

Elijah: An Ordinary Man with Extraordinary Faith – Standing Boldly for God in Dark Times

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[0:00] Elijah, a man just like us. I love that about Elijah. And Elijah was here in ancient Israel,!

And he stands for God when everyone else is hiding.

Elijah. He's not royal, not educated, not famous. And he's from this obscure village, Tishbe, an unknown village. He's an ordinary fellow.

But he serves an extraordinary God. There's much we can learn about the character of the man.

He's no superhuman. He has fears and doubts and worries, feelings, just like you and I do.

And that's what makes him really someone we could, hopefully we can get some identifying within today. And James talks about that in James 5. He talks about the man, Elias or Elijah, was a man subject to like passions as we are.

[1:26] And he prayed earnestly that it might not rain. And it rained not on the earth the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again and the heaven gave rain.

And the earth brought forth her fruit. We've got sound effects happening today, haven't we? The rain. Glory. When you face dry times in your soul or you feel alone standing for the truth.

Elijah felt that too. We can relate to Elijah. A man of like passions as we are. And he prayed earnestly and God showed up.

And God shows up for us too, doesn't he? In those dry times, those dry seasons. Let's have a look at some of the moments of his life. We go to 1 Kings 17.

And we see Elijah was a man who stood for the truth. It says there of Elijah that he walks into the palace and he stands before King Ahab.

[2:33] And he says these words. As the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

He speaks God's truth. Knowing that it's going to cost him, it could cost him potentially his life. And the point here is to stand for truth.

Ahab and Jezebel at the time, they're pushing this Baal worship. It was everywhere. And Baal was the so-called storm God, supposedly controlling the rain and the crops.

People sacrificed to him for prosperity. But God says, enough. Elijah boldly delivers the message.

And his message really is, your fake rain God is powerless. The real God who controls the heavens is the God of Israel.

[3:34] And he's shutting off the tap until you repent. There was no backup plan. No plan B. Just faith. Bold faith. Judgment falls.

And the drought comes. Three and a half years. Exactly as Elijah prayed. Elijah's secret, he lived daily in God's presence.

Notice it says there, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand. Elijah stood before God. And we can have courage when we stand before God in prayer.

And we can stand then before anyone with courage. The first thing, the first place he stood was he stood before God. Prayerfully stood in that presence of God.

And brother and sister, if God before us, who can be against us? If we stand before God, we have nothing to fear. You are not alone through life's journey. God is your shield and strength.

[4:38] So stand for God. Stand for truth. He declared the word of God. And secondly, we see we should trust God's provision.

After Elijah's bold stand, the drought hits. And Elijah feels the cost too. No rain, no crops, no food. It was a tough time.

But God provides for Elijah. As it reads there, 1 Kings 17, from verse 2 through 4, in part it says, God says to him, get thee hence.

He says, hide thyself by the brook Cherith. I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. It's a time of drought, but God provides. And it's interesting that he provides a brook there that flows. And then he sends these ravens to deliver breakfast and dinner daily. Fancy that. It's better than, what's those things that you're called to get something delivered?

[5:41] God delivers daily breakfast and daily dinner. Ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning and bread and flesh in the evening.

And he drank of the brook. God's supply. But then the brook dries up. And God redirects Elijah. He tells him, arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there.

Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. So first he'd been fed by these unclean birds. That was kind of an unusual thing.

And now he's being sent to Zarephath, enemy territory, a town swarming with Baal worshippers.

This was a pagan place. And there Elijah finds a widow gathering sticks for her last meal.

And she says, other, and her boy. And Elijah says, make me a little cake first. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruise of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

[6:52] She gives her last. And God multiplies it. Think of the desperation and her faith to believe the prophet's word.

And what happened? Day after day, the flour kept coming. The oil kept flowing. It prompts us to think of Philippians 4.19, But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

I don't know how much God's got in the bank, as it were, of the riches of his glory. The riches of God. But he's got that supply for you.

God uses unlikely people. There's pagan widow and an unlikely place in the enemy land to bless.

God can use the unlikely places and people.

Sometimes life feels like your brook dries up, doesn't it? That we're feeling dry, spiritually dry. Dry seasons are really the classrooms for trust.

[7:56] We can trust God in those times of dryness. And when our brook, as it were, may run dry, God's river never does. His supply is always there. His providence.

And God often uses the small things to show his power. Two sticks, this pagan widow and a little boy. God's providence.

The ravens. Amazing, isn't it? This widow's tiny act of faith turned into a lasting miracle. For yourself, when life feels empty.

When your barrel is down to that last handful. You're scraping the barrel. Keep on trusting. Keep on believing. God can bless the handful that you offer to him.

A handful becomes a harvest for the widow. And even when things look impossible, God provides. Simply trust him. Trust him now. Another moment in Elijah's life.

[8:53] This time of crisis and what he did. What happened next is that tragedy strikes. The widow's son dies.

And she cries out in grief. Blaming herself and Elijah. Elijah takes the boy. And he persistently prays.

He prays earnestly. It says he prayed there three times. He cried unto the Lord. Oh Lord my God, I pray thee. Let this child's soul come into him again.

Ernest prayer. And God restores his life. Elijah returns the living child to his mother. He says, see, thy son liveth.

And the woman said to Elijah, now by this I know that thou art a man of God and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is true. What does this teach us?

[9:51] God can use the crisis times of our lives to show his power in those crises, in those tough times. The deepest of pains. Another moment in Elijah's life is where we see that God answers prayer.

It tells how Ahab came to Elijah and he, you can imagine him pointing his finger at him and saying, oh, you're that one, the troublemaker.

Art thou he that troubleth Israel? He called Elijah a troublemaker. And Elijah answered and said, I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and thou hast followed Balaam.

Elijah challenged Ahab that he had forsaken God's commands and he was following these false idols, these gods of Baal. What happens next? We come on to Mount Carmel.

The showdown. Three and a half years of drought. The nation starves. Elijah confronts Ahab. And then Elijah calls for all Israel and the prophets of Baal to meet together.

[11:03] And then he challenges the crowd. 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. There's no middle ground. Choose your side. Whose side are you going to be on?

There's a line in the sand. And Elijah caused them to turn first. The false prophets cry. They dance all day. They had quite a revival there.

A Baal revival. Everything was happening. They were really full on. What happened? Nothing. Elijah mocks them. He says, cry aloud.

Cry aloud for he is a God. Either he is talking or he is pursuing or he's on a journey or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awake. He kind of mocked them for their false worship of a false God.

[12:09] They shout. They spin. They slash. But still no sign. Nothing. No sign. Just silence. No fire. Here they are bleeding.

Gyrating. Lots of emotion. But no fire. And then Elijah rebuilds the altar. God's altar. With 12 stones. As that sign of the nation.

Of God's people. He soaks the sacrifice. And the word. Once. Twice. Three times. Then he prays simply. And sincerely.

Cries out. Lord God of Abraham. Isaac. And of Israel. Let it be known. This day. That thou art God. In Israel. It reads on. Hear me. Oh Lord. Hear me. That this people may know that. Thou art the Lord God. And that thou. Has turned their heart back again.

[13:11] God's answer. Instant. Fire falls. Then the fire of the Lord fell. And consumed. The burnt sacrifice.

And the wood. And the stones. And the dust. Then the people fell on their faces. It says. They cried out. The Lord. He is the God. The Lord.

He is the God. Elijah commands. Slay the prophets. The false prophets. And then he prays for rain. The clouds gather.

Can you hear the lightning? Can't you? The thunder. The torrent falls. The drought ends. And real power comes from the true God. God answers.

His prayer. Not from shouting. Or show. Just a simple prayer. Just a few words of prayer. But true prayer. And you go back to that question.

[14:08] If the Lord be God. If the Lord be God. Follow him. But if Baal. Then follow him. There's no neutrality. It's a decision point.

It's a life changing resolve. Who will you follow? And perhaps. We've let. Things grow cold. Man of like passions.

As we are. Even strong believers. Get discouraged. And Elijah shows us what to do. Hey. Just because you're discouraged sometimes.

Doesn't mean you're out of God's will. God's there for you. Strong believers get discouraged. And that's okay. After the victory.

Jezebel threatens to kill Elijah. He goes from the heights of victory. At Mount Carmel. Into the depths of the wilderness. It's like this flip happens.

[15:06] And he runs for his life. He's exhausted. Scared. Depressed. He bolts. Forty miles to Beersheba. That's been on the. Heard about Beersheba on the radio this morning.

Because of course it's topical. At this time. And he bolts to this. Wilderness place. Beersheba. He collapses under a juniper tree.

And what does he do? He prays to die. But he himself went. A day's journey. Into the wilderness. And came and sat down. Under a juniper tree. And he requested for himself.

Heroes break. Even strong believers. Can get tired. Burnout. It can happen. God sends an angel there. To feed him. Giving him strength.

For a 40 day journey. To Mount Horeb. And we find him there. At Mount Horeb. He's hiding in a cave. And God asks him. What doest thou here?

[16:04] Elijah. What are you doing? Why are you here Elijah? In this cave. In this hideout. What's happening? And Elijah it says. And he said.

I felt like quitting. What does God tell him? God tells him. Go forth. He says. Stand upon the mount. Before the Lord. And behold.

The Lord passed by. And a great and strong wind. Rent the mountains. And break in pieces. The rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind. An earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake.

And after the earthquake. A fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire. A still. Small voice. God wasn't shouting.

He was whispering. And Elijah. As it were. As he speaks to us. And he said. But the Lord is not in the fire. But then came.

[16:59] A still. Small voice. God wasn't shouting. He was whispering. And Elijah. Learns to listen. In the quiet moments. It's the same for you and me.

When we're feeling overwhelmed. Can we just. Listen for that still. Small whisper. That voice of God. As it were. As he speaks to us. Through his word. As we open his.

Voice to us. In print. And we hear his voice. And we just slow down. And listen. And we can. Hear his word.

We can hear his voice. And through. That we can know his peace. And that quiet nudge. In it. In our spirit. It's that still. Small voice. That prompting. Sometimes you just got to get.

To that quiet place. And then God sends Elijah. On a new mission. To anoint Hazael. Shehu. And to train Elisha. To take his place.

[17:57] God shows Elijah. The succession plan. Is to pass the torch. To Elisha. And he reminds Elijah too.

That hey. You're not alone. He says. Yeah. I have left me. Seven thousand in Israel. All the knees of which. Have not bowed unto Baal. And every mouth which hath not kissed him.

So speaking about Baal worship. He says. The seven thousand. There's a remnant. Of seven thousand faithful. Brother. Sister. You're not alone.

There's others amongst you. That maybe you're not even aware of. That God always has a remnant. Of his faithful people. And if you're feeling burnt out. That's normal.

Elijah was just like. You and me. And. It tells us. The Lord is nigh unto them. That are of a broken heart. God. Saveth such as be. Of a contrite spirit.

[18:54] And we get that brokenness. And that. Low time. God's near to you. His presence isn't far far away. When you're weary. Can you just listen in.

To that. Still small voice. To his whisper. And God will refresh you. Just like he did. Elijah. God met Elijah in the cave. When you feel down or afraid.

Don't give up. God has a plan. And his grace is enough. Like Paul found. As he prayed. And prayed. And prayed. God said. My grace is enough. My grace is sufficient.

That's what you need. I'm everything that you need. My grace. Another torch. Elijah's life wasn't. About him. It was about passing on.

The faith. And here he is. He finds Elisha ploughing. And he throws his mantle. And he went the twelfth. And Elijah passed by him. And cast his mantle upon him.

[19:51] So he took off his coat. This mantle. And threw it upon Elisha. As the symbol of his calling. And then Elisha it says. Follows Elijah.

And Elisha learns. Of Elijah. And he asks for a double portion. Of Elijah's spirit. How can we pass the torch.

As it were. Someone's Elijah. Think of it in your life. In your circle of influence. Who can you impact. For the glory of God. Can you be a good example. Like Elijah was.

For Elisha. There's others. Maybe younger in their faith. And newer in their walk. But you can be. And I can't hear. In 2 Kings 2. 11. It says.

There appeared a chariot of fire. And horses of fire. And parted them both asunder. And Elijah went up. By a whirlwind. Into heaven. An astonishing sight.

[20:46] To see Elijah. Taken up. As a. You could reckon. A preview of the rapture. The faithful taken up. To glory. Elijah's faith.

Carried on. Through Elisha. Who he left behind. And Elisha performed. Twice as many miracles. With that double portion. Think of it for yourself. A faithful life.

Leaves a lasting legacy. And for yourself. And Elisha. That you can help. And encourage. Maybe a newer believer. A younger believer. In the faith. Someone you can. Get alongside.

Train someone. Pass the torch. And finish well. By ensuring the work continues. So. God blessed. Elijah. With this amazing. Taking up.

And. Into heaven. He finished well. And. The work. Continues. He didn't leave it. Hanging. Think of.

[21:42] Elijah. And what we could learn. Some of the points. We've touched on. How he stood for truth. Before the king. He was bold. He was prayerful. He trusted God's supply.

And God did supply. In amazing ways. He faced crises. And tests. He was faithful. He saw miracles. God's provision. He was powerful. But not his power.

It was from heaven. The fire fell. And. There was times. He was broken. Discouraged. Hey. He was human. That helps us. Doesn't it?

That hey. We've got. Some hope there. When we're having those. Elijah moments. Wanting to be in the cave. And just hide. He was broken. Discouraged.

In our life. Can we stand boldly. When the truth is unpopular. Can we say. Hey. This is the truth. And that's where I stand. Boldly stand.

[22:38] Trust God completely. Knowing he's going to meet your needs. Even though circumstances. Aren't how you'd like them to be. Trust him. And keep on trusting. And listen.

Listen quietly. His word. That's his voice. That's his true voice. The word of God. God. It's in. The pages of his word. We can get his whisper.

As we meet with him. As we stand before him. Like Elijah did. In prayer. As we go to hear his voice. The quiet. Voice. Of the scriptures.

And his whisper. Brings light. In the spirit. But beyond our own family circle. Think of others. In your life. In your friendship circle. How can you pass it on?

Train the next generation. Wouldn't that be a blessing? As we look back. As we might be in the exit lounge. We think. Hey. There's others. That are carrying on the work.

[23:34] This church is going to grow. From strength to strength. This ministry. This work. This blessed gospel. It's going to be passed on. And others are going to keep on. Passing it on.

And serving. The next generation. The Elijah life. Can we have such a life. That we will be brave. That we will be bold. That we will be earnest in prayer.

That we will stand. That we will trust God. Always trust him. Even though there's drought. Even though there's despair. Even though there's crises. We're going to trust God. Always trust him.

And we're going to pray. And keep on praying. Pray with faith. Like Elijah prayed. Time and time again he prayed. He prayed and the fire fell. He prayed and the boy came to life. He prayed and God provided.

Out of nowhere. In unusual circumstances. And he prayed. And God answered his prayer. And there's times he was weary. And worn.

[24:28] Just like the best of us. Can have those moments. Of discouragement. Of difficulty. Rest. Take that time to rest. And listen for his voice.

And don't be ashamed. To pass it on. Think of others. Who can I pass the baton onto? Who can I pass the torch onto? As it were. To share the gospel faith. To share that ministry.

Our heart for God. And we can be just like Elijah. He was just a man. A simple man. A man like as we are. Just an ordinary man. Just Elijah.

You might say for yourself. Well I'm just. Humble old me. I'm just me. God uses ordinary people. Plus faith. And that is a powerful life for God.

Simply trust him. We've been challenged earlier. Of the gospel challenge. Have you trusted him? Are you a believer? As Elijah was a believer. And it was simple faith.

[25:29] Right through. That God answered. His need. And your ultimate need. For all of us. Is salvation. Have you trusted him?

As your saviour. And know that. He's going to watch over you. Lifelong. And you can have a powerful life. For God. Let us pray. Lord we thank you.

That it's only by the virtue. Of your shed blood. That we can have. Of salvation. Because you. Took our sin. And paid for it. You died in our place.

For our sin. Lord we love you. We pray that you'll help us. Lord to grow in that faith. To grow stronger. Yet stronger. To walk. More powerfully. Lord not. Laying any claim.

To our own righteousness. Even. But laying hold of your righteousness. And walking in your. Walk in your spirit. In your truth. Help us with the challenges of life.

[26:22] The discouragement times. The depression. The stresses of everyday living at times. Even. Of knowing. How we're going to be sustained. That you are our provider.

Lord we thank you for all of these things. Help us to pray. And keep on praying. Help us to be people of faith. The faith that saves. The faith in the saviour.

Lord and have that faith. That lives and walks. In our shoes. Lord help us. We pray. Be glorified. We pray if there's any yet to trust you here.

Today or watching. That they might. Cry out. Lord Jesus save me. I trust you. As my saviour. To pay for my sin. And to forgive me of my sin.

To cleanse me. To make me yours. To purchase me. That I would be yours. And yours alone. Lord help us to walk in that truth. As saved people.

[27:19] All for your glory. May we finish well. Lord that we'll look back. We may not be taken up. In a chariot of fire. But Lord. Some of us may even.

Go up. In your taking up of your church. But yet. However you take us. Lord we want to finish well. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.