

The Prayer of Faith

- Have you ever prayed for something and it just never seemed to get answered? (...)
- Did it challenge your faith? (...)
- On the other hand, have you ever prayed for something and it was answered? (...)
- Did it encourage your faith? (...)
- Can anyone share *how* it encouraged your faith? (...)

-Today, we are going to talk about how a prayer of faith from the Bible can encourage us in our own prayer life and walk of faith.

-It is from the book of I Kings and is about a prophet. Can anyone tell me what is a prophet? (From scripture, it was a man or woman who was called by God to speak for Him and be His messenger. They were also prayer warriors, prayer was their principal means of communication with God *and lay at the heart of their personal relationship with God.*)

-Here lies a question for all of us to ask ourselves, as the prophets, does prayer lay at the very heart of our own personal relationship with God? (...)

-Even if it does lay at the very heart of our own personal relationship with Him, can it be a struggle sometimes? (...)

-Here is an encouraging side note, if you know Jesus as your personal Savior, He put inside of you a part of Him that helps you pray when it can be a struggle! Do you know Who that is? (The Holy Spirit, John 14:16,17 says “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.”)

-So, whenever we pray, we have direct access to God because His Holy Spirit is in each of us, praying with us, interceding for us to our Heavenly Father.

-Now, let's get back to a specific prophet in I Kings 18 that shows us this first hand how to pray in faith even when it can be hard. Does anyone remember whom the prophet Elijah was? (A great prophet of Israel during the time of the rule of wicked King Ahab and Queen Jezebel.)

-Do you think Elijah was above making mistakes or doing things wrong since he was a prophet? (...)

-Was he still a human with weaknesses even though he was called by God to be a prophet? (Yes.)

-Knowing this, does that mean that God only calls “perfect” humans to have a relationship with Him and speak with Him? (No. He wants us where we are, just with a willing heart to do what He asks of us.)

-Do you think the prophet Elijah was ever afraid? (...)

-If you remember his story, can you tell us of a time when he was afraid, hint: it has something to do with Jezebel and what Elijah did to her prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel? (In I Kings 19, the land of Israel was in a severe famine because it had not

rained for a very long time due to the murdering of God's prophets by the wicked Queen Jezebel. Elijah summoned wicked King Ahab to meet him with all of her 450 prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel and had two alters erected with a bull on each one. One was for Baal and the other was for the One true God, the God of Israel. The prophets of Baal called on their god all day long and did everything they could to get the attention of this non-existing god, even cutting themselves until the blood poured out, all to no avail and no answer. Then the people of Israel watched Elijah call on the One true God, asking Him to prove His power and existence by devouring both alters, even after they soaked the one Elijah erected for God three times with water. God immediately answered and showed Himself to all those watching by pouring down fire and burned up both alters and soaking up all the water. Then Elijah ordered those who were still faithful to God to kill all of the prophets of Baal, for these were the very ones misleading the children of Israel into idol worship. Then God allowed the rain to finally come after several years of drought, but also came the fury of Queen Jezebel because Elijah had all her Baal prophets killed. She sent a message that she was out to kill him within 24 hours. Elijah became afraid and ran for his life.)

-Would you think, after seeing all that God did on Mt. Carmel, Elijah would have been afraid and run for his life? (...)

-Before we judge, let us ask ourselves a similar question. Have we not seen God do wonders throughout our own lives and the lives of others, wonders of protection, provision and salvation and yet when tough times comes, we fall back in fear of the circumstances we face? (...)

-We too tend to forget all the great things He has done and the great things He can still do for us.

-Just like Elijah, we all go through times of fear and even loneliness, but there can be victory. Let's follow his story and see what we can learn from this.

-He went on a day's journey into the desert. He came to a tree and sat under it and prayed that he might die. He said, "Lord, I have had enough, take my life. I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under a tree and fell asleep.

-Has there ever been a time in your own life when you felt this way, totally exhausted with life? (If a prophet of God can feel this way, I'm sure many of us have felt this way too!)

-But, this isn't the end of his story, just like it isn't the end of our own story.

-In God's Word, in I Kings 19, it tells us that God sent an angel to minister to Elijah. Even when he complained and wanted to give up, just like we all would have felt, He still cried out to God (crying out to God is a form of praying), and God answered Him and ministered to His soul. He sent His angel to feed him and refresh his soul.

-At times like these, when we want to cry out and give up, God gives us something that can feed and refresh our own souls. Does anyone know what that is? (His Word, the Bible and His Holy Spirit.)

-But just like Elijah, we have to cry out to Him and then reach out to Him and His words of comfort and promises from the Bible. Resting in the power and presence of His Holy Spirit in our lives!

-But, you ask, where is this prayer of great faith in Elijah that you talked about in the beginning?

-I thought I should first set the stage and give you the whole story, from the beginning to the end, to remind us all that great faith is exhibited in our weakness as well as our strengths.

-Just like Elijah, we have weak moments but we also have powerful moments of faith as well. In the beginning of this story, Israel was worshipping the false god Baal and provoked God to anger and God told Elijah to pray for no rain. (I Kings 16)

-Let's read our first verse together on our Verse Sheet to see what happened:

(James 5:17 "Elijah was a *man just like us*. He prayed *earnestly* that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.")

-What does the first sentence in this verse tell us? (That this great man of God was just like us! Just like us, he had weak moments of faith and also powerful moments of faith!)

-It also tells us how he prayed. How was it? (Earnestly!)

-What does earnestly mean to you? (To pray intently, pouring our heart out before the Lord. Not giving up!)

-And what did God do? (Withheld the rain for 3 ½ yrs.)

-But there is something here we need to remember, Elijah was praying in God's will, God wanted him to pray that it would not rain. And because he was in tune with the Father's heart he was able to pray in God's will and it was answered.

-Now, the question for all of us to ask ourselves, are we praying in our own will or our Heavenly Father's? Think about this for a moment.

-Let's continue. After 3 ½ years it needed to rain to fulfill God's prophecy that He would send rain, so let's read verse #2 together on our Verse Sheet: (I Kings 18:42 "Elijah climbed to the top of Mount Carmel and bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.")

-Why do you think he bent down to the ground? (He humbled himself before the Father.)

-Do we humble ourselves when we approach the Father? (...)

-Why do you think he put his face between his knees? (He was shutting out all the sights and sounds around him. He put himself in a position to neither see nor hear what was happening around him. Not focusing on the circumstances but on the King of the Universe who can change the circumstances!)

-How often are we focused on the circumstances instead of the King of the Universe Who can change them? (...)

-We too have the privilege of humbling ourselves before the King of the Universe Who can change our circumstances, but we must drown out the noise around us that tells us He can't or won't and instead focus on the One Who can!

-Let's read our next verse together, #3: (I Kings 18:43 "Go and look toward the sea," he told his servant. And he went up and looked. "There is nothing there," he said. Seven times Elijah said, "Go back.")

-What would most of us say after 4, 5 or 6 times of seeing no change? (...)

-Would you give up and stop praying? (...)

-Do you do this now when you may have prayed for a loved one or a friend for a long time and you don't see an answer? (...)

-Or maybe for a child, a grandchild, a parent or sibling who may not know Jesus and you don't see a spark of interest yet? (...)

-We may not *see* our prayers answered in our lifetime but we know that God hears our prayers and they do make a difference! Even though we may not see it, it doesn't mean His is not working out His will in that person or circumstance!

-There is a letter that a grandfather wrote on the day that his grandson was born. It told of how happy he was that this baby boy was born and that he was praying that this grandson would love and serve Jesus. This grandson never met his grandfather. His grandfather died when he was a small baby but the difference those prayers made in that child's life was eternal. He grew up to know the Heavenly Father and raised a godly family of His own. That grandchild has now gone to be with the Lord and his grandfather as well due to a terminal illness, but he left behind a godly seed of his own. You may not see the answer to your prayers on this side of eternity but you will on that side if you continue in prayer and faith that God is working!

-Let's continue with the rest of this story. Let's read verse #4 together: (I Kings 18:44 "The seventh time the servant reported, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea. So Elijah said, 'Go and tell Ahab, '*Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.*'")

-How did the servant describe the cloud? (As small as a man's hand.)

-Imagine the servant lifting his hand to the sky to measure the size of the cloud. He probably thought it was nothing, but what did Elijah say? ("Ahab, Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.")

-What did Elijah believe was coming? (Torrents of rain.)

-Elijah believed that this small cloud was going to be something huge. Just as we should believe that the small clouds of things we see or changes we see will one day be greater things than what we have even prayed, for God is answering in His time and in His will.

-What a perfect description – for a man’s hand had been raised in prayer before the rain came! Open your heart and hands and pour out your requests to the One Who truly loves you unconditionally.

-Let’s read our last verse together, #6: (I Kings 18:45 “Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, and the wind rose, and a heavy rain started falling...”)

-According to this verse, what did God do? (He opened the floodgates of heaven!)

-Just as God opened the floodgates of heaven when Elijah prayed in His will, He also will open the floodgates for us if we never give up on our praying!

-Even if you don’t see it now, don’t stop, you will see it one day just as that grandfather saw it one day when his grandson approached him in Heaven!

-Never give up because God never gives up on us!

The Prayer Of Faith Verse Sheet

- 1. James 5:17** “Elijah was a *man just like us*. He prayed *earnestly* that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.”
- 2. I Kings 18:42** “Elijah climbed to the top of Mount Carmel and bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.”
- 3. I Kings 18:43** “Go and look toward the sea,” he told his servant. And he went up and looked. “There is nothing there,” he said. Seven times Elijah said, “Go back.”
- 4. I Kings 18:44** “The seventh time the servant reported, “A cloud as small as a man’s hand is rising from the sea.” So Elijah said, “Go and tell Ahab, ‘Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.’”
- 5. I Kings 18:45** “Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, and the wind rose, and a heavy rain started falling...”