

God's Superhero - Elijah

Man of Vision

James 5:17

Introduction

Elijah, according to our text today, was a rather ordinary individual who learned the secret of trusting God and was willing to put his faith into action.

James 5:17-18 records that, "Elijah 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. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."

James' point is that ordinary believers can do extraordinary things when they exercise their faith in a supernatural God. Elijah wasn't perfect! How many of you know no saint is! He had his own struggles of weakness and discouragement. He regularly had to do battle with his mental attitude and his focus. And He constantly was wrestling with the sinful desires and temptations of the flesh - because while the Spirit of God enters our spirit when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior - the mind continues to struggle and must be renewed daily with the washing of God's Word - and sadly our struggle with the flesh will be a constant source of battle until we are given a new glorified body at the rapture or resurrection.

Most of us tend to think of the heroes of the Bible as special people who had something we don't have. We think of them as almost god-like, with special powers we don't have - probably because, like the seven thousand believers who were hiding in caves, we just won't put ourselves at risk like Elijah did. We believe - but at a safe distance! You don't want to be too fanatical or people like Jezebel will put out a wanted poster on you! We read about it in 1 Kings 19 (Read)

Elijah was a man of passion! He may not have been perfect but he wasn't apathetic!

I. People of Passion

People of passion are in touch with their feelings and the people and circumstances around them! People of passion are often accused of allowing their heart to rule their head (something meant to be disparaging when in actuality it can be a true sign of faith). If you're a person of passion it's great when things are going well. You're inspired and you can be the one

who inspires others to believe and have faith. But it can be a real drain if things are falling apart! There's nothing more thrilling than being around someone who's depressed and down in the dumps and no matter what you say or do they just won't pull out of it.

Elijah knew all about this roller coaster of emotion. All you have to do is compare 1 Kings Chapters 17 and 18 with Chapter 19. They deal with the same man, but the difference is like day and night. In chapters 17 and 18, we see a strong Elijah relying on God's Word and prayer. But in chapter 19, we see a weak Elijah crashing because his personal fears have got the best of him. In chapters 17 and 18, we see a productive Elijah ministering to others and vindicating the name of the Lord. But in chapter 19, we see panicked Elijah giving up and running away not even able to help himself. In chapters 17 and 18, we see a victorious and bold Elijah confident in the face of overwhelming odds, facing 450 prophets of Baal singlehandedly. But in chapter 19, we find a depressed Elijah scared of Jezebel, afraid for his life, and wishing he was dead. In chapters 17 and 18, we see a bold and confident Elijah aware of God's presence, convinced of God's superiority, even daring for the Lord. But in chapter 19, we find paralyzed and ineffective Elijah looking at people and circumstances instead of God.

Instead of focusing on God's solution, Elijah becomes completely absorbed in his own problems. He fails to pray and forgets to stand on the promises of God. In fact, not once in chapter 19 do we see Elijah confident in his relationship with God. He acts as though what Jezebel claims to do is greater than God's claim. But thankfully, God doesn't give up on Elijah!

Whenever we become pre-occupied with our own problems rather than with the Lord's call and mission for our life we're in serious trouble. Instead of magnifying the person and power of God, focusing on the problem diminishes the person and power of God in our eyes, and magnifies the problem. When we allow our problems to become gigantic we diminish and distort the power and presence of God.

No matter how gifted or used of the Lord, we are still human! Believers are not perfect - nor will we ever be perfect in this life! We are not saints who have successfully reached the mountain top of spiritual success to sit elevated for others to idolize while they struggle along trying to learn our secret of success. Unfortunately, many believers look at their pastors and church leaders as perfect saints. But I can tell you first hand, that is completely unrealistic. We all have personal weaknesses and struggles even though we're committed Christians.

Elijah was a dynamic man of God, but he was human and struggled with the same kind of issues we do today! But God wouldn't let those things get the best of Elijah! And God won't let the issues and problems you're dealing with get the best of you either when you wake up and reconnect with Him! Elijah may have been a man subject to like passions as we are, but he was also a man of action!

II. People of Action

In 1 Kings chapter 18 verses 19-20 Elijah tells Ahab, "Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table. So Ahab sent a message among all the sons of Israel, and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel.

One of the greatest needs in our society today is for God's people to step forward for God and His truth. Those who are willing to do that are probably in the minority. While God always has His people many times they are only a remnant or a minority. Even in Elijah's day, there was a remnant. Seven thousand had not bowed the knee to Baal. But to Elijah it seemed as though he was the only one left because he was the only one speaking out. All the other prophets had either been murdered or reduced to ineffectiveness and were hiding in caves.

Elijah stood alone on Mount Carmel to confront the hundreds who stood in support of the idolatrous cults of Baal and Asherah. Taking a stand for truth and facing a majority who stand against the truth often leaves you feeling a little lonely. But Elijah believed he was in the majority because standing with him was the Almighty God and the armies of angelic hosts.

Elijah must have passed this kind of faith on to his successor, Elisha." In 2 Kings Chapter 6, when he was surrounded by the Syrian armies and his servant was afraid, Elisha prayed for his servant, "O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Elisha's servant was afraid because he could see only the large number of enemy that surrounded them. But Elisha prayed that his servant might have eyes to see the myriad of God's host surrounding them.

People of action cause others to see a plan of action that takes fear out of the equation and prepares them to see success! Elijah in essence says to the people, "Look, I stand here alone against four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. Unless the Lord is who I claim He is, what, humanly speaking, can one man do against so many?" When we stand up in witness to God

Almighty, we stand in the sovereign strength and might of the one true God of the universe who surrounds us with His hosts.

This is a day in which the body of Christ needs another Elijah. I believe God is calling out to those who will stand in the gap and be counted for the Lord. There are huge gaps in the walls of our nation and society. There are breaches in the walls of our biblical values and our Christian heritage. There are places where the enemy has been sweeping through to destroy and corrupt the effectiveness of the gospel. Ezekiel wrote, "And I searched for a man among them who should build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one" (Ezek. 22:30).

Are you willing to face the call and take a stand for the Lord? Any one of us can do it if we ask the Lord to give us eyes to see His truth and justice prevail. But before we are ready to do this something else needs to happen in our lives.

Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word. (1 Kgs. 18:21) This is one of the key issues. There can be no instability of indecision and double-mindedness if we hope to prevail for the Lord. It's so easy to straddle the fence. But indecision is inconsistent with faith in God. It leads to instability in every part of your life. Double-mindedness can quickly become your downfall.

King Ahab and the people were probably expecting Elijah to pray for rain to end the drought. But neither Ahab nor the people were ready for the blessing of rain. The truth is they were under divine judgment for neglecting God's Word and for their idolatry (which they refused to acknowledge). There were some serious issues in their lives that had to be faced before God could bless them with rain. So many today are the same way! They want God's blessings without facing their responsibilities. We want a relationship with God without the need for deep down repentance. We want to flirt and sin with the idols of the world and then still come and worship God.

There are a lot of believers today departing from the message of the Bible. The feel good gospel appeals to our desire for blessing without calling attention to our real need for deliverance and healing and salvation for our souls. But don't just limp along in your Christian life!

Elijah demanded a definite decision. A decision that required action. We cannot walk the fence with the Lord for very before we have to make a decision. Following God demands your full commitment. Anything less is only leads to consequences that will affect every aspect of your life. Indecision will leave you spiritually and morally lame and unstable in all your ways. But we need to take the right action! Some people cry, "Do something...do anything!" That's called reaction! God calls us to do the right thing! To act not react! And right action comes as a result of being on the same page with God. That comes through communication and conversation with God. What we call prayer!

III. People of Prayer

The national decay we have witnessed in our nation in recent years is epidemic. We have seen our nation backslide into secular humanism and fall into gross immorality. While there are still thousands of believers in our nation and "in God we trust" is still on our coins, our own President is now telling the world we are no longer a Christian nation and the sad reality is he may be right.

Americans today are worshipping at the altar of a modern Baal with a strange mixture of idols consisting of materialism, secularism, ecumenicalism, and New Age mysticism. For many people even if they believe in God, He is not a real issue in their lives. A large portion of the population no longer believes there are any absolutes. And recent surveys show this is true even among many who profess to be Christians. There are a growing number of people in our culture who confess some kind of faith in God, but live as practical atheists.

What is desperately needed in our society today are some real people of prayer. People like Elijah who can have an Elijah-like impact on this society. Elijah was used to turn the hearts of the people back to the Lord (18:37)!

But what was so special about this man? James reminds us that he was a man of like passions as us, but then James goes on to show that the thing that made him effective in his day of spiritual and moral decay was his prayer life.

In chapter 18, verses 30-46, we get a glimpse of Elijah as a man of prayer.

In those verses we see:

1. Elijah's preparation for prayer in verses 30-35;

2. His public prayer and its results--fire from heaven, hearts returned to the Lord, and the Baal prophets removed in verses 36-40; and
3. His private prayer and its results: rain from heaven and special strength in verses 41-46.

Do you want a pattern for your prayer life? Do you want to effectively change your life and increase the effectiveness of your prayer life and your impact? Then, absorb the details of this passage in 1 Kings 18 and claim the promise of James 5.

There are several things you can do if you want an effective prayer life:

1. Restore the altar of your heart (vs. 30b-32)
2. Be prepared to make a sacrifice (vss. 33-35)
3. Have a regular time and place of prayer (vss. 36a)
4. Honor the greatness and majesty of God (vs. 36b)
5. Be specific about the content of your prayer (vss. 36c-37)
6. Get to the point and don't ramble.
7. Expect Results from your Prayer (vss. 38-40)

God uses prayer to promote spiritual growth in us and build our faith and keep us focused on Him. If Satan can keep you off your knees your spiritual life will just become one busy activity of ineffectiveness. Elijah may have been a man subject to like passions as we are, but he prayed earnestly! And that's the difference! We cannot escape the important dimension of prayer! It is an absolute necessity if you expect to be spiritually successful as a believer.

Conclusion

James says that we all have something in common with Elijah – human nature. 1 Corinthians 10:13, “there is no temptation taken you but such as is common to man.” Our temptations, our trials, our frustrations and failures are common to us all. We are not alone no matter what we are facing. God is faithful to help us handle the temptation, and God is gracious to pick us up when we fall.

The failures and weaknesses of the great heroes of the faith should never be taken as shields for us to hide behind so we can excuse our own failures in continued irresponsibility. God holds each of us responsible for what He has given us. The important thing is to maintain your focus and develop an attitude of trust in the Lord. Keep your vision and focus upon Christ!

References:

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