



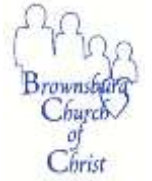
The Power Who Hears Our Praying

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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PM Assembly



Introduction:

The God Filled are people who are God Connected. In **Ephesians 3:14-19**, everything Paul said about being God Filled began with bowing his knees before the Father. If we want to have the strengthening power of the Holy Spirit, the dwelling of Christ in our hearts through faith, and to be filled with all the fullness of God, it begins with prayer. The God Filled are Prayer Filled. With that in mind, we are going to take several Sunday nights to examine what being Prayer Filled looks like. How do the God Filled pray?

The Bible is filled with Prayer Filled warriors. 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” (NASB). Elijah was a praying warrior. His prayers impacted God. Think for just a moment. What stopped the rain? Not Elijah. He had no power residing in him, he was a man like us. Not Elijah’s prayers. These were not magical chants containing inherent power. Elijah’s God stopped the rain. 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 the God, the Power, who hears? 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 believe in the nature and power of God, prayer will not be a ritual to mark off our 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. Examine what he said in **I Kings 18:27**:

Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened (NASB).

Discussion:

- I. “Perhaps he is asleep”—Jehovah does not sleep, He is not a man with man’s needs.
 - A. Sometimes I get tired. I am sure you have been there. You have been up since early in the morning, you have been working or playing all day and now it is late. 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. According to **Isaiah 40:28-31**, not only does God not sleep or need to, He is the one that can provide strength for His children who get tired and need rest. **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. Too often we envision God as essentially 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 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. “Needs to be awakened.”—Jehovah does not need us to wake Him. He does not need our help.
 - A. Baal needed his 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**, “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (ESV).

- C. In **Psalm 50:12**, God said through the Psalmist, “If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world and its fullness are mine” (ESV). 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 needed service. 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 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. That is, however, exactly what we can expect from Jehovah God. He 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 a plate of cookies. A child had hastily written on a card, “Take all you want, God is watching the apples.” That is not our God.
- C. Our God is everywhere and sees all. **Psalm 139:7-12** drives this home for us. “Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence?” (ESV). 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 gone aside”—Jehovah is not gone aside or “busy.” He 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 altar fires. 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 we simply cannot fathom. He can do everything and He can do it all at once. He can hear everyone’s prayers all at once. This is the God who created the world in six days, sustains this universe and provides us all with life, breath and all things (**Acts 17:25**). He can do far more, abundantly beyond all we 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 to get to our requests. He is that powerful. That is not to say He never makes us wait. But, we cannot begin to 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 occupied.”—Jehovah is not distracted by His occupations, but loves and listens to us.

- A. Without getting sidetracked by some of the more colorful possible meanings behind the original language, 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. 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 so focus on my own little world that even though my subconscious is registering my child needs me, it does not break through to consciousness or action. Baal may get so focused on his own concerns that he does not listen, but Jehovah is really 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 look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?” (ESV). David recognized how amazing God’s regard for us is, we should too.
- C. How great it is to know 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 saying no matter what we do, God loves 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.

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.

“O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.’ Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God” (1 Kings 18:36-39, ESV).

Suddenly, the people of Israel came face to face with the realities of God that Elijah 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 and listens to us. Let us pray to Him.