

Series: Persistence in Prayer

AT THE SEVENTH TIME

1 KINGS 18:40-46

Text: 1 Kings 18:44

1 Kings 18:44

⁴⁴ *And it came to pass **at the seventh time**, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.*

Introduction:

When we come to these verses in chapter 18 we find that God has been proclaimed as God and the 450 prophets of Baal have been slain.

The drought is about to be over because rain is on the way.

This is because Israel has dealt with the cause of the drought.

It is always this way.

Once we deal with the sin that is causing the problem, we will remove the hindrance to the blessing.

We have a tendency to try a multitude of ways to obtain the blessing without removing the hindrance.

Listen, we cannot tolerate the virus and still and enjoy good health.

Someone once said: “When we rely upon organization, we get what organization can do; when we rely upon education we get what education can do; when we rely upon eloquence we get what eloquence can do . . . but when we rely upon prayer we get what God can do!”

Again we consider the importance persevering, or persistence in prayer.

We read in James 5:16-18 a reference to our text.

Note:

James 5:16-18

*¹⁶ Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. ¹⁷ Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, **and he prayed earnestly** that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.*

*¹⁸ **And he prayed again**, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*

Let's examine the persistence of prayer in the life of Elijah.

Note:

Sermon Content:

1. THE EARNESTNESS OF ELIJAH'S PRAYER (VS. 42)

1 Kings 18:42

⁴² So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,

Understand:

Earnestness is not determined by its:

- Language
- Loudness
- Length

Note: Matthew 6:7-9

Matthew 6:7-9

⁷ But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. ⁸ Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

As you note the actual words of Elijah's prayer are not even recorded. It does tell us that Elijah that he put his face between his knees.

A. His Earnestness Was Seen in His Posture

Again often people make much of the posture of our praying but again we find several different postures throughout the Bible.

Notice:

- Prayer Standing

Nehemiah 9:5

⁵ Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, **Stand up and bless the LORD your God** for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

- Prayer Kneeling

Ezra 9:5

⁵ *And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God,*

- Prayer Bowing

Exodus 34:8

⁸ *And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.*

- Prayer Sitting

2 Samuel 7:18

¹⁸ *Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?*

- Prayer with Uplifted Hands

1 Timothy 2:8

⁸ *I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.*

All that can be said of Elijah's posture was that it was outward evidence of his inward earnestness.

B. Earnestness Was Seen In His Priorities (vs. 42)

1 Kings 18:42

⁴² So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,

We see a contrast in this verse.

While Ahab was eating Elijah was praying.

We must make prayer our priority.

Illustration:

William Carey was once reproached for spending so much time in prayer that he neglected his business.

He replied that supplication, thanksgiving, and intercession were much more important in his life than laying up treasures on earth.

“Prayer is my real business!” he said.

“Cobbling shoes is a sideline; it just helps me pay expenses.”

The Lord honored Carey’s faith, and he became a well-known missionary and was mightily used by God in India, Burma, and the East Indies.

Not only was his Earnestness seen in his Posture, and Priorities but it was also:

C. Earnestness Was Seen In His Persistence in Prayer

1 Kings 18:43-44

⁴³ And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. ⁴⁴ And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

Note Elijah said to his servant “Go again seven times.”

Elijah didn't stop praying after the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, or 6th time.

I wonder how long we would continue to pray about a matter.

We need to be persistent in our praying.

We have considered the Earnestness of Elijah's Prayer note secondly:

2. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ELIJAH'S PRAYER

Notice:

- The Principle of Prayer

How do we get our prayers answered?

1 Kings 18:1

¹ *And it came to pass after many days, that **the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.***

1 Kings 18:36

³⁶ *And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that **I have done all these things at thy word.***

1 Kings 18:45

⁴⁵ *And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.*

Part of having our persistent prayers answered is to believe God's promises.

Quotes:

Spurgeon, “Every promise of Scripture is a writing of God, which may be pleaded before Him with this reasonable request, ‘Do as thou hast said.’”

Matthew Henry, “We must turn God’s promises into prayer, and then they shall be turned into performances.”

F.B. Meyer, “though the Bible be crowded with golden promises from board to board, yet will they be inoperative until we turn them into prayer. . . . God’s promises are given, not to restrain, but to incite to prayer.

Understand:

Promises show direction in which we may ask, and the extent to which we may expect an answer.

Note not only the Principle of Prayer but also:

B. The Perversion of Prayer

We think we can pray for what we want and God is obligated by our prayers.

What is the source of our prayers? Our desires or Gods will? If we pray for what we want can we expect God to answer?

Remember what we read in James 4:

James 4:2-3

*² Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. ³ **Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.***

We often misunderstand the meaning of prayer.

Prayer is not to get God to change His will.

If we really believe that the will of God is perfect, then why would we want Him to change it?

Our prayers really ought to be prompted out of our deep understanding of what the will of God is.

There are a lot of folks who go to prayer, not to ascertain the will of God, but to ask Him to do what they want.

Prayer is not getting God to adjust His program to what we want, it is adjusting our lives to the revealed will of God.

1 John 5:14-15

¹⁴ And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

¹⁵ And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

Quote:

Robert Law wrote, "Prayer is a mighty instrument, not for getting man's will done in Heaven, but for getting God's will done on earth." Or, as other have expressed it "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness."

Note not only the Principle and Perversion of Prayer but also:

C. The Perplexity of Prayer

Here is a legitimate question.

1 Kings 18:1

¹ And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.

Since God had said that He was going to send rain, why pray?

Elijah was praying for the promised rain as though its coming depended upon his prayers and not on the promises of God.

If God had already stated what He would do, why pray?

Prayer was not mentioned in verse 1 but Elijah still prayed.

He not only prayed but he prayed 7 times for rain.

He sent his servant toward the sea to look for the promised rain, and while the servant was going, Elijah put his face between his knees, and prayed.

The servant comes back and tells Elijah that he sees “nothing.” Elijah says to him, “Go again seven times.”

And each time, while he is going, Elijah, with his face between his knees, prays.

Elijah was praying for the promised rain as though its coming was depended upon his prayers and not on the promise of God!

The connection between Promise and Prayer is illustrated in a former scene in the life of Elijah.

He boldly goes into the presence of Ahab and says:

1 Kings 17:1

¹ And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

The people had turned away from God, and the promise was written in Deuteronomy 11:17:

Deuteronomy 11:16-17

¹⁶ Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; ¹⁷ And then the LORD'S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you.

Elijah prayed that promise into performance.

Close:

The showdown had been won but there was still Elijah left the victory and turned to praying.

Promises must be claimed, prayers must be prayed, God still wants His people to run with patience the race of life for His glory.

We must take God at His Word and pray like their fulfillment depends upon our prayers.