

**LIVES THAT REMIND US ABOUT GOD - Meeting Yourself In The Sacred Text Part ten - Sunday, April 7th, 2024
Pastor Don Horban - Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON**

ELIJAH - WALKING IN THE POWER AND PATIENCE OF GOD

1) **Elijah and National Revival (1 Kings 18:16-39)**

- a) ***Elijah confronts the people's sin - 18:16-18*** - “So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah. [17] When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" [18] And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals.”

King Ahab feels ***Elijah*** is the source of the nation's problems because Elijah has pronounced nationwide drought on the people. Lesson: The one who points out the sin of any group is frequently viewed at the problem itself. Examples of this would be the contrary views the church would have over same-sex marriage or the abortion issue.

Elijah forces the truth about ***Israel's idolatry*** to the surface as the real cause of Israel's problems. This took great courage on Elijah's part when speaking to the king. Yet no progress can be made in any area of spiritual renewal until ***sin is named and confessed specifically before God:***

Psalm 66:18 - “If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.”

Psalm 32:5 - “I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.’”

- b) ***Elijah challenged the indecision of the people - 18:20-21 - “So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel. [21] And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word.”***

Elijah confronts the people with their "*limping*" between two opinions. Their problem is one of ***consistency***. They wavered back and forth between ***two different loyalties***. They weren't always bad. But they weren't always living for God either. Elijah says their devotion must go deeper than fluctuating whims and passing spiritual urges. Their commitment, and ours, must be ***complete*** and ***permanent***.

See **James 1:6-8 - “But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. [7] For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; [8] he is a double-minded man unstable in all his ways.”**

Most people will want to **“receive”** something from God as some point of need or sheer selfishness. Nothing reveals the state of the heart like prayer. Ahab’s false prophets prayed fervently to their gods, but idolatry and divided loyalties make frauds of all prayers.

- c) ***Elijah exposed the particular sin of idolatry - 18:24-29 -***
“And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, he is God.” And all the people answered, “It is well spoken.” [25] Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many, and call upon the name of your god, but put no fire to it.” [26] And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made. [27] And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, “Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.” [28] And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them. [29] And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention.”

There is probably no more natural sin than to try to muster up human zeal and religious fervour for God ***while, at the same time, clinging to idols and unholy loves in the heart.***

Question: what would make people engage so fervently in prayer and religious exercise when they have no consistent commitment to honor and obey God? And the answer is religious exercise goes a long way to appease a dead conscience when idolatrous affections reign in the heart.

Devotion to God must be pure and unmixed with any other rivals if my worship is to be potent and life giving to my soul.

- d) ***Elijah honored God by stepping out in faith - 18:32-37 -***
“....and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord. And he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two seahs of seed. [33] And he put the wood in order and cut the bull in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, "Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." [34] And he said, "Do it a second time." And they did it a second time. And he said, "Do it a third time." And they did it a third time. [35] And the water ran around the altar and filled the trench also with water. [36] And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. [37] Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back."

First, he had pure motives for the glory of God - 36b - “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word.” The whole ***reason*** for Elijah’s prayer was his abiding intolerance of people worshipping any other god.

Second, he laid out his request with a concern for the lost and backslidden - 36-37 - “And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. [37] Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.”

Third, he carried out all of the Lord's commands to the letter - 36b - “O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word.”

1 John 3:21-22 applies here - “Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; [22] and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him.” Full obedience places our prayers in the center of God’s will ***and*** frees the heart for a full, confident expression of faith.

2) Elijah faces Discouragement (1 Kings 19:1-14)

- a) ***Nobody lives all of life on Mount Carmel's peaks.*** There are times when great battles are won. There are other times when circumstances don't get better. There are times when they get worse. We need to remember this when James tells us Elijah was a man with an ordinary nature just like we.
- b) ***God gives Elijah a chance to honestly express his heart - even in complaint - 19:5-8 - "And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." [6] And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. [7] And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." [8] And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God."***

There's such an understanding gentleness in God's dealing with Elijah. God knows what's in Elijah's heart, but He doesn't confront him with his bad attitude immediately. He remembers our frame, the Word says. He has realistic expectations from people made from dust.

- c) ***God shows Elijah that He had other ways of working besides the great and dramatic - 19:11-12 - "And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. [12] And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper."***

Perhaps Elijah liked the idea of fire always falling down from heaven. It seemed to make short work of all his opposition. But God wanted to build faithful, ongoing ministry in the life of Elijah and the 7000 others. And solid trust must experience the ***absence*** of miracles to grow. Nothing is more challenging than to be locked in some kind of spiritual struggle ***from which God seemed to bring supernatural deliverance once before, but from which there doesn't seem to be any immediate help from Him right now.***

In fact, Elijah complains about this very thing to the angel of the Lord - 19:9-10 - " There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" [10] He said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." This is where faith takes over and we must learn to take our hands off the wheel and let God drive.

- d) ***Be where God wants you to be and do what God wants you to do - even when it may not be as exciting as a Mount Carmel revival - 19:11-12 - “And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. [12] And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper.”***

God will feed Elijah in the cave for a while, but not indefinitely. The work of God must go on in spite of our feelings and frustrations. Fresh anointing comes for fresh service. God calls Elijah out of the cave and back to the mountain. Elijah's problems weren't all solved and his questions weren't all answered. But he ***did*** find out that God works in many different ways. And he ***did*** learn that God still had a place for poor Elijah as he made himself available for His service.