

Praying for Rain

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 23 August 2026

Preacher: Mario Lima

[0:00] I think I'm on. Thank you and good morning, church. For those who don't know me, my name is Mario, and I'm part of the team here at Harvest Church. And today I'm very excited and privileged to share the message that happens on the account right after Mount Carmel, where there's a showdown between Prophet Elijah's God and Prophets of Baal, in which God sends a consuming fire that burns the sacrifice and everything around it, proving that only he is God.

And the prophets of Baal have been defeated. They're slaughtered in the valley of Kishon, and the people bow down and confess that the Lord is God.

Yet the drought is not over. Fire has fallen, but rain is yet to come. And that brings us to today's message.

So I'll invite you to open your Bibles, please. And also the passage will be displayed behind me on the screen. 1 Kings chapter 18, verses 41 to 46.

And I'm reading from the ESV version. And Elijah said to Ahab, go up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of the rushing of rain.

[1:32] So Ahab went up to drink, to eat and to drink. Interestingly, listen to that very quickly in the time of drought. And Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel, and he bowed himself down on the earth and put his face between his knees.

So after the slaughter, now the prophets of Baal have gone. Prophet Elijah goes back up to Mount Carmel, and then starts praying after he hears the rushing of rain.

And he said to his servant, go up now, look toward the sea. And he, the servant, went up and looked and said, there is nothing.

And he said, Elijah says, go again, seven times. And at the seventh time, he said, behold, the servant says, a little cloud, like a man's hand, is rising from the sea.

And he said, go up, say to Ahab, prepare your chariot and go down, lest the rain stop you. And in a little while, the heavens grew black with clouds and wind.

[2:39] And there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah. And he gathered up his garment and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Now, that's the word of the Lord. Now, to help us understand the passage and draw lessons from it, I like to frame the message into five key words or five takeaways.

And these takeaways are going to map out almost verse by verse. And there are the following.

Promise, prayer, persistence, provision, and power.

Now, promise is one that is not so obvious because it's not really on the passage, on the immediate passage. However, it is in the context. So, if we start with verse 41.

Elijah said to Ahab, go, eat and drink. For there is of a sound of the rushing of rain. The remarkable thing is that there was no rain.

[3:50] There were no clouds. No thunder. No visible evidence. Yet Elijah could hear the rain before anyone else could. This wasn't wishful thinking.

God had already promised rain. If we look at the first verse in chapter 18. So, 1 Kings chapter 18, verse 1.

It says, So, Elijah here, his confidence is resting on God's word, not in circumstances.

His faith is listening to God's promises. More than he's listening to circumstances. In other words, Elijah had this promise of God in the back of his mind.

As all these events are taking place, he's expecting a certain point. God will send rain. So, he's listening out. And then he hears the sound of rain. The interesting thing is, if we go back just under a century before, during the reign of King Solomon.

[5:04] Solomon, in the inauguration of the temple of God. Solomon prays. This happens at 1 Kings. If you like to look this up. It's just 10 chapters before.

Chapter 8, verses 35 to 36. Solomon, in his God-given wisdom, he's predicting that the Israelites, at some point, they would sin.

And God, as a response, would shut the heavens and there would be no rain. But then he's praying to God, If your people were to repent and ask for forgiveness, forgive them.

Would you forgive them and open the heavens so there would be rain? So, there was already a prayer from Solomon, foreseeing that this was going to happen. And then this prayer has been, God responds to his prayers.

It's been fulfilled in the time of Elijah, his perfected ministry. And then you may wonder, was it a repentance? Yes. The people bow down and they confess that the Lord, he is God.

[6:05] After God sent fire. And then they seized the prophets of Baal and slaughtered them. So, that moves into the prayer takeaway.

What is Elijah's response to God's movement? So, as he hears the sound of rain, what does he do? So, after the great victory, Elijah hears the sound of rain.

And he doesn't just sit back and watch God do what God does. His response is to go back up to Mount Carmel. And do what? In prayer.

He prays persistently. So, God's promise does not make prayer unnecessary. They make prayer essential. Sometimes we may think, well, if God has promised, why do we need to pray?

The Bible shows us that God's promise becomes foundation of prayer. Elijah prayed because he believed God's word.

[7:15] We pray not because God is unaware. But because prayer aligns us with his purposes. With what he intends to do. And how did he pray?

As I've already mentioned, he prayed persistently. Persistence is the third takeaway. In verse 43, Elijah told his servant, Go and look towards the sea.

The servant returns. There is nothing there. What did Elijah do? He prays again. Still nothing. And again, nothing.

Six times the servant returns with the same purport. Imagine how discouraging that must have been. Perhaps many would have stopped after the first disappointment.

Some after the third. Most after the sixth. Certainly, I would most likely pray twice if I remember three times. And then I'll say to the Lord, Well, I've already prayed two or three times.

[8:23] I don't have to keep reminding you this is what I need. Or this is what I want. But that's not what Elijah did. In James 5, chapter 5, verses 17 to 18.

James tells us that Elijah was a human being like us. And he prayed earnestly that it would not rain. And there was no rain on the land for three years and six months.

Then he prayed again. And the sky gave rain. And the land sprouted with a harvest. I was hoping that...

Okay. Hopefully, you could see what was on the screen for James. Now, Elijah prayed earnestly. In the original language, this carries an idea of fervent and persistent prayer. Sometimes, God answers immediately.

[9:30] Sometimes, he answers gradually. And sometimes, it develops perseverance and faith while we wait. Friends, delay doesn't mean denial.

Persistent prayer is not trying to overcome God's reluctance. It is demonstrating our dependence to him. However, I do need to open a parenthesis here.

Sometimes, we may pray persistently. We may pray seven times. Even ten times. And we may pray in line with God's promises for our lives.

Even biblically. And we wonder, why is God not responding? It doesn't make sense to us. We're afraid of line with his, as we know him, with his goodness.

And yet, no response. Or perhaps, the response is no. Why is that? To be honest, I don't know. Every case is specific.

[10:34] And we're not omniscient. But I do know this. God is good. And he's sovereign. God is always good.

And he's always sovereign. If we look fast forward now. About 150 years. A century and a half. And almost the same chapter. But in 2 Kings. We see a story of another king. A good king. In the certain kingdom of Judah. His name is Ezekiah.

Some of you may know Ezekiah's tunnel. He's known for that. He was one of the good kings. In 2 Kings, chapter 18. Verses 3 to 8.

Yes. That's the passage there. The word of the Lord tells us that. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. According to all that David, his father, had done.

[11 : 34] He removed the high places. He removed the high places. And broke the pillars. And cut down the asherah. And he broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made. For until those days.

The people of Israel had made offerings to it. It was called Neshtar. The Lord. That he trusted in the Lord. The God of Israel. So that there was none like him.

Among all the kings of Judah after him. Nor among those who were before him. For he held fast to the Lord. He did not depart from following him.

But kept the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses. And the Lord was with him.

Wherever he went out, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria.

And he would not serve him. He struck down the Philistines as far as Gaza. And he stirred it to from Watchtower to a fortified city. So here the passage is telling us.

[12 : 30] Of a good king. Out of the many not so good ones. This was a good one. However. If we just go two chapters ahead. Chapter 20.

Second Kings chapter 20. Verses 1 through 6. This is what happens. In those days. Izekiah became sick. It was at the point of death.

In Isaiah. The prophet. The son of Amos. Came to him and said to him. Just say the Lord. Set your house in order. For you shall die. And you shall not recover.

Then Izekiah turned his face to the wall. And prayed to the Lord. Saying. Now oh Lord. Please remember. How I have walked before you in faithfulness. With a whole heart.

And I have done what is good in your sight. And Izekiah wept bitterly. We may say here that he prayed persistently. And before Isaiah had gone out of the middle of the court.

[13 : 29] The word of the Lord came to him. Turn back. And say to Izekiah. The leader of my people. Thus says the Lord. The God of David your father. I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears.

Behold. I will heal you. On the third day. You shall go up to the house of the Lord. And I will add 15 years to your life. And I will deliver you and the city. Out of the hand of the king of Assyria.

And I will defend the city. For my own sake. And for the sake. Of my servants. For my servants David's sake. If we keep reading.

What happens after that. We see that after Izekiah's healing. He became proud. There was an envoy from Babylon. That visited Judah.

And he was showing this envoy. All the wealth. Of Judah. So he became proud. And then. Subsequent to that. Prophet Isaiah comes to him.

[14 : 28] And then tells him. What's going to happen to Judah. That the fact that he's shown. All the wealth. To the Babylonians. They will come and invade. And basically take his direct descendants.

Back to exile. And his response was. Well at least. There will be peace. And stability. During my lifetime. And after that.

In that 15 years. He also had a son. Which becomes the next king. Manasseh. And the Bible tells us. That Manasseh becomes. One of the most vile kings. That lived in that region.

Even compared to the atrocities. Of the previous nations. Of Amorites and Canaanites. So what's the point here. There might be. A theological argument.

That if God had said no. To the persistence prayer. That his story. Would have been of a good king. Until the end. And who knows. What would have happened.

[15 : 25] To the kingdom of Judah. Because he wouldn't have had the son. Now. I'm not saying here. Friends. That. When God answers yes. To a persistence prayer. That everything would go horribly wrong.

What I'm saying. Is that. God is good. And he's. Sovereign. He's always good. And he's always sovereign. We can trust him. To be a loving father.

And savior. And that brings us. To the fourth. Takeaway. Provision. On the seventh trip.

The servant reported. A cloud. As small as a man's hand. Is rising from the sea. To most people. That cloud. Would have seen. Significant.

What's a cloud. A small cloud. After three and a half years. Of drought. But Elijah. Recognizes. Immediately. This is the beginning. Of God's answer. Immediately.
[16:24] Told. Ahab. To prepare. Because the rain. Was coming. Faith. Sees. God's hand. In small beginnings. A small opportunity.

A small change of heart. A small breakthrough. A small answer. God. Often starts small. Before doing. Something great. A tiny cloud. A tiny cloud.
Eventually became. A mighty storm. That ended. Years of drought. During my time. In the US. In my church.

There was a lady. Who had. This. Pressing. In her heart. That God. Was telling her. That we should reach. The children. In Newark. In the state of New Jersey.

There's a city of Newark. In the most impoverished areas. And then she approached. Our pastor. And I was part of that conversation. As well. And she shared.

[17:20] What was in her heart. So then the pastor said. Well. Okay. Let's do something about it. So what we did is. We printed out some leaflets. We went into this neighborhood. Knocking on doors.

And ending in invitations. For an event. Where the children would come. We would feed them. We would teach them. And then they would. Go home. So. Some.

Some responded quite nice. To that invitation. Others. Just. Shut the door. They were not interested. But we did that. And then the first time. We did the event. There were a handful of children.

That came. And. It was. Easy to manage. It was a small beginning. However. As we kept going. The second time. We could fill.

A minivan. So then. Or a van. Sorry. And then there were more. Basically. And as things progressed. We had to. Rent a bus.

[18:14] To bring so many children. In fact. I remember. I just finished university. At the time. And. And when we. We had a van. And we didn't have enough space anymore. And there were more children.

That we could. Carry. I was putting them. In my car. So. I had just bought this new car. And I was worried about. What they were going to do. In the back of my car. But it turned out to be fine.

And. So the point is that. It just continued growing. And then. I moved on from that ministry. And one day. I visited. And I saw a room. Well. The social room in that church.

Was about three. Or two thirds of this room. And it was filled with children. There were tables. And. And it just grew. And then there were these. Classrooms in church. Where the teenagers.

Have volunteered to teach. So. It really. Grew. And afterwards. I saw a post. On social media. Someone from church. Was sharing that. That was published.

[19:07] That particular ministry. Was published. On the local newspaper. So it grew that much. That it had an impact. In the community. So God. Often starts small. We shouldn't underestimate.

Those. That small answer from God. And now we move on. To the final takeaway. Power. The passage ends.

The power of the Lord. Came on Elijah. As rain poured down. Elijah. Runs ahead. Of Ahab's. Charity.

All the way to Israel. The story concludes. Not with Elijah's strength. But with God's. Everything in this account.

Points. To God's. Providence. God sent fire. God sent rain. God strengthened. The prophet. The same God.

[20:01] Who heard Elijah. Still hears his people today. James. Reminds us. That Elijah. Was a person. Just like us. The difference.

Was not Elijah's greatness. But God's greatness. The fire. And rain. Was. Were addressing. A turning away from God.

By his own people. The Israelites. And resolving. The consequence. Of that action. However.

This was a temporary. A solution. In order to once. And for all. Resolve mankind. Condition. God himself. In the form of the son. Came to this world.

God. And gave himself freely. Not only to address. The turning away. And its consequences. But to permanently.

[20:56] Unite us. With him. In Christ. Forevermore. Could I have the band. To come up please.
To conclude.

To conclude. To conclude. To conclude. So to conclude. Elijah. Heard the rain. Before it arrived. He trusted.

God's promise. Before we saw provision. He prayed. When there was no evidence. He persisted. When there was no visible progress. He believed. When others saw. Only an empty sky. Then the rain fell.

Friends. God still. Responds. To the prayers. Of ordinary people. Who trust him. Can I invite you to.
[21:56] Put your hands like this. I would like to pray. Thank you Lord. That you are the same.

Yesterday. Today. And you never change. Lord. Thank you for sending fire. For sending rain. And sending a savior. Who died for our sins.

And rose again. So that we may have. An eternal gift. From heaven. That is. Eternal life. In Christ. Thank you Lord.

We pray. Lord. As we lift our hands. Before you. That you would pour. Out. Your living water. On us. Renewing us. Each day.

And never to go thirsty. Amen. Thanks Mario. I invite you to stand.

[22:50] As we.