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Grace Evangelical Church
Sunday, November 16, 2008
"A Passion For God's Righteousness" (Elijah & Elisha)
I Kings 17:1; 18:1-2; 17-18; 19:19-21; II Kings 5; 7:1,18-19; 8:1-15

Thomas Edison (1847-1931) was one of the outstanding geniuses in the history of technology.

He tried ten thousand times before he could come out with the right formula that made the electric light bulb. There was a famous story about him that after he tried nine thousand, nine hundred and ninety nine times to perfect the light bulb and had not succeeded, someone asked him: "Are you going to have ten thousand failures?" He answered "I did not fail; I just discovered another way not to invent the electric bulb". He was passionately set to achieve a breakthrough.

The Wright brothers (Orville and Wilbur Wright) persisted with their experiment to invent a machine that could carry human beings and still fly, despite the fact that scientists at that time could not accept such possibility.

In 1903 they achieved the first powered, sustained, and controlled flight of an airplane, thus ushering in the age of heavier-than-air flight. They were also the first to build and fly a fully practical airplane in 1905. And, because of the pioneering efforts of the Wright brothers, we now have aeroplanes flying across the globe and other sophisticated machineries like rockets conveying scientists to the moon. Scientific facts surrounding the issues confronting you can change, if you have the passion and the belief to persist long enough on your task. The Wright brothers did, and the result is evident to all today.

It has been said that a person without passion has no more value than a candle without a flame or fire without light.

What is passion?

Passion is a zeal, an enthusiasm, or fervor. It is the force that relentlessly drives one forward. Passion is a burning desire that creates commitment to a person, project, or life.

What is your passion this morning? What is my passion? What really provides us an intensity, an enthusiasm for doing a specific task, or pursuing a specific interest?

Let's put that question into the spiritual world? Do I, do you, have a passion for the true and living God and for His righteousness? Do we get as excited and passionate about God as we may a football game or going shopping?

Jesus put it this way in Matthew 6:33, "Seek (keep seeking, a present tense and a command) first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you."

I believe that Jesus was saying that His followers should have a passion for the kingdom of God, for God's person and His righteousness.

Did Jesus have passion for the God and His righteousness? In John 4:34 Jesus told his disciples, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work." Later in John 8:29 we have recorded these words of Jesus, "For I always do the things that are pleasing to my Father." Then in Mark 10:45, "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Let me ask again. Did Jesus have a passion for God and His righteousness? Obviously, YES. He set for his followers the ultimate example of one who had a heart for God's righteousness. His life was aflame with doing the will of His heavenly Father.

And when we talk about Jesus Christ and His passion for God's righteousness, we need to ask if there was ever anyone on planet earth who had a passion for God's kingdom and righteousness like unto what Jesus did?

Two individuals in the Bible who come to mind in this regard were Elijah and Elisha, two Old Testament prophets. We could consider each of them separately, but I will consider both of them today since they were somewhat similar in their personalities.

First of all let's consider the time when Elijah and Elisha ministered.

I. The time Elijah and Elisha ministered (874 B.C into 798 B.C. and perhaps later).

1. Elijah (his name means, my God is Jehovah) served the LORD from about 874 B.C. to 848 B.C. He ministered in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reigns of king Ahab (reigned 22 years), king Ahaziah (reigned 2 years), and a couple of years in the reign of king Jehoram.

2. Elisha (his name means, God is salvation) ministered from 848 B.C. to 798 B.C. or later. He served the LORD in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reigns of king Jehoram (reigned 12 years), king Jehu (reigned 28 years), king Jehoahaz (reigned 17 years), and king Jehoash (16 years). It doesn't appear that Elisha ministered during the entire reign of king Jehoash.

3. The combined ministries of Elijah and Elisha in the northern kingdom of Israel totaled some 80 – 85 years. Their ministries were very colorful to say the least, as we shall see.

4. Why did Elijah and Elisha minister in the northern kingdom? The northern kingdom had no godly kings. In total there were 19 kings that reigned over the northern kingdom of Israel. None of them followed the LORD. 5. Elijah and Elisha ministered during the time of six of those ungodly kings to let Israel know that God was still God in spite of their rebellion against Him.

II. The spiritual climate when Elijah and Elisha ministered (complete idolatry and rebellion against God).

1. The Scriptures description (I Kings 16:30-33).

I Kings 16:30-33 tells us that Ahab, the king, the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him. He married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshipped him. Ahab, then, erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria. (He let Jezebel bring in the gods of the Phoenicians).

Jezebel housed and fed 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah (1 Kings 18:19) and sought to put all the prophets of the Lord to death. Of course, this was a Satanic plot to exterminate all believers from Israel. Satan's master plan throughout history is to destroy Israel and usher in a false millennium apart from fulfilling the unconditional covenants to Israel.

Ahab also made the Asherah, the chief goddess of Tyre and mother of Baal. Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

2. A further description of Baal worship.

The Scripture says that Israel worshipped Baal. The word Baal means "master or lord." Baal was one of the chief male deities of the Canaanite gods. Baal was the son of El, the father of the gods and the head of the Canaanite gods. He was associated with agriculture. Baal was thus the farm god who gave increase to family and field, flocks and herds. He was also identified with the storm god, Hadad whose voice could be heard reverberating thunder that accompanied rain, which was necessary for the success of the crops. Baal worship was conducted by priests in temples and in good weather out in fields and on hilltops called "high places." High places had chambers for sacred prostitution by male prostitutes and sacred harlots. Human sacrifices such as children were also offered to Baal (II Kings 17:17; Jeremiah 19:5). The gaiety and licentious character of Baal worship became a subtle attraction to Hebrews who served the LORD God under His laws and directions.

Yielding to temptation, the northern kingdom of Israel had rejected the true and living God and adopted the idolatry of Baal without any reservations. They slapped the living eternal God in the face, turned to man-made idols, and they became like them, debased. Such of course would eventually bring the judgment of God upon the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C. when Assyria took the kingdom captive, and finally in 586 B. C. when Nebuchadnezzar carried out the final deportation of the southern kingdom, Judah, to Babylon.

III. The ministry that Elijah and Elisha carried out.

1. The ministry of Elijah.

(1) Elijah's person.

Elijah comes on the scene in I Kings 17:1. He is described as a Tishbite, meaning Tishbeh, which is said to be Naphtali in the Upper Galilee south of Kedesh, which is on the west side of the Jordan River. Gilead is the mountainous region in that area. Elijah is called a settler, meaning he must have moved there from another area. That's about all we know about Elijah. Obviously, he is a prophet of God, who God has touched to be his messenger to this ungodly king and his wife Jezebel. In spite of the Jezebel's hatred of the prophets, and Elijah thinking he was the only prophet in Israel, God still had 7000 in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. Those who were prophets hid in caves.

(2) Elijah's service.

****First encounter with king Ahab.**

Elijah evidently walks to the palace of Ahab and tells him as the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word (I Kings 17:1). From I Kings 18:1 we discover that is about 3 years. James in his letter tells us 3 ½ years (5:17).

What's going on here?

Elijah tells king Ahab the idolator face to face that the eternal God is alive and well.

God is using Elijah to tell Ahab that even though he has rejected the true and living God and turned to man made idols, God (Elohim, the strong ONE, the Creator), who is also LORD, the self-existent covenant God and Redeemer of Israel, is alive and well and knows exactly what is happening in Israel.

How we need to remember that the living and eternal God revealed in the Bible is alive and well and in control even though He is rejected by many today.

Rejection of God, and even the denial of His existence doesn't do away with the existence of the true and living eternal God and His sovereignty. That should cause us to say AMEN. Praise the LORD!!

But there is more than Elijah telling Ahab that the true and living eternal God is alive and well regardless of his rejection of the LORD.

Elijah tells Ahab in no uncertain terms that he has disobeyed God's word.

How do we know that? What did Elijah tell Ahab? He told Ahab that it wouldn't rain for 3 years or so. Deuteronomy 11:13-17 has God speaking to His people through Moses telling them to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all their heart and all their soul. Doing that, God will give rain in its season, that they may gather their grain, eat and be satisfied. God will also give grass for their cattle. Then God gives a warning if they turn away from Him and serve other gods, He will become angry and shut up the heavens so that there will not be rain and the ground will not yield its fruit, and the people will perish from the good land which He is giving them.

When Solomon made his amazing prayer in dedicating the temple which God allowed him to build, in that prayer Solomon referred to this passage in Deuteronomy 11:13-17 when he said, "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against You, and they pray toward this place and confess Your name and turn from their sin when You afflict them, and then hear in heaven and forgive the sin of Your servants and of your people Israel. . . ."

Israel had rejected God and His Word. God used Elijah to be the messenger to come to Ahab and tell him that God was alive and would bring punishment upon him and the people for rejecting God and His word and not worshipping Him.

****God's care over Elijah.**

Having delivered his message, God tells Elijah to go to the brook Cherith where he stayed awhile and the ravens brought him bread and meat morning and evening (a true miracle of God's provision for Elijah), and he stayed there until the brook dried up.

God was protecting Elijah from Jezebel while taking care of his physical needs. God then directs Elijah to go to Zarephath, which is on the Mediterranean coast between Tyre and Sidon, the home of Jezebel and the heart of Baal worship.

****Miracles God empowered Elijah to perform.**

Elijah ends up going to a widow's house who has a son. There Elijah, with God's help, caused her flour and oil to multiply for many days.

In you take time to read through the life of Elijah, you will discover that God give him the ability to perform different miracles - each could be a message in themselves – there were nine in total.

- (1) Elijah declares a drought (I Kings 17:1).
- (2) Elijah multiplies the widow's flour and oil (I Kings 17:7-16).
- (3) Elijah resurrects the widow's son (I Kings 17:17-24).
- (4) Elijah calls fire down from heaven (I Kings 18:1-40).
- (5) Elijah prays for rain and it comes miraculously (I Kings 18:41-45).
- (6) Elijah outruns a chariot (I Kings 18:46).
- (7) Elijah predicts Ahaziah's death (II kings 1:1-2).
- (8) Ahaziah's men killed by fire from heaven (II Kings 1:9-17).
- (9) Elijah parts the Jordan River (II Kings 2:1-8).

At the end of his life, Elijah is taken up into heaven in a whirlwind. He never dies as God's chariot of fire and horses of fire appear, showing God's almighty power (II Kings 2:11).

The miracle we are probably most familiar with is when Elijah after 3 years appeared the second time to Ahab, and what happened after that incredible event. This found in the second encounter that Elijah has with king Ahab.

****The second encounter of Elijah with king Ahab – the Battle between Baal and the LORD God.**

I Kings 18 is one of the most famous chapters in the Bible. Three and a half years had gone by since Elijah first came unannounced into the palace of Ahab and told him that it would not rain on Israel. Now God told Elijah to go to Ahab for He was going to send rain on the earth. As Ahab was going to Ahab, he met Obadiah, a prophet in that day, who feared the LORD, and had hid 100 prophets of the LORD in caves to protect them from Jezebel, while providing them bread and water.

Elijah's Meeting Obadiah

Elijah told Obadiah to go to Ahab and tell him that he wanted to talk to him. Obadiah was reluctant to do this for he was afraid Elijah would disappear, and then his neck would be on the line.

Elijah told Obadiah that as the "LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today." (I Kings 18:15).

Elijah's Meeting With Ahab

Obadiah conveys the Elijah's message to Ahab, and Ahab goes to meet Elijah. That famous meeting is described in I Kings 18:17-18. Ahab upon meeting Elijah, told him, "Is this you, you troubler of Israel?" Elijah replied to king Ahab, **"I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and you have followed the Baals."**

Elijah went straight to the issue at hand. He didn't beat around the bush. **"Ahab, you have not obeyed God's commandments (breaking the first and second commandment), and you are an idolater."**

The Picturesque Battle Between Jehovah God And Baal

Then Elijah challenges Ahab to a face off between the 450 prophets of Baal and the true and living eternal God (I Kings 18:21). The place for the challenge was Mt. Carmel.

Elijah directed the prophets of Baal to cut up an oxen and place it on the wood which was put on an altar they had built. No fire was to be used. Elijah challenged the prophets to call on their god to bring down fire on the altar, but nothing happened. They called on Baal from morning until noon. Elijah mocked them (I Kings 18:27). The prophets of Baal continued in a frenzied show from noon until 3 PM.

Then Elijah went into action, repaired the altar of the LORD which had been torn down. He took 12 stones representing representing the unity of the nation, God was still God of the entire nation, although at this time the nation was divided into the northern and southern kingdoms. Elijah had a trench dug around the altar and had water poured on the burnt offering and the wood three times so it filled the trench. The water was probably gotten from a perennial spring near this traditional site.

Then at the time of the evening offering Elijah prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, today let it be known that You awe God in Israel and that I am Your servant and 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 heart back again" (I Kings 18:36-37).

God's Answer

"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" (I Kings 18:38);

The Response Of The People

"When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God." (I Kings 18:39).

Elijah's Response

Elijah had all of the 450 prophets of Baal killed. (Imagine what was going through Ahab's mind at this time). He told Ahab to go eat and drink for there was the sound of the roar of a heavy shower. Ahab did that, but Elijah went up to Mt. Carmel, crouched down, put his face between his knees and evidently prayed (James 5:18). After his servant went back and looked toward the sea seven time, he reported to Elijah a could see a cloud small as his hand coming out of the sea. Elijah told his servant to tell Ahab to get in his chariot for rain was coming, and it rained a heavy shower. Ahab rode to Jezreel (the winter residence of Ahab) about 17 miles from Carmel. and the hand of the LORD was on Elijah and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab's chariot.

Obviously the true and living God won the battle at Mt Carmel with ease. Man's idols are powerless in His sight. But the fire coming down from heaven was God's sign that He accepted the sacrifice Elijah made, His awesome power was defeating evil and His cleansing was available to all who would repent of their sin and turn to Him. The killing of the 450 prophets of Baal showed God's judgment on idolatry.

Jezebel's Response To Baal's Defeat On Mt. Carmel.

When Jezebel, Ahab's wife, heard that all 450 prophets of Baal had been killed with the sword, she was furious, to say the least. She sent a messenger to Elijah telling him that she would kill him as he had done to her prophets (I Kings 19:1-2). Eventually as Ahab was killed in battle (I Kings 22), and then Jezebel died in II Kings 9 as prophesied by Elijah (Cf, I Kings 21:23; II Kings 9:30-37).

Elijah's Reaction To Jezebel's Threat

Elijah became frightened and took off and went to Beersheba (120 miles south of Jezreel) then into the wilderness, and requested to die as he sat by a juniper tree. The Lord sent an angel to him as Elijah slept, touched him, and told him to arise and eat. He ate and drank and slept a second time. The angel of the LORD came and touched him again and told him to arise and eat. He did and went 40 days and 40 nights to Mt. Horeb or Sinai, (200 more miles south) where Moses had received the Ten Commandments. There God appeared to Elijah, and helped Elijah work through his fear and discouragement, by asking Elijah what he was doing there two times. Each time Elijah answered that he had been very jealous for the LORD the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away (I Kings 19:10, 14).

God's Understanding Of And Encouragement To Elijah

God graciously dealt with Elijah, implying that He understood how Elijah felt. God did not condemn him for his fear and discouragement, but told him that He had things for him to do, to anoint a king of Aram, and a king over Israel, and anoint Elisha who would take his place as prophet in Israel. In fact, God told Elijah, that He had 7000 in Israel who hadn't bowed the knee to Baal (I Kings 19:15-18).

2.The ministry of Elisha.

(1) Elisha's person.

We find that Elisha (God is salvation) was plowing with twelve oxen when Elijah called him to be his successor (I Kings 19:19-21). He responded to Elijah's call, as he threw his mantle on him. He asked if he could kiss his father and mother goodbye, and then Elisha joined Elijah by sacrificing a pair of oxen, indicating his worship of the Lord **and his commitment to serving with Elijah.**

(2) Elisha's service.

After the translation of Elijah in II Kings 2 we have the beginning of Elisha's ministry. He headed schools of prophets (II Kings 4:38-44; 6:1-7), Evidently some lived at Bethel (II Kings 2:3), at Jericho (II Kings 2:5), and Gilgal (II Kings). The words, sons of the prophets, means member of disciple of the prophets. Interesting as in the days of Elijah, God still has those who followed Him in the midst of idolatry and immorality.

****Elisha's Miracles.**

Elisha performed more miracles than any biblical character other than Jesus Christ.

- (1) Parted the Jordan River (II Kings 2:13-14).
- (2) Made the Jereicho spring drinkable (II Kings 2:19-22).
- (3) Sent bears to punish irreverent youths (II Kings 2:23-25).
- (4) Flooded ditches to confuse Moabite (II Kings 3:1-27).
- (5) Multiplied the widow's oil (II Kings 4:1-7).
- (6) Shunammite woman bears a son (II Kings 4:8-17).
- (7) Resurrected Shunammite womans's son (II Kings 4:18-37).
- (8) Purified poisoned stew (II Kings 4:38-44).
- (9) Heals Naaman's leprosy (II Kings 5:1-14).
- (10) Gehazi was struck with leprosy (II Kings 5:15-27).
- (11) Floats lost axhead (II Kings 6:1-7).
- (12) Gave special light to the king's messenger (II Kings 6:16-17).
- (13) Blinded the Aramean army (II Kings 6:8-23).
- (14) Elisha's bones resurrected a dead man (II Kings 13:20-21).

Elisha had an amazing ministry like Elijah his predecessor. He was used by the LORD to perform five more miracles than Elijah.

One of those miracles we will look at is Elisha's encounter with Naaman the captain of the army of the king of Aram.

****Elisha's encounter with Namaan, the army captain.**

Naaman's Position & Physical Condition

Naaman, although a valiant warrior, had leprosy (II Kings 5:1). In Israel if one had leprosy, isolation and observation were practiced. Outside of Israel, lepers were not necessarily isolated

Naaman's Strategy To Be Healed Of His Leprosy

The Arameans had in their raids taken captive a little girl from the land of Israel. She waited on Naaman's wife. One day the little girl told her mistress that she wished her master was with the prophet of Samaria, for he would cure him of his leprosy.

Naaman was told what the little girl said and he went to the king with the story. The king of Aram told Naaman to go and he would send a letter to the king of Israel. He also sent a handsome gift of silver and gold and ten changes of clothes. Naaman brought the letter to the king of Israel asking that Naaman may be cured. When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and expressed that this was impossible for him to do and that the king of Aram must be seeking a quarrel with him.

Elisha's Help For Naaman

When Elisha heard about what Naaman had requested of the king of Israel, he sent word to the king to have Naaman come to him. So Naaman came to Elisha. He stopped in front of Elisha's house with his horse and his chariots and stood at Elisha's doorway.

Elisha told Naaman to go wash in the Jordan seven times and his flesh would be healed. Naaman was furious thinking that Elisha would come out and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and heal his leprosy. There were better rivers than the waters of Israel. Convinced by his servants, Naaman finally went to the Jordan River and dipped himself seven times and discovered that he was healed of his leprosy.

Naaman's Response To God Using Elisha To Heal Him

Naaman came back to Elisha and told him that now he knew that is no God in all the earth but in Israel, so please take a present (II Kings 5:15). Elisha would not take any gift. Naaman said he would worship the true and living God even if he had to go into the house Rimmon the god of Damascus.

The sad sequel of the story is that Gehazi, Elisha's servant decided that he would like some of the gold and clothes that Naaman had offered Elisha. Gehazi lied about what it was for. He hid the gifts in his house and stood before Elisha. Elisha knew what had happened and the leprosy that Naaman had come upon Gehazi.

We could consider some of the other miracles of Elisha, but let's put together some lessons that we can learn from the lives of Elijah and Elisha, the lives of two prophets of God who certainly had a passion for God's righteousness in the midst of an idolatrous and immoral environment.

Some lessons we can learn From Elijah's and Elisha's passion after God's righteousness.

1.If a person is going to have a passion after God's righteousness, one must first have a personal relationship with the true and living God (Acts 4:12; John 3:16).

Obviously, both Elijah and Elisha knew personally by faith the true and living God. He took care of Elijah and Elisha.

In the full revelation of the Bible, we find that the personal relationship with the true and living God is through faith in Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior. There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved – that is forgiven and have eternal life (Acts 4:12). I trust that you have made that personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as your Savior, who died in your place, to pay the penalty for your sin, was buried and rose again to win for you His forgiveness and eternal life.

Accepting Christ as one's Savior, is basic to having a passion after God's righteousness.

2. The believer who has a passion after God's righteousness has the conviction that God's authority is his or hers (Ephesians 6:10).

On whose authority did Elijah depend upon when he came into the presence of Ahab telling him that there would be no rain in Israel for these days (I Kings 17:1). "As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand." Elijah came in the authority of the self-existent, Creator, Redeemer personal and living God. On whose authority did Elisha depend upon when he told Naaman to go wash in the Jordan River 7 times? Not his, of course, but rather God's authority.

In the full revelation of the Bible, the believer's authority today rests in Jesus Christ. We are to pray to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. We are to be strong in the LORD and in the power of His might (Ephesians 6:10).

I am not talking about the name it and claim idea that is floating around in Christianity today. Rather, I'm referring to the position that the believer has in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit of saying "No" to sin and "Yes" to righteousness.

The story is told of a little boy who was in a large city where the policeman had a place on a stand in the middle of the intersection where he stood to direct traffic. As the traffic began moving well, the policeman stepped aside for a few minutes of rest. When he wasn't looking a little boy, who had been watching the policemen from the sidewalk, rushed from the street into where the policeman had been standing. He raised up his hand, and the cars all stopped. It wasn't his person that had the power, but the position he stepped into.

It's the same with the believer in Jesus Christ. The believer has the position of authority only in Jesus Christ to have passion to do what is right to the glory of God. Let's use our authority in Jesus Christ, children, youth, and adults.

3. The believer who has a passion for God's righteousness has a working knowledge of God's Word and does what God's Word says (II Timothy 2:15). He knows who He believes and acts on who God is and what He says.

What did Elijah tell Ahab? **"I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and you have followed the Baals (I Kings 18:17).** Elijah knew what the first and second commandments were. He knew what Deuteronomy said God would do to Israel if they disobeyed Him.

That's why we take time, I trust, to read God's Word, meditate upon it, and even memorize some verses. That's why we take time to study God's Word together so we know how to live with God as individuals, as couples, as families, as a church family, at work and in our neighborhoods. That's why it is necessary to know God's word so we can bring it to bear on the culture in which we live.

4. The believer who has a passion for God's righteousness has a grasp and understanding of the purity of God (I Peter 1:14-16).

The entire drama on Mt. Carmel between the true and living God and the false god, Baal, was a contest between the holy God and the idolatrous and immoral god of Baal. That's what the fire was all about. The holiness of God came down, accepted the sacrifice of Elijah but burned up everything including the stones, and the water in the trench around the altar. God's holiness is awesome. Our God is a consuming fire states Hebrews 12:29. His holiness pervades every aspect of His eternal character, and the sum of it is His incredible glory. That's why God appeared to Moses in bush that was on fire but never burned up.

That's why God exhorts all believers in Christ to be holy for He is holy. We are set apart to God as holy, as His possessions, through faith in Christ. But in the power of the Holy Spirit, God wants us to be holy, give evidence of His holy character in our thoughts, our attitudes, and actions.

Certainly God provides us His forgiveness when we don't think holy thoughts, and display holy attitudes, and have holy actions. We have but to ask His forgiveness, but then we must go on and seek to live a holy life in the power of the Holy Spirit.

5. The believer who has a passion for God's righteousness understands that God is a God of grace and forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7; 4:32).

Elijah knew that when God brought down fire from heaven burning up the entire sacrifice, wood, stones, and water that God was satisfied with the sacrifice, and forgiveness was available to those who would turn to the LORD. And the people fell on their faces and they said, "The LORD He is God; the LORD, He is God." They were repenting of their sin and acknowledging that God was truly God, not the gods of Baal. When Elisha told the leper Naaman to go and wash in the Jordan River 7 times, I believe Elisha knew that if Naaman did that it would be a sign of his obedience to God and his willingness to follow Him. Naaman's response to Elisha was, "I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel." Then Naaman said that he would only sacrifice to the LORD. Some powerful grace of God and His forgiveness being experienced here.

6. The believer who has a passion for God's righteousness knows that God is there in times of fear and discouragement (Psalm 27; Isaiah 41:10; John 16:33; Hebrews 13:5-6).

God's taking care of Elijah when he fled from Jezebel's threats to take his life is evidence that God does not forget us when we become afraid and encounter different challenges in our life. His tender way of dealing with Elijah as God asks Elijah what he is doing at Mt. Horeb. He never condemns Elijah but encourages him to return to usefulness for HIM. God does the same for us. He has given us the indwelling Holy Spirit who is there to comfort, encourage, and cheer us on in our times of fear and discouragement.

7. The believer who has a passion for God's righteousness has an understanding of God's judgment (Hebrews 9:27; 10:30-31).

Elijah's treatment of the 450 prophets of Baal doesn't register very well on our spiritual radar. But Elijah knew what God's Word said that idolatry was against God and must be judged. God is a God of love and justice. Those who repent and turn to the Lord will not be judged. Those who reject the Lord will be judged. His justice demands it. That's why Hebrews 9:27 says that is appointed unto man once to die and after this comes the judgment. Vengeance is mine I will repay says the Lord. The LORD will judge His people. It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. We can count on God someday doing away with all sin and evil as the

Bible states in II Peter 3:10-13 & Revelation 21. This action of God should not cause us to be proud, but rather to be humble that through faith in Christ we don't have to face that judgment, and we can seek to please Him.

8. The believer who has a passion for God's righteousness has a continuous desire to serve Him at all times even in the midst of an idolatrous and immoral culture. (Psalm 100).

Elijah served the LORD in the midst of idolatry confronting the culture of his day. Elisha did the same. They did not renege from serving the LORD even in the midst of idolatry. God even used Elisha to minister outside the nation of Israel. God has a heart for all people to come to know Him personally through faith in His Son, the Lord Jesus. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we are to serve the LORD with gladness, to give it our best shot, to serve the Lord with enthusiasm.

9. The believer who has a passion for God's righteousness bathes his life and service for the Lord in prayer (James 5:17-18; I Kings 17:1; 18:42-43).

Elijah was a man of prayer as portrayed in his experience with Ahab on Mt Carmel. The believer is exhorted in Ephesians 6:18 tells us that prayer is what really makes work the entire spiritual armor that God gives the believer to use against the wiles of the evil one. Keep praying for whatever you are praying for. Keep seeking, knocking, and asking. Bathe your life, your family, our church family, your work, your school experience, our country, our world, in prayer. We are to pray without ceasing, always having that attitude of prayer.

May our lives display a passion after God's righteousness each day in our lives.

In fact, I understand that passion is many times alluded to as a raging fire.

Certainly, fire accurately describes the nature of Passion.

On one hand, the fire of passion can be used constructively; if contained, it can help ignite other fires. On the other hand it can be used destructively to put out fires.

During Desert Storm, Saddam Hussein lit many oil wells on fire. Water could be used to no avail to put these fires out, nor did anything else work.

These massive fires were consumed by another fire created by dynamite. The dynamite literally licked up all the oxygen, suffocating and ultimately destroying the once thriving fire.

May our passion for God's righteousness be the spiritual fire of dynamite - the power of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, causing us to do His will and to share God's love with someone else this week!