

Elijah; A Man of Like Passions

James 5:17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; 13 And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

Lesson Objective:

The aim of the lesson is to strengthen the relationship between the church and the pastor. We will consider the work of a pastor by comparison with the life of Elijah. We will look at the demands placed upon him, his trials, successes and failures in an attempt to better "know them which labour among you" with the hope that by better knowing them and their trials we may be better equipped to support them.

What I am not trying to do with this lesson is to solicit pity for the Man of God, to excuse him of his responsibilities, nor to make excuse for his sins or failures. We are responsible to God and to the churches to faithfully execute the calling we have been given.

The work of spreading the Gospel was committed to the Churches that make up the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

1 Thessalonians 1:8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

We are all working TOGETHER for the promotion of the Gospel and Kingdom of Tesus Christ.

Ephesians 4:-:u-i2 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; 12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

1 Corinthians 3:5 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

How important is the relationship between the pastor and his congregation?

1 Thessalonians 5:12 And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you...

Hebrews 13:7 Remember them which have the rule over you...

Hebrews 13:17 Obey (also translated as trust, believe, have confidence in) them that have the rule over you...

What did Paul mean when he said, "know them, remember them, obey them"? Did he intend for us to know their name, know where they live? Or did he rather intend for us to understand who they are and what their work in the church is so as to better enable us to support them. Consider this occasion with Moses.

Exodus 17:11-12 And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. 12 But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.

Did Aaron and Hur fully understand the weight that was upon Moses? Perhaps not, but they could see the effects of it and did what was in their power to do to help bear the burden.

Elijah-My God is Jehovah

The Tishbite 1 Kings 17:1

1. Tishbe was nowhere special and we know nothing of his lineage. He was in fact an ordinary man as we are.
2. Elijah appears on the scene as a man with no earthly connections. No one was with him and no one came looking for him. At times, the ministry can be a lonely place for the Pastor. Although there are burdens which are his alone to bear, there can also be a tendency to shut others out. This is especially true when there have been previous wounds inflicted by those whom he has the care over. We must fight this tendency. We cannot well care for those who we will not let in.

1 Corinthians 1:26,29 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

The Message to Ahab 1 Kings 17:1

- 1.He delivers a message to King Ahab, pronouncing judgement on the nation of Israel: a drought as a consequence of their idolatry.
- 2.The Pastor is a chosen mouthpiece. As such, he sounds out the truth according to the word of God. A truth which is not often convenient or popular and which may put him out of favor with the obstinate and in danger with the wicked.

The Brook Cherith 1 Kings 17:2-9

- 1.He is next directed, by God, to the hiding place of the brook Cherith where his life is sustained by the food delivered from the ravens.
- 2.The brook at Cherith marks the first of many stops that Elijah would make over his 15 year ministry. It reminds us how that the work of the pastor is transient. Though others may be permitted to set their foundations in one area and stay, he is often called upon to make transitions that require great faith and sacrifice. Yet, God, continuously and sometimes miraculously sustains him.

The Widow Woman of Zarephath 1 Kings 17:10-18:1

- 1.When the brook dries up, he is sent to the house of the widow woman of Zarephath, where Elijah, The Widow, and her son are miraculously fed by the store of oil and meal. While here, Elijah restores life to the widow's son who had fallen sick and died.
- 2.At the brook, God had directly provided Elijah with water from the brook and food from the ravens. He can do this and at times he does. More often, He uses our fellow brothers and sisters to help in our time of need. Who was really helped here? Elijah or the widow and her son? In truth they were all blessed. As Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"

The meeting with Obadiah 1 Kings 18:2-16

1. After 2 years with the widow and her son, Elijah is instructed to go and meet Ahab. On his way, Elijah met Obadiah. Obadiah brought Ahab to Elijah.

2. On the surface, the meeting with Obadiah seems to be merely a matter of chance. However, we know better, our God works with purpose. How often has the timely visit of a kindred spirit strengthened the preacher. As Solomon wisely said^

Proverbs 27:9 Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so doth the sweetness of a man's friend by hearty counsel.

The Contest on Mt Carmel 1 Kings 18:20-4.0

- 1.The contest on Mt Carmel marks the pinnacle of Elijah's public ministry. It is here that Israel is gathered with Elijah and the prophets of Baal. After a Divine exhibition of the power of the One True God, the people cannot help but fall on their faces and say... "The Lord, He is the God".
- 2.From time to time, God permits his humble servants to stare in the face of heavenly victory. We see a soul saved, a member restored, a family healed and we rejoice in the Glory of God. We must make monuments of such moments for surely the valley is still ahead.

The Death of the Baal Prophets and the Blessing of Rain I Kings 18:40-4.6

- 1.After the miracle on Mt Carmel, Elijah ordered the death of the prophets of Baal. It was a sweet victory. To add blessing upon blessing God sent the rain which would forever wash their blood from the land.
- 2.After a long period of seclusion and famine, Elijah was blessed to see the fruit of his labours. So it is for the weary pastor, who diligently labouring for years without apparent fruit is blessed by the Master with a fruitful season.

Galatians 6:9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

The Fear of Tezebel1 Kings 19:1-3

- 1.It may seem at this point as though Elijah should fear no one. Indeed, he had no reason to fear Jezebel, knowing that God was for him. It is here, that we are reminded that Elijah was "man of like passion." Elijah had anticipated a different response from the people. Greatly discouraged and fearing for his life at the threat of Jezebel, he fled.
- 2.Mountain tops are too quickly followed by valleys. If the pastor is to stay a little longer upon the top he must continuously rely upon the might and wisdom which descends from above. There is a temptation that follows a

spiritual battle which is most dangerous. It is a temptation to judge the results. This can lead to either pride or self pity. Both are harmful to the preacher.

2 Corinthians 12:9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

The Tuniper Tree 1 Kings 19:4-8

1. In total exhaustion, both physical and spiritual, Elijah reaches the end of his strength and courage. Sitting down under the Juniper tree he asks to die, saying, "it is enough,...for I am not better than my fathers"
2. Many times the Pastor is his own worst critic. Add to that, Satan's desire to "sift" us and we reach these moments in our ministry. Spurgeon refers to them as "fainting fits". They are moments when it seems we cannot go on. Many men of God have experienced these times. Yet after the darkness we hear the words, "Arise and eat, the journey is too great for thee"

Mt Horeb 1 Kings 19:9-18

1. Elijah pushes on toward Mt Horeb with the strength he received from the angel's food. He hides himself in a cave, perhaps the very cleft that Moses was in when he beheld the glory of God. Here in the lowest moment of his ministry he is taught a great lesson and brought back on the path of service.
2. Serving God in the office of a Pastor can be challenging. It will require sacrifice, commitment and continual reliance upon God. Along the way, the Pastor may experience loneliness, rejection and betrayal. However, it will but add to our difficulty if we feel sorry for ourselves. In moments of silence, we hear that still small voice and are redirected back to the path of service.

The life of Elijah serves as a wonderful example of the work of a Christian minister. It shows his successes but does not hide his failures. We clearly see his opposition in Ahab, Jezebel and even the people of Israel. However, we also see those faithful few who supported him along his way. Elijah may have been God's chosen means of sharing His message with the people of his time but those who aided him also aided God and entered into his labors.

So it may be for the pastors in our churches. They proclaim the gospel and we hold them up and support them by our prayers. We help sustain them by our means. We welcome their message with a warm reception and endorse that message with a public affirmation.