

# Living With Power in Dark Times (Part 3)

Sunday, September 19, 2021

In this series we will consider the ways in which the lives of Elijah and Elisha show us how to live with power even in dark times

Both faced the difficulties of a culture that had willfully turned its back on God and joyfully engaged in the hedonistic practices of pagan idol worship.

They dealt with a corrupt and self-serving leadership that branded them as troublemakers and sought to silence their voices

They endured difficult times brought on by the consequences of sin and God's ensuing judgment which was meant to draw the people back to Himself

They experienced drought, famine, warfare, spiritually deaf ears, hard-heartedness, and the growing pervasiveness of blatant immorality.

But in spite of these challenges, they lived as victorious vessels through whom God displayed His power and presence.

We too live in dark times. And just like Elijah and Elisha, we have the opportunity to display the power of God in the midst of that darkness. In fact, that is what we are called to do...

## **Matthew 5:13-16**

**13** "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

**14** "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. **16 In the same way, let your light shine before others**, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

## **Acts 1:8**

**8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Living with power in dark days means **TAKING A STAND FOR TRUTH**. They (Elijah and Elisha) took a stand for truth and so must we...

- **KNOW** the truth
- We must **PROCLAIM** the truth (with our mouths and our lives)
- We must be willing to **PAY THE COST** of truth

They **TRUSTED** God for **PROVISION**

- Trust that God will provide for your needs
- Trust that He will provide even when we experience the harsh realities of the consequences of the sinful choices of others
- Trust in God's provision even when it looks different than you expected
- Trust God for provision when things suddenly change
- Trust God for provision even when His directions don't make sense
- Trust God to provide when things seem impossible
- Trust God to provide when everything completely falls apart

Today we want to look at two more powerful characteristics that help us live with power in dark times.

They **PRAYED** with **PASSION** and **PERSISTENCE**

They **OPERATED** with **SIGNS** and **WONDERS**

Let's return to 1 Kings 17 and pick up where we left off last week. You remember that Elijah has prophesied a drought on the nation of Israel because of their great wickedness in turning from the Lord and pagan idol worship. He was miraculously fed by ravens at the brook by the Kerith Ravine. When the brook dried up, God instructed him to go to Zarephath and be taken care of by a widow. When he arrived, he found that she had only enough flour and oil for a final meal for her and her son. Elijah told her to make him something to eat and that the flour and oil would not be used up until the day the Lord breaks the drought and sends rain on Israel

### **1 Kings 17:17-24**

**17** Some time later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. **18** She said to Elijah, "What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?"

**19** "Give me your son," Elijah replied. He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his bed. **20** Then he cried out to the Lord, "Lord my God, have you brought tragedy even on this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?" **21** Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried out to the Lord, "Lord my God, let this boy's life return to him!"

**22** The Lord heard Elijah's cry, and the boy's life returned to him, and he lived. **23** Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, "Look, your son is alive!"

**24** Then the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord from your mouth is the truth."

In the third year of the drought, God instructed Elijah to present himself to the wicked King Ahab, because God was going to send rain on the land. Elijah did what God had told him and then confronted the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel (we will revisit that part of the story next week). Following that confrontation and God's miraculous display of power, Elijah set himself to pray for the rain that God had promised.

### **1 Kings 18:41-46**

**41** And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain." **42** So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees.

**43** "Go and look toward the sea," he told his servant. And he went up and looked.

"There is nothing there," he said.

Seven times Elijah said, "Go back."

**44** The seventh time the servant reported, "A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea."

So Elijah said, "Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.'"

**45** Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain started falling and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. **46** The power of the Lord came on Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

## **They PRAYED with PASSION and PERSISTENCE**

If we are going to live with power in dark times we need to learn to pray with Passion and Persistence. James referred to this kind of prayer and even used Elijah as an example.

## **James 5:13-18**

### **The Prayer of Faith**

**13** Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. **14** Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. **15** And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. **16** Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

**17** Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. **18** Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

### **James 5:16 (KJV)**

**16** ...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

### **James 5:16 (NLT)**

**16** ...The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.

- To pray with passion and persistence we must believe prayer makes a difference

### **Mark 11:23-24**

**23** “Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. **24** Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

- To pray with passion means knowing God hears us when we pray

### **Matthew 6:9-13**

**9** “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, **10** your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. **11** Give us today our daily bread. **12** And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. **13** And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’

### **John 11:41-42**

**41** So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, “Father, I thank you that you have heard me. **42** I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.”

- To pray with persistence means not giving up

### **Luke 18:1-8**

**18** Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. **2** He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. **3** And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

**4** “For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, **5** yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

**6** And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. **7** And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? **8** I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”

- To pray with passion and persistence means stepping out in faith (Notice he prayed for what God had already promised)

### **1 Kings 18:1**

**18** After a long time, in the third year, the word of the Lord came to Elijah: “Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.”

### **Hebrews 11:1-2, 4-11, 13**

#### **Faith in Action**

**11** Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. **2** This is what the ancients were commended for.

**4** By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did.

**5** By faith Enoch... pleased God.

**6** And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.

**7** By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family.

**8** By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. **9** By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. **10** For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. **11** And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise.

**13** All these people were still living by faith when they died.

## **They OPERATED with SIGNS and WONDERS**

The Midrash (ancient Jewish commentary on the scriptures) attributes 8 Miracles to Elijah and 16 to Elisha (since Elisha asked for a double anointing of Elijah's power. Other lists attribute as many as 14 Miracles to Elijah and 28 to Elisha. Regardless of the exact numbers what we know is both men operated with signs and wonders

### **Signs and Wonders in the Career of Elijah:**

- Causing the rain to cease for 3 1/2 years (1Ki 17:1)
- Being fed by the ravens (1Ki 17:4)
- Miracle of the unending flour and oil (1Ki 17:14)
- Resurrection of the widow's son (1Ki 17:22)
- Calling of fire from heaven on the altar when he confronted the prophets of Baal (1Ki 18:38)
- Causing it to rain (1Ki 18:45)
- He outran a team of horses for a distance of 20 miles
- Miraculous meals provided by an angel that sustained him for 40 days and 40 nights
- Experiencing the manifest presence of God with Wind, Earthquake, fire, and a still small voice
- Prophecy that Ahab's sons would all be destroyed (1Ki 21:22)

- Prophecy that Jezebel would be eaten by dogs (1Ki 21:23)
- Prophecy that Ahaziah would die of his illness (2Ki 1:4)
- Calling fire from heaven upon the first 50 soldiers (2Ki 1:10)
- Calling fire from heaven upon the second 50 soldiers (2Ki 1:12)
- Parting of the Jordan (2Ki 2:8)
- Prophecy that Elisha should have a double portion of his spirit (2Ki 2:10)
- Being caught up to heaven in a whirlwind (2Ki 2:11)

#### **Miracles in the Career of Elisha:**

- Parting of the Jordan (2Ki 2:14)
- Healing of the waters (2Ki 2:21)
- Curse of the she bears (2Ki 2:24)
- Filling of the valley with water without wind or rain (2Ki 3:17)
- Deception of the Moabites with the valley of blood (2Ki 3:22)
- Miracle of the vessels of oil (2Ki 4:4)
- Prophecy that the Shunammite woman would have a son (2Ki 4:16)
- Resurrection of the Shunammite's son (2Ki 4:34)
- Healing of the gourds and the poisonous soup (2Ki 4:41)
- Feeding 100 with 20 loaves (2Ki 4:43)
- Healing of Naaman (2Ki 5:14)
- Perception of Gehazi's transgression (2Ki 5:26)
- Cursing Gehazi with leprosy (2Ki 5:27)
- Floating of the axe head (2Ki 6:6)
- Prophecy of the Syrian battle plans (2Ki 6:9)
- Vision of the chariots (2Ki 6:17)
- Smiting the Syrian army with blindness (2Ki 6:18)
- Restoring the sight of the Syrian army (2Ki 6:20)
- Prophecy of the end of the great famine (2Ki 7:1)
- Prophecy that the scoffing nobleman would see, but not partake of, the abundance (2Ki 7:2)
- Deception of the Syrians with the sound of chariots (2Ki 7:6)
- Prophecy of the seven-year famine (2Ki 8:1)
- Prophecy of Benhadad's untimely death (2Ki 8:10)
- Prophecy of Hazael's cruelty to Israel (2Ki 8:12)
- Prophecy that Jehu would smite the house of Ahab (2Ki 9:7)
- Prophecy that Joash would smite the Syrians at Aphek (2Ki 13:17)
- Prophecy that Joash would smite Syria thrice but not consume it (2Ki 13:19)
- Resurrection of the man touched by his bones (2Ki 13:21)

The New Testament also records that Signs and Wonders were a regular part of Jesus Ministry and those who believed in Him.

**Acts 2:22**

**22** “Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.

**Acts 2:43**

**43** Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

**Acts 4:30**

**30** Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

**Acts 5:12**

**12** The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade.

**Acts 6:8**

**8** Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people.

**Acts 14:3**

**3** So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders.

**Romans 15:17-19**

**17** Therefore I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. **18** I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done— **19** by the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God. So from Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ.

**2 Corinthians 12:12**

**12** I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles.

**John 14:12**

**2** Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.