

Introduction:

The Bible is filled with praying warriors for God. One who is specifically set forth is Elijah. **James 5:16-18** says, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.” Elijah was a praying warrior. His prayers impacted God. Think for just a moment. What stopped the rain? Elijah did not stop the rain. He had no power residing within him, he was a man just like us. It was not Elijah’s prayers that stopped the rain. These were not magical chants that contained some kind of inherent power. The God to whom Elijah prayed stopped the rain because of Elijah’s prayers. Elijah’s prayer was successful because of his faith in the One to whom he was praying. If we desire our prayers to avail anything, we must begin with our faith in God. Who is this God, this Power, who hears our prayers? Remember, we must not believe in the power of prayer. Rather, we must believe in the power of God and, therefore, pray. When we truly recognize and have faith in the nature and power of God, prayer will not be a ritual to mark off our daily worship checklist. It will be our natural response to His awesome majesty. In **I Kings 18**, Elijah had a showdown with the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. However, the battle was not really between Elijah and 450 prophets. It was between Jehovah and Baal. We know the outcome, Jehovah brought victory and the prophets of Baal and Asherah were slain. Within this story Elijah taunts Baal’s prophets because their god is not accomplishing the task. By contrast, we can learn from those taunts what Elijah knew about Jehovah that allowed him such great faith to pray for rain and for fire. Examine what he said in **I Kings 18:27**:

Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.

Discussion:

- I. “Perhaps he is sleeping”—Jehovah does not sleep, He is not a man with man’s needs.
 - A. Sometimes I get tired. I am sure you have all been there. You have been up since early in the morning, you have been working or playing all day and now it is late at night. What do you do? You go to sleep. Why? Because that is the way God made us. We need rest.
 - B. But God is not like us. He does not need sleep. **Numbers 23:19** says plainly, “God is not a man.” He does not have our limitations. He does not have our needs. **Isaiah 55:8-9** presents a comparison of God with us. His ways and His thoughts are greater than ours as much as the heavens are above the earth.
 - C. We must never mistakenly believe God is like us. In fact, the Israelites made this mistake according to **Psalms 50:21**. God said He would rebuke them. God is not a man and He is not like us. Too often we envision God as basically a superpowered human. He is great, awesome, majestic and powerful, but all in all we picture Him as just a much better one of us. This has been the plague of mankind since the very beginning. This is why God had to write a law against making graven images in **Exodus 20:4**. What kind of image could men mold that could possibly come close to representing the God who is not anything like us? All we could make is something that would be like us or like the beasts of the field. Once this image became cast in the people’s minds, then their idea of God would be limited. We must not limit God by thinking He is even remotely like us. Baal may sleep like a man, but Jehovah is really God.
- II. “Perhaps he...must be awakened.”—Jehovah does not need us to awaken Him. He is not served by men’s hands as though He needs our help.
 - A. Elijah pinpointed one major contrast between the false gods and the one true God. These false gods needed their servants. But Jehovah is truly God and is not served by the hands of men.

- B. Paul made this declaration on Mars Hill in **Acts 17:24-25**, “God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath and all things.”
 - C. In **Psalm 50:12**, God said through the Psalmist, “If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all its fullness.” We must come face to face with this fact. Our God does not need us. We must never pray thinking somehow we are providing Him with some service He requires. We pray because we need to pray, not because God needs us to. That being the case, there is no amount of prayer that obligates God to us. Rather, we are obligated to Him, therefore we pray. Baal may need his servants, but Jehovah is really God.
- III. “Or he is on a journey.”—Jehovah is not off on a journey. He is omnipresent.
- A. You certainly could not expect Baal to be everywhere at once and pay attention to the needs of all his servants all at one time. However, that is exactly what we can expect from Jehovah God. Jehovah does not go on journeys, He is everywhere at all times. What a mind blowing thought.
 - B. Elijah’s statements remind me of a story I once heard. As the third graders made their way through the lunch line, they came to a table with a bowl full of apples. A teacher had neatly written on a card, “Take only one. God is watching.” Later in the line they came to a table with plates of cookies. A child had hastily written on a card, “Take all you want, God is watching the apples.” That is not our God. Our God is everywhere and sees all. **Psalm 139:7-12** drives this home for us. “Where can I flee from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?”
 - C. There are two sides of this fact. The one side is a little frightening. We cannot hide from God. He sees all and knows all. Every sin we commit under the cover of darkness in secret from our brethren, He sees and knows. The other side of this coin is very comforting. Nothing can hide us from God. No matter what we are facing or enduring God is there and we can call on Him. Baal may travel and be out of pocket, but Jehovah is really God.
- IV. “Or he is busy”—Jehovah is not busy. He is all-powerful and can accomplish all things at one time.
- A. Surely you can’t expect Baal to do everything at once. Give him time. Perhaps when he gets a free moment he can light the fires of the altar. However, Elijah knew Jehovah could answer his plea. Because, in fact, we can expect Him to do everything at once. He is all-powerful.
 - B. This is, of course, an aspect of God that we simply cannot fathom. He can do everything and He can do it all at once. He can hear everyone’s prayers and He can do so all at once. We are talking about the God who created the world in six days. He is the God who sustains this universe. He provides us all with life, breath and all things Paul said in **Acts 17:25**. He can do exceedingly, abundantly beyond all we can ask or think (**Ephesians 3:20**). There is nothing we can think of that He cannot accomplish. He does not have to finish what He is working on now to get to our requests. He is simply that powerful. That is not to say He never makes us wait. We simply know that God is far more powerful than we can even imagine. We cannot begin to challenge or tax His power, with our wildest requests. Read **Job 38-41**, to scratch the surface of His power. Baal may get busy and preoccupied, but Jehovah is really God.
- V. “He is meditating.”—Jehovah is not distracted by His own meditations, but loves and listens to His servants and children.
- A. Without getting sidetracked by some of the more colorful possible meanings behind the original language at this point in the text, we can see that Elijah says Baal may just be so preoccupied with his own concerns that he does not have time, energy or ability to deal with his servants’ requests. But that is not the case with Jehovah. What an amazing aspect of God.
 - B. We are so unworthy, yet God loves us and listens to us. As we have already said, God does not need our prayers. But He wants them, because He cares for us (**I Peter 5:7**). **Psalm 8:3-4** demonstrates how amazing our God is in this regard. “When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit Him?” David recognized how amazing God’s regard for us is. Despite how amazing it is, that is the way it is.

- C. How great it is to know that God loves us because He is love (**I John 4:8**). His love is not based on anything we can do for Him or have done for Him. That means there is nothing we can do to deter God's love for us. I am not saying there is nothing we can do for which God may not accept us. I am just saying no matter what we do, God will love us. Even while we were sinners, God sent His Son to die for us to pay for our sins (**I John 4:9-10; Romans 5:8**). Think about how amazing this is in comparison to Baal and other false gods. If the servants of Baal wanted to be loved, they had to do all kinds of things and make all kinds of sacrifices. But Jehovah loves us just because He is love and He made the sacrifice that draws us near to Him. Is there anything more amazing than that?
- D. Having made that sacrifice for us and having submitted to that sacrifice, God wants us, His children, to come to Him and pray. I do not know how many times I hear someone in the background saying, "Daddy...Daddy...Daddy...Daddy..." Then Marita hits me, "Edwin, Ethan is talking to you." I do not mean to do that. But sometimes I am just so focused in my own little world that even though my subconscious is registering that my child needs me, it does not break through to consciousness or action. Jehovah is never like that. Baal may get so focused on his own concerns and meditations that he does not listen to his servants, but Jehovah is really God.

Conclusion:

After the prophets of Baal finally gave up in exhaustion, after crying out to Baal for nearly 9 hours, Elijah called the people to himself, prepared the altar and then called on Jehovah God.

Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again. Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!"

Suddenly, the people of Israel came face to face with the realities of God that Elijah believed and knew all along. What did they do? They worshipped, praying praises to Jehovah, the only living God. When the realities of God sink into our hearts, our response will be the same. No longer will we have trouble scheduling, committing to and following through on prayer times. Rather, we will have the opposite problem. We have trouble scheduling, committing and following through on other issues because of how much time we invest praying. This is Jehovah God. He is not like us. He does not need us. He is everywhere and sees all. He can do all. But despite all of that, He loves us and listens to us. Let us pray to Him.