

A Small Cloud like a Man's Hand

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[0 : 00] During prayer that enabled him to possibly block out other things that were going on, but also was a posture of humility, bowing down before God.

! There are different ways of standing or kneeling or sitting when you pray. But Elijah gives us one model which encourages us to be humble before our God, to shut out the distractions of the world around us.

He was not, as one might think, dancing and rejoicing and shouting with joy, having just defeated the prophets of Baal, but he was humble and recognised where that victory had come from.

He was persistent in his prayer. It's the belief that he was on the ground praying for the rains to return because that's what God had promised.

He was praying in line with God's will, but he was persistent. He kept sending the servant. He was patient.

[1 : 10] After the first couple of times he didn't say, well, that's it, you know, I've done my bit, you know, can't do any more. He kept going in prayer and he was patient. He encouraged the servant to go back.

Keep having a look. Keep having a look. Let's wait. Let's see what God is going to do. It may not be as quickly as we want, but I've got confidence that God will do it.

He was confident that the small sign of a cloud only the size of a man's hand was a portent of bigger and more important things to come.

The rains that would break the drought and bring back the crops, the grass for the animals and prosperity to the kingdom again.

Ahab was not killed along with the prophets of Baal. But he was allowed to not exactly escape because he was still, as it were, under the control of Elijah, who was telling him, do this, do that, go there.

[2 : 18] Judgment may be delayed. We might get cross or angry or impatient where we don't see God at work where there is injustice.

But judgment may be delayed. To give those people a chance to repent. And then occasionally, and it's not quite certain why, I had a look, I couldn't see why Elijah was supposed to arrive in Jezreel before Ahab.

It may have been something to do with to get there ahead of Ahab so that Jezreel could know what had happened before Ahab gave his version of events.

But sometimes, God will provide his power to do something extraordinary or different, to take you beyond the natural in some way for his purposes. And sometimes we may not know exactly why that is.

And we have just to trust that he knows what he's doing with us. So when you pray, think about your posture. Are you praying in humility?

[3 : 37] Are you praying without distraction? Are you persistent? Do you keep going even when you can't see the answer immediately? Are you patient? Because you know that God has said something will happen, but you can't see it just yet.

And then an encouragement that if you see a small answer, be confident that that may well be the start of a bigger answer or a bigger thing to happen.

That judgment belongs to God, not to us. And that we should be available to God for him to exert his power through us in humility.

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. And as we go from this place, whether now or later in the day, out into the world, may we know God's leading, God's presence, God's power, as we speak and minister to the world around us.

Amen. Amen.