

# Revival in Our Day

by Doc Greenway

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*Doc Greenway's sermon explores the principles of faith and obedience through the story of Elijah, linking them to the theme of revival.*

**Duration:** 30:19

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 18:41-45, Matthew 6:33, 1 John 1:9

**Topics:** "Revival"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of faith and perseverance in seeking God's forgiveness and blessings. He uses the story of Elijah as an example of someone who did not lose hope even when there seemed to be no sign of rain. The preacher also shares a personal anecdote about a violin incident that taught him the lesson of concentration and perseverance in prayer. He concludes by encouraging the congregation to have faith in God's promise of revival and to be obedient and expectant for it.

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## Transcript

I would like to read from the first book of Kings, chapter eighteen, commencing at verse forty-one to the end of the chapter. I'm reading from the authorised version, by the way. First Kings, chapter eighteen, verse forty-one to verse forty-six.

And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink, and Elijah went up to the top of Carmel. And he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea.

And he went up and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there arises a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand.

And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind. And there was a great rain.

And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah. And he girded up his loins and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

May God bless those that are reading from his word. I can well recall the first occasion when I referred to this incident in the life of Elijah. It was when I was in Middlesbrough in the north of England.

It was my first parish. And I had been speaking about revival, the need of spiritual renewal. And this flashed into my mind, this account of the event in the life of Elijah.

And I thought, That's a good illustration for revival. And so, it seemed to me that it was all summed up in that expression. There is a sound of abundance of rain.

And being young and inexperienced, I thought I'd make this quite dramatic. And so, I stepped back on the platform and then came forward and said, There is a sound of abundance of rain. Perfect.

And I stepped back and stepped forward again and a little louder said, There is a sound of abundance of rain. Stepped back again and by this time there was silence. Stepped forward once more and this is the climax, you know.

There is a sound of abundance of rain. And a dear old lady stood up and said, All right, young man. She said, You don't frighten me.

I don't care how much rain comes. I've got my umbrella. What an anticlimax.

Of course, I tried to recover it and say, Well, that's the trouble with us, isn't it? We've got our umbrellas. We're afraid to get soaked. We don't want God to really drench us by His Spirit.

But I don't think I succeeded very well, really. However, that was part of the inexperience to which I was passing and it added something to me when I saw what had happened. This is a very interesting event in the life of Elijah and I wish that we had plenty of time this morning to develop it.

But we haven't and so I'm going to touch on the salient points. I'm sure that when we talk about Elijah and his prayer for rain that immediately there comes into our mind the thought of revival. Because time and time again this outpouring of rain is linked with spiritual renewal and spiritual revival.

And I think it is quite justified to say that time and time again in the Word of God, the two are so joined together that you learn to think of them as almost one. And so, it seems to me that if we are to discover the principles underlying what took place here we have to be open to the Spirit of God. You know, for some reason or other we're inclined to think of these worthies in the New Testament and the Old Testament as belonging to some superior order of beings.

It may be the distance lends enchantment to the scene, I don't know. But we do think of them as different somehow. But you can be dead sure about Elijah because in James 5, 17 we are told very distinctly that Elijah was a man with a nature like ours and he prayed fervently that it might not rain.

And for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again and the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth its fruit. A man with a nature like ours.

Well, if he had a nature like mine, then I can really understand him. But I can see too where he triumphed and I might have been defeated. But the question I want to ask first of all is what are some of the lessons in faith that we learn from the experience of Elijah which is recounted here? What are these lessons? What is the approach of faith to begin with? What is involved here? The means by which faith was cultivated in the life and experience of this man.

Why was it that he was able to say so triumphantly and so definitely and positively that there is a sound of abundance of rain when the skies were as brass and there hadn't been rain, according to his word, on the earth for such a long time? How was it possible? And the first lesson that I learned here is that obedience is the key to assurance in the area of faith. Obedience is the key to assurance. This is true prevailing prayer as it is true everywhere in spiritual life.

John the Apostle reminds us of this in 1 John 3 and 22 when he says, And whatsoever we ask we receive of him because we keep his commandments and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. How did Elijah know the rain was coming? I think it's an oversimplification to say that he knew because he was a prophet and therefore he had a spiritual insight to the things that were going to happen. I don't think that's good enough.

The answer lies deeper in his obedience to the expressed command of the Lord to him. Remember after his word to King Herod that the drought was coming, that's 1 Kings 17 verse 1, he was commanded to hide by the brook and to drink of the brook and to be fed by the ravens. Well, if Elijah had a nature like mine, I think that he would have been inclined to argue a bit, even though he may not have expressed it in so many words.

Why send me to a brook, Lord? You know very well it's going to dry up. At least give me a spawning chance, send me to a river that I might have the chance to survive a little longer. Why send me to a brook? So strange.

And ravens to feed him. The whole command is so ridiculous on the human level to the man who is reasoning from that standpoint. So strange, so silly really.

One would think, why to a brook? I don't find that Elijah did argue really, but in verse 5 I read, so he went and did according to the word of the Lord. He did it, didn't argue about it, didn't reason concerning it, but he obeyed it and he went. And eventually, of course, the brook dried up and it was time to move on.

Where next? Where is he going now? The answer is in verse 9. Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. Well, here it is again.

Why send me to a widow, Lord? Why don't you send me to somebody who is well off? Able to afford to keep me. And a gentile at that. Why send me to a gentile widow when there are so many you could call upon? How strange.

If the first command was ridiculous, this one was preposterous. Why do this to me, Lord? What are you really getting at? There, as we have read this morning, he found a widow gathering sticks for a fire. She was going to make a meal, the last one, for herself and her son.

And Elijah said unto her, Fear not, go and do as thou hast said, but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it to me, and after make for thee and for thy son. And then comes the first indication that the rain is at hand. Verse 14.

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. Now, if Elijah had not obeyed the Lord, would he have got the revelation? I don't think so. And so, where we are concerned, if we believe that revival is coming, if we can say quite positively and definitely that we are concerned to declare this, that revival is

coming to New Zealand, how can we be sure? How can we be positive? How can we say this with authority unless we are prepared to obey God? Because obedience is the key to assurance.

So Elijah obeyed the Lord. And then comes the third instruction. Chapter 18 and verse 1. And it came to pass, after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto Abraham, and I will send rain upon the earth.

Well, believe me, if the first command was ridiculous and the second was preposterous, this one was really deadly and dangerous because we are told very clearly what Ahab thought about Elijah and what he was doing when he was looking for him. Ahab was infuriated with Elijah. He believed that the prophet was responsible for the drought in the land.

And he was determined to kill him. And when Elijah met up with Obadiah, Ahab's servant, who was a good man, by the way, this servant of Ahab's was very concerned. If I go and tell Ahab, you are here, the spirit of the Lord will carry you away.

And Ahab is going to kill me. Talk about the elusive pimpernel. It's nothing to do with the elusive prophet.

They couldn't be sure where he would be found. He popped up here, there and everywhere. And Obadiah was very concerned.

But Elijah reassures him, As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today. And when Ahab saw Elijah, he said, Is it you, you traveler of Israel? And Elijah said, You have got the wrong man. You are the one who travels Israel by your idolatry and your worship of Baal.

Now Elijah knew he was risking his life in facing Ahab. But he knew also that God had said, Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth. So he obeyed God.

And his obedience was the key to his assurance so that he could say there is a sound of abundance of rain. A second lesson we learn is that to be productive, faith must be active. It is a funny thing about faith.

You know, it won't work until you do. Faith doesn't work until you do. If you step out upon faith, faith becomes active.

But if you are not prepared to do that, then it is nothing so far as you are concerned. It produces nothing. But to be productive, faith must be active.

Chapter 18 and verse 41, And Ahab said unto Ahab, at least Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink, and Elijah went up to the top of Carmel. What is the action of faith? The first thing is separation.

Separation. Ahab went up to eat and to drink, Elijah went up to the top of Carmel to separate himself unto the Lord. He didn't rest back and say, Well, the rain is coming, so what am I going to worry about or be concerned about? Not at all.

He didn't let things take their course. But he went up to Carmel's heights. And isn't it true that every walk with God is a climb? Every one.

Without exception. And yet, you have to get alone to know that you are not alone. And I don't think you ever will discover that you are not alone really until you are prepared to get alone.

Elijah knew there was plenty of activity in the valley below, plenty of company down there, but he went up the slopes of Carmel, separated himself before the Lord. And this was the first thing. You can be alone and yet not be lonely.

Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, alone with God, the world forbidden, alone with God, O blessed retreat. He had went up to eat and to drink, but Elijah went up to the top of Carmel. Separation.

That's the first step. And the second step in faith is intercession, verse 42. And he cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees.

There are many attitudes in prayer we know, standing to pray, kneeling to pray. But here in this prayer, Elijah goes further still and bows himself over till his forehead is almost touching the ground. An expression truly of the fact that God was present.

An expression too of the fact that he himself could do nothing. Bowed himself over. Why, I wonder.

Because this is intensity in prayer. The word which is used in James 5.17 gives us this idea. Intense prayer on fire.

It's also used that Jesus in Matthew 26.39 in Gethsemane, and he went a little further and fell on his face and prayed. Prayed earnestly. Prayed fervently.

Prayed with prayer on fire. Intense intercession which has caught fire, which has the glow of prayer about it. This is the factual fervent prayer of a man that avails much with God.

And Elijah prayed earnestly. That's according to James. We're not told that he used any words that are recorded.

Probably he was praying silently. It was very effective, wasn't it? I remember when I had given my heart to the Lord, some months after that, I went through a very trying experience. It seemed to me that I doubted everything.

That every star dropped out of my sky and I was left forsaken. It was a terrible experience. So I went down to see my minister, who was a converted minor, actually.

He used to lecture, I remember, on one occasion. I remember it quite clearly. His subject was from pit to pulpit.

But he was a wonderful man of God. And I went down as a young man, went down to see him. My wife said, well, he's in his study.

You can go right in. So I just tapped and went in. And I found that he was on his knees.

And he looked at me and he said, excuse me while I pray. And I sat for a while and I felt impelled to go on my knees. And I watched him.

And he was bowed over like Elijah on Mount Carmel. And he never uttered a word that I could hear. But every now and again he would sigh.

And a strange thing happened to me. I found that while he was there in this attitude of prayer and prostration before God, that I began to weep. We must have been there for about an hour.

And all I can say is this, that as I knelt there, I found that every star was put back into my sky. And he never said a word. In the end he straightened himself up and he looked at me and said, is it all right now? I had never heard or seen or witnessed anything like that before.

It was real. Intense intercession on fire. That's how Elijah prayed.

And so Elijah's prostration in prayer signified his consciousness that God was near. Bowing down in an attitude of worship, it proclaimed this fact that his intercession was being heard. The third step in the action of faith is expectation.

Verse 43. And he said to his servant, go up now, look toward the sea. Oh yes, Elijah knew the direction from which he could expect the answer.

And that's so important, isn't it? It's no use looking up if you should be looking down. It's no use looking outward if you should be looking inward. The answer will never come except from God's direction.

And it's important that we know where to look, where to direct our gaze for the answer to prayer, especially prayer for revival. I read quite recently about a minister who went to a church some miles away from his home to conduct an evangelistic campaign. On the first week, there was no results at all.

And on the Friday, he began to check it out. So on his knees he said, why don't you move, Lord? And the Lord spoke right back to him and said, why don't you move? It was such a shock to him to realize that God was speaking to him in this way that he began to examine his heart. And into his consciousness there flashed the realization of the last time that he was at his own church in a kind of little farewell meeting.

And this night, while the people were assembled there, the caretaker went to remove the pastor's violin, which he treasured very much, from the top of the piano that he might fold it down. And accidentally, he knocked it against the piano. And the minister, he really lost his temper, had a hard job to control himself, but he snatched the violin away from the man's hand and was quite upset about it.

And this was the thing which the Lord brought back to him on his knees in this room. And so he arranged with the minister who was there in charge to take the service on the Saturday night, on the Sunday, and he went back to his own church. On the Sunday morning, he spoke to his congregation.

First of all, he had spoken to the man and apologized to him, and now he spoke to the whole church and told them what had happened and humbled himself before them and asked their forgiveness. Then he went back to the place where he was conducting the mission and preached again. And the Lord really blessed him and gave him wonderful results.

So simple, isn't it? Why don't you move, Lord? Why don't you move? Why don't you do what I want you to do? If you are willing to obey me, I am willing to bless you. You know, in 1 John 1 and 9 we read, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity. Sin unconfessed is sin unforgiven, and sin unforgiven is sin unfriends.

There is no way out. And this man of God realized it. So Elijah knew where to look and his expectation would not be cut off.

He would not be disappointed. The fourth step in the action of faith is concentration. Verse 43.

He said to his servant, Look toward the sea. And he went up and looked and said, There is nothing. Actually, the words there is not in the original text.

It reads, And looked and said, Nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. Elijah refused to be discouraged when the answer was not there, apparently.

When there was nothing to see, and this is the essence of faith, the man who has heard something will still believe, though at first he sees nothing. There is a sound of abundance of rain. That was good enough for Elijah.

Concentration. Perseverance. This lesson, prayer Jesus taught, you remember, in the parable of the impotent widow and the unjust judge.

The judge who said, Well, I don't fear man and I don't fear God either, but this widow, she is something else beside. And I have to do something about it because I will never get any peace until I answer her petition. And so he did something.

Remember how Jesus spoke about asking and seeking and knocking? All in the present tense, continuous tense. For he who keeps on asking, He who keeps on seeking, finds. He who keeps on knocking, the door is open to him.

The secret is in keeping on. Tenacity, importunity, perseverance, determination. We are the ones who give up.

God never does. Concentration. Many are saying, What's the use of looking for revival in these Laodicean days? No use.

You're wasting your time. Well, I don't know. The choicest blessing, as I see it, is offered to the overcomer in this particular dispensation, if these are the Laodicean days.

For the Lord says to him, It overcometh, will I grant to sit with me on my throne. You can't have anything better than that. That's the Laodicean Church.

Like Elijah, we must keep on believing for the drenching rain. For this is the action of faith. Then, briefly, the answer of faith.

Chapter 18, verses 44 and 45, you get this. Notice, first of all, the smallness of the sign. And it came to pass at the seventh time that he said, Behold, there ariseth a cloud like the size of a man's hand out of the sea.

That's all. The smallness of the sign. Not much of an indication of what Elijah had prophesied and declared.

Not much to be seen. But then again, little is much, if God be in it, the size of a man's hand. That's all.

How did the revival in Wales begin at the beginning of the century? How did it really start? It started in a Christian endeavor meeting where a young girl stood to her feet and said, I love Jesus Christ with all my heart. That's all. And the Spirit of God fell upon the congregation of young people and upon their leaders.

Many were mown down under the impact of the Spirit of God. And the revival schemes began to flow. Not much to be seen.

Not much in evidence at the beginning. But it led to such tremendous things. I love Jesus Christ with all my heart.

That's all. But God used that as the key. Think of that.

It doesn't demand great things of you. But if you're obedient, and if your faith is active toward God, and if you truly believe that God is determined to send revival in our day, you won't be put off. Why am I in New Zealand today? Why did I return from the old country? Because God showed me that revival was coming to New Zealand.

That's why. And I came back because I wanted to be in it. If it was His gracious desire for me to experience it when it came.

But believe me, revival is coming. And believe me too, that it won't come until we are prepared to do what God wants us to do and to obey Him. Then think of the largeness of the vision.

The largeness of the vision. Elijah said to his servant, Go up, say unto him, Prepare thy trowel, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. What? Trowel about the size of a man's hand.

And he's talking about getting a move on in case the rain stops him. The largeness of the vision. This is faith, isn't it? Faith that believes the incredible.

Faith that perceives the invisible. Faith that achieves the impossible. This is the kind of faith that Elijah had, which he manifested.

Get moving, Jehovah, or you aren't going to make it. Get a move on. The rain is coming.

Surely coming. And then the greatness of the rain. Matthew 2, verse 45.

And it came to pass in the meanwhile, while he was still praying and seeking God. That the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. What had he prophesied? Abundance of rain.

What did he receive? Great rain. It's exactly what he prophesied. It was exactly what he received.

His expectation was not cut off. And God honored this faith. So if we are believing for revival in our day, we have to remember two things at least.

We have to remember that one of the great principles in revival is divine sovereignty. Only God can send revival. Men may build the altar, stone upon stone.

Men may place a sacrifice upon it. But only God can send the fire. Divine sovereignty.

The other thing is human availability. Not human ability, but availability, usability. Ready and prepared to let God use you in his purpose.

In the bringing to pass of his will concerning revival. May we learn some of these lessons of faith from the life of Elijah and from this event in my life. And may God inspire us and quicken us that we may believe him for revival in our day.

Not just the droppings, but the mighty showers. God is more ready to give than we are to receive. Lord, give us more Elijahs to pray the fire down.

To close the heavens and also send the rain. To heal the sick and raise the dead. And glorify thy name.

Oh, I'd like to hear Elijah. Pray again. May God bless his word to our hearts.

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