

Running in the Rain *2 Kings 18:41-46*

INTRO:

We have been to the mountain top. We witnessed the great confrontation between Baal and Yahweh. Yahweh showed Himself to be the only true and living God by answering with fire from heaven.

Today we learn how this same Yahweh our true and living God is the God Who took away the rain, and Who will bring rain again to Israel. However, before this rain comes, Elijah will pray.

I. The Rain Returns (v.41-44)

II. The Prophets Runs Before Ahab (v.45-49)

I. The Rain Returns (v.41-44)

1 Kings 18:41-44 *“Then Elijah said to Ahab, ‘Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.’ So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, ‘Go up now, look toward the sea.’ So he went up and looked, and said, ‘There is nothing.’ And seven times he said, ‘Go again.’ Then it came to pass the seventh time that he said, ‘There is a cloud, as small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!’ So he said, ‘Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.’”*

A. After the crowd and Elijah slaughter the four hundred fifty prophets of Baal. Elijah turned his attention to the rest of the job Yahweh gave him to do. God said in

1 Kings 18:1,

“And it came to pass after many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, ‘Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth.’”

We know what God promised to Elijah, but look how it was fulfilled.

B. First, Ahab, who has become insignificant in this passage, because Yahweh thrust Himself into the foreground, is told to go eat and drink and strengthen himself. Elijah adds that he hears (by faith) an abundance of rain.

C. Then Elijah and his servant climb to the top of Carmel and Elijah takes a very humbling position. The text does not overtly say he prayed, but we know he did because in God’s divine commentary in **James 5:17-18,**

“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 land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.”

Elijah assumed this humble position to pray.

1. Was Elijah certain when he said to Ahab that he heard the abundance of rain? Did he really believe God would carry out the promise of **1 Kings 18:1**? If so why did he pray? Yes, Elijah was absolutely certain and yet he prayed.

2. Here we get another peak at the secret of prayer. The Lord who answers the prayers of His people delights to do His will in answer to the prayers of His people. Do you remember Daniel in **Daniel 9:2-3**?

“In the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.”

This is serious prayer! Did Daniel doubt God would keep His Word? Not one bit. His assurance did not keep him from praying earnestly for its fulfillment.

3. Let me give you one more example. The LORD declares in **Isaiah 11:9**, ***“For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.”***

Yet, in the Lord’s pattern prayer in **Matthew 6** we are commanded to pray,
(10) “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

4. In the same way, Elijah earnestly sought the LORD to ask Him to do exactly what He had promised He would do. God delights to do His will in answer to our prayers. God is not dependent upon us to pray, but He delights in our prayers when we do pray.

D. A second principle about prayer is the Lord does not always answer us in the same way. Notice how He worked with Elijah. In the contest on the mountain, no sooner had Elijah finished his prayer than Yahweh answered by sending fire from a cloudless sky and obliterated the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust, and the water. Now a little later, Elijah prays seven times for the rain until his servant sees the cloud the size of a man’s hand. Elijah knew that this “little cloud” meant God had answered and rain was on the way!

II. The Prophets Runs Before Ahab (v.45-49)

1 Kings 18:44-46 ***“Then it came to pass the seventh time that he said, ‘There is a cloud, as small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!’ So he said, ‘Go up, say***

to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.' Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel. Then the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel"

A. This is an interesting and unusual account the LORD put in His word for us to contemplate. First, Ahab is warned. Based on this first sign of God's blessing, Elijah is bold to announce the rain is coming and Ahab must hurry home or he will not be able to get there. Baal could not bring rain, but God was providing a downpour.

B. We learn by time the servant gets to Ahab, the one little cloud has become a sky full of black clouds and wind. Rain was coming.

C. For me the most curious part of this picture is **verse 46**.

"Then the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel."

Why did Yahweh move Elijah to out run Ahab's chariot all of the way to Jezreel, a distance of some seventeen miles? Many folks have many speculations, but none are obvious in the text. We can say at least here was a visual reminder of God's unique power channel through Elijah, Yahweh's prophet.

What Do We Learn From This?

1. Prayer is not twisting God's arm. Prayer is taking hold of the willingness of God to bless His people. Just because God promised something does not mean we should not pray. Think about the pattern prayer in **Matthew 6:9-11**.

"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread."

Are not all these things we should pray for something God has already promised? God does not need us to pray to work, but He allows us to pray and be involved in His Work.

2. We also learn from this that sometimes God answers almost before we pray and sometimes He wants us to keep on interceding before He answers. We must remember that like Elijah apart from His working we can do nothing.