the illustration from the life of Elijah has been inserted at the end of the letter of James may suggest that it has limited significance to the pericope in which it is included. However, it is to be noted that resident within the story are a number of important characteristics that confirm and clarify his practical advice concerning ministry to those in the local fellowship who are suffering from an unidentified weakness. Thus, to his mainly Jewish Christian readers, he provides the example of a well known figure from the Old Testament whom they are to emulate in their service to the suffering.