

(Men Who Met God): Elijah - 'The Lord Leviticus Before Whom I Stand'

by A.W. Tozer

Elijah's courage and confidence came from his discovery of God's absolute presence and power, which gave him the courage to approach King Ahab and declare God's presence and power.

Duration: 47:50

Scripture: 1 Kings 18:21-22, 1 Kings 18:40, 1 Kings 19:9, 1 Kings 19:11-12, 1 Kings 19:18, 1 Kings 19:21, Matthew 6:33, 2 Timothy 4:3-4, Hebrews 11:6, James 1:12, 1 Peter 5:8, Revelation 2:10, Revelation 3:16

Topics: "Elijah"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the concept of finding reality and how sin often prevents us from experiencing it. He explores the inner conflict within humans, where the divine nature clashes with the sinful nature. The preacher emphasizes the importance of understanding the meaning behind hymns and not just singing them without comprehension. He challenges the audience to take action and not waste their time, urging them to seek the faith and courage of Elijah in standing before God.

Transcript

First Kings 17 entire chapter responsibly, and Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand, there shall not be dune or rain these years, but according to my word. Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Kirith, that is before Jordan. So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord.

For he went and dwelt by the brook Kirith, that is before Jordan. And it came to pass, after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there.

Behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not, go and do as thou hast said, but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son.

And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah. And she and he and her house did eat many days. And it came to pass, after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick, and

his sickness was so sore that there was no breath left in him.

And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord, my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again.

And Elijah took the child and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother. And Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. Now, we have just read a little out of the life of one of the great Old Testament saints.

I do not hesitate to call him a saint, though he was a man that liked passion. He was still a man after God's heart and a saint. And yet this man, though among the very greatest of the Old Testament, or indeed the greatest of Bible heroes, yet was a man who had almost nothing to recommend him.

If Elijah were to appear here tonight, if we didn't know who he was, we wouldn't let him in the church, or if we did, we certainly wouldn't let him in the pulpit. And yet, though this man lacked so many desirable qualities that he, of course, didn't have, and he had so many undesirable qualities that he shouldn't have had, there was something about him, nevertheless, that God honored and blessed. And the most wonderful thing of all is that God has let him stand as a beacon light on the top of the hill for all the ages that follow, have followed, to get light from and encouragement.

Now, I want to inquire tonight a bit, what was the secret of this man? What was it? What did he have, or what didn't he have, or what position did he take, or what attitude, what was there about him? You say it was all of the grace of God, and I would run to underscore that, because that's so. But why does the grace of God operate toward some people and not toward others? For he is no respecter of persons. Well, let's look now and see whether we can discover what it was.

I think that the foundation of everything that made Elijah, Elijah, is found in his opening testimony to the old king. He said, The Lord God liveth. Now, that wasn't anything for a Jew to say to another Jew.

The Lord God liveth. Of course the Lord God lives. But he added another three or four words, and these were the words added to the first four that probe somewhat deeply into the life of the man.

He said, The Lord God liveth before whom I stand. Now, Elijah was a countryman from up in the land of Gilead, the land of Tishbe, he was a Tishbite, and he had no education, at least if he had, I wouldn't know where he got it. He had no culture at all.

We preached about Moses here, and Moses was a cultured man. He had been brought up in the court of Pharaoh and educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. But here stands a man without any education at all, except what he might have gotten out for himself, and a man with no culture, a man dressed in the rough garments of the Gileadites, girded around with a girdle of plain leather, and yet this man doesn't hesitate to walk into the presence of the great King Ahab.

Now, a king is always great. He's always great, even if he isn't great, he's great. He's great because he has the power to do things that the average man doesn't have.

He has the power, at least he had in those days, in the time of limited monarchies, such as we know now, the power of a king is not so unlimited. But in those days, a king only had to say casually over his shoulder as he went off to have dinner, have his head off, and he came back, the fellow had no head. He was just

that way, you know, he had all sorts of power.

If he didn't like a fellow, he just said, have his head off. So heads came off, and because they did, they took him off. Those were kings, so this was a great king in spite of the fact that he wasn't a great king.

And yet Elijah didn't hesitate to walk straight into his presence. He didn't have anybody to introduce him, he didn't have any pool, he didn't have an appointment, he didn't have an office boy or secretary or gentleman-in-waiting or anybody. He just walked in, barged in is the word I think now.

And when he got in there, the king looked up and here this great fellow stood, smelling of the mountain, where he had come from. And the king didn't get a word out of his mouth. He started to say something royal, but it didn't come out, he didn't have time.

Elijah told him what he had come for. He said, as the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. He never even said goodbye.

He turned on his heel and walked out of the king's presence, and left the king standing there breathless, angry, frustrated, and confused. That was Elijah. Now how was it that Elijah had a courage like this? Well, Elijah had found the ultimate reality.

Ultimate reality. If you were a philosopher, you'd want to plow into those two words, the ultimate and reality. What are those two words? Mostly we don't see ultimate reality roundabout.

We don't see ultimate reality. Somebody today driving out here took us around the way and threw an old section. Well, now that old section won't be there in another ten years.

They'll tear that all down out of there. The word permanent is practically gone from the vocabulary. Nothing's permanent anymore.

Years ago, five, ten years ago, I got a definition of the word permanent from a bulletin, from a dodger they threw around the houses. It said it was announcing a beauty shop, and it said, permanent ways guaranteed to last three months. And thus I got a definition of the word permanent, it lasts three months.

And God Almighty made us with eternity in our hearts, and then we call permanent three months. We don't even build expecting anything to stand anymore. Things crumble down.

You build automobiles, they don't expect them to last. They sell you things they don't expect them to last. I've been told, though I don't know whether this is true or whether it is just somebody out to get the manufacturers, but they tell me that they deliberately build automobiles less substantial than they could because they don't want them to last too long.

That's down in the States. I don't know what they do up here, where they make these cars, but I would guess that that's the way it's done. Nobody has found reality.

Nothing lasts, you see. But here is a man who found something that lasted. He found reality.

We miss it constantly because of sin, and yet man's always striving after it. What is it that stirs people up to do the weird things that do? Why, when a fella can walk down the street, why does he get in a big go-devil and pull the throttle open and roar down the street? It's because something in him is big and wonderful and grand, and something else in him is little and mean and devilish. It's that which is of God in

him fighting with that which is of sin in him, and we don't act natural.

We haven't found the blissful center, as the poem, the hymn has it, fixed on this blissful center rest. With some of our old hymns, now this isn't part of the sermon, if I never get back to the sermon it'll be worth saying this anyhow, but some of our old hymns are just wonderful, but we sing them without knowing what they mean. We say, now rest my long divided heart, fixed on this blissful center rest.

I don't know that anybody knows what that means. I asked a congregation one time what it meant when it said, I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. And it was an intelligent congregation with a fair average of education, and not one person knew what I dare not trust the sweetest frame meant.

I won't embarrass you by asking you, because I wouldn't do that. I did them, but I wouldn't do that with you. But, I dare not trust the sweetest frame.

Now what did the man mean? Was he just finding a rhyme for name that came later, but wholly lean on Jesus' name? No. In those days when the man wrote that, a frame was a frame of mind. And so he said, I came up to you and to Brother Newell and said, Brother Newell, how's your frame? I wouldn't be asking about his body, I'd be asking about what frame of mind he was in.

I dare not trust the sweetest, happiest frame of mind. That was what we sing when we, it's what we sing. I dare not trust how good I feel, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

But of course, feel doesn't rhyme with name. So he said, I dare not trust the sweetest frame. And that's when it says, I fixed on this blissful center of rest.

We just skip that, and we don't claim to know what it means, but it was talking about God, the center of our being, the center. I was talking with friends today about the German writer, Meister Eckert, and his use of the word, I think in German it's, I don't know very much about German. But what does it mean? It means the ground, the deep center of the soul.

And he talked, and others talked about the ground of the soul. The average person doesn't know his soul has an anchor. There's something deep down in there, hidden and real.

Elijah had found that reality. He had found the absolute beyond and in the midst of the relative. Relativity, that cursed word that ruins things now, relativity.

Nothing is fixed, but everything is relative to everything else. But there is one who isn't relative to anything, except whom he sovereignly desires to be. And that is God, and that is the absolute.

Well, I had a son. He's very much changed now, and he's happily associated in one of the Presbyterian churches in the city, Chicago. But when he first came back from the university, where he got his basic degree, the Bachelor of Science, the old man didn't know anything at all.

How he could manage to find his way home after 6 o'clock, that boy couldn't understand, you know. Because he hadn't been to the university there, at least not recently. And this boy came back filled with relativity.

He was very nice about it, and teased me always. Our family's always been great teasers, and of course, because I'm the worst one, I get the worst. And he called me an absolutist.

He said, that's what you are. You're an absolutist. You know, they bite that word off and spit it at you, as though they were cursing you.

You're an absolutist. Of course we're absolutists, ladies and gentlemen. Don't get scared, because they call you an absolutist.

You're a lot of things you didn't know you were. You're a biped prince, did you know that? Sure you are. So don't, and a vertebrae biped prince.

Don't let that bother you. Of course you are. Down in the southern part of the U.S. one time, an educated fellow was running against another fellow in office for office.

And he wanted, of course, to defeat his opponent, but he didn't know how to do it. So he was in the section where they don't have too much education down there. Tell it not in gas, but there are some sections where they're not too well-educated and a little bit prejudiced.

And so he started a report, got to whispering it around. He said, did you know that my opponent, who seeks a high office, was a celibate before he was married? And you know, they started the report that he'd been a celibate before he was married, and he never got to first base. You know, they weren't going to let a fellow like that into office because he'd been single before he was married, you know.

Well, words. Don't let words bother you, ladies and gentlemen. Don't let words bother you.

Sticks and stones can break your bones, but words can never hurt you. And the word absolute doesn't bother me. Of course we believe in something absolute.

Of course we believe in something fixed. In other words, we believe in God. And that fixed absolute said, when you pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven.

So that fixed absolute is a being, a person, one who calls us his children and who says, call me Father, and ye shall be my sons and daughters. Well, Elijah had found the absolute, and he'd found the holy in the midst of the impure, and he'd found the infinite beyond the limited. There's nothing but what has limits, you know.

But God is unlimited. He's the infinite, and Elijah had found the infinite, and he'd found the perfect in the midst of the imperfect. Don't ask me how he found him.

I don't know. He'd found the eternal within the temporal. They say, who was it, said it, one old man, might have been Eckhart, who said that if you can find the eternal in the eternal, you're all right.

But if you can find the eternal in the temporal, you're still better. Meaning by that, that if you can find God in the midst of a shifting, changing world, it's better than if you try to rise beyond it and try to find God in the monastery or chapel. Find God as you travel.

Find God in the midst of the relative, midst of the flowing. Well, Elijah had found all this, and what he had found, remember, wasn't a philosophy. A lot of religious people are just religious philosophers, not very good ones, but religious philosophers.

And they get wild and spend a lifetime promulgating their religious philosophy. Elijah hadn't found a religious philosophy. Elijah had found God.

Elijah hadn't found a religion. Elijah hadn't found a key of life. You know, there are keys of life lying around everywhere.

Mrs. Mary Baker, much married, Eddie, had one, has one, and made a few million out of it, I guess, before she died, selling it. But they call it the key of life. Everybody's looking for that key.

People send me books, you know. They devil all editors by sending them books. Some of them are worth a while, but most of them are not.

We get them by the carload down in New York, and used to get them in Chicago, and we'd pile them up there, and a few of them we'd review, and the rest we'd either throw away or pile in a corner, until the corner got filled up and we didn't know what to do with the books. Books are being written, and to the making of many books there is no end, and a lot of them are keys. Keys to this and keys to that.

I wrote a little thing and somebody named it Keys. I didn't name it that, because I don't believe in keys. Elijah hadn't found a key of life.

He had found God, and there's an awful lot of difference, brothers and sisters. You can go and be baptized and take communion and yield to and formulate your lives after all of the ways of a church, this church or some other church, and yet be empty and miserable, because God made us for himself, and our hearts are dissatisfied until we find satisfaction in God. It is God that we need, my brethren.

It is God that we lost when we sinned, and it's God that we get back when we're redeemed, and it's God that we miss and it's God that we need. Elijah had found God. He had found, as his ancestor Abraham had found, that only God matters, and so he said to the great King, I stand before God.

This man's spiritual encounter was tested in the fire of living. There's a great breakdown in modern Christianity. We take things at second hand, and we either never have a true encounter with God, or we can't relate our religion to our lives.

Some people's religion go east while they're going west. They go one direction and their religion another, and they never can quite relate it. I want to ask you a question now, and may the Holy Ghost burn it into your heart.

What did you do last week differently, except go to prayer meeting and to church? What did you do differently than you would have done if you had not been a Christian? Tell me that. How did you live that was different? We talk about love, but how much did you spend on yourself, and how much did you give away? We talk about sacrifice, but did you sacrifice riding in a big car, sleeping on a beauty rest mattress and eating three times a day? Any sacrifice? What are we doing that we wouldn't be doing if we were not Christians? What's the difference anyway? I'd like to know there's a difference. Is Jesus Christ simply a foot mare to put on a human lapel and carry around something nice, something pretty? Is Christianity simply a decoration, or is there a reality back of it? Elijah said there's reality there.

He found it, and his spiritual light was tested in the fire of living. He related his faith to his works, his beliefs to his light. A lot of Christians in our time, it's just a lovely symbol, but no living reality back of it.

If you press a fellow, he blows up in your face. He's supposed to be a Christian, but push him enough and he goes to pieces. A fellow said to Moody one time that he was holy sanctified and couldn't sin.

Moody took a pail of water and threw on him, and he got red-hot angry and wanted to whip Moody. Moody just said, I knew he didn't have it. There was no relation between what he claimed to have and what he actually had.

I wonder how far could you be tested? If you scratch a businessman dressed in a \$15 shirt and a \$115 suit that just got out of a \$3,500 car, scratch him and the caveman will shout out through his angry mouth. He's the same old fellow. Sister, you can fix yourself up, but you're just a daughter of Eve.

That's all. Sometime I'd like to see a Canadian or an American congregation before they got time to have Project R done on them. Before they got painted up, I really liked to see it.

I heard of the woman who could sing beautifully, but she wasn't kind of homely. A fellow married her for her voice, and the first morning that he saw her, he broke down and cried and said, Honey, please sing! He couldn't stand that thing. Well, I'd like to see us before we get fixed up and all dolled up.

My brother, what you are when you're under pressure, that's what you are. Always remember that. And a lot of us live Christian lives.

We're born again, we carry a Schofield Bible, we attend conferences, and we're part of the religious life of our day. But when the pressure is on, religion goes one way and we go another. How utterly terrible! Elijah wasn't guilty of that.

Elijah was not a visionary. Elijah had seen God and been with God, but he was not a visionary. How unsubstantial the average person's Christian life is! How unsubstantial! Because there's no reality there.

Elijah's religious notions didn't vanish under pressure. They stood up because he had been with God. I am Elijah, I stand before God.

Everything he believed had been tested in the fire of experience. And so we see him there. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

And it is the work of God to make the Word flesh over and over again. Now, there is a sense in which incarnation can never be repeated. One time, the second person of the Trinity was born of the womb of the Virgin Mary, and that's never repeated, never needs to be, and there's nothing like it in the universe.

So that stands in lonely grandeur as the mightiest act God ever wrought in the ages. But there is another limited and relative sense in which the Word becomes flesh whenever a man is born again. And I believe the Word would become flesh.

The man of faith was Abraham, and the Word became flesh in Abraham. The man of courage was Elijah, and became incarnated in Elijah. The man of deep thought became incarnated in Paul, and the man of mighty love became incarnated in John.

And I believe that God wants to incarnate the Word again in human life. We need that more than we need anything else. And I believe if the hundreds of people, the few hundred that are here tonight, were to become incarnated to the Word, walking around, enfleshing the doctrines they believe, we would have on our hands such an upsurge of Christian work and testimony as we've never known in this generation.

Now, God gave us Elijah that we might see a man that was the incarnation of what he believed. You couldn't separate him from what he believed. It's easy to separate some people.

They say in all the country that some fellow comes home Sunday night, takes his religion off and hangs it in the closet and doesn't put it on until Sunday morning again. But you couldn't separate Elijah from his religion. You could see him any direction, and you were always running into faith, always running into faith, because the man was petted all the way through.

He stood there against this wicked, weak, infecting Ahab and an iniquitous and idolatrous Queen Jezebel and a timid, time-serving bunch of preachers. I pity these preachers. I can get awful sarcastic when I come to weak preachers, preachers that won't pay the price for the ministry they are called to give.

I confess I have to pray to keep sweet about the reverends that are never found anywhere except in somebody's house eating chicken or cake, patting their baby's head. You know, they just don't have it, the time-serving. There were 7,000 people that hadn't bowed to Jezebel, but where were they? And there were a couple of hundred preachers, but where were they? Scripture says they were hiding in a cave.

Can you tell me what those 200 reverends were doing in caves? When the world was going to pieces and Israel needed help and Jezebel was ruling the roost, that wicked Zedoniah with her gods, where were these 200 men? Better come out, stick their neck out and get their heads cut off, and the blood of their martyr would have been the seed of the church. They could have saved the day, but they were hidden away, and one lonely man had to stand there all by himself, and so here was one man against the world. One time, Athanasius, I told you this, he already mentioned it in passing, that Athanasius was fighting against Arias again about the deity of Jesus.

Arias said he's a good man, the best man that ever lived, but he's not God, and Athanasius said he is God, indeed he is God, and there was an argument on great controversy throughout the Roman Empire about it, and somebody said to Athanasius, Athanasius, the world is against you. Instead of his running for a cave, he said, all right then, Athanasius is against the world. That's the type of man I like to see.

Man isn't afraid to get out there. The reason some preachers don't get anywhere is because they're never willing to enlarge the area of their vulnerability. They're always going to keep protected.

Even a mud turtle can't go anywhere unless he sticks his neck out. As long as he keeps his neck in, he just lies there and looks dumb. But as soon as he sticks his neck out, then come the legs and then usually the tail, but he gets going.

Well, this man was a man who wasn't afraid to stick his neck out. I don't claim to be anything, but I'd love to meet Elijah, and I hope to sometimes. He won't be as rough there, and I'm sure he won't have those garments.

He'll have different garments on. He'll be more approachable than he was in that day. Prophets are notoriously hard to live with, you know.

You hear the pastors, the soft, gentle fellows, the cool and purr. You can live with them if you can stand it. But the prophets are hard to live with because they're with God and they walk with God, and sometimes they're all out of accord with their generation, and Elijah was.

Here was a man who let his faith in God cost him something, you see. He didn't go to church once a week and give an occasional donation, but his was a deep and serious dissent from the popular world of his day, the world of Jezebel and Ahab and Baal and the rest of them, the scared creatures. His was a deep dissent, a radical, grave, treasonable dissent, treasonable because he stood against the king, a wicked

king.

He had a commission from God to stand against, and the word alone occurs, I only, God, I only. He said in an hour of weakness, I only, I only. Now there was the loneliness of serving God.

The rest were silent, and he didn't know they were there. That was the terrible part of it. He would have probably felt better if he'd known he had a few half-converted people around, but he didn't even know that.

He said, I only, Lord, I only. Well, there lay the power of this great man, a man who had been with God and stood in his presence, a man whose faith was tested in the fire of living, a man who had the courage to stand against corruption. That was what made the man great, and to know God cost this man painful discipline.

I want you to notice here, oh, how we fix it up. My grandmother, my German grandmother, talked about a band box. Now, I don't know what a band box is.

I have sort of visualized it as an upholstered hat box. I don't know whether I am right or not. But she talked about people wanting to live in band boxes.

If a woman got more than one dress a year, you know, my grandmother would say, ah, she lives in a band box. I suppose that meant in the height of luxury. I suppose so.

We have fixed up Christianity now so that we've got everybody in a band box, and we go around telling them how easy it is, and we gather people together and say, now, you've got it all wrong. Jesus isn't going to lay any burdens on you. He's going to take them all.

He isn't going to get you in trouble. He's going to get you out of trouble. Serving the Lord is the easiest, smoothest, slickest thing in the world, and you can have a wonderful time and just be happy, happy, happy, and go to heaven.

So now, won't you just take Jesus? And so poor little, carnal, self-loving, sin-loving kids will bow their head and sniffle and say, I take him. And after that, they think they're Christians. No, we ought not to lie to them like that.

We ought to tell them if you follow Jesus, you'll have his enemies. If you follow Jesus, you'll have his troubles. If you follow Jesus, you'll have his rejection.

If you follow Jesus, they'll think the same of you as they did of him, and what they thought of him can be seen on a hill outside Jerusalem. They took him out there and nailed him on a cross. But these soft, pussycats, soft, well-beferred Christians that smile and smile and smile, but they don't know God.

Poor kids don't know God. This man knew God, and it cost him discipline. First, he had to accept personal humiliation.

He said, get thee to the brook Tirth, and I'll feed you there. And in a big old buzzard, or I don't know what a buzzard was, they called him a raven, he was a flesh-eater and somewhat of a scavenger. He came croaking down every morning.

He delivered the milk and the bread and the food for the man he led. What a humiliating thing that was for a man who was a great, hairy fellow that had been his own boss all his life and had come down a great

rough countryman from the highlands of Gilead. Now he sits there and watches the raven bringing bread.

And the Lord said, now Elijah, you'll drink of the brook. And Elijah drank of the brook, but he had said to Ahab, there'll be no rain. And pretty soon his prophecy started coming true, and there wasn't any rain, and very shortly there wasn't any brook.

And God said, Elijah, you're going to have to drink of the brook. But Elijah said, Ahab, there'll be no rain. And here he was, caught and hoisted by his own petard.

And there he was. Well, now how humiliating can you get? A fellow goes into a church, and these churches were the, well, almost any church. A fellow goes into a church and starts preaching the truth, and people stop giving.

The economic strangulation is on, and they strangle the preacher to death. And his Reverend Nibs pretty soon has to go to work selling insurance to make a living, keep his wife and family. They choke him up, choke him up, preach the truth, and the brook dries up.

Oh God, now that shouldn't have been the way. You know, if you and I had been doing it, we'd have given a degree to Elijah, and we'd call him Dr. Elijah. He'd have given him a doctorate, and a big car, and the best of everything.

And when he came down the street, we'd have said, Good morning, Father. But God said, Go out and sit down, a poor fellow by a little brook, and let your own preaching dry up your source of income. And that's exactly what happened.

He preached. I preached one time at council years ago, and I've never lived it down. I said, John the Baptist preached his own head off.

But I told the truth about it, he did. Elijah didn't preach his head off, but he did preach the brook dry. And the brook dried up, and it looked like a blunder and a failure.

And I suppose the devil came, and if it had been deacons, they'd have probably come, and said, Pastor, this is all bad here. You mean well, no question about it, but you're reading the wrong version, and your brook has dried up on you. Now, if you're just a little broader-minded, if I could just persuade you to be a little broader-minded, why be old fashioned? And Elijah pulled that girdle around him a little tighter, you know, and said, I stand before God.

He was willing to take whatever came. Well, then when there was no brook, there was no rain, and there was Elijah hungry and thirsty, and then the Lord came around to Elijah and said, Elijah, get thee up and go into the town of Zarephath, and there a widow woman will feed thee. Widow woman.

Notice that? If an article came in with the words widow woman in it, we'd edit it out in the Alliance Witness, because widow woman is topological. Of course, she's a widow if she's a woman. She's a widow if she's a woman.

But anyhow, it says there was a widow woman there, and she will feed thee. Now imagine, there is compounded humiliation. Bad enough to have a raven feed you and then see your source of income dry up because of your faithfulness to God.

And now he has to go and have a widow woman, and the whole thing was given for the humiliation, or at least the humbling, of the man Elijah. He went to this woman, and she saw him come, and he said to her, fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel. He was just a beggar, and she said, all right.

And he said, as she started after the water, and there was a little of that left, he said, bring me some bread, too. And she said, I tell you, as the Lord liveth, there isn't any bread. She said, the last little bit of meal now I'm going to make into cakes and give to my family, and that's the last and after that we'll have to die.

And Elijah said, you give it to me first. What does Emily Post think of that? You give it to me first! She gave it to him first, but thank God the cruise of oil did not fail, nor the meal fail. They lived on miracles for a long, long time, because the man was willing to be humbled into the dust.

She was repaid a thousandfold, and Elijah repaid her by raising her son from the dead. The man that could raise my son from the dead, I'd consider I'd work a thousand years and still be in debt to him. So Elijah wasn't in debt to her after all, but it looked for a while as if he was, and the whole thing was for the humbling, I don't like the word humiliation, but the humbling of the man Elijah.

Well, there he stands, this man of God, and he's standing there in history saying to you in this soft, overstuffed, well-fed age, he's saying to you, where have you been all this time, man? Where have you been, woman? Here I put a man there and set him like a burning cross on a hillside for all the world to see. There's my man Elijah, and he was so great that when I wanted him up with me, I just sent whirlwind and fire down and took him. What about you? This man has been strength to millions, the very fact that Elijah lived.

I'm a better man because Elijah lived. Are you? I'm better. I used to lie face down and read about Elijah.

I've always been cowardly, more or less timid. You wouldn't think it, I suppose, to hear me yelling around, but I've always been cowardly, and I needed a lot of help. You know, if you're not courageous, the next best thing is to live a while with courageous people.

It kind of seeps in by osmosis, so I lay stretched out, and it seeped into my spirit, so that the least worry I have in the world is what some big shot thinks about me. I don't worry about him. I've always had an awful time.

I live with the brethren, you know, and get along with them and do what I'm supposed to do if I think about it. But as for the bosses, the fellows over me, there's just one wee boss over me, and he doesn't assert himself. He just stands there and says, if you will, I will, that's all.

His name is Jesus, the Lord. But these little bosses, God bless them. There isn't anything that's quite so disgusting as a country policeman, the only one in the town, and he runs the undertaking shop evenings.

But he's the cop, you know. He's got a badge there, twice as big as it would need to be, because there's nobody to shoot at him, so they don't need a target. And there he stands, and the littler the town, the bigger the authority.

It's the same with churches. Here was a man who stood before God. He didn't try to push people around, but he did stand for what he stood for.

God says, there, I put him up there for you to look at. Look at him and be a better woman. Look at him and be a better man.

Look at him and be a humbler person. Look at him and glorify God. For Elijah's God still lives today.

Now it says here, and I close, the Lord heard the voice of Elijah. Why does it say the Lord heard the voice of Elijah? Because Elijah had been willing to hear the voice of God. If you want God to hear your voice, you're going to have to hear God's voice.

You won't hear God's voice and you go on like that and you get in a jam and then you scream to high heaven and want God to hear your voice. Well, God isn't going to put himself in your hands like that. If you're going to be heard of God, God will have to be heard of you.

God heard Elijah because Elijah heard God. And God did what Elijah asked because Elijah had done what God asked. God and Elijah were friends, you see.

The great friend and the little friend. The great God and the little prophet. Now what about you? Souls of the righteous are in the hands of God and no evil can befall them.

And not all the world's charm could pull Elijah away. Now I want to ask you friends, let's get a little intimate here as we talk it over. You've been coming to hear me preach and I guess it's my American accent and I don't know why, but you've been coming.

All right, very good. Very good. Are we going to do anything about it or are we going to fool our time away? I'd better be somewhere else.

Are we going to be fooling this away or are we going to take it and get a hold of it? This was not written here as a theme for discourse. This was written here to give faith and courage to men in an evil and adulterous generation. Who will bid for Elijah's mantle? Who will bid for Elijah's power? Who will apply for the place of standing before God as Elijah did? Well, rule the coward out, he can't have that job.

Rule the self-lover out, rule the sin-lover out, rule the world-lover out, they can't have that job. Only the fearless need apply. Only the faithful need apply.

But through Jesus Christ, our Lord, you can apply. Always remember, all this was done under the shadow of the cross. Elijah looked forward to the cross and we look back to the cross, but it's the same cross.

Elijah lived in the power of Christ to come and we live in the power of Christ who came, but it's the same Christ. Don't say that was Old Testament, this is New Testament, dispensation lies yourself into your skin and bone. Of course it was the Old Testament dispensation and of course this is the New.

But the God is the God of both and all dispensation. And the God, the spiritual laws and principles revealed here are still holding true. The man who will hear God, God will hear.

The man who will allow his spiritual experiences to be tested in the fire of living, who will dare if he need be to stand against, God will bless that man. God will hold that man close and watch over him and love him and keep him and bless him. All by grace, all by grace through mercy, but also the conditions of obedience and faith.

We write the lives of the saints. I've written some lives, I'm never going to write another one, and it's blessed me just searching around after the way they lived. It was good to learn from them.

If we can, we can write their lives. Jesus said you build the sepulchres of the prophets, but you don't live the way they lived. The only way to write a biography as a saint is to be a saint.

I'm not sure I qualified, particularly when I wrote my Wingspray. I don't know that I do now. I'm not going to investigate, I'm just going to trust God.

But you've got to have something of the man had if you're going to understand the man. Can we understand Elijah at all? Are we softened and weakened and initiated to a place where we don't even understand these men? Anything God did for Elijah, he'll do for you. Anything he did, he'll do for you by way of spiritual power and blessing and warmth and fruitfulness and intimacy and grace and all the rest.

He'll do it for you too. So now, you've listened and you've listened. I don't bring this series to a conclusion, yet I want to talk about Isaiah and I want to talk about Ezekiel, these great souls who lived with God.

But what good is it doing us, if any? Let us pray.

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