

Elijah's Prayer

by Bill Barratt

Elijah's prayer was based on God's infallible Word, and he prayed with persistence and faith, resulting in a marvelous answer from God.

Duration: 36:11

Scripture: 1 Kings 18:43-46, Matthew 6:6, Matthew 7:7, James 5:16

Topics: "Prayer"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. He emphasizes the dramatic actions taken by Elijah to demonstrate the power of God. Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal to a test, where they must try to light a sacrifice with fire. Despite their efforts, the sacrifice remains unlit. Then, Elijah pours water on his own sacrifice and prays to God, who sends fire to consume it. The speaker encourages the audience to pray with boldness, humility, and persistence, believing in the power of God to bring about miraculous change.

Transcript

Over the last few Sunday mornings, we have seen how Abraham, Moses, and Solomon prayed. And this morning, we're going to look at how Elijah prayed. The idea being that we can learn from great men of God how Elijah prayed.

First of all, Elijah prayed according to God's infallible Word. The foundation of Elijah's prayer was God's Word. Verse 41, if you want to follow this, it may help you later to study the prayer for yourself.

I'm taking each verse. And Elijah said unto Ahab, get thee up and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain. Elijah, in the first verse of that chapter, had had a word from the Lord.

And it came to pass, after many days, that the Word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, go, show thyself unto Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth. So, Elijah had had the word straight from God that it was going to rain after three and a half years of famine. He knew that.

God told him. God told him, go and tell the king Ahab it's going to rain. The land had been in famine with no rain for about three and a half years.

It had stopped raining when Elijah had said, there'll be no more rain except by my word. And the reason was, it was the judgment of God upon the king and the nation, because they'd rebelled against the Lord.

And it was to teach them that God was on the throne.

They'd turned to idols, and they'd been disobedient to God. And so, Elijah, the prophet, starting figure, appears on the scene. And every time Elijah came on the scene, Ahab's heart smote him with fear.

It will not rain except by my word. And immediately, it stopped raining. Three and a half years afterwards, God says to Elijah, now Elijah, I'm going to send rain, go and tell Ahab.

And so, God was vindicating his prophet, his spokesman, his representative on earth. And he was saying to Elijah, the powerful king in the nation, this is my man, and he has authority from me. So, Elijah knew it was going to rain by the word of the Lord.

What can we learn? If we want our prayers to be answered, they must be based on what God says. They must be based on the sound, infallible word of God. Not on fancy, or even our own desires so much, but on what God says.

Those are the prayers you can pray with confidence, when you know God says it. Thus saith the Lord. Now, God can still speak today through vision, or dream, or circumstance.

And if you're living close to God, and you're dedicated to God, and you know your heart is clear before God, and your conscience is without offense towards man and God, then God can speak. And you can pray with what God has told you. But that is the basis.

If you want answer to prayer, it must be based on God's word as the foundation. That's the first thing we can learn. The next verse, 42.

So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. The rain hadn't come yet. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel.

Elijah went to the top of this great mountain, very high. I think it's in Amos chapter 9, that we read there that people used to go to the top of Carmel to escape, to hide in the rocks and in the mountain. It was so high and so big, not easily accessible, right at the top.

It says that Elijah went to the top of Carmel. Elijah went apart from the noise and the strife and the destructions of the earth and the world. He went as high as he could away from it.

Elijah went to be alone with God. What can we learn? We can learn the prayer and the way to pray that Jesus taught. When you pray, go into your closet, close the door, and pray to God in secret, and he will reward you openly.

So the second thing we can learn is not only to base our prayer on the infallible word of God, on a specific promise of God, on a word from the Lord, but when we know and we have it, then we must get away from the distractions of the world, get away from the humdrum and the noise and the things that go on around, the wireless, the television, everything we can as far as we can, and our circumstances will permit, and get alone with God. That's the second thing we can learn. So Elijah went to the top of Carmel and he cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees.

That was an unusual thing to do. Cast down on the earth, yes, but to put his face between his knees. Now I tried that and I couldn't do it.

I won't give you the reasons. So I asked somebody else who was slim and tall, and they could with a little effort. I tried several ways.

I tried lying sideways. I tried on my knees, and I tried sitting down, but I couldn't do it. Unusual posture for prayer.

There was a sense of humility. He knew the answer was coming. He knew God's word would come to pass.

He had faith in God's promise. He'd already told Ahab to go before it had even happened. That's how much faith he had, but now he was praying it through.

He gets alone apart from everybody, but that's not enough. He casts himself on the ground and puts his face between his knees. Now if you've got your face between your knees, you can't see very far.

Why did he do that? I don't really know. The Bible doesn't actually tell us. It was an attitude of prayer, but I try to learn from it, and I hope we can learn from it.

There's one thing I know. Elijah was not just a prophet of the usual line generally. He was extremely dramatic, and I would say Elijah was perhaps the most dramatic prophet in the Bible with Elisha.

Not without significance, because the Holy Ghost is dramatic, and those two figures, Elijah and Elisha, are representatives or shadows or types of the coming Holy Ghost. The first and the latter rain. You remember, Elijah did mighty miracles more than any prophet outside of Moses in the Bible, and Elisha had a double portion of his spirit.

The first rain and the latter rain. We're in the latter rain today. We can pray for rain.

Can you hear the sound of abundance of rain? God's promised it. In the last days saith God, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Should we not go into our carnal and get alone with God, and should we not try and learn how Elisha prayed? Now he prayed dramatically.

He was a dramatic prophet. When a woman who he'd stayed with and she'd provided for him had a bereavement of her son who was dead, Elijah didn't walk in calmly and tell them all to go out and touch the lad. It says that Elijah, and you have the impression it was a dramatic action, stretched himself upon the child three times, and the child rose from the dead.

There was this spirit of drama in Elijah. It was part of his character to enter in. It's as if he's stretching himself into the very death of the lad, covering him and stretching his old body and his being in his spirit, and saying in his spirit, rise.

You can feel it. He's a dramatic prophet, and he did. When Elijah challenged the 450 prophets or so of Baal, he didn't stand there with a rod like Moses and points, but he was dramatic.

He says, build your altar, get the bullock, put it on. He says, now call to your God, then I'll build an altar, now call to my God, and the God who answers by fire, let him be God, and all the people said, Amen. I don't know what the prophets of Baal said, and what happened? Well, they started from morning till night.

They prayed, they cut themselves with stones, they pleaded to the gods, they humbled themselves, they did everything possible, but there was no answer. Now Elijah, this dramatic prophet, he goes up to them,

and he possibly knew some of the stories surrounding the gods of the heathen. You know, the gods of the heathen, they had sun gods, and rain gods, and sea gods, and all kinds of gods, and there were stories circulate around these gods.

If he didn't answer prayer, that one of the gods had gone on a hunting trip, or another one had been asleep, or perhaps he was busy, and so Elijah stood there, this dramatic prophet, there was no answer. He says, Perchance he's on a long journey, call again. Can you imagine this scene? Fiery prophet, I should imagine he's fairly lean, and strong by the way he had his posture in prayer.

He was certainly a dramatic figure, baldish perhaps, and air flowing, and beard, and perhaps he's gone on a journey, cry again to your God. Now it wasn't just boastfulness with Elijah, it was a spirit of God using his personality to impress upon the people the ridiculous and hopeless situation of praying to gods that don't exist. There's a dramatic picture.

Don't think that Elijah was boasting, or making fun so much, as bringing out a tremendous message, a prophetic message. You're worshipping idols of wood and stone. Mine's a living God.

Nothing happened. Call again, perhaps he's having a sleep. Israel, Ahab, cry a bit louder, promise to God he's perhaps asleep, you've got to wake him.

And all the people were looking on. Dramatic prophet, no answer. Drama again.

He says write, build the altar, 12 stones, one for each tribe. The marvellous prophetic ministry of Elijah, Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is dramatic.

You can't fall asleep when the Holy Ghost is moving. One for each tribe. God will show who's God.

One for every tribe, build the stones, now put the bullock upon it, now do something else. You didn't, you did not do this for the prophets of Bible, we'll see who's God. Dig a trench round, he'll take two measures of steel, go on dig it round.

Now then get four barrels of water, throw it on the sacrifice, let it go in the trench. So all the people looked at Elijah, and the prophets of Baal looked at Elijah, what a dramatic action. He was saying I'll show you, through prophetic action, since dripping with the water from the sacrifice, beginning to fill up, soak it into the ground.

They said are you ready? No not yet, get another four barrels and pour it on. Well that'll never burn, ah go on get another one. And then he says now we'll pray, and you heard the prayer.

And the fire came down, burnt up the sacrifice, burnt up the wood, burnt up the stones, burnt up the water, and burnt up the dust in the trench. And the people says, God, he is God? Of course he is, the dramatic prophet. When his time had finished, for his great ministry, and God told him, because he was in touch with God, Elijah, he's going to take your place Elijah.

What does Elijah do? He doesn't go up to him and say now come along, I'm going to train you in the Bible college, I'm going to give you some instruction, I'm going to tell you what to do. Elijah didn't say that, he knew that Holy Ghost stuff needed Holy Ghost revelation. So what did he do? He took his mantle off, dramatic, and he threw it on him.

He says there you are, you've got the mantle. Dramatic, a mantle, but what did it speak? Volume. There it is, the Holy Ghost.

And Elijah was a man of a kin spirit, he won a double portion, I'll not let you go. Marvelous dramatic prophet. So when he came to Carmel, God said it's going to rain.

Elijah couldn't do it like anybody else, sat in an armchair leaning back. He flung himself on the ground, buried his face beneath his knees. I thought, dramatic, what was he saying to God? What was he saying to his servant? What was he saying to himself? Well you know, questions come to mind when you serve God, questions come to mind when you're a pastor, and the church grows beyond your physical capabilities to reach each person individually.

As your vision grows for lost souls, so does your hopelessness become apparent. When you hear the calls on phone line, desperate calls every day, you realize that it's not possible to get involved. You could spend all your life caring for one person, not possible.

But the commission is preach the gospel to every creature, so what you've got to do is enter into their sufferings and put your compassion into your prayers. But you can't act upon it, God's got to do that. There's wisdom in these things you know.

The devil would have us looking after one person, very worthy, very needy, but what about the thousands who've never heard? Our job is to get the message over. We're a spiritual church, we're not a social church, and yet we are, we're more social than anybody. But we pray, it's God that deals, and he can deal with a thousand at once, and a million.

So we spread the gospel, that's our job, and we ask the Holy Ghost to do the work, praise the Lord. And if they're desperate enough, you don't have to call for them. If they really mean business, they have faith, they'll phone the ambulance and say, I'm nearly dying, I can't walk, but send an ambulance and take me to Sharon.

That's what they did in the Bible, and they rose up and walked. There's wisdom in these things. Now Elijah, you know you might say, oh Elijah, what a hard man, he stopped it raining.

Have you ever thought that for three and a half years, mothers had no food for the children? Innocent people, some of them had lived for God, had to have meager rations and hardly have enough to live. Did Elijah go and do miracles? He did a miracle for one woman where the cruise of oil never failed, neither the meal in the barrel. But he didn't go around to everyone in Israel and do it.

In fact, he wasn't even belonging to Israel. You see, they were suffering for their sins, and it was God's business. God was more concerned than Elijah for Israel, there is people.

God's more concerned for people than we are, there is people. What's God said to you and me? And so Elijah, it seems to me, because he was a man of God, because he had a heart of God, he wasn't callous or hard, just because he wasn't running around everywhere and trying to find water or do miracles to feed people. It wasn't that he was hard, he had to obey God.

And so when it came to the part where God says, I'm going to send rain, go and tell Ahab, Elijah's heart rejoiced for God's people. And he says, even before he prayed, he says, go and tell Ahab, there's a sound of abundance of rain. He was glad to announce the good news.

But then when he went in prayer, then came all his three and a half years of compassion and sorrow for his own people. And I believe his attitude was one that you would have if you were starving and thirsty and destitute, cast on the ground, head between the knees. What a beautiful picture, dramatic prophet.

God uses our personality. Don't you pray like everybody else. If you pray quietly on your knees without saying a word, you pray that way, it's your personality.

If you shout the head off and all the neighbors come on knocking on the door and want to know what's going on, you pray that way. Better to go to Mount Carmel and do it, mind you. But whatever you do, you pray as you are.

Elijah prayed, he wasn't like Moses or Abraham. Abraham stood before God and looked at Sodom and Gomorrah. Moses stood before God and looked towards Egypt.

Solomon knelt on his knees and lifted his hands up before God in the temple. Elijah cast himself on the ground and put his head between his knees. Jesus also cast himself upon the ground and sweat as it were, drops of blood.

Pray as you are, be real before God. Take the attitude that's natural to you and let the Spirit of God work through your spirit, I in you and you in me. We can learn something here of how to pray.

Don't pray because the book says you must always kneel or you must be comfortable or you must shout or you must go in the mountain or you must go around there. You find your own way to pray but there must be that compassion. He knew it was going to happen but he did it.

So we can learn from that and then we read on. He said to his servant, go now and look toward the sea and he went and looked and said there's nothing. What do you think about that? Now Carmel had a great view of the Mediterranean and so when the servant went and stood at the top of Carmel he could see right across the vast Mediterranean on the blue sky above, not a cloud, nothing.

What a sight to send your faith to the bottom of the ocean. Thank God Elijah wasn't looking. His face was between his knees.

We walk by faith and not by sight. If God says it we believe it. Better to close your eyes if you see a dead person and you're praying for them to be raised from the dead than look at them.

And so his servant came back, nothing. So Elijah got up and said well that's it then. Didn't he? Not on your life.

His prayer was based on the word of God and that would never fail. So what did he do? Go again, head between his knees. Servant goes again, nothing.

Nothing. Go again, third time. What is this? What a sight.

Nothing. Go a fourth time. Elijah I've been, you know it's 700 yards to the edge of there.

I've been there. I've been to the top. Righto, nothing.

Surely he won't ask me to go again. Go again, seventh time. Go again.

What can we learn? Elijah was persistent in his prayer. Jesus said knock and it shall be opened unto you. He didn't knock once.

He knocked seven times and he wouldn't take no for an answer. Seven times the servant came back and says no. Do you think God could not have given him a sign right away? God had promised him there'd be rain but he made him go seven times.

Did Elijah give up? Not on your life. He believed God. He kept asking.

He'd already sent Ahab the king and said it's all right there's going to be rain and there was no rain seven times. Then the prophet came back and he came back not too excited but a little. He said well I'm glad to say Elijah that there's a cloud.

It's just about the smallest you could have. It's the size of a man's hand. Now I don't know whether you've thought of that.

There's the vast ocean or sea and there's the great blue sky. Nothing there. Blue.

And if you had one of the latest jet planes that holds three or four hundred people flying through the sky at about a thousand feet you know you could put your hand up and blot it out. It becomes that small. So how small is a man's hand? It was just the tiniest little width of a spiraling little tiny cloud in the sky.

I don't think God could have given him anything less small. So God made him wait seven times and then he gave him the smallest possible encouragement. Oh but Elijah as soon as he heard that it was like the ocean to Elijah.

He said right it's there now. Don't have to wait any longer. Go and tell him hey get ahead run off before he gets wet through.

Some of us carry on praying when we should have stopped. We can learn that too can't we? If God promises we don't have to have the full thing do we? It was still blazing sunshine and blue in the sky and a great big blue sea and no sign of rain except the smallest cloud you could hardly see. But that was enough for Elijah.

That's it. I finished praying now. Go and tell him and you know what the account says.

Verse 45. He says go and tell Ahab prepare thy chariot. Get thee down that the rain stop thee not.

I don't know what his servant thought of him but he went. But listen to the answer and it came to pass in the meanwhile that the heaven was black with clouds and wind and there was a great rain and Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. In the rain coming down on the wind pouring down after three and a half years there was the king riding back to Jezreel.

He never thought about Elijah left alone in the rain but that's what people do when God answers prayer. They forget those who pray. They forget they forget why the blessing has come.

They take all a blessing and forget somebody's worked out for it. Don't do that will you. So he prayed and he answered the prayer God in a marvelous fashion.

What can we learn? Well let's just look through those points briefly. We are praying. Now I want to tell you something.

God spoke to me and God said this to me. He said the man who can organize and involve people in massive prayer everywhere will see greater things from God than he'd ever imagined. So personally I'm determined to do my part to get this church at least by the grace of God praying.

That's why I'm preaching on praying. God told me and I believe and I say it as from the Lord if you and I will get down to prayer individually in twos everywhere you meet in the Sunday school in the campaigners on Friday nights let's get the church full of the side rooms if we'll get down to pray I promise you from the Lord that you will see greater things than you've ever seen in your life. I'm not saying when and I've not seen a cloud yet but there's a sound of abundance of rain.

I'm trying to instruct from the best of my knowledge and ability and experience to tell you how to pray so that you're not just doing a lot of off air and a lot of phrases that don't mean anything. Here is definite prayers from men of God in the bible and you how to pray. Let us learn.

Here's the points. There are six points. First prayer is based on the infallible word of God as your foundation.

Otherwise you're praying for nothing. It's got to be from God. Second it was a specific thing.

Second we pray along with God. We get away with God whether it's in twos or a group away from the world or an individual. We get away from God.

We get away from the distractions of the world. We mean business. We're not going for a blessing.

We're going to work for God. We're not going on feelings. Get along.

Thirdly we are humble before God. We cast ourselves down and we fill our spirits with the compassion for the need like Elijah did. Fourthly we're expectant in prayer.

Keep looking. Keep looking. Never mind if nothing happens seven times.

Keep believing. Never mind if the church congregation goes down or up, sideways or forwards or backwards or under the ground. Keep believing till the balcony is full and the youth centre has the television closed circuit in it and every room's full and we have to have five services a day.

Believe it. Is it impossible to God? Well if that won't happen we've no chance for Manchester have we? And what's Manchester in this universe? A faith in God. Never mind how the situation looks.

Get your head between your knees. Don't look at it and keep praying. And when the messenger comes back and says nothing yet say well keep going.

Fifthly we must be persistent. Seven times means completion. Carry on.

70 times 7. Keep praying. Never stop. Knock, knock, knock, knock until you get the answer and you've got the promise of Jesus.

Knock and it shall be opened. And know when to stop. You'll know in the spirit as soon as you see God beginning to move you'll know.

I want to tell you something. He's already started. Don't know about you but I've seen the cloud and I'll tell you something else.

It's a lot bigger than a man's hand to me. Oh well two and a half million. No it is about a cloud but it's already there.

Conclusion. What do we get? Not that we're looking for that. I like the last verse.

And the hand of the Lord was upon Elijah. And he girded up his loins and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. Dramatic prophet.

Oh glorious. How beautiful consistent is God's word and his people. He done all this dramatic action and as soon as he got the answer he says to Ahab go on you've got a chariot you've got a good horse you're a king probably the fastest horse in the land and a beautiful chariot with well-oiled wheels.

Get on your way and he's off. And as he's driving along suddenly there's a dramatic figure comes striding down with long lean legs sinewy and strong a man who fasts and prays with his air blowing in the wind in the breeze. Ahab looks the rain dripping and coming past him and the wind blowing it on his face and his air flowing back and running on.

He says whip the horses up but he can't keep up with him. He stands at the gate of Jezreel wet through the prophet and he says thus saith the Lord praise the Lord. If we pray like that one day we'll say to the sceptics thus saith the Lord that'll be a great day.

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