

Divine Factor - Human Factor (1 Kgs 18-19)

by George Verwer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of spiritual balance between the divine factor and the human factor, and the need to accept our human limitations and weaknesses for spiritual growth and maturity.

Duration: 35:50

Scripture: 1 Kings 18:24, 1 Kings 19:4, Proverbs 3:5-6, Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:2, 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, James 1:5

Topics: "Human Nature", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the importance of accepting the human factor in our lives and embracing our own complexities. He shares a personal experience of feeling conflicted about pursuing his own interests and desires, which he initially considered worldly. However, he realizes that God wants us to be close to Him and to embrace our humanity. The speaker emphasizes the need for believers to be strong in the Word, willing to compassionately disagree with others, and to practice love. He also highlights the importance of having an ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and learning to listen to God's still small voice.

Transcript

I think of those words of Scripture that tell us, to whom much is given, much will be required. And I often feel that one of our dangers, those of us who come to conventions like this and hear this kind of ministry, that we become over-familiar with spiritual terminology, or we become accustomed to hearing these things. Or even worse, we don't do anything about what we hear.

We realize as we study the book of Acts that what our brother has been sharing about is God's purpose for every believer. Remember Billy Graham speaking about the Holy Spirit and the need for a spirit-controlled life and the reality of the spirit in our lives. One said, I don't care how you get it, just get it.

And how we, I believe all of us, I hope all of us, just long for this greater reality in our own lives. I really believe as we leave here, we have an awesome responsibility to share the challenge of the message God has brought to us here with other people through our own testimony, through lives, and through literature. And I praise God for the great emphasis here in Keswick on Christian literature.

I wanted to do something a little different in presenting a couple of books that I hope you will read and just present them to you in the form of a prayer request for the authors as I present some books of authors I know or knew. I say knew because one of them, Ralph Shallis, last year went to be with the Lord. Here's a

very basic book called From Now On on how to take a crisis that we may have this week at Keswick and make sure it leads to a process of growth.

A lot of people in Britain today are crisis-oriented. I go to a lot of meetings, I go to a lot of conferences. There's a lot of emphasis on crisis.

There are hundreds of thousands of British people who have had major crises with the Holy Spirit in the past 25 years since I've lived here. My question is, where are they? When it comes to world missions, when it comes to justice and reality and godliness, where are they? And we know that if a crisis is not followed by a process, it will become an abscess. Here was a man, Ralph Shallis, who demonstrated with his whole life, we knew him very intimately, first in North Africa, then in France.

And I'd ask you to pray for Ralph's widow, Rangeli Shallis, living in France and to make use of this book. I know churches that make this required reading before you can become a member. Another dear elderly saint I would like you to pray for is Oswald Sanders, who wrote this book on spiritual leadership that is almost required reading in our fellowship.

It's just such an outstanding book for anybody in any position of responsibility. Past 80, I believe, this man is still going strong. I don't know if you'll ever meet him again, but you can get his book.

I have the burden to pray for the meeting over in the cinema with the young people. And I'm going to lead in prayer just very briefly in a moment and pray for them. I gave a little interview and testimony there the other evening and it was a great challenge.

We haven't been able to have Charles Price here, but here again. A great blessing of Christian books because as he's over there, we can get his book here, Christ for Real, growing in God's likeness. I'd like you to pray for Charles Marsh, 45 years in the Muslim world.

What an example! He is not well at all. Some of you know Daisy, his dynamic daughter. She is well, but we can again get Charles' book, here is his book, into action.

He wrote this in his senior years, calling people, young people especially, to get into action. He is just one of many that have been an enormous influence on our fellowship. Lastly, I wanted to mention Michael Griffith's book, Take My Life, because it's my favorite book on discipleship.

Again, he was here last week, giving the message on the Christian service morning. He got stuck with me this week, but don't be discouraged by that. You can get his book.

Praise the Lord. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for what's going on in the cinema right now.

Move through Charles Price in power. Bring those young people into greater commitment and greater reality. And Father, help us to make definite decisions right now, in our own hearts, in our own minds, concerning your Holy Spirit, that we may not be hearers of the Word, but doers.

For we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. I want you to turn to 1 Kings, chapter 18.

I was so thrilled to see that so many of you are still in the Authorized Version. Now, I've got my New International here, but the print is smaller, and my eyes aren't as good as they used to be. My wife is always hassling me about that.

But I want to read my Scripture from the Authorized Version. 1 Kings. I want to deal with chapter 18 and chapter 19.

How to do that in a half an hour is interesting. So, we're not going to read both chapters. You've got those in your Bible.

I'm just going to read selected portions that will give the general thrust of what God has put on my heart. I believe many of the Bible readings and messages this week have been based on the New Testament, and that's great. That's where I spend a lot of my time.

But I think it's also very important to study fervently the Old Testament, and then to make some of these beautiful comparisons. We have Elijah. We have Elijah on Mount Carmel.

We're going to read, starting at verse 20 in 1 Kings 18. So Ahab sent on to all the children of Israel and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people and said, He'd be a good speaker for Chesed.

A special evening meeting, two speakers. You have to be careful on the time. So he got straight to the point.

How long halt you between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him. But if it be Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

I'll never forget as a young baby Christian, listening to a phonograph record of a Scotsman that came over to America and shook at least Washington. A man named Peter Marshall. Many know Catherine Marshall, who lived long after Peter, was so suddenly taken.

But I remember as a baby Christian, Peter Marshall preaching on this text. It was a message, I think, that eventually by record and cassette went across the nation. When he spoke those words from Elijah, how long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him.

But if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him, there's so much in these two chapters that really backs up. Our brother Harris has been sharing with us from the New Testament.

Let's look at verse 24. He challenged these four prophets. And he said, Call ye on the name of your God, small g. And I will call on the name of the Lord.

And the God who answereth by fire, let Him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. What an amazing challenge.

I felt that what, I should say Bishop Harris really, shared with us is so significant and so important. The need for all of us to have an ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Isn't there the danger that some of us who are somewhat conservative, you know, characters like me, well trained in Moody Bible Institute.

Never saw anyone raise their hands there when they had a question. When I came this week to Keswick, I thought, you know, Philip Hacking is a special privilege. No one else raises their hands when they worship, but he's up here all the time raising his hand.

But, and his emphasis on God working in different people in different ways is just so significant. But I always feel that some of us who are a little conservative, I've even written a book against extremism that's

got me in a lot of trouble. Doesn't sell anymore, you can pick it up free.

But there's the danger that we overreact to extremism and we don't want extremism, but we can overreact and end up in the deep freeze of dead orthodoxy with wrong attitudes, prejudiced, bigoted, and even bad-mouthed in terms of the way we sometimes speak of other believers who may not agree with us. And I believe the way ahead as we move forward in the church, believers of different backgrounds and different fellowships, is to learn the reality of compassionately disagreeing. Is that something well? To compassionately disagree? Must we speak in tones that belittle people? Must we speak in judgmental tones? Must we speak in terms of one-upmanship? We are better than they.

Must we go on making generalizations about things often we have never studied and have little first-hand experience? I, for one, want to be cautious. My wife has had a rather rough life married to me, 27 years. I know that's unusual today.

You're the same wife. And we discovered after we were married, and I know some of you, you know, I've seen you walking in the woods. I saw Brother Cager walking in the woods with his wife.

Lovely couple, just still tingling with romance. And I'm sure some of you have found marriage is just getting better and better and you're just two little love doves even though you've been married for a hundred years. Wonderful! Our marriage has not been like that.

And we have found marriage at times rather difficult. A lot of people, when I first started preaching discipleship, commitment, forsake all, you know, I had people even forsaking things they didn't want to forsake. And other problems.

A lot of people thought I was going to have a nervous breakdown. People were praying. They were sending me notes.

Take a vacation. Take a holiday. Slow down.

Beware of burnout. Beware, you know. After, what, 32 years walking with Jesus, quite a few have given up on the nervous breakdown idea.

I don't think I'm the type. My problem is more giving other people nervous breakdowns. And by God's grace, my wife is still going.

But we decided some years ago as we discovered a lot of differences. We got married young. You know, Bible college marriage.

We were ignorant. Naive. We thought if we believe Jesus rose again, if we believe the basic doctrines, then we're like-minded.

Let's go take the world for Christ. But after the wedding, we discovered many differences. Just communication.

Any of you ever have any problem just communicating to your wife? My wife feels she has a problem not only communicating to me, just getting my attention. It's like that story of the donkey. Surely that must come from Keswick teaching, that famous donkey.

Very stubborn donkey. How many have heard that story? Oh, my land. Must be another generation.

But this lady had this pet donkey she loved very dearly. Very dearly. But one day the donkey got into her flower garden and she was very concerned that some of her dear flowers were being trod on by the donkey.

So she called a donkey specialist. I think he was an American. Brought him and said, look, you've got to get this donkey, very stubborn, out of the flower garden.

But you cannot hurt him. He's very close to me. You must not hurt him.

And this donkey specialist took a big piece of wood. We call it a two by four. He clobbered the donkey on the head and the donkey jumped out of the flower garden.

The lady ran out. I told you not to hurt him. He said, lady, I'm not hurting him.

I'm just getting his attention. And sometimes my wife has felt a little bit in that category. Well, I don't want to get on a sidetrack.

But I believe the way ahead is to be convinced in our own heart what we believe on these issues, strong in the Word, and willing to compassionately disagree with others who we still treat as believers, if they are believers, and put into practice the greatest aspect of the Holy Spirit mentioned in the whole of the Bible, love. And that is a great plea on my heart. God who answers by fire.

We need fire. We need fire in our churches. And I'm not talking about just central heating in January.

We need fire in the pulpit. We need fire in our hearts. I'm not talking about emotion.

You can relax. I'm not talking about volume. That suddenly if you're on fire for Christ, you've got to become loud like this imported American with a big mouth and a big nose.

Look at that. Talk about struggling with self-image. And I was living in Thailand giving out tracts.

If they don't like you in Thailand, they call you a long-nose foreigner. And I was giving out tracts one Sunday with a missionary on the spot. And a man came up and he didn't take the tract.

He just looked at my face and he reached out and stroked my Mount Everest. In fact, I believe one of the reasons there's so much confusion about the Holy Spirit is we have the idea that if you're filled with the Spirit, you must be sort of super spiritual. You'll have a different smile.

You'll have different eyes. I've even heard people that seem to have a different voice when they were more spiritual. Real gruff character with a rather gruff voice.

But he gets in a prayer meeting and he gets all wound up and suddenly, oooh! God, and we're going to see this very clearly in this passage, is not out to destroy your human factor. So beautiful the way God works. Well, Elijah prayed.

I was reading an old Keswick message some time ago and it spoke about rebuilding that altar. And you can hunt through a hundred years of books and find that message. Rebuilding the altar.

But I'm not going to dwell on that. He prayed and then the fire came down. Verse 38.

Let's look at 37 and 38. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that Thou art the Lord God and that Thou hast turned their hearts back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust and licked up the water that was in the trench.

God answered by fire. Now many people long for this today. And I think whenever we take an Old Testament passage and an Old Testament story, we must be careful not to stretch it beyond the bounds of Biblical sense.

And I think we have to go to the New Testament which we've already done and see what the Biblical way is. It says in Hebrews that our God is a consuming fire. Fire is obviously important and an important way in which God wants to communicate truth to us.

He's obviously not expecting us to pray forth literal fire upon our hearts or upon the church. This is a unique, historic situation. But we have indication in other Old Testament passages and in the New Testament that our God is a consuming fire and that when you love Jesus and you're committed to Jesus that you are spiritually on fire.

It means there'll be the fruit of the Spirit, there'll be the gifts of the Spirit and God gives different gifts to different people. To me, that answers immediately a lot of the controversy about that just in one sentence. And we know that the person who is on fire for Christ, I know this expression isn't used so much, but when I was a young Christian, we used to speak if someone was winning people to the Lord and at least witnessing and he was active in prayer and he was loving people and serving people and self seemed to be crucified in his life, we'd say, well, he's on fire for God.

Is there anything wrong with that today? Is that too old-fashioned? And we who come here to Keswick and who feed on the Word of God and who hear these messages need to go away from here on fire for God. That means being excited. Are we afraid of being excited? We get excited at football in Britain.

We get a little excited at cricket, don't we, Philip? I get excited about a lot of things. Why is it so many young people are saying today the church is boring? And then we react with some little generalization about, oh, this generation. Oh, dear me, what's happened to this generation? As if in the days of Charles Dickens all was well in Britain.

I'm burdened for the young people. I'm burdened for the gap, the wall that easily comes between older people and young people because sometimes we lack wisdom and as we seek the reality and the power of the Holy Spirit, I don't believe it should be just for power. It is for wisdom.

Today, everybody's into choruses. Choruses, a new chorus every day. I'm not against choruses, but I challenge many young people, groups that I've spoken at.

I said, look, do you stop reading after the Psalms? Do you know what is after the Psalms? Many do not know. I think Matthew comes after the Psalms. What comes after the Psalms? Proverbs.

So it's good to have praise. It's good to use the Psalms. I read them almost every single day, but you know what I do also every single day? I read Proverbs.

Balance. We don't want just praise, just worship, just a great meeting, a wonderful time, a bless up, but we want wisdom and as we go to take what God has given us here in Keswick back to our churches, back to the man in the street or wherever, we have to contextualize what God gives us here in this spiritual

environment into that other environment, whether it's our home, the church, the factory, or wherever. And one thing that will help us do that is if we find spiritual balance between, and this happens to be the title of this message, the divine factor, which we've seen as Elijah prayed down the fire, and the human factor.

And that's why I don't stop at chapter 18, but go to 19. What do we find in 19? In verse 4, suddenly we read, but he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a juniper tree. This version says a broom tree.

I need to study what that's about. And he requested for himself that he might die. This is impossible.

This man has just seen one of the greatest miracles. That any man has ever witnessed in history. He's made absolute fools of these false prophets and they ended up being destroyed.

And now we find our great hero, our great prophet, under a tree and he's depressed. And do you know doctors tell us the number one illness in Europe today is depression. And it concerns me that sometimes Christians are afraid of a little biblical psychology.

They always think problems can be answered with Bible verses or spiritual suggestions. And often pride keeps them from getting the help they need for depression or for something else that may be quite serious and may be even medical. And I have seen people effectively treated through medicine for certain forms of depression.

What do we find God doing for our prophet under the tree? Surely this is the time to send one of the dynamic spiritual Nathans to shake him up. Get him into repentance and back on the path. Right? Revival.

A good kick. But that's not God's strategy in this situation. And as he lay and slept under the juniper tree, behold an angel touched him and said unto him, Arise and eat.

I cannot tell you how much as a potential extremist this little verse helped me. Because I was in a place some years ago where I was really denying the human factor in my life. Things that I wanted to do, that I liked to do, that in some cases people thought were even worldly.

I generally thought in the light of the lost and the need for prayer and witnessing and evangelism certainly was a waste of time. And when God really took this passage into me, and I can only give you because God has given me, and showed me that I must accept the human factor. As I sat listening to the Bible reading this morning, the thing that God dealt with me the most about was this whole factor that this treasure is in a clay jar.

We are earthen vessels. We are weak. The fullness of the Spirit does not mean you're not going to make mistakes.

It doesn't mean you're never going to say anything stupid anymore. It doesn't mean you're going to enter into marital bliss from now on. And your children are all going to be good little well behaved evangelical fish.

It doesn't mean that the next person you witness to is going to fall down and accept Christ like some of the stories we hear from certain places. I myself find witnessing an awesome experience oftentimes. And sometimes after I pray for someone, and I witness to them with all my heart, I'm sure none of you have this experience, everything gets worse.

So what should I do? Quit? So many of God's people today are discouraged. Let's face it. We know back in our churches that's true.

They're discouraged. They've tried some kind of witnessing and it just didn't work. They've tried some intensive prayer for a while but God didn't seem to answer their prayer or somebody criticized one of their prayers or something else went wrong.

There are so many people today who have tried this and tried that. They gave this a little emphasis and that a little emphasis and they may even be a Christian leader but in the center of their heart they know they're down. They're discouraged and the altar needs to be rebuilt and the fire needs to come again.

And if that fire stops coming at Keswick, you'll never get me back here, I can assure you of that because that is what this place has stood for for over a hundred years. God moving among His people. We know biblically He is already in us because His Holy Spirit lives in us but He wants control.

We can talk about the Lordship of Christ. We can talk about the yielded life. We can talk about Hudson Taylor's exchange life.

Different vocabulary. Same reality. Colossians says let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

And then it gives the same description as we find in Ephesians 5 after the words be ye filled with the Holy Spirit. What an interesting study. But no matter how filled you are, no matter how committed you are, you are still very, very human.

And there are times when the answer is not another great spiritual tonic or message but there may be a need for some relaxation. God's people must know how to relax. Tozer said that many dedicated people are religiously jumpy.

And he speaks about the fact that our great God of mercy and love is easy to live with. A book that ministered to me so much, I put it in a magazine form and did 100,000 copies is Stanley Volk's book On Personal Revival which is linked with Roy Eshen's book Calvary Road which is simply, really the message of grace. And we hear these challenges.

We hear these strong messages. And sometimes we just feel so weak. We just feel so overwhelmed.

Me? Weak me with my struggles? Can I do it? Yes! By grace! Because God is a God of mercy. And if even you're under the Jennifer tree tonight, somehow you're discouraged, you're depressed, maybe you're hurt, God can meet you there. Maybe He wants you to go out and have a special meal.

Maybe He wants you to have just a good night's sleep. The amazing thing is that this angel seemed to give a second blessing. Look at verse 8. And he arose after he went back to sleep.

He arose and he ate and drank again. And then if you follow on, you will discover that Elijah went out to this special place and there came a great earthquake and there came a great wind and God wasn't in the wind and there came a great fire and God wasn't in the fire and how did God speak to this man at that time? Still, small voice. And that's so important and difficult for me to even speak about because I'm so loud.

But you can probably, praise the Lord, you won't have to hear my voice for a long time unless somehow you buy a tape and you can turn that down and even erase it, praise the Lord. But as you go from

Keswick, you can have that still, small voice every day. Whether you're in a bed of affliction or you're moving out in the center of your town to give out some tracts.

Whether you're in a mountain alone waiting upon God or in an OM team evangelizing Paris. You have the privilege of God's voice through His word day by day. It's not always the big message.

It's not always the big challenge. Stand up. Come forward.

Hallelujah. God uses those things. But more often for the soldier, the disciple, the long-term marathon runner in God's race, it's the still, small voice.

Learn to listen. Learn to wait upon God. Accept your human side with all of its complexity and allow God to fill you afresh every day to go where He wants you to go and to do what He wants you to do.

Let us pray. Let's just have a moment of silent prayer. We can ask the fire of God to burn afresh in our own souls.

We can confess sin. We can repent. We can cast our burden upon the Lord.

And we can ask just privately, quietly for the Lord Jesus by His power to cleanse and for His Holy Spirit who lives within us to fill us again even tonight. That's your privilege as God's child. It's your inheritance in Jesus Christ.

We can pray for a great revival, but according to the Word of God, we can appropriate tonight personal revival in our hearts through Jesus reigning and ruling as Lord, as King. It's so beautiful. It's so biblical.

Don't miss it as you pray just a brief prayer where you are. Oh, Lord Jesus, You know all about us and You love us still. We thank You for Your grace.

We thank You for Your mercy. We thank You that You take weak, struggling, ordinary people like myself and my dear wife and so many others who are here and You use us somehow a little for Your kingdom. We thank You, O living God, that You are alive.

You, the God of Elijah and Moses, of Abraham and Isaac, You are alive and well and You are living in us by Your Holy Spirit. And we yield our members unto righteousness tonight. And we believe that You can and will do a new thing in our hearts, in our lives, in our churches as we move forward by faith and as we find that divine factor and that human factor in biblical balance in our lives.

Grant this, we pray, in the name of Jesus, our Lord and our Savior. Amen. The song of the benediction.

If there are those who would like to speak with one of the speakers or just be counseled, do remain in the tent or just remain to pray or share with one another. 174 Convention praise. 180 Keswick praise.

O Thou who camest from above, we stand to sing. O Thou who camest from above, we stand to sing. we stand to sing.

O Thou who camest from above, we stand to sing. we stand to sing. O Thou who camest from above, we stand to sing.

we stand to sing. Praise ye the Lord, my heav'nly King, My arms of faith and love relieve. Give rest my head and body still, And make a sound with light from Thee.

Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, to Him be glory in the church and in our lives and in Christ Jesus this night and for evermore. Amen.

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