

Finishing Well

Introduction. The last six chapters of 1 Kings and the first two chapters of 2 Kings detail the work of Elijah among the northern tribes of Israel. He is one of the most remarkable figures in Israel's history. His importance is seen in the religious reformation he sought and the fact that the New Testament speaks of him 30 times. When our Lord was transfigured on Mount Hermon, Elijah, along with Moses representing the Law, was there representing the prophets (Matthew 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30).

He appears suddenly in 1 Kings 17:1 proclaiming a drought on the earth and disappears suddenly in 2 Kings 2:11 in a whirlwind. Elijah's ministry was one of action rather than diction. He performed nine recorded miracles but so far as we know he wrote nothing.

The New Testament refers to your life as a Christian as that which is "run" (Galatians 5:7; Philippians 2:16). We want to see from Elijah not only how to run well, but also how to finish well and receive a glorious reward.

I. ***He Dutifully Prepared Others For The Work***

- A. Although Elijah would soon be taken away, the work of God would continue. It was Elijah's job to make sure that preparation was made so that the work would go on after he was gone.
 - 1. In 1 Kings 19:15-17, Elijah is assigned three specific tasks. One of these tasks was to anoint Elisha as his successor.
 - 2. In 1 Kings 19:19-21, Elisha is called and accepts the call. Elijah did not die right away, nor did Elisha take over right away. Elisha served Elijah for the rest of the time he was on the earth.
- B. We too, should make preparations for our work to continue after we are no longer able.
 - 1. Of course, we should train ourselves first (2 Timothy 1:13; 2 Peter 1:5-11; Jude 20).
 - 2. Furthermore, training others is specifically mentioned in the Bible.
 - a) Psalm 78:5-8 and Ephesians 6:4 tell us that children are to be trained.
 - b) Ephesians 4:11-12 tells us that Christians are to be trained.
 - c) 2 Timothy 2:2 tells us that faithful men need to be trained.
 - d) Titus 2:3-4 tells us that older women are to teach younger women.
- C. Churches grow when they heartily engage in the work of training others and equipping them for service (Philippians 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:3). Bible classes are unbelievably important and we cannot neglect this work (Hebrews 2:1). It only takes one untaught generation for the church to go astray (Isaiah 1:3; 5:13; Hosea 4:6)!

II. ***He Faithfully Proclaimed The Word***

- A. As long as God gave him something to say, Elijah proclaimed God's message. He demonstrated that God always has a man to match the hour.
 - 1. Elijah preached against Ahab and Ahaziah (1 Kings 21:19-20, 23-24; 2 Kings 1:16).
 - 2. Will any of us get mad like Ahab and Ahaziah when the truth is preached and toes are stepped on (cf. Titus 1:9)?
- B. As long as we are able, we should faithfully proclaim the word (1 Timothy 4:16).
 - 1. It is so unfortunate to see faithful brethren who were strong advocates of the truth when they were younger, but they faltered in their older age.
 - a) One can never take age for granted. Timothy was a young man, but we should never forget the admonition (1 Corinthians 10:12).
 - b) Hezekiah committed the foolish act of showing the Babylonians all that was in his house in the last fifteen years of his life (Isaiah 39:1-8).
 - 2. Elijah was not afraid, and he hated religious apostasy and the sins it brought and he tried his best to call men back to the "old paths" (1 Kings 18:21; Jeremiah 6:16).
 - a) At the contest on Mount Carmel, it was time to make a decision (cf. Exodus 32:26; Joshua 24:15; Matthew 12:30).
 - (1) It was of the greatest importance that the futility of Baal worship would be exhibited in the fullest manner.
 - (2) The victory must be complete and the renunciation of Baal worship beyond recall (cf. Deuteronomy 17:2-5).
 - b) He possessed courage, faith and zeal for Jehovah and a passionate loyalty to the word of God (Proverbs 28:1; Acts 4:29, 31; 13:46; Ephesians 3:12).

III. ***He Loyally Received His Reward***

- A. Elijah walked with God until God took him to heaven (2 Kings 2:11).
 - 1. The only other person who never died was Enoch (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5).
 - 2. Elijah went where God directed him and proclaimed to Elisha what God told him.
- B. We are to "walk" as well.
 - 1. "Walk" is used figuratively dozens of times in the Bible and it signifies "the whole round of the activities of the individual life" (Vine, p. 1218). Thayer adds, "to regulate one's life, to conduct one's self" (p. 504).

- a) The early disciples were “walking in the fear of the Lord” (Acts 9:31).
 - b) Paul commands Christians to walk worthy of their calling and of God (Ephesians 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:12).
 - c) We are not to walk as the Gentiles, but are to walk in love (Ephesians 4:17; 5:2).
 - d) If we will “walk by faith” (2 Corinthians 5:7), we will have a great reward or inheritance (Colossians 3:24; 1 Peter 1:4; 5:4; Revelation 2:10; 14:13; 22:14).
2. There is great joy when one is found walking in truth (2 John 4-6; 3 John 3-4).
- C. We need to pray that our faith will not waver like Abraham who is “the father of us all” (Romans 4:17-22; Hebrews 11:13-16). Will the Lord find faith (Luke 18:8)?

Conclusion. Peter was an example of one who started well but stumbled (Matthew 26:75). Thankfully, he finished well (Luke 22:31-32; John 21:18-19). Judas was an example of one who stumbled and never recovered (John 13:2; Matthew 26:47-49). Judas did not finish well (Matthew 27:5; Acts 1:16-20, 25).

In 2 Kings 2:13, Elisha took up the mantle of Elijah. He was a wonderful example of how we are to look to the examples of those who have gone on before us (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Timothy 4:6-8). Will you run your race and finish well like Elijah (Hebrews 12:1-2)?