

Prayer: Key to Revival

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1 Kings 17:1 (NKJV) *“And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.’”*

1 Kings 18:1 (NKJV) *“And it came to pass after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, ‘Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth.’ ”*

1 Kings 18:41–46 (NKJV) *“Then Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.”⁴² 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,⁴³ 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.’⁴⁴ 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.”’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.⁴⁶ 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.”*

James 5:17–18 (NKJV) *“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.¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.”*

God brought about a revival through the prayers of the prophet Elijah. Why was revival needed in Israel? Idolatry had infiltrated the hearts of the people and its government. Elijah prayed and prophesied that it would not rain and it did not rain for three and one half years. After Israel repented at Mt. Carmel, Elijah prayed and prophesied that it would rain and it did rain. God brought revival to Israel in response to prayer.

In the same way, God can bring revival to our nation through prayer—*our* prayers. Elijah was a prophet but God did not bring revival because he was a prophet. God brought revival to Israel because Elijah prayed. Elijah was a man with a nature just like ours. He was an ordinary man just like you and me. He was a hero one day and a coward the next. However, Elijah knew how to pray to get results.

First, Elijah prayed *prayerfully*. There is a difference between *saying prayers* and *praying*. Elijah did not just say prayers; he *prayed!* God works His will through the cooperation of men. Dr. J. Edwin Orr once said, “Whenever God gets ready to move, He always sets His people to praying.” Jesus taught His disciples to pray, *“Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*¹ God is sovereign but He has ordained that His will on earth be done in cooperation with our prayers. Consider the following examples in Scripture:

Ezekiel 36:37 (NKJV), *“Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them: I will increase their men like a flock.’”*

Isaiah 45:11 (NKJV) *“Ask of Me of the things that are to come; concerning my sons, and concerning the works of my hands, command ye Me.”*

John Wesley, founder and leader of the Methodist movement, said: “It seems God is limited by our prayer life—that He can do nothing for humanity unless someone asks Him.” Ruth Bell Graham: “God has decreed to act in response to prayer. ‘Ask’ He commands us. And Satan trembles for fear we will.” E. M.

¹ Matthew 6:10

Bounds said, “Whether we like it or not, asking is the rule of the kingdom. ‘Ask, and ye shall receive’ (John 16:24). It is a rule that never will be altered in anybody’s case. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the elder brother of the family, but God has not relaxed the rule even for Him. Remember this text: Jehovah says to His own Son, ‘Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession” (Psalm 2:8). If the royal and divine Son of God cannot be exempted from the rule of asking that He may have, you and I cannot expect the rule to be relaxed in our favor. Why should it be?” Watchman Nee adds, “What, then is the prayer ministry of the church? It is God telling the church what He wishes to do so that the church on earth can then pray it out. Such prayer is not asking God to do what we want to do, but asking Him to do what He wants to do. Oh, let us see that the church is to declare on earth the will of God in heaven.”

Second, Elijah prayed *prophetically*. Elijah prayed in faith according to God’s word. In 1 Kings 18:1 God told Elijah that He would send rain. After his showdown with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, the people of Israel repented. In response, Elijah prophesied to Ahab that rain was on its way when as yet there was not a cloud in the sky! Elijah then got down to the business of praying for rain. Elijah prayed according to God’s *prophetic timing*. There is a time when God chooses to act and it is imperative that God’s people pray in the day of opportunity: “Then Elijah said to Ahab, ‘Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain.’”² There is a prophetic element to prayer in discerning the times and seasons of God’s activity. If we are not aware of God’s timing, we can frustrate ourselves and others with unwarranted expectations.

Third, Elijah prayed *persistently*. Elijah did not stop praying until he got results. Elijah prayed seven times until God sent rain.³ Seven times while praying Elijah sent his servant to see if there were rain clouds in the sky. Finally on the seventh trip, the servant saw a cloud the size of a man’s hand. Elijah declared that rain was on the way and told Ahab to get home before the downpour. And rain it did! Jesus made the importance of persistence in prayer clear in the Parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8). True faith is persistent even when the answer seems delayed.

Fourth, Elijah prayed *prevailingly*. Elijah didn’t quit until the answer came. Elijah prevailed in prayer until the drought was broken and the heavens were opened. There is an acronym “PUSH” that means, “Pray Until Something Happens”. We must never give up on God’s promises. We must pray until we get the results that God has promised. An example of persistence unto victory is found in Exodus 17:8-13 when Israel defeated Amalek. Moses had to keep the rod of God raised above his head until Joshua had completely defeated Amalek. In the same way, we must prevail in prayer until the victory comes.

Prayer is the key to revival. With the key of prayer we can unlock the door to revival in our land. If we will pray prayerfully, prophetically, persistently, and prevailingly, then God can open the windows of heaven to release the much needed rain of revival from heaven that we so desperately need. What are we waiting for? Look, the key is in our hand!

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² 1 Kings 18:41 (NKJV)

³ 1 Kings 18:42-45