

# Elijah Against the False Prophets

by Charles Alexander

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of remembering God's deliverances and trusting in his ongoing faithfulness, even in the face of adversity and idolatry.*

**Duration:** 39:23

**Scripture:** Luke 23:33, John 3:16, Romans 8:28, Ephesians 2:8

**Topics:** "False Prophets"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on a significant event in history that had far-reaching consequences. He emphasizes the importance of faith and perseverance in times of obscurity and encourages listeners not to lose heart. The speaker also discusses various current events, such as violence and the urban guerrilla movement, and criticizes the governments for their lack of effective solutions. Ultimately, the sermon reminds listeners to trust in God, who sent his son to alter the course of history and reign over all.

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## Transcript

pathway of history there have been no examples of the divine intervention in human affairs more dramatic than that which we have read this evening in the 18th chapter of first Kings when God answered by fire the faith and the prayer of his solitary servant Elijah who stood alone against all the assembled might of this world and believed in God and turned the heart of a multitude of people back to the true God and eternal life. There is no consequence people saying well God doesn't work like this now therefore he never worked like that but then you see the divine interventions often vary in form even Mr. Churchill said at the time of the evacuation of Dunkirk after had been a day of prayer in this country which the churches were full and the streets were empty. Those of all of you who are old enough will well remember the circumstances and 330,000 men were brought back across the English Channel the only trained men that we had in the service of the King at that time and Mr. Churchill said the way in which he only could say it, it seemed, he said, as though some power had intervened.

We all know exactly what he meant. Yes, it's the same power of God which intervenes in your life and mine. Your next door neighbour might not know about it but you know about it.

I know about it. We all surely have had those experiences of life when it seemed that some power had intervened. Go on believing dear friend.

Someone once said God will not let you down, rather modern language that's what it means that God is faithful, will be true to his word, true to his promises and if there is a God in heaven and there is we may expect him to intervene. No, not fire coming down from heaven now. There's no special need for that.

There was in that day, the circumstances were peculiar. They've never been repeated nor are they ever likely to be. There are certain things which the Lord does which only need to be done once in all history.

As for instance, when God intervened in the days of Moses and Egypt, when they crossed the Red Sea, dry shod and Pharaoh and his great army, probably the greatest army on earth at that time, were drowned in the depths of the sea. Someone asked me only this week in connection with that, how it was that there was no memorial of this on the Egyptian monuments, nor any reference so far as we can find on the Egyptian monuments to the fact that the children of Israel had ever been in Egypt. Well people don't put things on monuments you know, at the time that they happen.

Time elapses, it becomes history, then they put them on monuments and write books. It has to happen first. Before ever they were likely to put these events upon their monuments.

Well in this particular case, the very event itself was not an event which any Pharaoh or any of his architects and sculptors would have been likely to have commemorated. Terrible judgements which God visited upon them in the ten plagues and the final destruction of their host in the waters of the Red Sea. That's not a thing that you build monuments about you know.

Build monuments to other things, to the triumphs of the country, the great victories which were won. Monuments to the great men who triumphed in the battle of Trafalgar or on the field of Waterloo or somewhere else. Yes, these things are monumentalised in the histories of nations.

They don't build monuments to their own shame and confusion. Therefore it's not surprising that the only reliable record we have of the God's dealings with his people in ancient times is in the Bible. Where else would you expect to find it? It's there.

Don't look for it anywhere else. It's here in the scriptures. So we read these stories of the divine interventions and we certainly do believe them.

And we are very comforted to know that they are true and that when God chooses he can alter the whole course of history and change the whole aspect of things in a land, a country or even a continent. He sent his son to be the saviour of the world. Thirty-three years later he was crucified upon the tree.

The world, as I said this morning, has nothing in its histories about this. These histories are not written for that purpose. Here was one amongst the thousands upon thousands who were crucified throughout the Roman Empire about that time.

Year after year and century after century it was nothing. Rome was also buried beneath the thousands of crosses which were erected in Italy, in Rome and throughout the Roman world. One more or less didn't make any difference to their historians.

It's the consequences which flowed therefrom. Because of the death of that one upon the cross the whole of history was altered as all subsequent history has testified. That great intervention by God in the history of the world has conditioned everything that's happened ever since, altered the whole course of the thinking of men's minds.

Everything has been changed in this last two thousand years. It was a consequence of that great event. Nobody can say otherwise or challenge that statement.

Yet history knows next to nothing about it except what is inscribed here in the Word of God, all the consequences which flowed from it. Now this great event in the history of the children of Israel has so many sides to it it's difficult to know where to begin. We have to remember the history of the time, the setting, in which this episode in history is found.

The children of Israel have been the subjects of many great deliverances. In the days of Moses, in the days of Joshua, in the days of the judges who succeeded Joshua, and in the days of the prophets and kings who came after them, the centuries were advancing, generations were coming and going, and this world very soon forgets all the lessons which God teaches. Even the church does that too.

We are inclined to forget the great lessons God has taught in our own individual lifetimes. He has intervened. He may be intervening now.

Learn the lessons of it. Very, very important. Are you looking for deliverances? Are you praying for them? Are you praying for them with humility, with grace in your soul? Are you praying for them with submission to the holy and divine will of God, whatever the outcome may be? This is how our many changes should be met and confronted.

We should always commit the issues to God, whose wisdom is vast and knows no bounds, and deep where all our thoughts are found. So in Israel, they very soon forgot. This was the history of the nation as it is of all nations, but peculiarly of theirs.

We often wonder why, but then, fathers cannot pass on their own faith and experience to their own children. Mothers can't either. Parents can't do this.

Within two or three generations, families die out. Those who were great become little. Those who were little become great.

Those who were pious become the opposite, or the reverse, if what we are now thinking of is a time of impiety. Who knows what another generation may bring forth in the mercy and providence of God? No, it doesn't matter what a family or a nation's history may be. Every succeeding generation has to know its own deliverances.

The deliverances of their fathers are not sufficient for them, and the generation soon forgets. And so it is that even the people who had crossed over the Red Sea, they hadn't advanced a few weeks upon their journey through the wilderness, but they were murmuring against Moses and against God because they wanted a drink of water and couldn't find one. They forgot the deliverances of God, were ready to turn back to Egypt because they didn't have flesh to eat.

And so God sent them flesh, and it wasn't a blessing to them. While the meat was yet in their mouths, the judgment of God overtook them, and the dead lay in heaps in the midst of the camp. They didn't learn either the lessons of judgment or the lessons of grace and favour and mercy, because that is the heart of man.

We soon forget. We ask God to forgive us our sins and go away and commit the same sins again, don't we? We see our own wrongdoing. At night time we pray maybe when we go to sleep, lest we shouldn't

wake up in the morning.

We should find ourselves in eternity. We pray very earnestly for the forgiveness of our sins, and then go and do the same things the next day or the next week. This is the history of nations, it is also the history of individuals, the individual soul.

When will we learn the lesson that we are in ourselves altogether corrupt, sinful, inconsistent, contradictory? We need the grace of God, we need the preaching of the Word. We need to come to this house or whatever house it may be in order to worship God and sing His praises, to get strength here, that we may stand in the evil day and having done all to stand. There is evil in your heart and in mine.

We are not proof against any of these trials and temptations. We need the grace of God continually. Sovereign grace and mercy in all our circumstances.

We know not what a day may bring forth. So this was the history of the children of Israel right up to Elijah's day and afterwards. They had received great deliverances.

They knew who the true God was, but they wanted another form of religion than that to which they were accustomed. There was no drama in it, it didn't excite their interest or their piety. They wanted something to see, not a God who was invisible.

So they were tired of the ways of God and the preaching of His servants and the reading of His Word. And so they went to Tyre and Sidon and they got a fresh load of gods from there. In particular, they got the god Baal and they got his infamous mistress, a heathen god known as Ashtoreth or Ashtarh.

She appears here as the god of the groves. Some say the word groves there means the goddess Ashtoreth. And of course, like all heathen gods, both Baal and Ashtoreth were very, very worldly gods.

And they were very, very adulterous gods. Because when men make to themselves a god, they fashion him according to their own evil desires and imaginations. That's why the heathen have the kind of gods they have.

Because they're brought out of their own hearts. They're fabrications of their own wicked imaginations. And they make gods which tyrannise over them too.

As men are afraid of their own imaginations and their own dreams. Terrified of the thoughts which go through their minds. And they take the form of phantoms and apparitions which rise up in their imagination and their dreams.

And so, Satan sees to it that those who make gods for themselves eventually become the slaves of their own gods. And in nothing more so than the slavery of their own evil passions, murders, adulteries, wickednesses of all kinds. Wickedness sometimes unmentionable and unprintable.

And so down to the present day. And they're still at it. I see the form of a denomination of Sodomites in the United States.

There are so many of them these days who have invented a form of religion and they've actually, I believe, applied to the World Council of Churches to be recognised and taken in as part of the body so they can say delegates to the triennial meetings of the World Council of Churches. It's what Mr Malcolm Muggeridge said about the last lot. And writing in a great journal about it, he who is a very great journalist,

probably our leading journalist, he attended the meetings of the World Council of Churches as an observer.

He came back and he said these men were prepared to agree on almost anything because they believed practically nothing. That's why all wise evangelical bodies have kept out of the World Council of Churches and have nothing well ever to do with them. We wait to see whether they'll admit the church of the homosexuals, the church of the Sodomites, the worshippers of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Oh yes, men will make a religion out of their own sins, out of their own crimes, out of their own shame, in order to deceive themselves that there's no shame at all. What a wicked world it is indeed. You say why doesn't God intervene and do something about it? Well he's doing something about it now.

He's causing his people to preach the word about it. And there's all kinds of things happening. The money that you have in your pocket, the money in the Bank of England even, is becoming more and more worthless.

Well hasn't God done something about that? There never was so much machinery, never so much science, never so much organisation, never so much cleverness in the world as there is today. And we're going down this steep slope down into poverty and ruination and bankruptcy. Not only this nation, but quite a large number of the nations, if not all of them.

Isn't that something to make you think? And all kinds of other things happening. The violence that's being shown, the urban guerrilla movement, which the governments of the world have found no answer yet because they've made easy laws. They've their own ideas of morality.

They've abolished the one penalty which can restrict the power of wicked men, that is to take their lives from them who wickedly and wantonly take away the lives of other innocent people. And there's no other remedy, no other way dear friend. They can't overtake their own errors.

We're in this appalling situation where people are afraid to venture in civilised England, Christian England as it once was. People afraid to venture out into the darkened streets at night or to open their doors when there's a knock there. Wondering what they can do for life and safety of themselves and their property.

May not these be divine signs to bring us law and to make people think? They propose to themselves all kinds of gods and religions or no religion at all. Well let them get on with it as they are getting on with it. They're not prospering as a consequence.

It's about time then that some of them began to think and to ask the real questions which ought to be asked. No we cannot sit in judgment upon these Israelites, wicked as they were because the same tendencies are with all mankind today. And so God sent the famine through the word of his servant Elijah, lasted for three and a half years and the time was drawing to a close.

Ahab sought in all the countries round about for Elijah. If he could only find Elijah, he would know what to do with him. He would soon and quickly put him to death.

Because he was the man who troubled Israel. He was the man who brought all this trouble upon them. God's faithful servant.

They knew who to blame didn't they? What Elijah hid was hidden by God by the brook Kerith. And the ravens came and fed him. Morning and night they brought his breakfast and his supper for him.

Day by day in their beaks. Until the waters of the brook Kerith ran out and he sent him to a widow woman in Zarephath. As we have seen this last two or three weeks.

There to care for him. And how wonderfully he was in that household where a barrel of meal did not waste nor the crews of oil fail. My aunt used to tell me of a modern instance of how the Lord looked after those who cried unto him in their need.

She told me that there was a Dr. Robert McDonald, a medical man who used to ride on his horse in those far off days, the beginning of last century, out upon his rounds. And he was passing on a very, very lonely road miles from anywhere and way there in the distance he saw a cottage. And for no accountable reason he turned aside and drove his horse across the fields.

And the door was open and he entered in a woman's voice as he came in, said in the old Scots, I can't you'd come. I can't you'd come. I knew that you'd come.

There she was on her knees and an open Bible in front of her, praying for God to send help. For her mother was there dying and there was no means by which either she could leave her mother and go for help or find anybody who would help her in her distress. Isolated alone she prayed for God to send help.

Dr. Robert McDonald was a Christian man. He became a friend of Robert Murray McChane and he always remembered that circumstance. I knew you'd come.

Her faith was strong that God would be as good as his words and would hear her cry in the time of her utter and absolute need. I could tell you many instances of the same, how God sends deliverance. It doesn't get into the history books because it's just all the record of some poor person whose name we don't know perhaps, who came here and lived and died and gone to her or his reward.

It doesn't get into the story books, but these are the great events in the kingdom of heaven. Like the poor widow of Zarathustra, and I pointed out last week, you remember, how Zarathustra comes again and again into the scriptures and it comes in through the tiny little prophets, the shortest prophet in the Old Testament, the prophet Obadiah, actually mentions Zarathustra and the tide of God's mercy reaching as far as to Zarathustra. About the only time it's ever mentioned in prophecy.

I told you this last week, very remarkable, but here's something else which happens in our chapter, in the early portion which we didn't read. That at the time when God was going to send rain upon the famished land again, Elijah, on the instruction of God, went to show himself to Ahab. And about that time Ahab called the governor of his house, that is his principal servant at the palace, to go and find wherever there was any water remaining, any springs still coming up, that they might find some bit of green pasture in order to keep one or two of the horses alive till the end of the famine.

And what do you think the man's name was? It was Obadiah. No, he wasn't the prophet Obadiah who mentions Zarathustra, for his name was Obadiah, just the same. Maybe the prophet was named after him.

He was a godly man in the household of wicked king Ahab, the wickedest king that Israel ever had. Isn't that remarkable? He had the prophet Obadiah there, a man named Obadiah there, a man who prayed and who was known to the king and to Jezebel, his wicked wife, why the two of them might have represented

Baal and Ashtaroath between the two of them. Jezebel came from those regions anyway.

She introduced the worship of Ashtaroath, the worship of the groves into Israel. They had slain many of the prophets of the Lord. They thought they had extinguished them altogether, all except Elijah, the great prophetic generation in those days that sought them out and killed all the godly men that they could find.

But Obadiah, unknown to his master and mistress, had hid a hundred of them in caves at one time and fed them. If he had been found out, he would have been put to death by the wicked king and queen, but they never discovered it. And he, this godly man, the only thing we ever know about him.

We wouldn't have heard about him otherwise, but in the divine record it's put down. He saved the lives of a hundred men. You may be only a servant of somebody else's.

You may be some obscure person. Your name never gets into the medal list. You're never decorated for anything that you do.

You just live and die and pass away. As far as the world's concerned, that's the end of you. You're just the number of a grain.

You're just the name upon a stone. Doesn't mean a thing. But maybe you saved the lives of a hundred men by your prayers, and perhaps almost unknown to you.

You did great things for God and you never knew that they were great. And nobody else ever knew about it, but God heard your prayers. He honored your little testimony and all your obscurity.

It was only the event which brought out what Obadiah had done. Otherwise, he was only a chief servant, a kind of a major domo in the palace of King Ahab. And so Elijah meets Obadiah and says to him, Obadiah, and you notice the connection, he'd just come from Zarephath.

And the man who took the name of Obadiah, generations afterwards, he's the only prophet who mentions Zarephath until Christ comes and visits that same region. And so it all hangs together. Those who attend to the scriptures and know something of the wonder of the Bible will know that these things are pointers given by God.

Fingerprints of the Most High upon the sacred page to show us that everything is under control and that everything has been arranged from the beginning to the end. And so Obadiah meets Elijah. Elijah says, go and tell Ahab, Elijah is here.

And poor Obadiah fell at his feet. He says, you know very well what the result will be, that if I go and tell Ahab Elijah is here, the Lord will take you away somewhere. And when we come, I look as though I've been telling lies and Ahab will put me to death.

And you know, you know, very few others know, but you know, Elijah, what I did, how I hid the sons of the prophets by fifty in caves so that one hundred men were preserved in their lives and piety still kept alive in this awful heathen land. You know that I did these things. Elijah said to him, it's all right, Obadiah, calm your fears.

He said, make no mistake about it. He said, I'm coming to see Ahab. And he's the man who will be put to shame, not you, nor the servant of the Lord Elijah.

And he came forth. You know, dear friends, we're going to adjourn the fire coming down from heaven to next week. It'll be just as good then as it is now.

God preserving us. We never know what is going on in the kingdom of God, do we? We don't know what's going on today. We look around, we say we wish that the Lord would do something, wish he'd fill this house with worshippers.

Thank God for all the worshippers who come. It doesn't look bad from the platform anyway. But we could always do with millions more, couldn't we? So would all the churches.

It may look like the kind of day where it doesn't matter how men preach, how faithful they are, whatever they're doing, there seems to be no reward, there seems to be no movement forward. It doesn't matter what we do, nothing seems to happen. Well, you never know what is going on.

You never know. I know what it is to feel disheartened. I often feel disheartened myself.

How many times we've thought of handing in our notice and saying it's alright, find somebody else, carry on. Well, when we're at ordinary secular work, there are times, aren't there, in the life of every man, when the only ambition he's got left is to give the boss the sack. But we're never able to do that, are we? We never just get that far.

But life is like that. But we never know what is going on in the Kingdom of Heaven. The ceaseless activity of the Eternal Throne.

The secret working of God in His Church and through His Church and through the preaching of His Word. There were many godly men in the days before Martin Luther appeared, especially in Northern Europe, amongst the Germanic peoples. There were plenty of godly men who were arising from time to time, but no reformation, no widespread upheaval such as was necessary in those times.

And good men looked to God and nothing was happening. No answer to their prayers seemed possible. Everything was going on just the same under the terrible ecclesiastical tyranny of the times that were then present.

Then in an obscure part of Germany, God had His man. He had a monk in a cell, praying and putting himself to all kinds of voluntary tortures of his body, trying to keep his temptations down and thinking that this was the way. Finding his way into the library and coming across a book of the Holy Scriptures, which he begins to read.

There was no circulation of the Scriptures at that time. And he comes across some great sentence in the Word of God. And he stared up to his innermost depths again and again and the Word comes and nobody knows about this.

Nobody knows because we never know what is going on. Suddenly, suddenly he emerges and it's like a flash of lightning coming down from a clear sky and a tremendous peal of thunder and you never thought that the thunder was so near. You never thought that such a change could take place on such a beautiful summer afternoon.

But there it happened. And in a few short years the whole of Europe and the world was ablaze. Everyone was talking about the one thing, the one topic of conversation and of study in all the universities of Europe.

And they were either for or against this that was happening. We never know what is going on. Faithful, persevering in our obscurity.

Don't let us lose heart, dear friend. Don't you lose heart just for yourself and your own affairs. Your own family and everything else that's happened to you.

Or is happening, will happen to you. Don't lose heart. You don't know what is going on.

We didn't know that. Many people in Israel didn't know anything at all about Obadiah and the hundred prophets. They didn't know that God had reserved to himself 7,000 men in Israel who would not bow their knee to the image of Baal and wouldn't do, even if their lives were at stake.

But they were obscure, they weren't known. They weren't even known to Elijah. He thought he was the only one left.

He had good reason for thinking he was the only one left. We don't hold it against him that he thought he was the only one left. So it wasn't thought at times there aren't many more besides us that we don't have the same reason for saying that as Elijah had.

We easily get down hearted, can't we? Faithful, persevering, obscure was Obadiah but he saved the lives of a hundred men. God knew what he was doing and when the moment came, in one tremendous day, fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifices. The prophets of Baal and the prophets of Ashtaroah were slaughtered to a man down there by the brook Kishon which flowed red with their blood and those wicked evil monsters of cruelty and vice and abomination, those men were swept in one afternoon from Israel.

And the rain came down in torrents from heaven following the fire and following Elijah's prayer and a great shout went up to heaven, the Lord, he is the God, the Lord, he is the God. And for generations afterwards they were unable to suppress the power of the gospel in Israel even though they continued to have wicked kings. Their history was lengthened out by a century or two before finally God foreclosed upon the wicked nation.

That is part of a story we have to tell as time goes on. May God bless us, may we trust in our God who sent his own son into the midst of history. As I have already said and altered the whole course of time and he who suffered upon the cross is now upon the throne and he is there to reign and to complete his task.

We never know what is going on in our time and generation but the Lord, he is the God, the Lord, he is the God. Amen. Now we are going to sing number 127.

Luke, ye saints, the sight is glorious. See the man of sorrows now from the fight he turned victorious. Every knee to him shall bow.

127.

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