

P307

GRACE NOTES RADIO PROGRAM

SERIES: Elijah, a man for the times

TITLE: Persistence in prayer pays off

SONGS: IN THE NAME OF THE LORD

PRAY

INTRO: Welcome to Grace Notes. We hope you have been enjoying our series on Elijah, a man for the times. Last week Barbara Sandbek took us to the showdown at Mt. Carmel, where Elijah, the lone prophet, single handedly, with the help of God, defeated the 450 prophets of Baal. It was not only a victory for him, but it finally convinced the Israelites that Jehovah is God. Baal, considered to be the Lord of the rain clouds, was powerless to give rain, even after the ecstatic raving of his prophets.

What a dramatic demonstration of Baal's impotence. With simplicity and dignity, Elijah rested his case on the certainty that the Lord would answer his prayer. Why?

Because there is strength, power, and hope in the name of Lord.

***** IN THE NAME OF LORD *****

We ended our story last week with the slaying of the prophets of Baal. You may ask, "Why didn't God just zap them along with the sacrifice? Why did he have the people kill them?" God wanted the people to prove to Him and to themselves that they truly wanted nothing more to do with their evil practices.

It works the same way with sin in our lives. God could prevent us from sinning but He gives us the will to choose. When we, ourselves purge our sinful practices, we are more inclined not to do it again.

He gives us the power to resist just like He gave the Israelites to overcome the pagan prophets.

Elijah had told King Ahab that he heard the sound of a heavy rain, though there was not actual indication of it as yet. He knew that the blessing of God would again come to them since the people had confessed that the Lord, alone was God and had repented of their sin.

Ahab was sure to get what he wanted – rain, so off he went to eat and drink without even a 'thank you.'

Elijah, on the other hand, climbed to the top of Mt. Carmel, bent down to the ground and put his face between his knees. What a difference between these two leaders. What is our response when God answers our prayers? Are we grateful, or do we just expect it?

Elijah, no doubt, was humbled by the experience - and to think that he was a part of it all. Why did Elijah climb back up the mountain? I think he did this to get away from the press, so to speak, and to be alone with God. Maybe he wanted to relive the victory and be where God's Glory had been revealed.

We, too, need to revisit the times, and maybe even the places, where God faithfully answered our prayers. Perhaps we can rekindle our joy.

Though God told Elijah he would both stop and start the rain, Elijah had to pray for it. Why? - because prayer precedes provision.

God had said in 2 Chronicles 7:13:

“When I shut up the Heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land, or send a plague among my people - if My people who are called by My Name, will humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

Elijah prayed for the covenant curse to be lifted by the coming of rain. He not only prayed once, he continued in prayer six more times. The promises of God require deliberate prayer.

James 5:16b-18 says:

The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain. And it did not rain on the land for 3 ½ years. Again he prayed and the heavens gave rain and the earth produced its crops.

J. Oswald Saunders in his book entitled, 'Prayer, power unlimited,' had this to say about persistent prayer. Is it without significance that Elijah prayed seven times, the number of perfection and fullness, while Abraham, in his quest to save Sodom, stopped at 6 times, the number of human frailty? Abraham stopped asking before God stopped answering.

Let us become seven times prayers.

King David was a persistent prayer. He needed God and he knew it.

He used phrases like:

- **Hear my cry, O God**
- **Listen - don't turn a deaf ear to me**
- **Come quickly and help me**
- **Be not silent**
- **Don't be far from me**
- **Listen - don't ignore my plea**
- **Hear me, answer me.**

He was in constant prayer. Hear his words:

- **I cry out by day and by night**
- **Every morning at noon I cry out.**

In Psalm 86:1 David prayed:

**Hear, O Lord, answer me, for I am poor and needy.
I call to You all day long.**

In a spiritual sense, this kind of poverty is recognition of complete dependence on God - that we have no resources to save ourselves.

Why don't we persist in prayer? I think it may be a matter of pride.

Why should we have to beg?

Well, why not? It's a way of saying, "I need You, God."

Pleading with Him for something makes us want it more. And, when we get it, we appreciate it and know from Whom it came.

Our persistent praying can also impact those around us, because persistent prayer is a sign of a great faith.

And faith is contagious.

After each of Elijah's prayers, he told his servant to go and look toward the sea for a sign of rain. Elijah's servant came back from his look-out point six times and said, "There's nothing there." But his own faith grew as he watched Elijah's faith in action. He returned the seventh time and reported that he saw a cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising from the sea.

That was enough for Elijah to act. He told his servant to tell Ahab to hitch up his chariot and go down before the rain stopped him. The sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose and heavy rain finally came.

Do we really want what we pray for? If so, then we need to pray like Elijah did – fervently, persistently, deliberately and continually. Let's conclude now with a song about another great prayer warrior and a great reminder for us all.

**** PRAY ****

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Join us again next time. Until then, let your grace notes be a song of praise.