

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 80 Real Prayer

Reading: 1 Kings 18. 36-46; James 5. 16-18

36 And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word.

37 Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again.

38 Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God.

40 And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

41 And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain.

42 So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees,

43 And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.

44 And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.

45 And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.

46 And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

16 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.

Address

People talk about Elijah as a *prayer warrior*, or a *mighty man in prayer*, and certainly he had some of the most amazing answers to prayer that anyone has known. You think of the little boy raised to life; think of the withholding of rain for over three years; think of rain coming again; think of the fire from heaven on Mount Carmel. So we might go on. A mighty man in prayer, a prayer warrior, and so on.

But the Word of God says he was a man of “like passions as we are.” So in himself he never felt to be a mighty man in prayer or a prayer warrior, or anything like that. He felt his weakness. He had the same problems in praying that we do. He had the temptations of Satan. He knew what a hard heart was. He knew what unbelief was. So he was not some kind of amazing man; he was a man of “like passions as we are.”

We do not make a man an offender for a word, but I have thought a lot about it for many, many years. It is an expression – you have it in our hymnbook in a few places, you have it in the pulpit continually: *the power of prayer*, and we know what people mean. But I have thought about this for many years. Prevailing prayer is our utter, absolute weakness laying hold of the divine, almighty power of God. So we are not offended when people speak of “the power of prayer,” but there is no power in the prayer itself. It is that weakness which lays hold on omnipotence.

“Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly.” They say the real meaning of it is, *he prayed in his prayer*. We realise so often that we do not pray in our prayers. Wasn’t it M’Cheyne who used to complain, “O my prayerless prayers!” We think of the little children’s hymn:

“I often say my prayers,
But do I ever pray?”

Elijah “prayed earnestly.” He prayed in his prayer. Now beloved friends, I feel the last two or three prayer meetings our brethren have really prayed in their prayers. There are some times, it can be a prayer meeting and there does not seem to be much prayer in the prayers. Old Mr. Field at Staplehurst said when he was young he had to go and live with one of his older brothers in London. This was in the late 1800s. He attended West Street Chapel, Croydon. Francis Covell had died, but they had some of the best ministers in the country,

and the ministers usually stayed and presided at the prayer meeting on the Monday. They had George Prince, and said, “Will you stay for the prayer meeting?” He said, “Is it going to be a prayer meeting?” They said, “What do you mean?” He said, “Usually when I go, it is a *prating* meeting.” Old Mr. Field said he called on one or two, and when he came to the third one he said, “The prayer meeting has just begun.” Well, we do not want to emulate people in that, but I felt in the last two weeks you prayed earnestly like Elijah and you prayed in your prayers.

When we read this evening, Elijah did something else. He waited for the answer, and looked for the answer, and was disappointed when he did not get the answer. He still continued in prayer till he got the answer, and he did get the answer. May we be helped to wait and to watch and to expect answers. This evening may you pray in your prayers. May you pray earnestly, though you feel a man of like passions, with all your faults and failures. It is on mercy’s ground, and we have a better plea than Elijah ever knew, through the merit and finished work of our Lord Jesus, once crucified, now exalted – looking to Him, depending on Him, hoping in Him.

May I say this this evening – I have often said it at prayer meetings – do pray particularly for the things which rest on your spirit, which burden you, because usually that is the most real prayer. I realise there is an order, and the things we must say, and we would be sad if we did not say them, and people would wonder what was the matter if we left them out. But O those things, if we have come to the house of God, and they rest upon our spirit because the Lord has laid them there! And do not forget,

“Prayer indited by the Lord,
The Lord will surely hear.”

*This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Monday, 29th June, 2015*

