



THE VISIBLE HAND
— OF THE INVISIBLE GOD —

PART FIVE

Sermon Overview

When God makes a promise, faith believes it, hope anticipates it, and patience quietly waits for it. In 1 Kings 18:41-46, Elijah witnesses the fulfillment of God's personal promise to him and responds in humility.

PART FIVE

The recipe for disaster in any church or nation is godless and arrogant leadership, and confused followers. In 1 Kings 18, Elijah is confronted by both.

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 came on and Ahab rode off to Jezreel.

⁴⁶ The power of the Lord came upon Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.

1 KINGS 18:41-46

CONDITIONAL AND UNCONDITIONAL PROMISES

In Scripture, there are two types of promises: conditional promises

dependent on meeting certain conditions, and unconditional promises for all of God's children. In Elijah's case, God had made a conditional promise to send rain if God went and showed himself to King Ahab, who had threatened to murder him. After meeting that condition and the display of God's power on Mount Carmel, Elijah prays specifically for the drought to end as revealed in James 5:17-18:

¹⁷ Elijah was a man just like us. 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 5:17-18

BIBLICAL PRAYER

Elijah's prayer illustrates biblical prayer, and how believers are to respond when they are answered:

Elijah Prayed Specifically and Obediently

God is specific and detailed, down to counting every single one of our hairs. If God is specific and detailed with us, we must be specific and detailed with Him in prayer, and pray in a way that is consistent with the Word of God.

Elijah Persisted in Watching and Praying

God is not impressed by the length of prayer, the eloquence of prayer, or the posture of prayer, but in its persistence and perseverance. Elijah prayed persistently, clinging to God's

promise to send rain. As he prayed, he sent his servant to look for clouds seven different times. Elijah did not doubt that God would fulfill His promise, but prayed expectantly until a cloud finally showed up.

Elijah Remained Humble Before God When the Promise Was Fulfilled

When Elijah's prayer was finally answered, he tucked his cloak and ran before King Ahab, showing humility before both God and the king. He was adamant that God and God alone received all the credit and glory for the rain.

CONCLUSION

As believers, we should appropriate the conditional promises of God by fulfilling their conditions. This requires self-examination, and asking God to help us meet those conditions.