

Elijah's Revival

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[0:00] Elijah lived at a time of apathy and compromise. Ahab the king of Israel had forsaken the true God yielding to his wicked wife Jezebel.

! And King Ahab had God's prophets murdered. But what's more Ahab had banished the worship of God and replaced it with Baal worship, the false god.

Elijah came on the scene. Elijah's name means Jehovah is God. And Elijah, it says, prayed earnestly that it might not rain. We see that in James chapter 5 verse 17.

It says this, Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are. And he prayed earnestly that it might not rain. And it rained not upon the earth by the space of three years and six months.

So here Elijah stood in a dry, thirsty land. It was a time of drought. Three and a half years of drought. And Elijah had been praying that it would not rain in Israel so that the people might realize that they had sinned and had displeased the Lord.

[1:08] The drought was meant to awaken the people spiritually, to prepare the people to repent. God was preparing his people for a spiritual revival.

Let us observe the marks of Elijah's revival. Firstly, notice it starts with a man. Elijah. Elijah, he was a man. A man, just a man. A man of like passions as we are. A man of like nature.

A man of like nature. A man of like nature. A man of like nature. A man of like nature. A man of like nature. A man just like you and me. A man who prayed, it says. Who prayed earnestly. And Elijah's revival was birthed in prayer. God works with men and women who pray to do his will.

Of the man Elijah, we'll see, firstly, we note this, that Elijah had a fervency. Notice Elijah's fervency. It said, Elijah was fervent in prayer.

It says in verse 16 of James, there, it says, the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. The effectual fervent prayer.

[2:10] Are we fervent in prayer? As our Lord was. As we see, for example, in Luke 22, verse 44, where we read, it says, And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood falling to the ground.

Our Lord demonstrated that earnest, fervent prayer. And this man Elijah, he was a man of prayer. A preacher of righteousness. He issued a fervent challenge. He called for the people to follow the Lord.

And Elijah was not timid. He did not hold back from prayer. He did not hold back from confrontation. He stood up to the compromising king, ungodly king Ahab. And he faithfully and fervently declared and delivered God's word.

And he fervently called God's people to repentance and to faith. As we'll read, we're going to pick it up in 1 Kings chapter 18. From verse 21, it says, And Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long hold ye between two opinions?

If the Lord be God, follow him. But if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him, not a word. Elijah called the people to make a stand.

[3:31] To make a choice. He said, You have to choose. You have to get off the fence. You have to. There's no middle ground. Back in the New Testament, we see Herod was a man who thought that he could sit on the fence.

He's a great example of that. He feared John the Baptist on the one hand. He knew John was a just and a holy man. He enjoyed hearing him gladly.

He was, you could say, one of his favourite preachers. But Herod did not repent of living with his brother's wife. A sin which John confronted him about.

Herod had to choose. This man, John, who he heard gladly. Or murder John to keep his wife's favour.

He had this horrendous choice. Support John or murder John. God brought him to the place where he had to choose. Instead of choosing life, to his eternal shame and damnation, he chose to murder John.

[4:39] The greatest minister of Christ, whoever lived, according to our Lord. You have to decide one way or the other. That's the point. Who will you follow?

You have to decide. If you choose God, you'll be blessed with life. But if you choose not, your heart will be hardened and you will be one who perishes.

God hates lukewarmness. God calls us to step over the line. And that's what we see Elijah call the people to. How long holds you? How long are you going to sit on the fence?

How long are you going to sit there between these two opinions? When are you going to make a decision? So we see further, it says that Elijah said unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men.

Elijah was fervent despite the circumstances. He was in the minority with God. Verse 19 says there was 450 prophets of Baal and 400 other prophets of the groves.

[5:44] Elijah was well and truly outnumbered. He was standing there, one man, alone. It was 850 to one. Yet his fervency was undaunted.

It says he prayed earnestly. When we read of the history of revivals of old, we read about men who prayed with fervent prayer. For example, John Hyde.

He so travailed in prayer, it says that his heart was actually moved within him from the left to the right part of his chest. He was so constrained in prayer. John Knox prayed, give me Scotland or I die.

David Brainerd was so consumed with prayer that he often spent hours kneeling in the snow, crying out to God to save the souls of men on that missionary frontier in the pioneer days of America, reaching the native population.

Evan Roberts is another man who prayed. He was known to spend several hours groaning. And when he came out of his prayer closet, his face was aglow with heavenly peace.

[6:55] Where are the fervent today? It seems all around us there's this lack of fervency. It's lacking. Where is the fervency? The fervency of prayer, the fervency in labor, in witness, in fellowship, in devotion.

The Lord calls us to a fervency. The word speaks of having a fervency in spirit. Romans 12 verse 11. It says in 1 Peter 4 verse 8 that we should be fervent in love, in the charity, in God's fellowship. Will you follow the crowd or will you be willing to stand alone with the truth? Will you follow the fakes, the false prophets, the prophets of Baal?

Or will you stand with the isolated preachers of the truth? We have seen Elijah's fervency. It was a fervency. He was fervent in prayer, it says.

And a preacher described such a prayer like this. He said this. This is E.M. Bounds, a man who wrote much on prayer. He said prayers must be red hot. It is fervent prayer that is effectual and that availeth.

[8:02] Coldness of spirit hinders praying. Prayer cannot live in a wintry atmosphere. Chilly surroundings freeze out petitioning and dry up the springs of supplication.

It takes fire to make prayers go. End quote. We don't have Elijah's revival today, I put to you, because we lack Elijah's fervency.

Secondly, another mark of Elijah's revival is this, faith. Elijah's faith made him stand out. Elijah stepped out in faith.

He entered an amazing contest now that began in verse 23, where we pick it up again. It says that Elijah challenged the people.

He said, And let them therefore give us two bullocks. And let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under.

[9:00] And I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And then it goes on to say, he said this, And call ye, call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord.

And the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.

And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first, for ye are many. And call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us.

But there was no voice, nor any, that answered. And they leapt upon the altar which was made.

And it came to pass at noon that Elijah mocked them and said, Cry aloud, for he is a god.

Either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awakened. And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

[10:15] And it came to pass when midday was past. And they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

They screamed, they jumped, they cut themselves to try and get a response from Baal. But the Bible tells us that there was no voice, neither any to answer, nor any that regarded.

So even the people who are watching on this spectacle, they lost interest in what was happening and what these false prophets were doing. And these 450 crazed prophets of Baal prophesying, yelling, shouting, screaming, dancing, jumping, cutting themselves, it was all a vain effort to get attention from a God who did not exist.

There was much noise, but God's spirit was not in it. Sounds a bit like some church circles today too. Much noise, much hoo-ha, but the spirit of God is not there.

Yeah, Elijah was different. He had faith. Faith despite the odds. And we see, as it says in verse 30, And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me.

[11:26] And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. Elijah had faith. Faith that was faith in action. He repaired the altar of the Lord that had broken down.

We need to, to repair the altar as it were, the broken down altar of our heart. Yes, that altar, that long neglected altar. The altar is in need of repair.

Elijah had faith to rebuild the altar of the Lord that had broken down. Altars could speak to us today, perhaps of places of assembly, of prayer, of corporate prayer.

Altars were built out of thankfulness. Altars are for sacrifice. Altars are a set-apart place for God.

And they were then used to spill the blood of an innocent animal.

And of course we know in our time it would reflect that completed sacrifice, the absolute finished work of Christ, the work of Calvary.

[12:31] Altars are places that we honour and glorify our God. And we can do that today. Surely we must. Elijah repaired the broken altar. It was noticed the altar of the Lord.

And it symbolised the people coming back to God. It pictured fellowship. It pictured getting right with God again. People finding forgiveness from His grace. People recommitting in a fresh way.

A renewal of spiritual life. Finding that way to live for God and refreshing it again. Altars speak.

Altars speak. You could reckon of prayer or fellowship with God.

Of dying to self. Of yielding to the will of God. The altar was in a state of disrepair. I put to you that. That's the same today, isn't it? The altar has got broken down.

It was a symbol of how far the people had strayed from God. It was a symbol of their backsliding. There's many backslidden people today. There's many broken down altars.

[13:30] All around us it seems like the family altar has broken down. The personal prayer altar is under attack. The altar in the place of assembly often neglected under attack.

As a nation, as a people, we have neglected God and prayer and worship. The altar is broken down. And the devil delights in that.

He wants to stop you from prayer. The devil hates prayer. And the devil hates the altar of prayer. He wants you to neglect, to pray, to neglect, to fellowship.

The altar has been neglected. As you could picture it, perhaps the moss growing over it, the weeds, the grass, the dust, the cobwebs. It was abandoned.

It was left unkept. The weeds must be pulled from the altar of the Lord. And it must be reconstructed and refreshed.

[14:27] The place of prayer. Believers sadly have forsaken the place of prayer, of assembly. And the altar must be restored. We read on. Verse 31.

And Elijah took the twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name. Revival is calling people back to where they're supposed to be, unto the name of the Lord.

It's about reminding people that God has a plan for them. Verse 32. And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord. And he made a trench about the altar as great as would contain two measures of seed.

So there's this big moat around the stone altar. Verse 33. And he put the wood in order and cut the bullock in pieces and laid him on the wood and said, fill four barrels with water and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood.

So we see Elijah arrange the wood in order and the sacrifice. Elijah's faith was unstoppable. He believed God would answer. And Elijah got ready for the fire to come down.

[15:38] Likewise, let us make preparation spiritually that we are ready for God to do his work in us, through us. Let us make preparation. That's what Joshua did, if you look back on that circumstance too, in his lifetime.

He said unto the people, sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you. As we trust, as we believe God's going to do something, there's a sense we need to sanctify ourselves. Get ready. Get spiritually ready. Get right with God. Today's sanctification produces tomorrow's wonders, you could say.

In biblical revival, there's a separation from the world. There was a trench, this moat, this trench around the altar that marked a separation.

There was a separation there. And there was a separation too between the worshippers, the people of God, and the idol worshippers. There was a demarcation made. There's a sense where we as God's holy people are separated unto God, unto him and unto his work.

[16:45] And away from that which is ungodly. There's a biblical way to prepare for revival. And when the biblical pattern is followed, then we can expect God to move.

Elijah, it says, prepared the altar. He prepared the word to sacrifice in an orderly way. Likewise too, we need to follow God's order. It has to be done God's way.

God, through Elijah, had been preparing the people with three and a half years of prayer, of drought, of a calling together before the Lord.

And now Elijah followed God's pattern, what God wanted in that worship that would please him. Where there is no altar, there is no fire. Elijah had to build the altar.

And that was in obedience to God. And then Elijah, by faith, he poured on the water. It's kind of hard to capture the faith of Elijah, that he would so believe God, that he didn't pour petrol on the sacrifice, he poured the water on.

[17:51] He wanted to show that this was a work of God. And he had faith. He trusted God to do God's work in that circumstance. So Elijah, it says, poured the water out.

Everything was drenched. He made it absolutely impossible for anything to happen other than what God alone would do. You don't put water on a sacrifice you want to burn.

It just doesn't work that way. But Elijah wanted to show that this was God's work. Elijah did not fear a little water. It would not stop a genuine move of God.

So the water would prove the move of God was genuine. This was the real thing. It was not something of human manufacture or production. It was God's doing. It needed no human help or effort.

Verse 34. And he said, do it the second time. And he did. He said, do it the third time. And they did it the third time.

[18:49] Verse 35. Very short prayer.

Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart again. We've seen the marks of Elijah's revival.

Elijah's fervency. He was a man of prayer. We see Elijah's faith. He trusted God to move. And he made preparation. He believed God would do his work.

Elijah had faith. And thirdly, we see fire came down. Elijah's fire, if you like. Notice it was just a short prayer, as I say. He did not even get to say amen to it.

You could notice there. And it says, Elijah's fire fell. Really, it was the fire of the Lord. The fire of the Lord fell, we see. Verse 38.

[20:06] 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. The fire came down.

And everything burnt up from the top down, proving it was the work of God alone. God sends fire. And when fire comes, there's a burning up.

There's a consuming of dross. This was a consuming fire. And the fire didn't just consume the sacrifice alone. It consumed everything. Everything. The sacrifice would speak to us, really, of our substitute, of our sacrifice for us, who is the Lord Jesus, who really took God's wrath.

He took the fire for us. God sends his fire. It speaks through the word of God, of God's holiness, of his purity, of his glory. When God moves, his fire falls.

The fire fell in Solomon's day, we see in 2 Chronicles 7, from verse 1 through 3. It says, now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven.

[21:14] And it consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices. And the glory of the Lord filled the house. Now this was so awesome, the spectacle. You can picture it at the dedication of the temple here.

And it says, the priest could not enter into the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house. It so filled the Lord's house that this thickness of this glory was so tangible and pressing that the priests, the ministers, could not even enter into the place of worship.

Imagine that. Verse 3, it goes on to say, You could read of God's word of itself.

As Jeremiah the prophet said, And at one time he said, I said, I will not make mention of him nor speak any more in his name. But his word, his word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones.

And I was weary with forbearing and I could not stay. He could not stop. He could not but deliver that burning word that was in his heart, the word of the Lord.

[22:50] And then it reads in Jeremiah 23, 29, What a picture.

Fire, hammer. The Lord answers by fire. And he burns away the dross. He purifies. This fire, notice it was heaven sent. It came from heaven. It was not manufactured by men.

Certainly not. That was quite clear. Today we see a coldness, a deadness, a fleshliness, a lack of fire. False fire. There's false revivals. I believe really looking back in history that some so-called revivals, such as Azusa Street, were really a false fire.

The Pentecostal movement, it was a false fire. Now I say that carefully and respectfully. But I have to be truthful. And I say that sadly.

That some of these so-called revivals of the past did not actually stack up. They weren't biblical. We need the genuine. That's what we must have. Not a false fire.

[23:56] Not a fleshly fire. But the fire of the Lord. The word of God. The real thing. We have to have the genuine. And revival is possible.

Revival is God responding to that fervency, to that faith. That faithfulness, to that truthfulness, as we follow after God, as we follow God's pattern. Revival is the fire of God falling, coming down on broken and contrite hearts.

When the conditions are right, God will respond with the fire of his presence. We go back to 1 Kings 18, verse 39. And when all the people saw it, they saw the fire fall.

They fell on their faces. And they said, the Lord, he is the God. The Lord, he is the God. The people responded with awe and with respect for the God of heaven.

Thousands fell on their faces and worshipped. When God comes in his glory, there is a cleaning out. Also, as we read later, we see what happened.

[24:59] It says in the word of God that our God is a consuming fire.

Hebrews 12, verse 29. What happened next in verse 40? It says, Elijah

said unto them, the people of God.

He says, 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. There was no place for compromise, for accommodation here.

The false had to be destroyed. And it was. There was a clean out. God needs to clean out. There needs to be a consuming fire. Sin was removed from the camp.

The fire fell. And there was a purging in the camp. When God revives, he cleanses the church. He cleans out the church. There's a purifying work. The fire had a direct and dramatic impact on those under its influence.

They forsook their sin. That's revival, isn't it? Where we see this evident work of God. This evident transforming work. Chains were broken.

[26:01] Scales fell off of men's eyes. Strongholds were torn down. What Satan has spent a lifetime building up, God can pull it down. For the man, the woman who is consecrated to God and living in holiness, that consuming fire can consume, burn up the dross, the rubbish, give it a complete clear out and a fresh new life.

We need the fire. Has the fire gone out for you? The altar, where is it? Is it broken down? Is it neglected? Gathering weeds and dust and cobwebs?

Forsaken? Neglected? Or will we see? Yes. I've got to rebuild my spiritual life. I've got to go back and build it again. Refresh that spiritual fervor and fervency again.

That faith. That God's fire can fall. The fire can be rekindled. Elijah started this process. Elijah's revival needs a man.

Just one. One man. A man. A woman. A man. A person. A man of like passions, such as we are. And a man of prayer, it says of Elijah. He prayed and the drought began.

[27:17] It was a wonder and a sign to the people to draw near to God. It says in James 5.18, when he prayed, it says he prayed again.

And then it says the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit. Elijah prayed and it stopped raining. Elijah prayed again and the heaven gave rain.

Verse 41 of 1 Kings 18 says, And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain.

Because of sin there'd been no rain. Because of the disobedience of God's people, of the nation backsliding. There'd been no rain for three and a half years.

Imagine the poverty, the famine, the needs. With repentance came this refreshing now. This blessing of God. This blessing for man and beast alike.

[28:17] And the curse was lifted off the earth. We see God moved in revival, in Elijah's day, as he can in our time, in our day, in our situation, in our community.

God moved in revival. He purifies the nation of idolatry. And he moves in power. There is a revival among God's people. And God moves when we do what Elijah did.

There'd been no rain for three and a half long years. And Elijah prayed again. And that evening it poured down. Elijah heard that pitter-patter of the raindrops.

He heard the sound. Maybe he even heard it before he physically heard it. There's that sense where he believed such that God would move. By faith, he heard the rain.

And he knew the downpour was on its way. And as the rain fell, the crops were restored. The granaries were refilled. The prosperity and the life came back to the nation.

[29:22] And spiritually too. When God works, there is a tangible blessing. We must repair. Firstly, repair the broken altar.

And seek the Lord. Turn to him. Seek after God fervently. God will respond in abundance. We need Elijah's. It's been said.

Where is the Lord God of Elijah? You could also put it. Where are the Elijah's of the Lord God? We must be a people to be such that we'll be like a man. A man called Elijah.

That we'll be one with God. Even one with God is a majority, really, isn't it? We must be a people who speak the truth, even when it's uncomfortable. And God will send a spiritual revival.

Ending those times of spiritual drought. Personally, corporately, community-wide. God can do something that will be to his glory and praise.

[30:21] And the Lord broke this long famine, sending life-refreshing rain. Although Elijah thought he was all alone too. It's interesting that the Lord told him the 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal.

Sometimes there's others out there. Maybe on the fringes, on the edges. And perhaps there's quieter Christians. Come out of the shadows. If you're one of the 7,000, stand with Elijah.

Let's not bow the knee to Baal. And let's stand for God in that faith, that fervency. And we'll see the fire. We'll see the fire fall. Maybe you're in that number, the 7,000.

You haven't bowed the knee to Baal. You're among those faithful ones. But perhaps you're not fully in there with Elijah as Elijah was.

He was willing to step out of those shadows, you could say. We can be like Elijah in that regard, I put to you. We can know the Lord God of Elijah. Yes, you. You and me.

[31:18] Man of like passions. People just like Elijah. People just like Elijah. Ordinary people. God works in such, as he always has in human vessels.

He still uses human vessels just like you and me. And be encouraged in that, dear saint. And if you're not a saint, you can know God. You can know him as truly as Elijah surely knew him. And we see what happened. As you put your faith in Christ as Savior and Lord, that's the start of that road, that journey of faith. And God will work in your life as he has through these characters of the Bible, through the actions and the unfolding journey of the people of God through the word of God.

It's human vessels, ordinary people that God works through. So let's pray for that fervency. That fervency that we'll pray. We'll pray through. That we'll have that faith that Elijah had, such that we will trust God, even when it seems humanly impossible, that God will do something in our hearts and our world, our families, our lives.

And we'll see the fire fall. God will surely bless that which we do unto him in God's way. And the fire of God will fall. We've got to rebuild the altar.

[32:42] Let's take stock of that personally, personal stock of our spiritual walk with God, our communion with him. Is the altar broken down? It's a big question.

And it's something we should seek after God. God helping us will rebuild the altar. Amen. May the Lord bless you and keep you and make his face shine upon you.