

Effectual Fervent Prayer

1 Kings 18 - April 21, 2013

Prayer is one of the outstanding privileges of the Christian life. It is the divinely appointed means to draw near to God for fellowship, mercy and to seek our needed supply of His grace.

Through prayer we make our needs known to God. We offer our prayers to God, by faith. By God's mercy and grace He responds to our needs.

But if this access to God's throne is choked, those supplies are withheld. If our faith lays dormant, miracles do not take place.

Does not God's word say?

"Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: ² But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." - Isaiah 59:2

Is not this what happens to many in our day.

"Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you." - Jeremiah 5:25

"We have transgressed and have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned . . .⁴⁴ Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through." -Lamentation 3:42, 44

Our unconfessed sin, stubborn pride, and dormant faith have made the heavens like brass.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" - Psalm 66:18

Yet, if we abide in Christ,

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." - John 15:7

"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, **because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.**" 1 John 3:22

It is not sufficient to come boldly unto the throne of grace without first seeking forgiveness and cleansing. Are we not told in Scripture to

"Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the

profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)" Hebrews 10:22

This is illustrated in James 5 by the prayer life of Elijah.

"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." - James 5:16-18

The book of James demonstrates the grace of God in the lives of four people. They displayed their faith through their obedience.

Abraham

"O vain man, that faith without works is dead? ²¹ Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" - James 2:20b-21

Rahab

"Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? ²⁶ For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." - James 2:25-26

Job

"Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." - James 5:11

Elijah

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." - James 5:16

The powerfully energized prayer of a righteous man has much force or is able to do much.

Certainly by the grace of God the prayers of the saints have made much impact. The tragedy is that the modern church is impotent. We have rich promises, yet few have availed themselves or disqualified themselves from these divine resources.

Today we need men and women who are abiding in close intimate fellowship with God. Godly saints who petition the throne of God.

The days of Elijah were not unlike ours. In his day, all but 7000 in the northern kingdom had defected in one way or another from the faith.

The nation was outwardly successful but was crumbling inwardly. Materialism, paganism, immorality and the decay of the family, coupled with a form of faith, made them entirely devoid of God's power.

We are promised in the latter days we will see men with "a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" - 2 Timothy 3:5

Into his faithless generation, stepped Elijah.

We are told three key items about Elijah in this passage.

1. Elijah was a righteous man
2. He was a man subject to like passions as we are
3. He was fervent in prayer

If we can get a hold of these three items, it would change our lives. It would transform our families, our work place, and this place of worship. It would make amazing inroads with the lost.

Elijah was a righteous man

1. The righteous man is one who is right with God practically in his daily life. His ways please the Lord.
2. Is there any wonder that our prayer-life is cold, formal and our petitions unanswered, if we indulge ourselves in the world and do not strive against sin or put to death the lusts and desires of our flesh?
3. Notice how careful Elijah was to obey God
 - a. - 1 Kings 17:1- with Ahab
 - b. - 1 Kings 17:3, 5 in obedience
 - c. - 1 Kings 17:10 went to Zarephath
 - d. - 1 Kings 18:1, 2 in obedience
 - e. These were hard tasks. Yet, how often do we fail to do even simple tasks of faith?
 - f. Isn't it because we lack the grace of God? We fail to be filled with His Spirit, which enables us to overcome sin.

- g. Rather we are filled to the full of the things of this world. Text messages, Facebook, movies, sports, social engagements and the like. None of those things in and of themselves are wrong or sinful, yet when we spend all our time chasing them and filling our lives with these tools we leave little or no room for God.
 - h. Yet to take time each day to fill our minds first with spiritual things rather than being endlessly engaged with the world can be liberating. To be filled with the Spirit. To yield wholly to the will of the Father, brings us to where we ought to be. Standing before the throne of God.
 - i. Look at the words of Elijah. He knew where he stood. 1 Kings 17:1 - before Whom I stand
 - j. Look at 1 Kings 18:15 - before Whom I stand.
 - k. Is this where you are standing? Are you in good stead before the throne?
4. Notice the mindset of this righteous man.
- a. 1 Kings 18:31 - the altar had twelve stones. He did not see things as the nation did. He saw twelve tribes, as God's people, not ten tribes. He saw things as God did.
 - b. 1 Kings 18:33 - He had a passion to do things right. No short cuts. He put the wood in order

Lev. 1:7 And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire upon the altar, and lay the wood in order upon the fire: 8 And the priests, Aaron's sons, shall lay the parts, the head, and the fat, in order upon the wood that *is* on the fire which *is* upon the altar:

There was a prescribed order for laying out the wood. Its purpose was to make sure the fire would not go out or smolder. It was to represent the fire of fervent holy passion.
 - c. 1 Kings 18:33b, 34 - He placed twelve barrels of water on the offering. One for each tribe.
 - d. Oh that we would have the mind of Christ; that our thoughts would be gauged by the Word of God; that we would think biblically.

- e. That we would rise above this world by faith and see things as God sees things. To see our trials as God sees our trials.
- f. Did not Abraham sojourn to the Promised Land without receiving the promise?

The book of Hebrews tells us,

“These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. ¹⁵ And truly, if they had been mindful of that *country* from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. ¹⁶ But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.” - Hebrew 11:13-16

- 5. He was a man subject to like passions as we are.
 - a. He had all the human frailties we have.
 - b. He needed food, and ravens fed him.
 - c. He ran out of water and God prepared a poor widow and her son to feed him and provide water.
 - d. He got discouraged and depressed and it was the Lord Himself who counseled him.
 - e. He grew tired and hungry and it was the Angel of the Lord who fed him.
 - f. He thought he was alone and it was God who assured him he was not alone that there were 7000 others who had not bow their knee to Baal. And then God gave him a servant, Elisha who would accompany him and carry on his work of restoring the nation to God.
 - g. Yet in our weakness whom do we turn? How many complain of God and think He does not listen. How many feel God is too busy to answer our personal prayers.
 - h. Does not God say, we have not because we ask not? Then we ask, and receive not, because we ask amiss, that we may consume it upon our lusts.

Elijah was a righteous man

Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are.

Elijah was a man of fervent prayer.

1. It is interesting that the Bible says God spoke to Elijah eleven times, but there are only four times where Elijah prayed. For example, God spoke in the following passages.

- a. 1 Kings 17:2

- b. 1 Kings 17:8

- c. 1 Kings 18:1

- d. Elijah Listened to God.**

Certainly, we can safely assume that Elijah was in prayer when God spoke. But more interestingly Elijah listened to God. It was not that He poured out his petitions to God and left. He spent time meditating on God and listening to God.

2. Only one time is it recorded that God immediately answered Elijah's prayer.

1 Kings 18:36-38

God can answer us immediately. But this is not typical.

3. Two times God delayed in answering Elijah's prayer.

- a. 1 Kings 17:20-22 - He had to pray three times.

- b. 1 Kings 18:42-44 - He prayed seven times. Think of how much time it took his servant to climb to Carmel's summit to look for rain and then to report back.

- i. One more thing about this prayer. God had already said He would provide rain in 1 Kings 18:1.

Yet, even after the fire fell and the sacrifice was consumed and the people killed the prophets of Baal. Elijah went up to pray.

He had to persist in fervent prayer, even though God promised rain. Why?

- ii. In fact, why do we have to pray if God knows all our needs?
- iii. I think the answer lays in this principle.

We have many precious promises by the Lord, but we have not because we ask not.

c. Matthew 6 we are told to pray.

- i. Matthew 6:11 - we are even told to pray for our daily needs.
- ii. Even though we are told in the same passage that our heavenly Father knows all our needs.

Matthew 6:27-34

- iii. We have many precious promises by the Lord, but we have not because we ask not. Furthermore, we are more apt to see God's glory and seek his kingdom when we pray.

4. One time God did not answer Elijah's prayer.

- a. 1 Kings 19:4 - He asked to die.
- b. Yet, Elijah did not die, rather He was raptured.
- c. This reminds me of the work of the Holy Spirit in our prayer life.

Romans 8:26 - "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

5. We need men and women who pray. Righteous men and women. Yes men and women of clay feet who bring their burdens to the throne room of God and are strengthened by Him. Men and women who pray fervently.