

# (1 Kings) a Great Victory, and the Aftermath of It

by David Guzik

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*David Guzik's sermon explores Elijah's confrontation with the prophets of Baal, emphasizing the need for decisive faith in God over false idols.*

**Duration:** 1:11:37

**Scripture:** Joshua 24:21, 1 Kings 12:28-30, 1 Kings 18:36, 1 Kings 19:12-13, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Faith And Obedience", "Gods Gentle Whisper"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. He highlights the passion and commitment of the prophets of Baal, but emphasizes that their devotion was not enough because they did not have a God who answered by fire. The preacher emphasizes that when the fire of God falls, it works beyond expectation. He then discusses how Elijah made a trench around the altar and poured water on the sacrifice, demonstrating that displays of power and anger do not necessarily change hearts. Instead, it is the gentle whisper of God that truly changes hearts. The sermon concludes by highlighting how God gave Elijah work to do after meeting him in the gentle whisper, emphasizing the importance of action and obedience in response to God's call.

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## Transcript

Tonight we begin in the middle of 1 Kings chapter 18. We hope to make it through the end of chapter 19 tonight, taking a chapter and a half. And we begin in an incredibly dramatic passage of scripture.

1 Kings 18 has to do with the prophet Elijah and his famous confrontation with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. At the beginning of the chapter, Elijah had made a dramatic stand against the wicked king Ahab and his wife Jezebel. And he did this by really putting an offense before the pagan god Baal.

Baal was thought to be the weather god of the Canaanites, the sky god. And so he was the one responsible for bringing rain. But because of the prayers of Elijah, there was a drought that lasted in Israel, the northern kingdom, for some three and a half years.

And this was a great offense to Ahab and Jezebel and the priests of Baal and the other major pagan deity, Ashtoreth, which they sponsored with money from the kingdom of Israel, the northern kingdom. And so Elijah made this great challenge to king Ahab and he told him, gather up all the prophets of Baal. Let's

meet together at the top of Mount Carmel and let's settle this once and for all.

So that's where we come to verse 20 and 21 of 1 Kings chapter 18. So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel. And Elijah came to all the people and said, How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him.

But if Baal, follow him. But the people answered him not a word. Elijah here was serving as a true prophet of God.

He was confronting the people of Israel, the tribes of Israel, the northern kingdom, with their great apostasy from the Lord. But you have to understand how it worked for ancient Israel and how it works for us too, mostly when our heart sort of fades away from the Lord. We usually don't make a conscious decision Okay, now I'm going to deny God and I no longer want to have anything to do with him.

Usually what we do is we introduce serving something else. To translate it in the same terms that ancient Israel dealt with it, we want to have the Lord. We want to have Yahweh, the God of Israel there.

But then we also want to serve Baal as well. And do you see what the prophet Elijah challenged them to right here? He said, How long are you going to stay in this place where you're serving both Baal and Yahweh? They can't both be true. There's not room enough for both opinions.

So he said this to the gathered people of Israel. It tells us right there in verse 20 that Ahab sent for all the children of Israel and gathered the prophets on Mount Carmel. You can just imagine the scene.

A huge crowd of people there at Mount Carmel. Massive, massive crowd. There they all are.

And of course we're not talking about every last person in the kingdom of Israel. We're talking about the representatives, the people, their sort of chosen tribal delegates and all of that. There they are, gathered.

Thousands of people there at Mount Carmel. And there's the prophets of Baal. And I can just picture it in my mind, the prophets of Baal looking at Elijah.

They hated Elijah. They loved the favor of King Ahab and of Queen Jezebel. And they enthusiastically promoted the persecution of any true follower of Yahweh.

But over the last three years, they had been severely humbled by Elijah. Can you imagine how many prayer meetings to Baal the prophets of Baal had, pleading with the God of the sky to come bring rain. They prayed and they prayed and they danced and they danced and they did whatever else they did before their pagan god Baal.

And nothing happened. All their cries to the weather god Baal were ineffective for three years. They hated this prophet of God.

He humiliated them. He exposed the falseness of the god that they worshipped and the falseness of their priesthood. You can just imagine that they're looking at him.

They're looking at him like a cat looks at a mouse. They're looking at him like, you know, they just can't wait to grab him and tear him to pieces. You look at Elijah.

I picture Elijah in this. He doesn't care. You know, Elijah, he's just up there and he's going to do what the Lord wants him to do.

Here he is, one man against hundreds of false prophets. Everybody's against him. Well, you've got a large group of people who are undecided, who could be very easily turned against him in a moment.

And then you have hundreds of professional enemies of his. They can't wait for him to make a mistake. But you just wait.

He's going to do something. You know, it's like you can have a lot of sheep and one lion comes and scatters the whole flock. Well, that's Elijah.

He's the lion in this situation. You're going to see what he does there. But you see the challenge that he gave to them there in verse 21 of chapter 18.

He says, how long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him. But if Baal, follow him. I want you to see that Elijah here is extremely logical.

He says, hey, listen, Israel, you're spiritually lukewarm. You're neither cold nor hot. You want to give some devotion to both Yahweh and Baal.

But the God of Israel wasn't interested in that kind of divided devotion. Spiritually speaking at this point, Israel was like an unfaithful partner in a marriage who doesn't want to give up their marriage partner, but at the same time, they don't want to give up their illicit lover. And the marriage partner in that relationship has the legitimate claim to say, listen, you're either for me alone or you're not for me at all.

And that's how Elijah challenged him. He said, how long are you going to falter between two opinions? You know, in the ancient Hebrew, he uses an extremely interesting word picture here. The word for falter there, which, by the way, is an unusual English word.

We don't use that word hardly ever. I mean, I can't ever think of a place where I've ever heard it used other than here in passages like this in the Bible. But the literal Hebrew word means to hop or to dance.

And it's especially used of a bird hopping from branch to branch. And it's almost as like that. That's what Elijah is trying to say.

How long are you going to dance between two opinions? How long are you going to hop from one place to another? You don't know which branch you want to settle upon. You just hop to one and then hop to the other. And you've got to make a decision.

Either Yahweh or Baal. I want you to notice this, too. Elijah made it clear that there was a difference between the service of Baal and the service of Yahweh.

You know, I can imagine that in the minds of the many thousands of people there gathered at Mount Carmel, there wasn't a big difference between the service of Baal and the service of Yahweh. They say, well, listen, what does it really matter? I mean, as long as I'm religious, as long as I have some kind of religion, as long as I'm sincere about that, why can't I just follow my heart? And if my heart leads me this week to Baal and next week to Yahweh and the following week back to Baal, what's the big difference? But Elijah knew that it could never be that way. Listen, either you serve Baal or you serve Yahweh.

There's a difference between the service of the two. I like it also what Elijah says here. It's so powerful.

Did you notice the question he asked in there? In verse 21, he says, how long will you falter between two opinions? He called his hearers to account for the period of time for which they had not made a decision. He goes, okay, look, you've been undecided for the past three years. You've got to make an account for those three years.

For three years you've wasted. Three years you've let go by without making a decision between Baal or Yahweh. How much time do you want? You know, it's a valid question.

How many sermons do you want? How many more Sundays do you want? How many warnings? How many sicknesses? How many catastrophes? How many friends or relatives or disasters? How many people dying around you? How much trial do you have to go through? How long? What's it going to take for you to finally say, okay, listen, I'm either going to be for the Lord or I'm not. What a valid question that is. How long are you going to go on before you make a decision? You know what the people of Israel did? They shouted back with one voice, Elijah, we're going to serve the Lord.

No, they didn't, did they? Did you see what it says there in verse 21? They did just the same kind of thing we like to do. It says there at the end of verse 21, but the people answered him not a word. There was no objection.

Hey, hey there, Elijah, you've got no right to say that. They didn't say that, did they? There was no repentance. Oh, Elijah, we're so sorry.

You're right, we should serve the Lord. They lacked the courage to either defend their position or to change it. They were willing to live unexamined lives.

Listen, Elijah, I just want to think about it. I want to think about these big issues. Baal, Yahweh, listen, isn't it enough that I'm religious? No, he won't let him get away from that.

He says, no, you're not going to do that. You've got to account before God. It's either Baal or it's Yahweh and you have to make a decision.

They didn't answer him a word. So what does he do? He says, listen, these people, I need to bring them to a point of decision. Verse 22, Then Elijah said to the people, I alone am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men.

Therefore, let them give us two bowls and let them choose one bowl for themselves, cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood and put no fire under it. And I will prepare the other bowl and lay it on the wood and put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your gods and I'll call on the name of the Lord.

And the God who answers by fire, he is God. So all the people answered and said, it is well spoken. Now they speak up, right? Now he's given them something dramatic.

He's given them a show that they can comment on. Okay, great, let's do that. But notice what Elijah begins by saying in verse 22, he says, I alone am left a prophet of the Lord.

Now, that's not true. I have to say, if there's anything true of Elijah, he tended to think pessimistically. He tended to think in a down kind of way.

Listen, Elijah had reason to know that it wasn't true. Just earlier in this chapter, he met Obadiah. Remember him? I mean, Obadiah was a true servant of God.

He was a prophet of the Lord. And what did Obadiah do? Obadiah had sheltered 150 prophets of God against the persecution of Jezebel and Ahab. Elijah could have said, well, it's me and 150 guys where I don't know where they are.

But he said, no, I alone am here. Well, he was alone at that time and place. So we're going to be a little generous with Elijah here and not criticize him too harshly.

But then he proposes this great test. He says, let's do two bulls. We'll select two of them.

The prophets of Baal, they can pick whatever bull looks to be more flammable. Looks like it'll burn easier. They can pick that one, right? I'll take the other one.

No problem here. And then we'll bring them before the Lord. And the God who answers by fire, He is God.

That's interesting to see. The fire would not come from either Elijah or the prophets of Baal. It had to be supernatural in origin.

The fire had to come either from Baal or from Yahweh. I want you to notice, Elijah gave plenty of advantage to the prophets of Baal. Again, what was it thought? Baal was the sky God, the weather God.

I think I've told you this before. Do you remember how Baal was often depicted in ancient sculptures and stuff as holding a lightning bolt in his hand? If anybody could throw down fire from heaven and light up a sacrifice, it was Baal, right? That was his turf. It was his territory.

I want you to see, Elijah said, look, I'll do the contest on your turf. Doesn't matter to me. I'll make it easy for you.

Let's do something that Baal should be able to do. And he put God and he put himself on the line before a gathered nation. That took a lot of faith to do, didn't it? I mean, you know, the Scripture says that you shouldn't do things that are beyond your level of faith to do.

Elijah had a lot of faith to do this. Where did he get that faith? You know where he got that faith, right? We saw it last week. He got that faith by the brook Cherith that dried up, remember? He got that faith by ministering to that widow in chapter 17.

God had been building this kind of faith in Elijah over a long period of time. And so he had great reason for confidence before the Lord. And matter of fact, he also knew from the history of Israel that God could send fire from heaven.

He did it before in burning of sacrifices. In Judges chapter 6 with Gideon, God sent fire from heaven and burnt up a sacrifice. In 2 Chronicles chapter 7 when Solomon made the sacrifice at the dedication of the temple, God sent fire from heaven.

God can do this. This is the Lord. I know that you can do this.

And so let's see what happens here. God, I know that you'll do it. That was Elijah's attitude.

Verse 25 now. It says, Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, Choose one bull for yourself and prepare it first for your many and call on the name of your God but put no fire under it. I want you to see, he's really giving the advantage to the prophets of Baal because let's just say, let's just pretend that Baal is real and Yahweh is real.

Well, Elijah is saying, I'm letting you guys go first so that you can win if your God comes through first, right? Very generous of you, Elijah. So he said to the prophets of Baal, Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare it first for your many and call on the name of your God but put no fire under it. So they took the bull which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, Oh, Baal, hear us.

But there was no voice. No one answered. And then they leaped about the altar which they had made.

And so it was at noon that Elijah mocked them and said, Cry aloud for he's a God. Either he's meditating or he's busy or he's on a journey or perhaps he's sleeping and must be awakened. I want you to notice something about the prophets of Baal.

They had a devoted prayer life, didn't they? They prayed long and they prayed with great passion. There was only one problem with their prayer life. They weren't praying to a real God.

Therefore, their prayers meant nothing. It's a sad, sad line in there. There was no voice.

No one answered. Now, look, I want to push the pause button right here and have you think about it just for a moment. It's easy for us to say, Well, you know, those stupid prophets of Baal, you know, they didn't know that they were praying to a false God.

Well, listen, I want you to be aware here. It is possible that you pray to a false God. Well, how could that be? I mean, I have a Bible open right in front of me.

I have a Bible study right now. Of course it's the true God. No, but I want you to realize that the God that is in your mind and in your heart might be a God of your own making.

What you have to be very diligent to do, and I have to be diligent to do it as well. I don't mean to say you at the exclusion of me. I mean all of us.

What we have to be careful to do is to make sure that the God that is in our mind and the God that is in our heart is the God of the Scriptures. Because it is possible to create your own ideas about God that have very little to do with the God of the Bible. It's something for us to thoughtfully examine.

Is the God that I serve the God of the Bible? If you're praying to the wrong God, then no wonder there's no voice. No one answered. But the prophets of Baal sure know how to have a prayer meeting.

They left about the altar which they had made. They had an energetic prayer life. Their worship was filled with enthusiasm and activity.

But it wasn't directed to the real God, and so it meant nothing. And Elijah, well, he couldn't resist the opportunity, could he? It says there in verse 27 that around noon, Elijah mocked them. He mocked the prophets of Baal for their evidently foolish faith.

You know, when he says there in verse 27, either he is meditating or he is busy. These are probably, in the ancient Hebrew, they're probably polite ways of saying your God is using the toilet. Except actually, in Hebrew, it's using it in a more crude way than I just used it right there.

But there's no need for me to describe it in a more crude way. You can imagine that in your own mind. But he's probably mocking their God and saying, you know what? He's probably out using the toilet.

Why don't you scream a little bit louder so that you can get your God's attention? And of course, that's exactly what they did. Look at verse 28. So they cried aloud and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, and the blood gushed out on them.

And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice. No one answered.

No one paid attention. You can picture it in your mind, can't you? This is one of the most vivid scenes in the whole Bible. I can just see the prophets of Baal cutting themselves and the blood is gushing out and they're completely sincere and they're completely devoted to their religion.

But it means nothing because it's the false God. They were so committed to their religion that they expressed their commitment in their own blood. They had zeal, but it was without knowledge.

And so it profited them nothing. Again, you have to read that verse there in verse 29. It's very distressing.

But there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention. That's the sad result of worshiping an imaginary God or the God of our own making. We can dedicate great sincerity, great sacrifice, great devotion to such gods, but it means nothing.

There's no one there to answer at the end of it all. So, after all morning long and into the early afternoon of the prophets of Baal doing their thing, there was no result. And I imagine that at this time, the only thing comforting to the 450 prophets of Baal was that when they finally gave up, they assured themselves, well, at least Elijah can't do it either.

I mean, listen, maybe Baal has his problems. We can't figure this out. But at least Elijah can't do it.

Go ahead, Elijah. Give it your shot. And that's what he does starting at verse 30.

Then Elijah said to all the people, Come near to me. So all the people came near to him and he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. And Elijah took 12 stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, Israel shall be your name.

Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seers of seed. When it was Elijah's turn to sacrifice, he first wanted to get the attention of the people. So he says, Come near to me.

Listen, I know it was entertaining to watch the prophets of Baal jump around and cut themselves and scream and yell and do all that they did. But anything like that gets boring after two or three or four hours of it. The people were probably bored.

They're talking with themselves. They're no longer watching the prophets of Baal. It's like, oh boy, this is, you know, good.

Oh, look, another one cut themselves. Oh, look, he's screaming. Oh, he's dancing.

Oh, so what? You know, they're bored. Elijah says, I need to get their attention. Come near to me.

He says, Come near. He had to get their attention. You see, this is interesting.

Elijah knew that the real point of this was for the benefit of the people. It wasn't for his own benefit. Elijah didn't need to do the sacrifice for his own benefit.

He also didn't need to do it for God's benefit as if God wasn't really sure he was God without this sacrifice. Who was this for? This was for the people. And so first thing he says is, Come near to me.

Come near to me. I need to have your attention. And then he does the next thing.

He repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. Elijah was very aware that he was repairing something that once stood strong. There was once an altar of the Lord that stood at this place at Mount Carmel and in Israel in general.

And Elijah was there to revive something that had vanished away. You see the next thing he did? He alludes to it at the very end of verse 32 where it says, He made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two sows of seed, verse 33, and he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, laid it on the wood, and said, Fill four water pots with water and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood. And then he said, Do it a second time.

And they did it a second time. And then he said, Do it a third time. And they did it a third time.

So the water ran all around the altar and he also filled the trench with water. Now can I just remind you? He couldn't just turn on a faucet and get out a garden hose and do this. This took time.

This took work. It was a dramatic scene. Elijah wanted everybody to know this is no trickery.

I don't have a torch or a big lighter up my sleeve or a magnifying glass or something like that. No. I'm going to wet down the sacrifice.

I'm going to wet down the altar. I'm going to wet down a trench that is dug around the altar so everybody knows that there's no trickery involved in one bit of this. You see, he wanted to make a deep impression upon the people.

And therefore, Elijah required more of Yahweh than he did of Baal. Is there even the slightest suggestion that Elijah expected the prophets of Baal to do this? No. He didn't expect this of the prophets of Baal.

But he said, you know what? The real God in heaven can handle it. The real God of heaven can ignite a wet sacrifice just as easy as He can ignite a dry sacrifice. So it doesn't make any difference.

Let's do it so that the people will be thoroughly convinced. Now, verse 36, And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice that Elijah the prophet came near and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant and that I have done all these things at Your word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God and that You have turned their hearts back to You again.

This was at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. Do you know what that means? It's talking about the evening sacrifice that was made in Jerusalem every evening and then another one was made at morning time. They had a morning sacrifice and an evening sacrifice.

Now, some 50 years before this, the first king over the northern king of Israel had officially separated the worship of the northern kingdom from the worship of the southern kingdom. He said, don't you go to Jerusalem anymore. We'll make an altar in Dan.

We'll make an altar in Bethel. We don't want you to go to Jerusalem to worship anymore. But God still observed the time of the evening sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem.

And then He says, what I think is one of the most important things in this whole chapter. I want you to look at this very, very carefully where He says in verse 36, He says, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel. Stop right there.

I want you to notice. He's done two things so far to remind them of their spiritual heritage. First, with the twelve stones that He picked up representing the twelve tribes of Israel, He's reminding them of their spiritual heritage.

By the way, I'm just flashing on this right now. It's interesting that He picked up twelve stones, right? Because the northern kingdom of Israel only encompassed ten tribes of Israel. But Elijah sees the people of God as a unity, doesn't he? So he picked up twelve stones, not ten.

He's reminding them of their spiritual heritage. But the second thing he does is in his prayer, he addresses it to the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel. He's trying to remind them you have a spiritual heritage.

Yahweh has been your God for centuries. Don't depart from Him now. Don't turn your back on Him now.

This is the God that has established you as a nation, not Baal, not Asherah. But then he says something, and I think this is so important in verse 36. He says, Let it be known this day that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and that I have done all these things at your word.

If you don't understand that, you don't understand this whole event. Elijah did this because of the word of God. You know, you look at this and you say, oh, like, brilliant.

Brilliant strategy. This whole dramatic confrontation on the top of Mount Carmel. Get all the prophets of Baal there.

You know, the king is there. The people are there. Let the prophets of Baal go first.

Elijah, you're smart. That's clever. Way to go, Elijah.

I want you to notice, this did not come from Elijah's cleverness. This was not a program of man. It didn't come because of presumption.

It didn't become because of vainglory. As if Elijah said, you know, let me think of a place where I can really attract a lot of attention to myself. You know, I can really be the hero here.

It wasn't any of that. God led Elijah to the showdown with the prophets of Baal. This did not originate with him at all.

It originated with the Lord. And so after all that prayer, after all this dedication, he says, Lord, let them see that you're God and that I'm your servant. I believe both were important.

It wasn't enough just for them to see that the Lord was God. They needed to see that Elijah was the servant of the Lord also. So now, verse 38, then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench.

Now, when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and they said, the Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God. And Elijah said to them, seize the prophets of Baal. Do not let one of them escape.

So they seized them and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there. Wow. A lot happens in just three verses, doesn't it? First, the fire of the Lord fell.

Listen, let's face it. The prophets of Baal had passion. They had commitment.

They had sincerity. They had devotion. They had great energy in the service of their God.

What they did not have was they did not have a God in heaven who answered by fire. But the fire came down. It burned up everything.

Did you see what it burned up? Its work was beyond expectation. That's how it is when the fire of God falls. It works beyond expectation.

Now, I think it even probably surprised Elijah. He probably stood back and said, Whoa. I mean, not just the sacrifice burned up.

Elijah expected that. But did you see all that was burned up? The wood, the stones, the dust, and it even licked up or evaporated all of the water that was in the trench. I think Elijah just was not that.

Whoa. God, even I didn't expect you to burn up everything. And when the people saw it, they fell on their faces.

I want you to notice, God didn't just want to win this contest. He wanted to glorify himself. He said, I'm going to go over and above what anybody would expect and I'm going to glorify myself in this situation.

And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and they said, The Lord, He is God. The Lord, He is God. At this moment, the people were completely persuaded.

Take an opinion poll of the people. Now, go out with your clipboard and ask them, Baal or Yahweh? Yahweh. Baal or Yahweh? They'd all check it.

Obviously, they knew who was the right God. It was the Lord. And I hate to spoil the surprise for you, but tragically, this was only a momentary persuasion.

They were persuaded, but it didn't last. This was no lasting revival in Israel. The people were definitely persuaded, but not lastingly changed.

If you would have asked any one of them at that moment, Which one is the Lord? Baal or Yahweh? They would have said, It's Yahweh. If you would have asked them a week or two weeks later, they would say, Does it really matter? It didn't last. But, Elijah was going to take advantage of the moment.

He didn't know how it was going to be in a couple weeks. How could you expect him to? He just knew, God, yes, Lord, you've done the work. And he instantly looked over at those 450 prophets of Baal whom every one of them wanted him dead.

And he said, I'm going to give you what you wanted to give me. So he said to them, Seize the prophets of Baal. Do not let one of them escape.

Now listen, I have to tell you that since this was a contest between Yahweh and Baal, the prophets of each deity had to be responsible for their respective results. The great sin of Ahab was his official sponsorship of the prophets of Baal. And now that the fraud of Baal was exposed, his prophets had to answer for it and to be dealt with according to the law of Moses.

And there's no doubt that according to the law of Moses, Deuteronomy chapter 13, Deuteronomy chapter 17, Deuteronomy chapter 18, these prophets were to be executed. Elijah simply demanded that the prophets of Baal receive the treatment that they promoted for the prophets of Yahweh. Now I want you to get inside of Elijah's head here just for a moment.

He's thinking, Oh, thank you, Lord. Wow. Man, this is revival.

The people are persuaded. Sin is punished. Wow, it's going to happen.

This is great. Thank you, Lord. Now you can send the rain.

You see, isn't that what we would expect? The Lord is glorified. Sin is punished. Now the blessing comes.

And it does come. Look at it here. Verse 41, Then Elijah said to Ahab, Go up, eat and drink, for there is the sound of the abundance of rain.

So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel. And he bowed down on the ground and put his face between his knees and said to his servant, Go up now and look toward the sea.

And he looked and said, There's nothing. And seven times he said, Go again. That's to the end of verse 43.

And it came to pass the seventh time that he said, There's a cloud as small as a man's hand rising out of the sea. So he said, Go up, say to Ahab, prepare your chariot and go down before the rain stops. Now, Elijah knew that once the official worship of Baal had been defeated, then the purpose of the drought was fulfilled.

Rain was on the way. And so Elijah and Ahab would now do each what they wanted to. Elijah wanted to pray.

Ahab wanted to eat. So go ahead and do your thing. Elijah went and he prayed.

And what did he do? He bowed down on the ground and put his face between his knees. This was an unusual posture of prayer for Elijah. He wasn't kneeling.

He wasn't sitting. He wasn't standing. He didn't lay prostrate before the Lord.

He was kind of curled up before God, laying down on the ground with his face between his knees. I want you to see what this shows us. It shows us that the power of prayer doesn't reside so much in the posture

that you have as it does in the faith that you have in the living God.

You know, just a few minutes before, Elijah was like a lion before the prophets of Baal. And now he's like a little baby before God, curled up before Him, pleading in prayer. Now I want you to notice, this wasn't easy.

You would have thought that Elijah would have just said, Whoo, Lord, now send the rain! And the rain comes. Elijah had to battle in prayer for this. I have the feeling that this experience sort of shook Elijah up a little bit.

Don't we sometimes think that after a great spiritual victory, that maybe for a couple weeks or a few months, man, everything's going to be easy. I mean, you're the spiritual Superman now, right? I mean, you've just defeated the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. But Elijah prays and nothing happens.

He prays again and nothing happens. He prays a third time and nothing happens. He has to pray seven times.

He had to be stubbornly persistent in prayer to bring something he knew that the Lord wanted to bring. I think that God was using this experience to humble Elijah a little bit, don't you? Isn't it so easy in a moment of spiritual victory to get kind of full of yourself? To get kind of, you know, Yeah, you know, you're the Superman there. I remember years and years ago, pretty young in the ministry, it was with a church that we had started in the first couple of years.

We had met in a little, you know, really a children's ministry area. And then we started meeting at a school. And, you know, we really wanted to have our own building.

And so finally, the Lord just wonderfully, just miraculously opened doors. And after a couple of years, we were able to get our own building. And I remember so clearly the first Sunday we were going to be there in our own building.

And, you know, I was a young pastor. That was a real, you know, as we would say, it was a real feather in my cap. You know, it was, yeah.

You know, I'm God's man of faith and power that led this church to our own building. Isn't this great? You know, wow. So I'm feeling pretty good there.

And there we are in the service. And yeah, the service went okay. You always want the first service in the new place to just be like the glory of God coming down from heaven, you know.

But it was a good service. And I preached the message. And it all went okay and everything.

And I remember that I sat down after the message. And they were doing a final song up there. And I was just sitting there.

And then I looked down for some reason. And I noticed as I was sitting there that my zipper was unzipped on my pants. And that had been that way for the entire service.

And then I suddenly got all nervous. You know, I get all flushed. And I'm thinking, did anybody notice? You know, and I start looking at the face.

I start remembering the faces of everybody. You know, because now my back's to them. The faces of everybody.

And you know, you would be able to tell. You know, people would, at least my wife or something would have been, you know, hiding her eyes or something. You know, give me some... And then I realized nobody had noticed.

You know, I mean, for some reason, nobody had noticed. And then right then, I felt the Lord just speak to me, spoke to me so clearly. He said, this is how easy it is for me to humble you.

Don't you get too high in a moment of what you think is spiritual victory. I can humble you like that. I think God was showing Elijah that his zipper was unzipped right here.

You know, you think it's all good. You know, Mr. Faith and Power, you pray and fire comes down from heaven. Well, listen, you know this is the will of the Lord, but you have to pray for this seven times.

You have to be persistent again and again and again. And then finally, what's the answer? There is a cloud as small as a man's hand rising out of the sea. Elijah prayed this, asking in faith for God to send the rain.

And he sensed this was the will of God. And yet this fervent prayer brought the rain. The evidence of rain came slowly and in a small way.

But out of this very small evidence, God brought a mighty, mighty work to Israel. You know, in 1904, November 9th, a magazine printed in England called The Life of Faith. It was printed in London.

It was a newspaper dedicated to the deeper life movement. And a writer named Jesse Penn Lewis reported on a remarkable work that was just beginning in Wales under the ministry of men like Evan Roberts and Seth Joshua. And this is what she wrote there.

She said, there's a cloud no bigger than a man's hand risen in Wales. It was a fitting description of something that was a small beginning to what clearly became a mighty work of God. You know, when God sets out to do a work, oftentimes it begins with small evidences, with small things.

They didn't say, well, what's the big deal? What's so great about that? But sometimes a great work is first signaled by just a small cloud off on the horizon. And if you see it, and if you know it, you should take great hope. Spurgeon preached a great sermon on this, as you might imagine.

He spoke of things that might indicate to you that the Lord is about to do a mighty work. These are some of the things that he mentioned. He said, you know, when there's a growing dissatisfaction with the present state of things, when there's an increasing anxiety among the members of the church for the salvation of souls, he goes, that's like the cloud as big as a man's hand off on the horizon.

He said when this anxiety leads believers to be very earnest and persistent in prayer, he says when ministers begin to talk one with another and say, what must we do to see the Lord move? He said when the doctrine of the individual responsibility of each Christian is fully felt and carried out into action, that's like a small beginning to something very mighty that the Lord wants to do. And so what did he say to Ahab? He said, listen, Ahab, you better go prepare your chariot before the rain stops. I wonder if Ahab laughed at him when he said that.

Elijah, it hasn't rained for three and a half years. You know, even if it rains, it's going to start with like a little sprinkle, right? Just a little drizzle. I mean, come on, what are you talking about? But listen, he knew that a torrent was on the way because he had seen the cloud as big as a man's hand.

Verse 45, Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel. Then the hand of the Lord came upon Elijah and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

God's word through Elijah proved true. The long drought was over and it was demonstrated that the prayers of Elijah first withheld the rain and then subsequently brought the rain at the right time. And the hand of the Lord was upon Elijah and he girded up his loins and he ran ahead of Ahab.

Listen, this is supernatural. I don't know how to explain this. This was a supernaturally empowered 14 mile cross country run.

You know, something like 25 kilometers he ran ahead of a man in a chariot. I don't know why exactly it was important for God, for Elijah to arrive at Jezreel ahead of Ahab. I don't know.

Maybe God wanted Elijah to be the first one to tell Queen Jezebel what happened. He didn't want Ahab to be the first one. I don't know exactly.

It doesn't really explain it so in the text. But we know that Elijah got there first and God's supernatural... I would have loved to see it, man, when you get to heaven. Get the DVD of this and see Elijah running faster than a chariot.

Boom! You know, down the way. More than 14 miles all the way from Carmel to Jezreel. And he made it there in that time.

Well, he did that. Now look at chapter 19. And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had executed all the prophets with the sword.

Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, so let the gods do to me and more also if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time. And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life and went to Beersheba which belongs to Judah and left his servant there. Well, again, we don't know exactly why God wanted Elijah to get to Jezreel first.

This text doesn't tell us that he spoke to Jezebel first. The first word we hear is of Ahab speaking. So I don't know.

Maybe it did, maybe it didn't. We have no way of knowing. But what I want you to say is that when Jezebel heard the news, her reaction wasn't, oh, I guess I've been wrong about Baal worship all along.

I repent the Lord is God. She didn't say that. What was her reaction? Elijah, I vow solemnly that I'm going to kill you just like you killed all my prophets of Baal.

Now, what did Elijah do in response? Queen Jezebel, I am God's man of faith and power. I'm the guy who calls down fire from Mount Carmel. I'm the guy who prays and brings rain or prays and withholds rain.

There's nothing you can do to me, Queen Jezebel. Is that what happened? Not at all. It says right here in verse 3 that he arose and ran for his life and went to Beersheba.

And I have to tell you, I don't know if this was led of God or not. Now, I don't have any doubt that God wanted to protect Elijah. God did not intend for Elijah to die here.

But honestly, you and I both know God could have protected Elijah just as easily in Jezreel as He could have protected him by taking to him another place. So maybe this was of the Lord, maybe it wasn't, but it doesn't feel right, does it? Right here we just have to say that this man who was such a great man of faith and power, now we see him running for his life in great fear. I have to say that I think Elijah was brought very low, that he failed in this very point in which he was most strong.

Isn't that true for most of us? We oftentimes fail in the place where we think we're the strongest. I'm Elijah. I'm God's man of faith and power.

I'm the man who can stare down 450 prophets of Baal. But when Queen Jezebel threatens my life, there's just something in it that makes my blood run cold, and I've got to get out of here. Abraham failed in his faith.

Job failed in his patience. Moses, who was the meekest man on the earth, he spoke hasty and bitter words against other people. It's very easy for us to fail in the area where we think we're the strongest.

Well, this was the problem with Elijah. And again, I think in a way that this was God's mercy to him. It's very easy for a man who is used as mightily as Elijah is used to get too big of a head about himself.

And God is actually being kind to Elijah by letting some of his weakness come out, by letting some of his failure come out. You know, I'm sure Elijah was just absolutely depressed by the thought that revival had not swept across Israel. Lord, what was all that business on Mount Carmel? What were you doing there? How come more didn't get accomplished? Look at his depression here in verse 4. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree and he prayed that he might die and said, it's enough.

Now, Lord, take my life, for I'm no better than my father's. He went, first of all, to the distant city of Beersheba. Beersheba was the southernmost city in Israel.

So he went as far south as you can go and then he himself went further. And he prayed, what? That he might die. Isn't this amazing? This mighty man of prayer.

He was mighty enough in prayer to pray and make the rain stop for three and a half years and then pray again and make the rain start and now he prayed that he might die. Now, can we praise God right here for this unanswered prayer of the Lord in the life of Elijah? You know, as a matter of fact, this was a prayer not answered for Elijah not ever. Do you realize that Elijah is one of the few men in the Bible to have never died? He was carried up alive in a chariot up to heaven.

Not only did God not answer the prayer here, he never answered this prayer for Elijah. We can imagine that as he was caught up into heaven on that chariot that we'll get to later on in 2 Kings, Elijah smiled and thought of this prayer. He said, you know, remember that time when I prayed that I might die? God's really not answering that.

He's not going to answer that at all. He said, oh Lord, thank you for your blessed no's in prayer. You know, to receive a no answer from God can sometimes be much better than receiving a yes answer from him.

What did he say? He said, take my life. It is enough. We sense that Elijah meant here.

I can't do this anymore, Lord. The work was stressful. It was exhausting.

And it seemed to accomplish nothing. Isn't that what gets us discouraged in serving the Lord? It isn't that the work's hard. It isn't that the work takes a lot out of us.

It's that when the work's hard, when it takes a lot out of us, and it seems to accomplish nothing. Elijah's saying this, Lord, where's the revival? Where are the hearts of the people? Why hasn't Jezebel turned around? Why hasn't Ahab turned around? Everybody knows what you did on Mount Carmel. The prophets of Baal are dead.

The great work on Mount Carmel did not result in a national revival or return to the Lord. And he says, you know, I just, I give up. I can give and give and give if I see that you're going to bless mightily, Lord.

But if I don't see that blessing, then it makes me want to give up. I want you to notice something. Probably, Elijah had hoped that the events on Mount Carmel would turn the nation around.

But he forgot something. He forgot that people reject the Lord despite the evidence, not because of it. You know, when people reject the Lord, it's not because they're being logical.

It's because they're being illogical. So he says, oh Lord, it's enough. I want you to know that it wasn't enough.

God had a lot more ready for Elijah. So he says, I'm not going to answer this prayer that you prayed. Now, Lord, take my life, for I'm no better than my father's.

As Elijah looked at the apparent failure of his work, he instantly set the blame on his own unworthiness. Lord, I know why there was no national revival. I know why the nation didn't turn around.

It's because I'm not godly enough. It's because I'm no better than my father's. Do you know what's going to happen in the rest of this chapter? God's going to minister to his despairing prophet.

Have you ever felt low like this? Do you ever feel this kind of discouragement, this kind of depression? Let God speak to you the same way that he did to Elijah. First of all, then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, Arise and eat. Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals in a jar of water.

So he ate and drank and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, Arise and eat, because the journey's too great for you. So he arose and ate and drank, and he went in the strength of that food and he went on and on and on and on and 40 days and 40 nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

You see what God's doing to Elijah? First, he's ministering to him in a very practical way. He's ministering to the physical needs of Elijah. You know what part of his problem was? He was exhausted physically.

So he says, Elijah, you need physical repair. Lay down and sleep under the broom tree. You need rest.

You need replenishment. Here's a broom tree. Sleep under it.

Now, God first ministered to Elijah's physical needs. I have to say, this isn't always God's order. Sometimes God will minister to spiritual needs before physical needs.

But sometimes God says, I want to minister to the physical needs first. Sometimes the most spiritual thing that a person can do is get enough rest and replenishment. That's what Elijah needed.

So he rested. He slept. Then what? Then he ate and drank and laid down again.

Do you notice this? One quick nap, one nice meal wasn't enough. God said, you need more than this. Go down and sleep.

I'll send the angel to bring food to you. I'll send the angel to bring a jar of water to you. You're going to need it.

Matter of fact, the journey is too great for you. Do you know the journey that God had Elijah take here? He sent him to Mount Horeb. Now, there's debate as to where Mount Horeb is.

Mount Horeb is the same as Mount Sinai. There's some debate as to where it is. Even at the closest, this was 200 miles away, 40 days away.

This was a long way away. You're going to go there, Elijah. Now, I want you to notice this, too.

What this meant was that God did not demand an immediate recovery from Elijah. He allowed the prophet time to recover from his spiritual depression. You know what? I think this is the grace of God.

Isn't this wonderful? I mean, oftentimes, I think, OK, you know, it's been a couple of days. Are you better now? Come on, get back with it. You know what? No, Elijah.

It's going to take some time. Get some rest. Get some replenishment.

Then start out on this 40-day retreat. You and me for 40 days. That's what he did.

Now, verse 9. And there he went into a cave. Now, there means at Mount Horeb. So this is 40 days later.

200 miles later. He finally made it to Mount Horeb. By the way, Mount Sinai, the same place where God met with Moses.

And there he went into a cave and spent the night in that place. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, What are you doing here, Elijah? So he said, I've been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they seek to take my life.

So what does he do first? He goes into a cave. By the way, can I tell you something from the original Hebrew? The original Hebrew says that he went into the cave. Not a cave, the cave.

Many people think that God led him to the very same place where the Lord met with Moses hundreds of years before. So God speaks to him. What does he say? He says, What are you doing here, Elijah? Isn't that a great question? You wonder what Elijah could have answered.

Well, Lord, you sent me here. Don't you remember? What do you mean, what am I doing here? God knew the answer to this question. But it was good for Elijah to speak to the Lord freely, to unburden his heart

before the Lord.

Hey, Elijah, get it all out. Come on, talk to me. Talk to me freely.

Be honest with me. And so what does he say? He says, I've been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts. I faithfully served you, Lord.

And now look at the danger I'm in. It's not fair. I've given up so much to serve you, Lord.

I've really put my life on the line. And what's happened? Nothing's happened. I don't like it, Lord.

What does he say? He says, I alone am left. Was that true? Now listen, it wasn't accurate, but it reflected how Elijah felt. Even way back on Mount Carmel, Elijah said, I alone am left a prophet of the Lord.

Isn't that the way it is when discouragement and depression comes? You feel very alone. That's exactly how Elijah felt. So he said, I alone am left, and they seek to take my life.

I want you to think about this in another way. The reasons Elijah gave for wanting to give up were really the same reasons why he should go on. Lord, I'm the only one.

And they want to get me. How much more important did I go on in the work then? They need me more than ever. But it made him wanted to give up.

You see, if he really was the last prophet or the last believer alive, shouldn't he seek to live as long as possible? If the enemies of God wanted him dead, should he not seek to defeat her wicked will? Elijah here powerfully showed the unreasonable nature of unbelief in fear. Lord, Satan wants me to give up, so I want to give up. Well, wait a minute.

Think about it for a minute. If Satan wants you to give up, then that's exactly the time when you shouldn't give up. But that's the way it is when unbelief and fear begin to dominate us.

So what's the Lord going to do? Alright, he let Elijah get it out. Now, verse 11. Then he said, Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord.

And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake.

But the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire.

And after the fire, a still, small voice. The Lord knew what the depressed and discouraged Elijah needed. He needed a personal encounter with God.

There was nothing fundamentally wrong in Elijah's theology. The problem was in Elijah's experience. He had been serving the Lord, but he was distant in his experience from the Lord.

And so he says, Elijah, you and I need to come close together again. So let's get together. Elijah, go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord.

And then the Lord passed by. Now listen, God brought his presence before Elijah. But first he showed Elijah where he was not.

In other words, before he showed Elijah where he was, he showed him where he was not. He was not in the wind. He was not in the earthquake.

He was not in the fire. Do you notice this? Like most of us, Elijah probably only looked for the Lord in dramatic manifestations. You know, Mount Carmel kind of stuff.

That's where the Lord is, right? That's when the Lord's really flexing his muscles. Now, certainly God sometimes appears that way. But often he appears in less dramatic surroundings.

He said, see the wind? See the fire? See the earthquake? Elijah, I'm not there. I'm not there. But then it says, after the fire, a still small voice.

You can translate that still small voice as a gentle whisper. That was a great contrast to the previous manifestations. There's a big contrast between a gentle whisper and an earthquake.

A gentle whisper in a big fire. A gentle whisper in a violent wind. God met Elijah in a quiet whisper instead of in the earth-shaking phenomenon that had just happened.

And you know, Elijah probably thought, just like we all think, that the dramatic display of power at Mount Carmel would turn the nation around. Or perhaps he thought that the radical display of God's judgment against the priests of Baal would change the hearts of the nation. I want you to see, neither one of those worked.

This is a very important example for Christian ministers, especially preachers today. It shows us that displays of power and that preaching God's anger don't necessarily change hearts. What really changes hearts is the gentle whisper of God speaking to somebody's heart.

That is more powerful than a display of power. It's also more powerful than a display of anger. It's common for us preachers to think that way.

You know, if I can just show people how powerful God is, then they'll want to serve Him. Or if I can just show them how angry God is at them, then they'll want to serve Him. You know, seeing the power of God or seeing the anger of God can't compare to that gentle whisper that He does to the human heart.

That's what changes hearts. Well, after God met Elijah in the gentle whisper, what does He do next? Look at verse 13. He gives him some work to do.

That's also a blessing. It says there, So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him and said, What are you doing here, Elijah? And he said, I've been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts, because the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword.

I alone am left, and they seek to take my life. And the Lord said to him, Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. You see, immediately, Elijah sensed that the Lord was present in the gentle whisper, in a way that He wasn't present in the earthquake, or the wind, or the fire.

Because he sensed the special presence of God, he immediately humbled himself and he wrapped his face in his mantle. He said, Oh, listen, Lord, You're here. I want to humble myself before You.

And then God asked him the same question all over again. What are you doing here? And then when Elijah responded to that question, God said, Great, fine. You're down.

You're depressed. Good for you. Now I've got work for you to do.

Go, return on your way, and anoint Hazael as king over Syria. God gave Elijah something to do. Now I want you to notice this.

This is how God often takes care of His servants. They're down, they're distressed. What's going on? Well, first He takes care of their physical needs.

Then He gives them some time. Then He speaks to them in a wonderful personal encounter. Then what does He do? Finally, He gives them work to do.

Go out and do some work. And this is perhaps what Elijah needed most of all to do. Listen, Elijah, stop looking at yourself.

Okay, you're weak, you're miserable, you've got all the sins of your fathers. Great, fine. You know what? I've still got work for you to do.

Would you do the work for me? He needed to get on with what God wanted him to do. And that was the last step in this restoration that God had for him. Look at it here, though, verse 16 through 18.

He says, Also you shall anoint Jehu, the son of Nimishi, as king over Israel. And Elisha, the son of Shaphat, of Abel-meholah, you shall anoint as prophet in your place. It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill.

And whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. Yet I have reserved 7,000 in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, in every mouth that has not kissed him. Isn't that great? God, I've got more work, excuse me, Elisha, God said to him, I've got more work for you to do.

You need to choose this king, Jehu. He's going to succeed the corrupt Ahab and his wife Jezebel. You know that Ahab and Jezebel, they're not going to be around for every Elisha.

Don't worry about it. I'm going to get them out of the way. And then he says, you know what, Elisha? I've got a successor for you.

Elisha. God gave something else to this discouraged and depressed prophet. Beyond work to do, he also gave him a friend and a successor.

I think Elisha needed a friend. You know, the core of his complaint before God was that he was all alone. And he says, listen, there's a man ready to learn from you and to be your successor.

And Elisha, here's hope for you. Because this man, Elisha, will be your successor. Your work is going to continue even after your death.

It'll go on. And God will execute his judgments, but then also he has those who are his. Did you notice what it said there in verse 18? I've reserved 7,000 in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.

You know, Elisha, you thought you were all alone. Surprise! I've got 7,000 faithful to me. They're all over the place.

You can't see them. You don't know them. But listen, your ministry has been fruitful.

I want you to think about this. Elisha had to see something. I think this is very, very important.

Elisha had to see that his quiet ministry over the years actually bore more fruit than his spectacular ministry at Mount Carmel. What was the fruit of the spectacular ministry at Mount Carmel? Well, it was a dramatic event, right? The rain came back and 450 prophets of Baal were dead. All right, that's something.

I'm not saying it's nothing. What was the result of his quiet ministry all the years before? 7,000 people were turned on for the Lord and serving Him. Do you see what the Lord was showing him? Elisha, your quiet ministry really has accomplished something.

Isn't this what we want to know? All the time that Elisha thought that the work of God could only happen in fire that came down from heaven, God was showing him that the still, small voice, the quiet whisper would do the work. Elisha, there's the fruit of the quiet whisper. 7,000 men who have not given themselves to Baal, who have not kissed Him.

So, verse 19. So he departed from there and found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with 12 yoke of oxen before him and was with the 12. Then Elisha passed by him and threw his mantle on him.

And he left the oxen and ran after Elisha and said, please let me kiss my father and my mother, then I will follow you. And he said to him, go back again, for what have I done to you? So Elisha turned back from him, took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh using the oxen's equipment and gave it to the people and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elisha and became his servant.

Elisha did what the still, small voice of God told him to do. Now, he happened to do it in reverse order. God told him several things to do and the last thing to do was to call this guy Elisha.

Well, he happened to start with that. I don't know, maybe Elisha believed that he first needed a friend and an apprentice. Okay, I want to do that first.

And Elisha was out there working and Elisha comes over and passes by him and throws his mantle on him, basically as a way of telling him, I call upon you to join my work as a prophet. He says, well, okay, let me do it. I'll follow you.

And so he takes a yoke of oxen, slaughters them, boils it. He says, I'm done being a farmer. Let's slaughter the oxen.

Now I'm going to be your assistant, Elisha. You see how wonderfully God ministered to this servant? He starts the chapter or the section that we went through tonight, all alone against 450 prophets of Baal. He ends the section with God's gentle whisper restoring him and giving him assurance and with a partner right beside him.

I don't know if there's anybody in the whole Old Testament that illustrates for us the ups and the downs and the trials and the difficulties of ministry any better than Elisha does. He shows us how easy it is for us to put our confidence in the big, in the spectacular. And listen, I'm not trying to say that God does not move through the big and the spectacular.

God moved at Mount Carmel. There's no doubt about it. We shouldn't say that God only works in the quiet whisper.

But listen, we often don't appreciate the work of God in the quiet whisper. God used this to show Elisha that the work that he did there was actually greater than the work that happened on Mount Carmel. So I don't know about you, it leaves me wanting to pray for both.

Lord, send the fire. We want the fire of revival, of great national repentance to come down from heaven. But at the same time, until it comes, let us serve you in the quiet and faithful and persistent ways so that we can build a testimony that way.

I think in both ways we want to see the work of God done. Let's pray. Lord, what an amazing passage.

I think that the way that you dealt with Elisha at Mount Horeb is even more spectacular than the way that you dealt with him and the nation of Israel at Mount Carmel. Lord, thank you for both kinds of lessons. We want our life to be marked by both things, Lord.

We want our life to be marked by radical trust in you for the big things and for the fire from heaven, because you are the God who answers by fire. You're not Baal. You're the God who really is there and can burn up the sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust and the water in the trenches.

You can do it all. Lord, we also want to appreciate that you are the God that speaks in the gentle whisper, in the still, small voice. Lord, make our hearts and our minds big enough to receive both kinds of your work.

For those of us, Lord, who doubt, don't really trust in your ability to answer in the big ways, then Lord, help us to believe it. But for those of us who tend to, Lord, to not appreciate the way that you work in the small ways, then Lord, help us with that too. We want to see your work in both ways.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

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