

January 25, 2026

“Propelled By God”

1 Kings 18:41-46

Intro:

If you were with us last Sunday, you will remember that I shared a couple of points from the keynote sessions at the pastors and spouses retreat I went to back in November. If you missed last week’s message, I invite you carve out some time this week to listen to it on our website. The main speaker at the retreat was Rev. Dr. Lenett Anderson, who pastors a Baptist church in Nova Scotia. It is also worth your time to look him up on YouTube and listen to some of his sermons.

Anyway, these two messages – last week and this week, have some connection and this week builds on last week. The title of the message last week was “I Don’t Have Time for This!”, and the point was that we need to learn to say no to the things that take us away from doing the thing that God has called us to do at that time. I did caution that we need to be careful not to use the freedom found in saying “I don’t have time for this” as an excuse to end up doing nothing at all. God has a role for each of us in His mission, and we need to make sure that we are focused and active in that task.

Another temptation we can fall prey to when declaring “I don’t have time for this” is to use that better sounding excuse for “I can’t do this”, when we think that we can’t do something. There can be many reasons we think we are unable to do something that is asked of us – perhaps we have tried it in the past and failed, or we have never had any training in that area and so feel we lack the required expertise, or we have never tried it before and are afraid of failure. Whatever the reason, the outcome is the same: God asks us to step into something for Him, and we don’t because we don’t think that we can do it. More than just thinking that we can’t do it, we actually put effort into convincing ourselves that we can’t.

I have news for you... Remember Nehemiah from last week? He was a cupbearer to the king, and I am pretty sure organizing and leading people to the completion

of a major building project was well outside of his experience and skill set. But he stepped up and did it. If God is asking you do something, He will provide what you need to do it.

Elijah:

Do you remember Elijah? I hope so, since we just read a short passage about him at the start of the sermon. Elijah's story is threaded through 1 and 2 Kings, and there are a lot of strange moments for this prophet of the Lord. Before the passage that we read is the account of his contest with the 400 priests of Baal on Mount Carmel. You recall the account? Elijah daringly goes out and challenges the religious leaders of the cult of Baal that Ahab (king of Israel, by the way) and his wife Jezebel were promoting. They put two altars up on the mountain and have a contest to see whose god will answer their prayers and light the offering on fire. All day and night the 400 prophets of Baal chant and scream and cut themselves to no avail. The offering remains untouched by heavenly fire. Then Elijah has his turn and he has his altar and offering thoroughly soaked with water – so much water that it creates a moat of sorts around the base of the altar, such that no one would be able to get near it. And then he simply prays. God answers by sending fire down from the heavens that burns up not only the water-logged offering, but the altar and all the water that was lying on the ground around the altar as well. Elijah is triumphant! At the end of this great demonstration of God's very real presence, he goes back up to the top of the mountain and begins to pray for rain for the rest of the country.

Seems a bit odd, but they were in the middle of a drought that had lasted for a few years now, and that had been part of God's efforts to get the attention of his wayward people. So, here we are at the end of an epic showdown between God and pagan worship, and Elijah gives warning that a storm is on the horizon. King Ahab is instructed to get himself fed and rested in preparation. Elijah goes to the top of Mount Carmel to pray for rain. He prays, he gets his servant to check for signs of rain, he goes back to praying, and the pattern repeats until the seventh time, when the servant reports a tiny cloud forming on the horizon. This is the

word. This is go time. This is the beginning of the end of the drought, and Elijah sends word to Ahab to get on his chariot and hurry home.

In ancient times, the chariot was seen as the pinnacle of military might. Most armies had only foot soldiers, but if you were able to afford horses and chariots, then you would be in contention for being a military powerhouse in the area. In part, this was because chariots were not cheap and they showed the economic dominance of that nation, but even more so, they were fast. Foot soldiers couldn't keep up to the deadly speed of a chariot and as such were always in the losing position.

Ahab has a chariot, and he is riding for all he is worth to get home before the storm breaks over him. Elijah also needs to go to Jezreel. He has a task to do in the changing religious climate following the defeat of the prophets of Baal. Exactly what that is we are not told, but we do know that he has to get there. Before the storm. But he doesn't have a chariot. He doesn't have a horse. He might have a donkey, but given how he gets to Jezreel, it is not too likely. He has only his feet.

God tells him to run. And run he does. He hikes his robes up into his belt so that his legs were free to move, and God places his hand of empowerment upon him. Imagine the scene from Ahab's chariot. The landscape is speeding by, other chariots are racing alongside him, and then out of nowhere comes this rugged-looking guy with his cloak all wrapped around his waist, passing them on foot! And not only that, but he manages to keep ahead of them for the entire journey back to the city.

I know that if you run a horse, it will get tired reasonably quickly. But the average person will tire out far faster, especially running at a sprint. But not Elijah. He is running under God's power now.

This is something that Elijah certainly can *not* do. There is no question. It isn't even a question of whether he should be doing it, or if it is something he should

say “I don’t have time for this” to. A human being is not capable of doing what Elijah was doing. But a human being *is* capable of doing it if God is the one providing the strength and power to do it.

Isaiah 40:29-31:

²⁹ He gives power to the weak

and strength to the powerless.

³⁰ Even youths will become weak and tired,

and young men will fall in exhaustion.

³¹ But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength.

They will soar high on wings like eagles.

They will run and not grow weary.

They will walk and not faint.

Conclusion:

Does this mean we are all going to go out and post world-record running times?

No. That might be something that God does for someone, but that is not the point here. What it does mean is that when God calls you to stand on that wall, to take on that task, to step into that unfamiliar area of ministry, He will provide what you need to do it. He does not just throw us in to the deep end to see if we can swim on our own. He knows we can’t. And, more importantly, He is calling us to His work, not our work. It is His mission. His desire is that people would know who He is. His plan is for people to turn and be saved. He is fully and completely invested in this. So, when he says to you, “I have a place for you in my great mission”, He will also provide all that you need to be able to see that to the end. To run that race. For His kingdom to come, and His will to be done on Earth as it is in heaven.

We pray those words, and we believe those words. But now God wants us to trust Him in obedient service to see those words come alive and become reality.

How do we know when we are in the zone of being empowered by God?

It might not be a big spectacular thing like out-pacing a horse. It might be subtle. It might be a passing thought in your mind or in casual conversation that sounds something like, “I never thought that I would be able to (fill in the blank), but here I am doing it, and it is pretty easy.”

That is God’s hand of power working in your life.

What is God waiting to empower you to do in His mission? As I challenged you last week... You do have time for that.

Let’s pray.