

Guest Preacher - Rev. RJ Campbell

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Preacher: Rev. RJ Campbell

[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's help and blessing, let us turn back to the portion of scripture that we read together, 1st book of Kings, chapter 17, and we'll read verse 1.

Now Elijah, the Tishbite of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years except by my word.

Now today, both in the morning and evening, we are going to study Elijah. And as we begin our study on Elijah, we are aware that there is not too much to say which has not already been said.

And many books have been written and many sermons have been preached and many lectures given on the person and on the work of Elijah.

Therefore, not much of what I will say during your study will be original. It will be the bringing together of what I have gleaned over the years. There are two books that I would recommend.

[1 : 16] One is by A.W. Pink, simply entitled Elijah. The other book is by Leon J. Wood, entitled Elijah, the Prophet of God.

So today I would like us to focus on Elijah at the palace. Elijah is unique in a number of ways.

For in all history, only two men were permitted to bypass death. That was Enoch and Elijah. And Elijah was also one of the men privileged to appear with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration and to have a conversation and to have a conversation with Jesus regarding the death that he was going to accomplish outside Jerusalem.

And Malachi, the prophet, predicted that Elijah would return before the great and terrible day of the Lord. Elijah appears quite suddenly upon the pages of Scripture.

We are told nothing about his parents or about his education or general background. All that we are told is that he was at the Tishbite of Tishbe in Gilead.

[2 : 38] Or as the A.V. reads, Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead. His name that was given to him by his parents, Elijah, it means my God is Jehovah, from which we can assume that he must have come from a God-fearing family.

Tishbite probably refers to the birthplace. And we find that in 2 Kings chapter 1, he is described for us as a man who wore a garment of hair with a belt of leather about his waist.

However, in the New Testament and in the book of James, we are told something about Elijah, which was true of him before he is introduced to us here in 1 Kings chapter 17.

In James chapter 5 and verse 17, we read, Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it didn't rain on the earth.

Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. So there it brings Elijah before us as a praying man.

[4 : 04] It brings before us the fact that Elijah was a praying man, and we'll be focusing and laying emphasis on that this morning.

James informs us that he prayed fervently or earnestly, which could be translated with prayer, he prayed, or praying, he prayed.

Before Elijah appeared, before the king, he had been in the secret place or in the closet on his knees, speaking to God.

James tells us that he had been in this duty for six months before he made his way to King Ahab, which is confirmed to us by Jesus.

For in the Gospel of Luke chapter 4, we read, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land.

[5 : 04] So that when Elijah appeared before King Ahab in Israel, the land had already severed six months of drought and famine, and during that time, Elijah was praying.

Although his actual prayers are not recorded for us, we know that he prayed in accordance with the word of God.

In Deuteronomy chapter 11, we read, Take care, lest your heart be deceived. And you turn aside and say to other gods and worship them.

Then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land will yield no fruit.

And you will perish quickly of the good land that the Lord is giving you. The Lord in his word had warned them that he would judge them if they turned aside to serve other gods.

[6 : 13] This tells us that Elijah, in praying in accordance with the word of God, that he was a student of the word of God. He knew the books of Moses.

He knew the promises and the judgment of God. It is always a valuable thing for us to be students of the Bible. It is always valuable for us and important for us to let the word of God guide our prayer life.

But it is important for us to note at this point that it was not the goodness and merits of Elijah that gave efficacy to his prayer, but the grace and the power of God.

Elijah, he was a righteous, faithful, and a praying person. But he lived in an evil day when Ahab was king over Israel.

As you may recall, the kingdom of Israel became divided after the death of King Solomon. There was the northern kingdom, which was made up of ten tribes of Israel, and there was the southern kingdom made up of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

[7 : 34] The northern kingdom was known as Israel, and the southern kingdom was known as Judah. The first king that reigned over Israel was a man named Jeroboam.

And he set up idols for the people to worship because he was afraid if he allowed the people to return to Judah, to return to Jerusalem, to return to the temple in Jerusalem to worship, that eventually they would rise up against him.

So he made two calves of gold and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put thee in Dan. And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not the sons of Levi.

You can read all about that in 1 Kings chapter 12. Now the six kings that followed Jeroboam were evil kings in the sight of God.

[8 : 51] There was Nabhan. He was an evildoer. There was Bashé, who was a murderer. Eli was a drunkard. Simri murdered Eli.

And Omri was even worse than all of them. For we read in 1 Kings chapter 16, the previous chapter, the chapter that we have before us today, we read there that Omri did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did more evil than all who were before him.

For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and in the sins that he made Israel to sin, provoking the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols.

However, if things were bad, things were to get much worse. For we read here that Ahab, the son of Omri, began to reign over Israel, and Ahab, the son of Omri, reigned over Israel and Samaria 22 years.

And Ahab, the son of Omri, did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him. You see, to Ahab, sin was very trivial.

[10 : 06] He did not, for a moment, give any thought to the consequences of his actions. As if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat.

And he married a wicked woman who took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Abel, king of the Sidonians. The marriage, of course, was a political move to establish an alliance between Israel and Sidon.

Not every alliance is a good thing, for the Sidonians were worshippers of false gods. They were Baal worshippers. And what we know is that soon Ahab, the king of Israel himself, became a Baal worshipper.

He went and served Baal and worshipped him. He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. And Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings that were before him.

Not only is the evil of Ahab brought before us, but evil also penetrated the people that belonged to his kingdom. For chapter 16 ends with the rebuilding of the city of Jericho, which brought the curse upon its builder in accordance with the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua.

[11 : 42] And we can read that in Joshua chapter 6. Now Ahab has many lessons to teach us. But this morning, what we want to focus upon is just to have a little knowledge of the background in which we find Elijah.

Elijah. He is a praying man living in an evil day when there was no regard to the claims of God, when people served other gods, in a day when sin was looked upon as a trivial thing, when God was not relevant.

And really, as we think of these things, do they not sound very familiar to us? Elijah, the praying man, was zealous for the glory and the honour of God.

He knew that the evil of his own day was idolatry. And he knew from the word of God exactly what kind of punishment to expect, because we've already read that from the book of Deuteronomy, where God warned the people of what would happen if they turned away from serving and worshipping God to false gods, to idolatry.

As A.W. Pink says, when Elijah prayed, he was very zealous for the Lord God of hosts, and longed to see his great name vindicated, and his backslidden people restored.

[13 : 21] Elijah puts the glory and honour of God before everything else, even before his own natural feelings. Elijah knew that the famine, which had already begun in Israel for six months, was the beginning of God's voice to the people.

God's voice to the people to repent and to turn back to him. Elijah was not only a praying man, but an observant and a sensitive man.

And he knew that this physical drought and famine was an expression of a spiritual drought and famine that was in Israel.

There are those who would judge Elijah as being a man who was impervious towards human suffering, or a man who took delight in witnessing the misery of his neighbours.

However, the opposite is true. It was the glory of God and his love for the people of Israel that motivated his prayer life.

[14 : 36] And these should be our motivations at all times for prayer. The glory of God and the good of our family, the good of our neighbours, the good of our people should always be our motivations for prayer.

We are not to be ignorant when we pray for the glory of God and the good of our family, communities, and so on. We must remember that it could mean sufferings and hardships.

sometimes it is by such means and ways that God acts so that people's hearts would turn back in repentance to him. Would any of us dare to pray such a prayer today?

you may say, but Elijah was so different. He was a prophet and became a miracle worker and so on.

It was easy for him. But James says, Elijah was a man with a nature like ours. Although Elijah was a righteous and a faithful servant of the Lord, yet he certainly was not yet made perfect.

[15 : 53] Elijah struggled with the same struggles that I and you have. He struggled with the same struggles that I and you have today. He struggled with the same passions that I and you have to struggle with.

He knew that it was going to bring hardship and difficulties and death. And yet he prayed. He prayed in accordance to the word of God.

He prayed in accordance with the warning that God had given Israel that if they would turn away from him and worship idols, that he would not send rain upon the earth, that he would withhold rain from the earth.

Now, Elijah did not find it easy to pray such a prayer, but the glory of God and the honour of God was foremost in his mind.

It wasn't easy for him because Elijah was a man with a nature like ours. As we go on to read about his life, we see at times he so indulged his fears that he ran away.

[17 : 07] He was prone to depression and even despair of life. He petitioned God to take his life away. he felt at times his weakness.

Sometimes he felt lonely. Sometimes he felt intensely the evils of his own day. Elijah was a person just like me and you.

And since we live in a day that resembles the days of Elijah as we have already noted, wherein there is little regard to the claims of God.

when people serve other gods, when sin is looked upon as a trivial thing, and wherein God is not relevant in our day and age, our prayers are as necessary as ever, and they can be as effective as the prayers of Elijah.

Let us all pray for the glory and honour of God. Let us pray in accordance with the word of God. let us pray out of true love for the good of our communities and of our people.

[18 : 20] It does not mean that we have to go as Elijah was directed to the palace and publicly stand before the king, but let us come into our closets with our words and let us kneel down before the king of kings.

Elijah was directed to the king's palace. We can just imagine the scene in Ahab's court as Elijah is brought before the king.

As we have already noted, he was very crude of dress and likely of speech as he approaches the king and gives his message.

And what was his message? He said, as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years except by my word.

The Baal worshipper confronted by the servant of the living God. Elijah began his address to the king by declaring what was wrong in the land of Israel.

[19 : 35] Israel. He pointed out to him who was truly the God of Israel, the Lord, the God of Israel, or Jehovah, the God of Israel.

His own name would be a witness to the king, my God is Jehovah, as he entered Ahab's court and he was introduced, this is Elijah. Ahab would immediately know what that name meant, that it meant my God is Jehovah.

So his very name was a witness to Ahab. He was pointing out to the king that he was wrong in worshipping and introducing Baal worship into his kingdom.

He says, as the Lord, the God of Israel lives, the God of Israel, he is the true living God. So unlike the gods that Ahab and Israel worshipped.

They are not living gods. There we sang in Psalm 115, where we read, Our God is in the heavens, he does all that he pleases.

[20 : 47] Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths but do not speak, eyes but do not see, they have ears but they do not hear, noses but they do not smell, they have hands but do not feel, feet but they do not walk and they do not make a sound in their throat.

Those who make them become like them, so do all who trust in them. Elijah then says, as the Lord, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, Elijah stood before King Ahab in his crude dress, but he was more conscious of standing before the living God.

As the Lord, the God of Israel lives, he is the true living God, before whom I stand. Now, too courage for Elijah to make this a profession because Baal worship had now become the recognized state religion of Israel.

And it had become dangerous to make any allegiance towards any other than Baal. So it was a dangerous time. However, Elijah was a man of faith in the living God, and he continued to soldier, and he was conscious of that very fact that God that he worshipped was the true living God before whom he stood.

He continued his whole journey, conscious of that very fact. Hear how we all need this fearless conviction today, that we are in the presence of the living God.

[22 : 46] Elijah was not afraid of making this bold declaration, that he stood in the presence of the living God. What is your own view of God?

When you think of God, what comes into your own mind? You know, in our day we have lost sight of who God is.

Who God is. And that was done in Israel as well. They had lost sight of who God is. It is important for us that we, that would be restored to us of who God is.

He is the true and living God. After introducing himself, Elijah gave his message.

There shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word. Israel was a land that was dependent upon water.

[23 : 56] It was dependent upon the former and latter rains. That is spoken of in the Bible. The former rain must be received after the corn is put into the ground.

Otherwise, it will rot or be blown away with the dust. And the latter rain must be received just before the time of harvest. Otherwise, the ears will lack the moisture that should fill them out and they will become thin and lean and very worth harvesting.

No message could have been more challenging to the ears of King Ahab or to Israel than the message that Elijah is bringing to them.

There was to be no dew or rain. That would mean for Israel, it would mean disaster, devastation, tragedy for Israel.

This was not simply something that would pass over in a week or in two weeks, but it was to last for another three years. They had already been there six months before Elijah came to King Ahab.

[25 : 10] There had been a drought and the famine had begun. And this was to last for another three years. And then Elijah adds, except by my word, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.

Elijah's life was in danger at this point, not merely for his profession of allegiance to the true living God, but his life was put in danger because of the contents of his message.

In his message, he was challenging the power and existence of Baal. Baal was supposed to be the god of rain and the god of good crops.

For God to proclaim to Elijah that there would be no dew nor rain until the prophet gave the word was to challenge Baal's central domain.

It was the beginning of the battle that would come at Carmel. That's later on in the history of Elijah.

[26 : 24] Now, Ahab and Israel probably paid little attention to the words of this crude-dressed man of Gilead. But as the days passed and no dew or rain came, as the lives and livelihood of the people began to suffer, as the animals began to die, no crops, no food on the table, shortage of water, but instead of repenting and turning to the true living God, they possibly began to cry out to their God, Baal, where were not the experts in rain giving the Baal?

But his conditions became more desperate and more helpless. Ahab's mind turned to the crude man of Gilead and in chapter 18 we read that he sends messengers all over the land and beyond looking for Elijah.

Among the many lessons that we are to learn is that our God is a living God. Those who serve God is like Elijah.

We serve a living God. God always keeps his word.

Always keeps his word. Elijah's drought and famine was not simply a natural disaster. Maybe some would look upon it and say, well, this is a natural disaster.

[28 : 19] disaster. But it was not a natural disaster. It was a specific punishment from God upon the people.

It is a reminder for us that God's threatened punishment for our sins is not an idle threat. But God says that sin must be punished.

Now, that's not an idle threat. yet it was an opportunity given to Israel to repent and to return to the Lord.

This morning, you and I are in the presence of the living God who always keeps his word and his threatened punishment for my sins and yours is not an idle threat.

God's sin is not an idle threat. For he made him to be sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

[29 : 47] God's sin. The cross of Golgotha is proof that God will punish sin, even when it is sin that is imputed or reckoned against the darling of heaven, his own beloved son.

It is proof for us that God is not going to overlook our sins. God will either punish his sins in our person if we do not repent or our sins have already been punished in his beloved son if we exercise faith or trust in the cross of Golgotha.

well what is your position today? For those who have put their trust or faith and committed themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ the punishment for their sins have already been met with in Jesus Christ.

Their sins have been punished in him. But for those who do not trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and have not committed themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ and to his finished work on the cross of Golgotha the punishment of your sins must be made upon yourself.

For God who is the true living God will punish sin. He will punish sin.

[31 : 19] This living God can bring hardships into our lives. He can bring us to an end of ourselves. And sometimes he does that.

Why? in order for us to realise our sins and our need to repent and our need to return to God.

If we repent and return he is the living God who will abundantly pardon. Well where are you and I this morning?

in the light of the recent devastating plague that was and is still raging among us affecting every avenue of our lives.

How we turned to God in repentance. How we sought his mercy. Our political leaders do not encourage us to call upon God.

[32 : 25] Their philosophy is we shall overcome. How often we heard that in recent times. We shall overcome this. Maybe that was Ahab's philosophy as well.

Maybe when food got scarce, when the animals died, when there was no crops, when there was no food on the table, maybe he said as well, we shall overcome this.

But after three years and six months of famine and drought, he began to seek not God, but he began to seek the man of God.

God. But my dear friend, let me and you seek God, not a man of God, but God himself, through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Because he's given us the means whereby we can seek him. The means is Jesus Christ. No man cometh unto the Father, but through the Son.

[33 : 40] He has given us the means whereby we can come in repentance and seek his grace and seek his mercy, seek his forgiveness and seek his pardon.

This morning I am pleading with you to seek the Lord. Ahab should have sought the Lord in repentance. And for me and you, our priority should be to seek the Saviour of sinners, to seek God through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Will you do so today? May the Lord bless our thoughts together. Let us pray. Eternal and ever blessed God, we give thanks to thee that thou art the true and living God.

That the God of Elijah is our God, the God who hears prayer and the God who answers prayer, the God who pleads with us and the God who is able to give pardon and forgiveness, that thou art the God of all grace.

and so we pray, O Lord, that we would be today able to come and to bow our knee before thee, who is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, and seek thy mercy and seek thy grace, seek thy forgiveness and thy pardon, for we must acknowledge, O Lord, that we have sinned against thee and that we are prone to harden our hearts, but we pray, O Lord, that by thy grace, that we would be able to come and to acknowledge our sinfulness and to seek thy favour.

[35 : 40] We pray, O Lord, that thou would continue with us for the remainder of this day and all that we ask for the forgiveness of our sins is in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

We shall conclude at this time by singing from Psalm 120 which you'll find on page 419. Psalm 125.

They and the Lord that firmly thrust shall be like Zion Hill, which at no time can be removed, but standeth ever still. As round about Jerusalem the mountains stand our way, the Lord has folk to the compass so from henceforth and foray.

For ill men brought upon the lot of just men shall not lie. Thice righteous men stretch forth their hands and to iniquity. Do thou to all those that be good thy goodness Lord impart and do thou good to those that are upright within their heart.

But as for such as done aside, after their crooked way, God shall lead forth with wicked men, on Israel's peace shall stay. We shall sing the whole psalm to the Lord's praise, Psalm 125.

[36 : 51] Then the Lord that firmly thrusts shall be like Zion Hill. Say in the Lord that firmly trust, shall be like Zion Hill, which God knows I can be we who must sound that ever still be at Lord in battle of may the

Lord his bold of God was soul From heaven's poor and glory.

For him is brought upon the Lord. All trust shall not lie.

Lest righteous men stretch for their arms.

Unto any rest be. Unto all those that be good.

[39 : 00] Thy goodness, Lord, impart. Unto the peoples that are bright within their hearts.

But thus for such a turn of sight.

After their crooked way. Lord, shall be formed.

With weakened men. And on Israel's peace shall see.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. And the love of the Father. And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Be with you all now and forevermore.

[40 : 18] Amen.