

“Praying in Faith”  
1 Kings 18:41-45  
(Preached at Trinity, August 8, 2021)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 16** ended with a vivid description of the wickedness of Ahab.  
**Verse 33 of Chapter 16** - "Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him."  
**Verse 34** comes as an aside – God's judgment was ignored to their great peril.  
**1 Kings 16:34 NAU** - "In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho; he laid its foundations with the *loss of* Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates with the *loss of* his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke by Joshua the son of Nun."
2. As **Chapter 16** came to a close it would appear that Baal was victorious in Israel. He had his own temple, his own altar and priests and he had the support of the throne. But God is not to be mocked and His power will not be undone.
3. Elijah arrived suddenly at the beginning of **Chapter 17**. His arrival was the announcement of God's judgment, the announcement of a great drought and famine that was about to come upon the land. It was by the command of God through His prophet.  
**1 Kings 17:1 NAU** - "As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."
4. The drought lasted many days. **Chapter 18** opens with the land still suffering through the endless days without rain. There were no crops, no harvests.  
We read in **Verse 2** - "Now the famine was severe in Samaria."  
It was in this setting that God sent Elijah to meet Ahab. This set the stage for the showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Baal was the god of rain, but was powerless to provide relief. In the showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal God proved Himself mighty and the impotence of Baal was displayed, and his prophets were destroyed.  
**1 Kings 18:40 NAU** - "Then Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape." So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there."
5. With this Elijah announced the end of the drought. But it hadn't ended. The skies were still clear with no rain in sight. Elijah made the announcement while the land was dry and parched. It was an announcement of faith.
  - A. We are given a definition of faith in **Hebrews 11**  
**Hebrews 11:1 NAU** - "Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."
  - B. Faith and hope are trusting in God's promises even when they are not seen.  
**Romans 8:24-25 NAU** - "For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he *already* sees? <sup>25</sup> But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it."

- C. Hebrews 11 is an entire chapter devoted to examples of faith, examples of individuals who dared to believe God, even in the face of great difficulty.  
**Hebrews 11:33-34 NAU** - "who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed *acts of righteousness*, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions,<sup>34</sup> quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight."
6. This is what we are seeing here with Elijah. He trusted God to bring the rain and rested in confidence, even before the skies began to darken.  
 James describes Elijah's prayer of faith  
**James 5:17-18 NAU** - "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months.<sup>18</sup> Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit."
- I. Faith believes even when we don't see the outcome  
 "Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."
- A. Elijah told Ahab to go and eat and drink
1. He declared the sound of great rain even when there was silence  
**1 Kings 18:41 NAU** - "Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a *heavy shower*."
  2. It had not rained for many days. The ground was dry, the crops had withered. Famine had taken its toll upon the land.  
**1 Kings 18:2 NAU** - "Now the famine *was* severe in Samaria."
  3. But what did Elijah hear? What was the sound of the heavy shower?  
 It was the sound of faith!
- B. What would lead Elijah to think the drought was about to end?
1. Surely, the skies did not hint of an end. If there were dark clouds on the horizon perhaps Elijah could hold out some hope. But the sky was void of clouds.
  2. If the drought had only lasted a few days, perhaps Elijah might hope the end was near. But it had been many days, in fact 3 ½ years.
  3. What was the basis of Elijah's hope? It was the Word of God.  
**1 Kings 18:1 NAU** - "Now it happened *after* many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth."
- C. Elijah prayed God's own Word back to Him
1. We saw this same thing with David in 2 Samuel
    - a. God promised David an everlasting throne  
**2 Samuel 7:12-13 NAU** - "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.<sup>13</sup> "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."
    - b. David then affirmed God's promise as he prayed back to God.  
**2 Samuel 7:25 NAU** - "Now therefore, O LORD God, the word that You have spoken concerning Your servant and his house, confirm *it* forever, and do as You have spoken,"

II. Elijah committed himself to prayer

A. It was a prayer of reverence

**1 Kings 18:42 NAU** - "But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees."

1. Elijah understood the rightful place of God – a place of majesty and glory.
2. Moses was commanded to remove his shoes in the presence of God  
Isaiah's response to the revelation of the majesty of Christ was, "Woe is me, for I am undone."
3. Jesus taught that proper prayer is reverent prayer  
**Matthew 6:9 KJV** - "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."
4. Prayer must first and foremost magnify God.

B. It was a prayer of expectation

**1 Kings 18:43 NAU** - "Go up now, look toward the sea."

1. James called it a prayer of faith  
**James 5:15 NAU** - "and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick"
2. It is the only true prayer  
**James 1:6-7 NAU** - "But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. <sup>7</sup> For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,"  
**Matthew 21:22 NAU** - "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive."
3. Does this mean we have to have a perfect faith, a mighty faith that never wavers? No. But even the weak faith of a believer is infinitely more powerful than the words of an unbeliever who has no claim upon the promises of God.

C. It was a prayer of persistence

**1 Kings 18:43 NAU** - "Go back " seven times."

1. The first time the servant returned with the report, "there is nothing."
2. Elijah commanded him, "Go back" and this was repeated six times, but on the seventh . . .
3. We are to persist in prayer. We are commanded to pray without ceasing. Too often we are guilty of praying once or twice and then stopping. After the servant came back the second or third time we would presume it isn't time for the drought to end.  
How many times do we pray for a job? Or for the salvation of a loved one? Or for healing from a disease or infirmity? Or a spouse, or a child? And God delays. And we wait and we wait.  
Jesus told a parable regarding persistence in prayer - **Luke 11:5-13**

D. It was a prayer of confidence

**1 Kings 18:44 NAU** - "Behold, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea." And he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare *your chariot* and go down, so that the *heavy* shower does not stop you."

1. Even after seven times the report came back, "I see nothing but a very small cloud, about the size of my hand."
2. Elijah's response to this was, "Run to Ahab and warn him that a heavy shower is about to come."
3. He was confident of the lawfulness of that which he asked of God. He prayed God's Word, God's promise.
  - a. This isn't like the health/wealth people who insist on the name it and claim it theology of asking for whatever we lust for.
  - b. James has something to say about this as well.  
**James 4:1-3 NAU** - "What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? <sup>2</sup> You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. <sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures."
4. Thomas Manton wrote: "Through Christ we have access with confidence unto the Father. We cannot lift up a thought of hope and trust but by Him. None can pray aright but believers. How can they comfortably be persuaded of a blessing, that never a promise belonging to them? If you have a promise, you may be confident that your requests will be heard."<sup>1</sup>

#### Conclusion:

1. Elijah prayed. He prayed reverently. He prayed confidently in faith. He prayed persistently. And He prayed with expectation, knowing and believing the promise of God. God had told him He would send rain. And Elijah looked for it with expectation.
2. If God told Elijah that He would send rain, why is it that Elijah prayed for it? Because God commands us to pray. Prayer is one of the means God uses to work His purpose.
  - a. For example, God has ordered the healing of a man smitten with cancer. But He ordered that the physician would prescribe surgery followed by chemotherapy. And He ordered that His people would pray. And the prayers of His people worked effectually.
  - b. God has ordered that the farmer's crops grow. He orders the rain and the fruit to form on the vine. He also stirs His people to pray for a bountiful harvest. And God hears their prayers.
  - c. Elijah was God's agent in affirming His promise. But this is the nature of all prayer. God ordains and then uses the prayers of His people effectually.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Manton, *A Commentary on James, a Geneva Series Commentary*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, (1998), page 47.

3. We must pray. We must pray continually, and we must pray believing. Yes, God has promised, and His promises are sure, but this does not lessen the necessity of prayer. Calvin: “There are many fanatics who ignore praying to God, under the excuse that they are assured by his word: ‘Since God has declared that he cares for us, why should we worry? God has promised not to leave us in necessity and in need. Let us wait, therefore, until he fulfills his Word. But what need is there to go and ask him for it? Now that is how profane people abuse the Word of God, under the false pretext that they are quite certain that without seeking for it, he will always manifest himself at the opportune time.’”<sup>2</sup>
4. We pray God’s promises. His promises teach us to pray. They direct our prayers. They give us assurance that our prayers are heard and answered. And God commands us to pray and assures us that He hears.

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<sup>2</sup> Calvin, John, *Sermons on 2 Samuel*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992) page 295.