Pastor Richard Allen Farmer

The Crossroads Church

5587 Redan Rd.

Stone Mountain, GA 30088

Small Clouds and Heavy Rains

Text: 1 Kings 18:41-46

Note two positions.

Ahab went *up* to eat and drink (42a). Elijah went up to bow *down* and pray.(42b). Elijah is praying, perhaps, that he be in the right frame of mind as God fulfills God’s promise to send rain and end this drought (17:1; 18:1).

Look toward the sea. There is nothing. Isn’t that a sad statement? It is sad, especially given the fact that the servant went looking for something on the sea SIX times. The seventh time was different (44).

On vs. 41, Rev. J. Roberts, in his *Oriental Illustrations of the Sacred Scriptures,* tells us that the expression, *sound of rain*, was a colloquialism, similar to our *looks like rain.*

I want to extract, from this text, three lessons, three observations, three *matters.*

1. Obedience matters- Ahab obeys the prophet, Elijah(42a). Elijah’s servant obeys Elijah (43). Elijah obeys God (v.1-2).
2. Patience/perseverance-six times the servant went looking for *something.* (43). C.H. Spurgeon wrote of this in a devotional in his book, *Morning and Evening*

*Six times the servant returned, but on each occasion no word was spoken but “Go again.” We must not dream of unbelief but hold to our faith even to seventy times seven. Faith sends expectant hope to look from Carmel’s brow, and if nothing is beheld, she sends again and again. So far from being crushed by repeated disappointment, faith is animated to plead more fervently with her God. She is humbled, but not abashed: her groans are deeper, and her sighing more vehement, but she never relaxes her hold or stays her hand. It would be more agreeable to flesh and blood to have a speedy answer, but believing souls have learned to be submissive, and to find it good to wait for as well as upon the Lord. Delayed answers often set the heart searching itself, and so lead to contrition and spiritual reformation: deadly blows are thus struck at our corruption, and the chambers of imagery are cleansed. The great danger is lest men should faint and miss the blessing. Reader, do not fall into that sin, but continue in prayer and watching. At last, the little cloud was seen, the sure forerunner of torrents of rain, and even so with you, the token for good shall surely be given, and you shall rise as a prevailing prince to enjoy the mercy you have sought.[[1]](#footnote-2)*

1. Size matters- I wonder if the servant of Elijah was assuming that the *something* for which he was looking was going to be a *big* something. We often assume that larger-than-life figures will create larger-than-life events. Instead, a cloud rises out of the Mediterranean Sea that is no larger than a man’s hand. Small cloud- large life lesson. Light visuals- heavy rain.

A drought had been predicted. Now, as rain begins to fall again, I want to see *drama*. However, that is not always God’s way. A cloud as small as a man’s hand. Look at 1 Kings 19:11-12. Some of us have been pursuing and expecting the dramatic, as we track the movements of our God. Could it be that we have missed what God was up to, because we overlooked the cloud as small as a man’s hand and the still small voice? The vocalist in me wants to remind singers that not all loud singing is good singing. The pianist in me wants to remind pianists that a piece may be played softly AND powerfully. The orator in me wants to remind speakers that yelling is not the only way to get a point across and it is rarely the most effective way. The theologian in me wants to remind us all to watch for the small movements and manifestations of God’s presence. Oh, Matthew 25 people, do not despise the significance of a seemingly small, trivial act. It may be physically small but spiritually monumental. When God sends heavy rain, a cloud as small as a man’s hand can hold that rain.

James says that we could learn something from Elijah, regarding prayer.

James 5:17-18 (NKJV)

*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.*

When we don't see even the small cloud and we don’t hear the abundance of rain and when we think Ahab is winning, it is time to pray. A Matthew 25 people are a praying people, who go back to Carmel’s brow and look toward the sea.

Tony Evans writes of an evangelistic outreach event at which he was to speak, at an outdoor stadium at the University of South Carolina. Rain was in the forecast. 25,000 people were in their seats. Dr. Evans writes,

*We went downstairs into a small room, gathered together, and began to pray. Of course, we prayed things like, “Dear God, please hold back the rain” and “If it’s Your will, God, could You hold back that rain?” Yet in the midst of all of us praying, a petite woman named Linda came forward. Perhaps she had gotten frustrated with the prayers of the so-called professionals—the preachers and the leaders. Whatever the case, Linda stood up and asked, “Do you mind if I pray?” What else could we say but “Go ahead”? Linda prayed, “Lord, Your name is at stake. We told these people that if they would come out tonight, they would hear a word from God. We told them they would hear from You. Now, if they come and You let it rain, and You don’t control the weather, then You will look bad. We told them that You wanted to say something to them, and if You don’t keep back what You can control—the weather—someone could say Your name is no good.”*

*And then she threw in a line that caused us all to look at each other out of the corners of our eyes. “Therefore, right now I ask in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the rain to stop for the sake of Your Name!”*

*With that, we opened our eyes. Eyebrows went up. All we could say and think was “Whoa. Did she really just pray that?”*

*Following the prayers, we all went up and sat on the platform. The sky had now become entirely black behind us. A guy who had been assigned to communicate directly with the weather bureau said, “The showers are coming. They are heavy thunderstorms, and they are coming right at us.”*

*It is now 7:00 pm and the music is beginning. It is time to start the crusade when massive thunder and lightning surrounded us. People began to stir in their seats. Some even started to get up and open their umbrellas.*

*Linda was on the stage with the rest of us. A quiet look of expectation covered her face.*

*Then something happened that I have only seen once in my entire life. The rain rushed toward the stadium like a wall of water. Yet, when it hit the stadium, it split. Half of the rain went on one side of the stadium. The other half went on the other side. Then it literally met on the other side of the stadium. All the while, Linda sat there with a confident look on her face. The rest of us, the preachers and leaders, just looked at each other. Then we looked at Linda. Linda looked straight ahead.[[2]](#footnote-3)*

When all looks hopeless, let us look to the God of heavy rains...and small clouds.

Amen

1. Charles Haddon Spurgeon. *Morning and Evening*. September 28, evening. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Tony Evans, *Kingdom Woman.* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)