

God's Powerful Word Is Offered Graciously to His Humbled Servants

Wednesday, July 6, 2022 • Read 1Kings 18:41–46

Questions from the Scripture text: To whom did Elijah speak (v41a)? What does he tell him to do? Why? What does Ahab do in v42? Where does Elijah go? What does he do there? To whom does he speak in v43? Where does he tell him to go? To do what? What are the results? How many times? When does the result change (v44)? What is the new result? How big is the cloud? Now to whom does Elijah send his servant? To tell him to do what? When? Why so fast? Now what is happening in the sky (v45)? And what happened on the earth? And where did Ahab go? Then what came upon whom (v46)? And what did Elijah do? In front of whom? All the way to where?

What does God's mercy to an enemy look like? 1Kings 18:41–46 looks forward to the first serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these six verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **the Lord's Word that could and should destroy us is offered to us instead to lead and direct us.**

The power of God's Word. Only the Word could bring rain (cf. 17:1). And now Elijah, the mouth of God, tells Ahab "Go up, eat and drink for there is the sound [literally, "voice"] of abundance of rain. Not even a fist-sized cloud has appeared in the sky, but he lets Ahab know that he can go ahead and drop the rationing, because abundance is coming. Eat and drink; more is on the way. How does Elijah know this? He hears the "voice" of abundance of rain.

And when the first hint of rain appears, Elijah gives fair warning, because this special, Word-brought storm will be a doozy. In fact, the advice to Ahab now changes... harness up that chariot and go, because this is going to be the kind of rain that stops chariots. And it was so. "The sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain."

The humility of God's servant. As the mouth of God, who has just won a great victory for God, Elijah might have indulged fleshly pride and enjoyed his victory. But it was the Word's victory. And the servant of the Word still had service to do. So what do we see him doing in v42? Praying. So constant in prayer as not even to go look for himself. He sends his servant to look, while he takes a servant posture before God in prayer. But even that is not so easy. He persists in prayer through seven iterations of sending his servant, etc. The Lord often humbles His servants not only into lowliness, but into having to patiently endure in prayer and lowliness.

The offer of God's Word to take other servants. All of this power that God has demonstrated in the fire at the sacrifice and the water of the storm (and to enable a prophet to outrun a chariot for miles in the rain) is now offered to sustain and support Ahab. After all that Ahab has done, this is a marvelously gracious offer to him in the form of the prophet running in front of his chariot in v46.

Whenever God's Word is presented or preached to us, the same offer is made. Submit to God, be the servant of His Word. Trust in His salvation. Know that His atonement means that He is entirely for us. God offers to take us for His own, and instruct and direct us throughout our lives, spiritually nourishing and reviving us.

What examples of the power of God's Word do you know of from the Bible? From history? From your own life? In what circumstances has God brought you low? Made you persist in prayer? How are you responding to God's offers to have your life directed by His Word? When does He do so in your life?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for the display of Your power in the rain that came by the prayer of Elijah. You have made us with like nature to his, but we are not believing or persistent in prayer like we ought to be. Forgive our unbelief and laziness. Make us to remember that the prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Thank You for sending Your Word before us. Forgive us for wanting to direct and instruct You, rather than be led and instructed by You. Truly, You are gracious, and we are stubborn. Overcome our stubbornness by Your grace, we pray, through Jesus Christ, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP32AB "What Blessedness" or TPH172 "Speak, O Lord"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

First Kings chapter 18, verses 41 through 46. These are God's words and Elijah said to Ahab, go up eat and drink for there is the sound of abundance of rain so they have went up to eat and drink.

The Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, then he bowed down to the ground and put his face between his knees and said to his servant. Go up now. Look toward the sea. So he went up and look looked and said there's nothing seven times. He said go again.

Then it came to pass the seventh time. That he said there was 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 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 just real and the hand of Yahweh came upon Elijah and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. So far the reading of God's inspired and inherent worked.

So, as we come to this passage and it's transition between the execution of the prophets avail and Ashrah and Jezebel's response to that execution. In the beginning of chapter 19 we have a reminder of the power of the Word of God and of the humility of God's servant that although his God's Word was in Elijah's mouth, Elijah himself was humble and small.

And we have the great mercy of God in offering repentance offering repentance to Ahab First. The power of the word of God for a couple of chapters. Now, since beginning of chapter 17, we have known, we have heard that there would not be rain again, except at the sound of God's Word, The Word that comes out of word that comes from the Lord by the voice of Elijah.

And even before there's even this tiny little fist-sized cloud in the sky. Elijah tells Ahab, he hears the sound of abundance of rain. And other words, it is the Word of God. First and foremost that determines whether or not you can come off of your food rationing plan. There's been a famine for three years.

You remember Ahab and Avidiah going separate ways to collect food for animals. We cared about the lives of the animals even as he was hunting down and killing the prophets of God. And apparently, or almost certainly, there was some some form of scaling back. Tightening belts not using up too much.

But now Elijah says to AM in verse 41, go ahead and eat and drink because the thing that controls the thing that controls whether or not, there will be rain, the Word of God says that there will be and there is the sound of abundance of rain. And then when the rain comes, it's that's the sort of rain it that stops chariots.

The word chariot doesn't actually appear in verse 44 because the instruction is too urgent. And he says, go up, say to Ahab and the word that translated prepare is really a word for harness or GERD Harness, and go down before the rain stops. You. So this isn't just a little bit of rain very quickly, the ground is going to become so saturated that it's the sort of rain that chariot wheels.

Get stuck in. So there's an emphasis here on the greatness of the power of God, and the power, especially of God's Word. But the one into whose mouth, God puts that word is very weak, very similar to what we've seen several times recently, and thinking about the apostle Paul, and his weakness and the morning sermons.

We've been in Acts chapter 9 and thinking of him as Saul of Tarsus and then, in order to understand Scripture by Scripture, we've been looking at places like second Corinthians 11, where he talks about the incident and Damascus with the wall and Galatians 1 and 2, where he talks about his training and his ministry and so forth.

And we find that although the word of God was strong and Paul's mouth Paul himself. As a man was unimpressive and weak, lowly and humble, The same is true with Elijah. Elijah has these very impressive and powerful things to say to Ahab but he himself must bow himself and pray.

And so you see in verse 42. Elijah goes up or sorry, Ahab goes up to eat and drink. And so you have the king feasting like kings do, but what does Elijah do? He goes to the top of Mount Carmel? They bows down to the ground and puts his face between his knees.

This is the right posture of the people of God, even when we have God, as our strength and our power like we heard about in Psalm 59 last night. Well what was David doing with God? As his strength and his defense and his mercy? He was crying out to God.

He was spraying. God himself was powerful, but David was humble before God and lowly. So, also here, Elijah Now, God himself is powerful and aligns up, but Elijah himself is humble and lowly. And that helps us because the fact that Elijah was not a superman encourages us in our troubles that we have the same access to the same God in the same loneliness.

That's why is the Holy Spirit carries James along and he's writing about praying in the last chapter of his letter. He says Elijah was a man of like nature to ours and yet he prayed and God stopped the rain. And he prayed. And God started the rain. A prayers of a righteous man, avail much.

They are powerful in their working, their effective in their working. And so, he actually uses the end of first Kings 18. The Holy Spirit uses as an example to us of how people who are lowly and humble and weak of like human nature. To ours independence upon God, have access not to a power.

That is in us, that's humanism. That's the lie of our society. I know you can do it, you have it in you. There's power in people, I believe in the power of people. It's usually what people mean when they say faith in our society, this believiness that is strong and pulls strength out of us, Though.

There's no such thing. One of the main points of this passage is how humble and weak and lowly. Elijah is although his God is great and strong and humiliates Baal and the and the kings of earth are powerless before him. Although his God is great and strong, the servant of God as low humble and must call upon God's name, He bows to the ground face between his knees.

I wonder how much how exercised we are and loneliness and humility before God. If this is something that we know about ourselves generally and then experience intentionally as we take a posture of prayer for sometimes a prayer before God. And then there is the offer of God's Word to Ahab this offer, this merciful offer of repentance Elijah.

The the week and lowly becomes Elijah the Olympic champion. The Word of God that had stopped the rain, the Word of God that had started the rain, the Word of God that had brought a hurricane on on Mount Carmel. The Lord. Now the hand of Yahweh comes upon Elijah and he's able to run in front of A-hat.

And so there is this extended period because it's from the top of Mount Carmel, all the way to Jezreel. And let's see if I can find them quickly here.

Either. It's not marked well enough or my geography is not good enough but it's miles and miles. That the king is in his chariot. And there is this, there is this hurricane of a storm. And of course, he's very impressed by the fact of the hurricane of the storm because there hadn't been a drop of rain in three years.

And he's urging his chariot on faster and faster. So best chariot in the land, it's the King's Chariot best horses in the land. Pulling the best area, it's in the land or the Kings horses. And he's trying to outrun the storm to make it to Jezreel before the chariot gets stuck in this hurricane.

And there's a profit running on foot in front of the chariot and he stays out in the lead the entire time for miles and miles from Carmel to Jezreel. And you see what God is saying to Ahab. What God is offering to Ahab. God is offering Ahab. I will make my servant your servant.

My word will lead. You will go out in front of you, follow my word and you will have my power to sustain and defend and strengthen you as it has Elijah. And you haven't been able to defeat this guy for three years. Although you've committed the resources of the kingdom and take made other nations come under vows that they haven't seen him.

This guy has defeated you all by himself by the Lord's strength and now the Lord is offering a have the opportunity to turn from following the bales His prophets are all. Just been executed to turn from following the. Bales and to follow the Lord, by the word of God and have the word act in service to and strengthening to him.

It's a very merciful offer, isn't it? They have deserved to be thrown in with the 850 profits and priests avail and ashra who were executed, but not only was Ahab, not killed, he's offered repentance. Now we find out that he is more afraid of his wife than he is of the Living God in the next passage.

But for now just now at the end of chapter 18 It's a marvelous offer from God. Isn't it? And doesn't he always offer us? Isn't he repeatedly? Every time we come to his word, every time we come to worship Him through Christ. And remember, the blood of the cross that paid for our sin, the righteousness of Jesus that stands for us and the invitation to live in this world as people who are righteous through Jesus and adopted as God's children and who are led by His Word, he keeps, he keeps taking us through have followed our own hearts and our own wills and he sets his word in front of us.

And he says, follow me, be led by my word and all my Almighty power while strengthen and defend and shall mercy to you. There's a marvelous marvelous offer of new repentance that God gives to Ahab in this picture that he gives to him. This moving picture of Elijah running in the mud faster than the Kings chariots and horses.

Well, may the Lord remind us of the great power of his word and of the lowliness, the humility of his servants who have access to the power of God through prayer. Not to a power from themselves and maybe remind us continually of the greatest of his mercy to offer us, repentance to offer us to be led through life by his word, following him and his word.

Let's pray. We, thank you, Lord, for this portion of your word. Thank you for giving us to open your words together Every day and giving us the instruction to do so morning and evening. We pray. Lord that you would give us humble hearts that even when we follow you, even when you do great things through us that we would remember that.

We were of, like, lowly nature to Elijah. We pray that your spirit might bring this home to us when we are in distress and remind us that our prayers avail much because they come up to you the all-powerful. God. Thank you. Lord for showing us again, the greatness of your mercy and patience as you offered a haberpentance.

As you offer us, continually repentance, grant to us to take the offer and to follow you and to turn from living, according to our own wills, grant, all these things. We asked in Jesus' name Amen