

**1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18: 38-46 – “The Lord’s Acts of Power”, Message # 8 in the series –  
“Lessons from the Life of Elijah”, A Bible Study conducted by Pastor  
Paul Rendall on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017, for those gathered at his home.**

The lesson that we want to learn in tonight’s study is that it is only through the Lord’s stretching forth His mighty hand in power that great things are done by men to change a nation for the better. This lesson will stretch into Chapter 19 as well as we shall see there. The man whom we have been looking at is Elijah the prophet. Elijah was a great man in the sight of the Lord, and pleasing to Him for the following 3 reasons. He was, 1<sup>st</sup> of all – A man pleasing to God because he was willing to confront evil and to execute justice as God would have it done. 2<sup>nd</sup> – He was a man pleasing in the sight of the Lord, because of his earnest prayers. And 3<sup>rd</sup> – He was a man pleasing in the sight of the Lord, because bringing glory to God was his highest motive for all that he did. Let us pray as you are listening to me tonight that we might learn more from the life of Elijah about how to glorify God in the way that we think and live.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Elijah was a man pleasing to God because by the power of God he was willing to confront evil and to execute justice as God would have it done.**

(verses 38-40)

We see here how Elijah built off of the mighty acts of God that were done that day. It was God who sent fire down from heaven upon the altar that Elijah had repaired, and had laid the sacrifice on. Elijah, as a prophet, was instructed in his spirit by the Holy Spirit, as to what he should do in this situation of contest with the prophets of Baal. His was to prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, whose God was the true God. And he performed his work to the glory of God. When the people, the children of Israel, saw the fire of the Lord come down and consume the burnt sacrifice and the wood, the stones, and the dust, when they saw the fire lick up the water in the trench, they said, “The Lord, He is God!” “The Lord, He is God!” And Elijah seized the moment, of their understanding the truth; that they now knew that God was the only true and living God, and that their hearts had, at least for this time, been turned to God because they had beheld this mighty act of power; this is why he could confidently ask those faithful Israelites around him – “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 executed them there.”

What we should conclude from this, is that it was most definitely the right thing to do, in the sight of God in Old Testament times, for the men who He had placed in authority, to execute just judgment upon those who were false prophets; those who had turned the hearts of the people away from the only true God, to worship idols. That is what these prophets of Baal had been doing for some years, in that time. Turn with me over to Deuteronomy 13: 1-11, and we shall see this. “If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, ‘Let us go after other gods’ – which you have not known – and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk.

“So you shall put away the evil from your midst. If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices you, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods,’ which you have not known, neither

you nor your fathers, of the gods of the people which are all around you, near to you or far off from you, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth, you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him; but you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. And you shall stone him with stones until he dies, because he sought to entice you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. So all Israel shall hear and fear, and not again do such wickedness as this among you.”

So here we find that Israel was commanded to put to death those false prophets who would turn away and entice them away from God by their false words and teachings. They were to “put away the evil from their midst”. Elijah was very zealous in a holy way, according the law of Moses, to put these false prophets to death. The people brought them down to the brook Kishon, and Elijah slew them there. Ahab did not stand in his way or say that he was not doing the right thing by doing this. He was in no position to prevent it. The word of God in the law of Moses was very clear. But what are we to do in our day; in New Testament times, about those who are false prophets and false teachers? Well, we are certainly not to tolerate them in our churches; those men and women who try to turn us away and entice from the true worship and service of the living God. But are we to put them to death? I think not; not at least, without the people of the land enacting a law which would be the will of the President, and the Congress supported by the will of the people. We have no example or instruction for this from the apostles except in Romans chapter 13, verses 1-4, and certainly we do have an authoritative word there, on rulers being able to enact capital punishment upon those who are evil-doers, and certainly promoting false religion is a severe evil in any society.

Listen to Romans 13: 1-4 – “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities.” “For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.” “Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.” “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil.” “Do you want to be unafraid of the authority?” “Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.” “For he is God’s minister to you for good.” “But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.” So, you can see here that in New Testament times it is not by the ecclesiastical minister’s authority that men are be put to death for doing evil; being murderers of people’s souls, being false prophets or their promoting false religion. In our times, it is only by the civil magistrate’s power that this could be done, if it is done. It is not as though anything has changed as to the heinousness of the sin and crime in the sight of God. It is that God in New Testament times commands all men everywhere to repent, for He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world through the Man whom He has appointed, that is – Jesus Christ. And He has furnished proof of this by raising Him from the dead.

And what did Jesus say about the woman who was caught in adultery in John chapter 8? Does he tell the men who brought her to him to bring her before the authorities and to have her put to death? She was caught in the very act. No, He said – “He who is without sin among you, cast the first stone. And in Matthew 7: 15-19 He says this about false prophets – “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” “You will know them by their fruits.” “Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?” “Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.” “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.” “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” But Jesus does not say that they are to be taken and put to death by the civil magistrate.

What can we do, then, about false religion and false prophets? We can recognize and point out these religions and their prophets as being false, and warn people that their teachers should

not be listened to. And we should do everything that we can politically to elect people to office who will oppose false religion and false prophets; attempting to show the tremendous damage that believing in what is false does, and what rejecting the truth of the Bible by a society leads to – It leads to the Lord’s judgments coming upon that society and against those people, not mention endangering their eternal souls. For Christians to act this way is right, and it is pleasing to God. But we should also see that it will take acts of the Lord’s power in judgment and revival to change whole societies away from false doctrine.

Let’s turn over to Isaiah 2: 20. Speaking of the time which is coming in this present Church age ; the beginning of the time period of the Millennium, the triumph of the gospel among the nations, it says here – “In that day a man will cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which they made, each for himself to worship, to the moles and bats, to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the crags of the rugged rocks, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily.” In other words, by acts of the Lord’s power whole societies will voluntarily do this very thing; they will get rid of their idols, because they will come to see that Christ is the only way to God, and Christianity is the only true religion. In that day there will be many men and many magistrates who will be willing to confront evil and to execute justice, just as God would have it done.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – Elijah was a great man in the sight of the Lord, and pleasing to Him, because of his earnest prayers.** (verses 41-44)

Verse 41 says: “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.’” Now, you will notice that since the evil in Israel had been addressed publicly and since the prophets of Baal had been slain by Elijah, God’s appointed minister of justice in this case, that the way is now opened for God to show mercy to Israel in giving them rain once again. Notice that Elijah says to Ahab – “Go up and eat and drink for there is a sound of abundance of rain.” Elijah knows this because he is the prophet of the Lord; that the Lord would now bring rain. But even though he knew that the Lord was going to bring rain, even so, he does not neglect the appointed means of the rain being brought, humanly speaking. The appointed means was prayer.

Turn with me over to James chapter 5, verses 16-18 – “Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” “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.” Now, you will notice that there is nothing here in these verses, from James’ inspired words, telling us that Elijah was an extraordinary prophet and therefore we should not follow him in his example of prayer. Instead he says the very opposite. He states that Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly. And since he had a nature like ours, we should use him as an example to ourselves of earnest, effective, and fervent prayer.

So what did Elijah do in our text? In verse 42, Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, and he bowed down on the ground and put his face between his knees. And after a little prayer he told his servant – “Go up now and look toward the sea.” “So he went up and looked, and he said, ‘There is nothing.’” We should learn from this that when we first set out to pray, we should not be discouraged if we do not see the result that we are looking for immediately. It says: “And seven times he said, ‘Go again.’” And 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!" We should learn from this to continue in prayer, we should continue seeking, and when we see the smallest indication of the answer coming, we should conclude that God is beginning the work for which we are longing for. Seven is the number of completion in the Bible. Keep on praying until you see the evidence that your prayers will be answered favorably. And have the faith to believe that you will receive the whole answer to your prayer; it is coming. In Elijah's case, he knew that the Lord was going to answer his prayers by giving a heavy rain, and so he had his servant go say to Ahab in verse 44b – "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.'" Whenever we are tempted to doubt in relation to the legitimate prayers that we offer up to God, let us remember the words of James 1: 5 and 6 – "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." "But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind." Be not unbelieving when you pray, but believe that God can, and He will, give exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. (Ephesians 3: 20)

**And 3<sup>rd</sup> – Elijah was a man pleasing in the sight of the Lord, because, bringing glory to God was his highest motive for all that he did.**

Verse 45 – "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." In the New American Standard Translation it says: "Then the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel." This too, was one of the Lord's acts of power. In verse 41 Elijah had said to Ahab – "Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain." He knew that Ahab was more interested in eating and drinking than in whether the judgment would be lifted from Israel. But he himself was more concerned with the glory of God than anything else. And God rewarded him for this. He gave him a more than ordinary strength for a man of his age, and he was enabled by God's strengthening him, to outrun Ahab's chariot to Jezreel. Let us remember in closing the importance of doing all that we are doing to the glory of God. For as it says in Romans 14: 17 – "The Kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Surely Elijah had great joy in the Lord that day, and he thought that things were really going to change in Israel. But he did not know the depth of the desperate wickedness of Ahab and Jezebel's hearts. He thought that God's having shown them His acts of power that they would now believe in the true God of Israel, but we shall see that this was not to be the case, and Elijah would have to learn more important lessons; of God's wisdom in His way of doing things, and His providential ordering of things for His own glory and for the good of His people.

**Joseph Benson says on verse 46 of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 18:** "God gave Elijah more than natural strength, whereby he was enabled to outrun Ahab's chariot for so many miles together. And he girded up his loins – That his garments, which were long and loose, like those in use in that country, might not hinder him. And ran before Ahab – To show how ready he was to honour and serve the king; that by this humble and self-denying carriage, it might appear, what he had done was not from envy or passion, but only from a just zeal for God's glory; that by his presence with the king and his courtiers, he might animate and oblige them to proceed in the reformation of religion; and, to demonstrate, that he was neither ashamed of, nor afraid for what he had done, but durst venture himself in the midst of his enemies. But surely, if Ahab had paid the respect to Elijah that he deserved, he would have taken him into his chariot, as the eunuch did Philip, that he might honour him before the elders of Israel, and confer with him further about the reformation of the kingdom: but his pride and ambition, and other corrupt dispositions, got the better of his conviction; and he was glad to get quit of him, as Felix of Paul, when he dismissed him, and adjourned his conference with him to a more convenient season.

