

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

Supplement 13

A character study of Elijah

His name means “my God is Yah.”

This prophet from the ninth century B.C. from Tishbe of Gilead in the Northern Kingdom has been called the grandest and the most romantic character that Israel ever produced.

He was a complex man of the desert who counselled kings.

His life is best understood when considered from four historical perspectives which at times are interrelated: his miracles, his struggle against Baalism, his prophetic role and his description of the Messiah.

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For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

#1 – Elijah Standing Before God and Ahab

Did you ever think of it that the Bible is full of biographies?

God has not only given us principles that he gave us flesh and blood examples of how those principles should be lived out, how they can be lived out, and as we look at the Bible characters we see ourselves, we see our own weaknesses, our own temptations expressed by these Bible characters and we see the victories and how God was able to use them.

We want to be inspired as we look at one of the Bible characters in a series of messages.

I invite you to turn to first Kings chapter 17, the man that will be in focus is the prophet Elijah. You might wonder why, why look at Elijah? Why is Elijah such a fascinating Bible character?

Well there is no other man in the Bible that enters and exits the scene so dramatically as Elijah. In one of the darkest periods of Israel's history Elijah blazes forth suddenly, without warning, with no word of his background, his parents or his preparation.

Suddenly in [1 Kings 17:1](#) he appears in Ahab's court proclaiming a message from God.

Elijah leaves the scene just as dramatically or even more dramatically as no man has ever done, in a whirlwind in a chariot of fire.

In between these two events is a Ministry filled with mighty miracles, almost single-handedly he strives to wrestle the nation out of the foul clutches of Ahab and Jezebel. And so powerful was Elijah's Ministry that when the Son of God appeared on the earth the Jews wondered, Is it Elijah?

And God declared that the forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist, would come in the spirit and power of Elijah.

Elijah is held up in the New Testament as a man who had power and prayer, he is an example for New Testament believers. 30 times Elijah is mentioned by name in the New Testament. *[Ed. Elijah is called Elias in some New Testament]*

Elijah is one of two Old Testament saints who had the wonderful privilege of bearing witness to Jesus' earthly ministry by appearing on the Mount of transfiguration with Jesus. ([Matthew 17:3](#)).

But another significant part of our attraction to Elijah this mighty man of God is as the new Testament says, A man subject to like passions as we are ([James 5:17](#)) and again we can identify with Elijah in his human weakness and as he wrestled with the flesh and its temptations as we do today.

I would like to credit one reference source for some of my inspiration for this series of messages and that is the book "Elijah the Tishbite" by Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacher.

First King 17 verse one, this will be our text for this morning's message.
[1 Kings 17:1](#) And Elijah the Tishbite, *who was* of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

First of all we want to consider the setting.

What was the setting into which Elijah steps?

Ahab and Jezebel then reigning as king and queen of Israel, Israel had been divided into two kingdoms 60 years before when Ahab became the seventh King of the northern kingdom.

The northern kingdom you will remember was that nation of Israel which was composed of 10 tribes, Judah was the southern kingdom which was two tribes.

The first King of the northern kingdom was a Jeroboam and Jeroboam had introduced idolatry with the two golden calves that he set up one in the north and one in the south to keep the people from the northern kingdom travelling to Jerusalem to worship, so he set up the golden calves and they would worship there. Each successive King that followed Jeroboam followed in his wicked footsteps and it seemed as though there is even a progression of wickedness so that everyone if it is possible became more wicked than the one before him.

When we come to Omri which was Ahab's father, we read about him at the end of chapter 16, where you will see the setting in the land of Israel at this time.

1 Kings 16:25-34

But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that *were* before him.²⁶ For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities.²⁷ Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he shewed, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?²⁸ So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria: and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.²⁹ And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years.³⁰ And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that *were* before him.³¹ And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.³² And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.³³ And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.³⁴ In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest *son* Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.

So we see that these Kings, Omri and his son Ahab, seemed to delight in finding new ways to indulge in depravity and wickedness and had sunk to a new low by marrying a pagan wife who brought with her Baal worship. Before this while Israel had been worshipping idols, worshipping the golden calves, they still were nominally worshipping God and it seemed as though they viewed the golden calf as representative of God and somehow mixed God in with the worship of the golden calf but now there was a Canaanite idol that became the God of the land and Ahab gave official sponsorship to this Baal worship by building a Temple for Baal in his capital city.

Baal worship according to Unger's Bible dictionary was a very depraved worship, it was filled with licentious dances and immorality and it was part of the situation Israel found themselves in during this time period.

Not only was there an idol worshipping King, the people of the land of Israel turned almost wholesale to idolatry and it was open rebellion against God and His prophets and His word.

Elijah said in [1 Kings 19:10](#) for they have forsaken thy covenant and thrown down Thine alters and slain Thy prophets with the sword.

Now we have this commentary in verse 34 at the end of chapter 16 about the rebuilding of Jericho and we wonder what this might have to do with this setting, with the scene in Israel at this time.

Well I think it is given here as an illustration of the brazen disregard for God and for history. Joshua when he destroyed Jericho said very clearly that Jericho should not be rebuilt.

[Joshua 6:26](#) And Joshua adjured *them* at that time, saying, Cursed *be* the man before the LORD, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: he shall lay the foundation thereof in his firstborn, and in his youngest *son* shall he set up the gates of it.

So there was a very specific curse pronounced on anyone that would rebuild Jericho but here came a man that said, I don't care about the curse, I'm going to rebuild Jericho anyway, I'm going to do what I want to do no matter what God says.

Do you see any parallels with our day today? Any parallels with our country today? Don't we see the same attitude around us today, people are setting aside God's word, God's standards of morality no longer apply, they are going to do what they want to do regardless of what God has said, regardless of the judgement that God has pronounced on sin.

I do think of that in the recent weeks as it was in the news about the military of this country and how the law has been passed that homosexuality is now allowed openly in the military. For many years they were Conservative enough to keep it hidden at least but now it is to be practised in complete disregard for God and His standards of righteousness.

Well that's a little glimpse of the setting in which Elijah stepped.

Let's consider in the second place Elijah's name.

We know that Bible names are usually significant for their meaning, many times we see in the Bible that God even gave a name or changed the name

because of its meaning. The meanings of the Bible names are to remind people of their calling or to remind them of a special promise of God or to remind them of the lesson that they had learned.

What did Elijah's name mean?

Well we do not have to look far we soon recognise the first part of his name El as the name of God and the last part of his name jah likewise is a name of God. So interpreted simply Elijah means my God is Jehovah or another interpretation Jehovah is my strength,

El referred to the strength of God, the power of God and so Jehovah is my strength and we can see although we don't know anything about Elijah's parents here we have a glimpse into his background and certainly we must recognise that he had devout parents to give him such a name as this.

And how well Elijah's name served him.

It served to remind in very trying circumstances that Jehovah was his God, Jehovah was his strength, he was a servant of the God of heaven.

It was not just Jehovah strengthens me that's good, but Jehovah is my strength, the all-powerful never defeated God is my strength, it is not my strength that I rely on but it is God Himself that is my strength.

And so today when our strength fails and we feel only weakness and shrinking within then we are reminded that by faith we can go forward in God's strength, not our strength but God's strength, God is our strength and this is an often repeated refrain in the Bible.

In the song of Moses, [Exodus 15:2](#) The LORD is my strength and song,

[Psalm 18:2](#) The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust;

[Psalm 46:1](#) God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

[Habakkuk 3:19](#) The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet,

That was Elijah's name, Jehovah is my strength.

We are also told he was Elijah the Tishbite This tells us he came from the little known town of Tishba which was on the East side of the Jordan river, we do not know anything about Tishba other than Elijah came from this town.

But how often that is when God needs a man He calls him from obscurity, He called Joseph from the jail cell, He called David from the sheepfold, He called Jesus from the carpenter's shop and so today we can remember that from the lowliest spot, the lowliest spot may be a place of preparation for service if we would only learn the lessons that God has for us today.

We are told in the next phase that he was of the inhabitants of Gilead, Elijah the Tishbite of the inhabitants of Gilead.

Gilead was the land on the East side of the Jordan River, you remember when the Israelites approach the land of Canaan that 2 ½ tribes said we would like to settle in Gilead. It was the tribe of Reuben, Gad and half tribe of Manasseh they saw that the land was good for the cattle and they wanted to settle there ([Numbers 32:33](#)).

And so Elijah was probably from one of these three tribes, we are not told which tribe he represented, but the land of Gilead was far removed from the centre of Jewish life which had been a good thing for Elijah at this time that he was out of the circle of influence of the idol worshipping King.

But God prepared Elijah in Gilead, he prepared a balm in Gilead which would be used for the healing of many in Israel.

Let's consider the third part of the message, Elijah standing before God.

Elijah appeared in Ahab's court and said, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand. ([1 Kings 17:1](#)).

What does it mean to stand before God?

I would like to notice three things that may be included in standing before God.

The men of Bethshemesh in said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? [1 Samuel 6:20](#)

They had sinned, they had looked into the Ark, God's judgement had fallen and they recognised the fact that they were unworthy, they were guilty, they could not stand before God. Men and women when brought into the presence of God were always filled with a consciousness of sin and of their unworthiness and they fell on their faces and realised that they could not stand before a holy God. [Ezra 9:15](#), as Ezra confessed the sins of the people he said for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

So the question is how can a sinful man stand before God, stand before a holy God?

Well the answer is found in [Romans 5:1-2](#) Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: ² By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

We can only stand before a holy God as we are justified by faith in Jesus Christ.

Here we see that we can stand uncondemned in God's grace, and rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God. And this is how Elijah also stood before God, by faith the Old Testament saints look forward to that meditorial work of Christ.

How much Elijah understood of that we don't know but we certainly see that it grew clear to him as time moved on and as 1000 years later he stood on the Mount of Transfiguration and discussed with Jesus His approaching death he certainly understood how it was that he could stand justified before God by the work of Jesus.

Secondly we would like to note that standing before God is that this implies being in God's presence.

It implies time spent with God, when you stand you are still, you're not moving, not walking away, you are standing there. It implies relationship, communication, worship

I would just like to read several verses from the Psalms that talk about standing before God.

[Psalm 122:1-2](#) I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.

Notice the delight of the psalmist to think of going in standing in God's house, spending time that, standing before God worshipping Him.

[Psalm 134:1-2](#) Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD.

There again we see the thought of dwelling there, standing there not just during the day but during the night, worshipping God in His house, standing in His presence.

We enjoy being in God's presence and standing in God's presence is something that we can do all the time even as we go about our day's activities we are conscious of God and our relationship with Him and we stay in communion with Him, we pray without ceasing.

I was blessed by the words of the first song this morning which I think was an expression of a heart standing before God,

Jesus Thy boundless love to me,
No thought can reach, no tongue declare,
Unite my thankful heart to Thee,
And reign without a rival there.

Thine, wholly Thine alone I am,
My soul with constant love aflame,
Thy love how cheering is its ray,
All pain before its presence flies,
Pain and sorrow melts away.

Where e're' its healing beams arise.
Oh Jesus nothing may I see,
Nothing may I desire or seek but Thee.
Oh to draw me Saviour after Thee.
So shall I run and never tire.

With gracious words still comfort me,
Be thou my hope my soul desire,
Free me from every weight,
Nor fear nor sin can come if Thou art here,

That is a picture of a soul that is standing before God enraptured with God and His love, with His presence.

Another part about standing before God is that Elijah received direction from God as he stood before God.

We are reminded of the angels as they stand before God awaiting direction from Him.

When Gabriel appeared before Zacharias in Luke chapter 1 he said, I am Gabriel that stands in the presence of God and I am sent unto thee to show thee these glad tidings. (Luke 1:19).

It is the picture of God's servant standing before Him waiting, waiting for work to do, waiting to be sent eager to serve.

And so Elijah stood in God's presence and then God sent him on an errand and so today we should stand patiently waiting for God to send us, ready to go, ready to do whatever He says and then we go but in spirit yet we remain in His presence, we never leave His presence and we have His holy Spirit to accompany us on the work that He assigned to us and gives us and the needed guidance all the time.

As we think of receiving direction from God we realise it is His work that we are doing and that we are only the messenger, we have no personal glory to seek, no personal agenda, Elijah came and his only concern was the LORD God of Israel whom he was serving, he only had a message from God and he said nothing of himself only God's words.

And we also realise as we stand before God and await His assignment that we will need to come back and give account of how we have fulfilled that assignment, of how we have served.

Daniel Webster that great statesman of the 1800's once said when asked, "What is the greatest thought that you ever thought?"

And he replied: "The greatest thought I ever thought was my accountability to my Maker."

And he served with that in mind, with that accountability in mind, and we imagine that he was a man that could not be bought or corrupted because he realised his accountability to God.

Oh that there would be more men and women like that today, that their greatest thought is accountability to God, the One who tells them what to do, the One to whom they will have to give account someday.

Moving to the last main point: Standing before Ahab.

Elijah moved from standing before God to standing before Ahab.

And we might say this seems like quite a contrast, from standing before a holy God, the holy God of heaven to standing before a king who had sold himself to do evil.

In reality it was standing before God that had prepared Elijah to stand before Ahab.

Ahab was a man that was completely unprincipled and he was under the control of the blood thirsty Jezebel who was systematically ridding the land of all the godly prophets.

We can imagine that Elijah must have felt he was taking his life in his hands as he went into Ahab's presence, at one signal from this wicked King Elijah could have lost his head, but he went, courageously, God was his strength.

Maybe Elijah remembered another prophet who had come before an idol worshipping King and delivered God's message and when that King, which was Jeroboam, had stretched out his hand and said, Seize him!, his hand withered and he couldn't pull it in again until the prophet prayed for him and he was healed.

Elijah was serving the same God with the same power and so he went before this wicked King with God's message. He knew that nothing could happen to him outside of God's will.

Well we too today are prepared to face, to stand against evil by standing before God. It is only as we take time to stand or sit or kneel in God's presence each morning that we will have the strength to stand the evil that we will face throughout the day, we will have the strength against temptations that we will face.

And maybe to the evil one himself we will need to say, Get thee behind me Satan. ([Matthew 16:23](#), [Mark 8:33](#), [Luke 4:8](#)) Or it may be one of his servants whose wicked deeds we will need to reprove.

And the strength, the wisdom and the humility that we need to stand against evil comes from God, Jehovah is my strength.

It is only as we stand before God that we are prepared to stand before men. Mothers as you stand before God then you are prepared to stand before your families with patience and kindness throughout the day.

Fathers as you stand before God then you are prepared to lead your families in gentleness and firmness.

Teachers as you stand before God you will be prepared to stand before your students and to lead them to God.

Young people as you stand before God you will be prepared to stand before your friends and be a positive influence for God.

Each of us needs to stand before God so that we will be prepared to be God's messengers to represent Him to the world in which we live.

We see as Elijah stood before Ahab he proclaimed the living God, as the LORD God of Israel liveth. Ahab and Israel were worshipping a dead god but Elijah reminded Ahab the LORD God of Israel liveth, He is alive.

Ahab and Israel wished to bury God, they wished that He were dead, that He was not seeing what they were doing but that was not true, that's not the way it was, He was the living God of heaven, He is not blind to your transgressions, He is not ignorant of your wickedness, He sees, He knows and He will bring judgement.

That proclamation should have reminded Ahab of what God had done in the past, the Lord God of Israel, this was the God of heaven the one who had chosen them for His people, the one who had given them the promised land of Canaan, the one who delivered them from Egypt, the one who had given them His love, the one who had led them through the wilderness, the one who had given them victory over their enemies.

The Lord God of Israel, and now they are rewarding him by turning their backs on the living God and worshipping gods of wood and stone.

But that did not change God, He was still a living, loving God and because He loved them He would once more chastise them to try to turn them back to Himself, He was not finished working with them, He would again bring a judgement that would remind them of His power and give them another opportunity to repent.

So Elijah came from the presence of the living God.

Do you think that was evident to those looking on that he believed that God was alive?

I believe there was no question that Elijah believed that he was serving the living God and that he was representing the living God.

How is it with us today? Can people see that God is alive, that we represent the living God and that we have His power, His love, His joy in our hearts and share it with those around us?

We also see that Elijah brought a message of judgement on wickedness. Why this judgement, why the drought, the famine?

Well again Unger's Bible dictionary tells us that Baal was the god of farming, he was the god of agriculture and they prayed to their god Baal for rain so that they would have a good growing season. And so this was a direct judgement against this false god that they believed, they were worshipping him, they believed was blessing them.

This was showing them who was in control, who was the true God. God would prove that He was the one who sent or withheld rain not Baal and that their success to farming was due to God's blessing not Baal's

This judgement was a direct fulfilment of God's warning which was given back in Deuteronomy chapter 11 verses 16 and 17.

[Deuteronomy 11:16-17](#) Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them; And then the LORD'S wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the LORD giveth you.

In this judgement we see God's mercy, it was not yet too late to repent and how willingly God would have turned from the pronounced judgement had they humbled themselves before Him.

Notice that Elijah said that there would be neither dew nor rain these years but according to my word. Any time Elijah could have given the word and it would have rained again if he had seen the people repent and turn again to God.

We think of the wicked city of Nineveh how it was spared judgement when they repented and turned to God.

We also notice how thorough the judgement was.

Not only would the heavens withhold the rain but also there would be no dew, not even a refreshment of moisture at night to refresh the ground, neither dew nor rain. And this also was a fulfilment of God's prophecy when God said, And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. [Deuteronomy 28:23](#).

Here God too was talking about the judgement of drought that He would send to them for a punishment on their sins, and so it was.

Well finally we would like to consider Elijah's faith as he brought this message to Ahab.

He said as the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to my word.

Why did he not say according to God's word?

Was this not God's word that God had given to him?

We may think that God gave Elijah the specific words to say but the New Testament would give as a slightly different picture, let's turn to James chapter 5.

[James 5:16-18](#), this is the context, verse 15 we see a prayer of faith that would save the sick, verse 16, Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. ¹⁷ Elias (which is the Greek translation of Elijah) was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

Here we have the picture of Elijah praying earnestly that it would not rain and God honouring his prayer, God answering his prayer.

I found it interesting this word earnestly here, the Greek word that is translated here earnestly is found 37 times in the new Testament and every other time it is translated as a noun either as prayer or prayers, so we could say Elijah prayed prayers that it might not rain, we see the idea of a repetition and the idea of earnestly is found in that repetition, the idea that he prayed again and again that God would not send rain, that God would fulfil this judgement and Elijah by faith was claiming God's promise that He had spoken back in Deuteronomy, that if they turned to idol worship this is what would happen and by faith Elijah believed that promise and he was praying that God would now fulfil this promise at Elijah's word and that God would be able to use that judgement as a message to His people to turn back to Himself.

So we see how strong Elijah's faith was in the word of God, the promises of God. And he said that this promise is as sure as God's existence is, as the Lord God of Israel liveth there shall be neither Jew nor rain, he said the promise of God is as sure as God exists, as sure as God lives He will fulfil His promise.

Are we that sure that God will answer our prayers today?

Are we that sure that God's promises will be fulfilled in our lives?

Can we likewise step out in faith and stand on the promises of God?
Can we risk everything on God's promises?

When we look at Elijah we could say, What risk you are taking, you are risking your reputation, you're even risking God's honour by making this bold declaration. But he was willing to do it because of his faith in God, his strong faith, he believed that God's word was sure.

Well may we like Elijah of old stand before God so that we can stand before the enemy and some day if we are faithful we will be able to stand before the Son of man and be with him for all eternity.

#2 – Elijah at the Brook Cherith

We would like to look at the second chapter in Elijah's life as given to us in first Kings 17.

[1 Kings 17:1-7](#) And Elijah the Tishbite, *who was* of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, *As* the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. ² And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, ³ Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that *is* before Jordan. ⁴ And it shall be, *that* thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. ⁵ So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that *is* before Jordan. ⁶ And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. ⁷ And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

For an outline this morning we would simply like to use six of the phrases that are found in this short account.

The first phrase we would like to consider is; The word of the Lord came to him. [1 Kings 17:2](#)

Where was Elijah when this happened? Was he still standing before Ahab? Well possibly, but I rather picture him delivering his message to Ahab and then turning and leaving abruptly as he appeared and possibly as he strode down the hot dusty street from the Palace he was wondering: When will the chase begin, when will I be arrested, where should I go, what next? He probably sent a cry to the Lord, Lord direct me, where should I go? And just as he needed it the word of the Lord came.

God does not leave His people without direction, He does not let us to our own devices, when we need to direction and cry out to Him He sends it, the word of the Lord comes.

How does the word of the Lord come to us today?

Sometimes we might wish if only God would speak in a voice from heaven then I would know for sure what I should be doing, what God wants me to do.

But the word of the Lord has come to us today as sure as it came to Elijah. We have the complete word of God, we have it before us, we have that in our hands, even more we have the Holy Spirit within our hearts to help us understand the word of God.

And we have godly mature brothers and sisters to go to for counsel to help us further understand what God's will is for us.

Now there is something within us that likes to make our own decisions and it might be hard for us to reach out for help, for advice, for counsel, and harder still to follow the advice that we do get.

Winston Churchill expressed human nature very well when he said, "I am always eager to learn, I just don't like to be taught."

We heard the last Sunday how God uses other people to help to perfect us and He also uses other people to give us direction, to help us to understand what His will is for us.

So the word of the Lord does come to us today.

I was impressed with this word "came" the word of the Lord came to him. God sent His words to us, God planned to give mankind His word even before man needed it and for over a thousand years God directed the writing of His word and for another two thousand years He has miraculously preserved the Bible so that we can have it today. God sent His words to us, the word of the Lord came to us.

How thankful we are that the word of the Lord is here, is at hand, we don't need to go searching for the word of the Lord it is here.

Let's turn to Deuteronomy chapter 30, I was reminded of a few verses that relate to this thought, Moses was summing up near the end of his life the history of the children of Israel and giving encouragement to them to continue following God and doing what is right,

[Deuteronomy 30:11-14](#) For this commandment which I command thee this day, it *is* not hidden from thee, neither *is* it far off. ¹² It *is* not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? ¹³ Neither *is* it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? ¹⁴ But the word *is* very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

And if that was that nigh to them back then how much then close is to us today as we have the complete word of God in our hands and have the Holy Spirit to help us to understand it.

The word of God came to us, we have it and how thankful we are for that.

Secondly let's consider the phrase: Get thee hence and hide thyself. [1 Kings 17:3](#)

Elijah's life if we can imagine, let our imagine run for a bit, Elijah's life for years must have been building up to this point. How long did it take God to prepare him for his public ministry?

Possibly all his life up to this point was a preparation for this event, for him to step out and publicly preach God's word, public confront wicked King Ahab with a message from the Lord and this event as far as we know marked at the very beginning of his public ministry.

After a long preparation, much prayer and seemingly endless waiting before God Elijah was finally sent on this important journey to begin his public Ministry and he successfully got into Ahab's presence, he delivered his message and that without being arrested or killed.

And we might say, What a better way to commence a public Ministry. Certainly God was going to use him mightily, maybe this was the beginning of a revival that he could preached to the people and turned a nation back to God by preaching and working miracles.

But now here comes the word of the Lord: Get thee hence and hide thyself.

Would his public ministry end as soon as it began?

We could call this “The Discipline of Obscurity” get thee hence and hide thyself.

God knew that Elijah needed more preparation before he was ready for Mount Carmel, Elijah needed more time alone with his God, Elijah needed more refining, Elijah needed more strengthening.

And how often God works that way, He sends his servants into obscurity to prepare them for the work ahead.

We could think of many other Bible examples that God worked in that way in their lives.

He sent Joseph into prison for two years.

He sent Moses to the backside of the desert for 40 years.

He sent David into the caves of the wilderness of Judeah.

He sent Jeremiah into the dungeon.

He said Saul, later known as Paul into Arabia.

And each of these men probably wondered, How can I do anything for God here?

The question is not: What can we do for God but What does God want to do for me? as He sends me into obscurity, into hiding.

You know there is something in each of us that likes to be in public view.

We like when others know what we are doing and express appreciation for it.

Are we willing to bear the discipline of obscurity? Are you willing to go and hide yourself at God’s command?

It may be sickness or physical affliction that lays you up in bed for several days or several weeks or several months.

It may be a time of bereavement and sorrow.

It may be the calling of a duty that keeps you tied down at home out of the public eye.

Or it may simply be that you are not given any public service for a period of time.

Maybe at the business meeting one year you are not elected or appointed to a single position for the coming year.

Well God has many valuable lessons to teach us by the discipline of obscurity. We will look at some of those lessons as we go along.

Moving to the third phrase we would like to consider: Turn thee eastward. [1 Kings 17:3](#)

Here we have a bright spot in this command to Elijah, turn thee eastward. Is there any significance to this phrase? Why did God specifically telling to turn eastward.

Well eastward is toward the rising of the sun and as such is often used in the Bible to represent moving towards God.

We noticed recently in our Sunday school lesson that the door of the Tabernacle faced east, that Moses, Aaron and the tribe of Judah camped on the East side of the Tabernacle, an East wind blew back the Red Sea, and we will see in our coming lessons that Israel entered Canaan from the East.

Elisha told King Joash to open the window eastward to shoot the arrow of the Lord's deliverance ([2 Kings 13:17](#)).

The river that Ezekiel saw flowing out of the house of God flowed eastward and Ezekiel also saw the glory of the Lord coming from the East into the Temple ([Ezekiel 47:1](#), [Ezekiel 11:1](#)).

The wise men came from the East to worship Jesus ([Matthew 2:1](#)).

So when Elijah went into hiding he was not going out of God's presence but rather he was going into God's presence, he was moving toward God. So God designs for us at times to come apart, to spend time alone with Him.

Jesus said to His disciples, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile ([Mark 6:31](#))

God knows what is best for us and in all the circumstances of life He is drawing us to Himself, He knows that public servers can so easily swell our heads and that is why God periodically leads his servant through the vale of humiliation

Also public service is draining and we need time to rest and refreshing alone with God.

Turning to the fourth phrase we would like to consider, He went and did. [1 Kings 17:5](#).

Very simple at the beginning of verse five, so he went and did.

Did what? Did what he wanted to do?

No, he did according to the word of the Lord.

No arguments, no bargaining, no protest, no questions, just simple straight-forward obedience.

No wonder God could use Elijah so mightily.

We can be almost certain that God's plan was different from the Elijah's plan for the future but he went and did.

And obedience is the proof of faith, we noticed two weeks ago Elijah's faith, his mighty faith in God but here we have another proof of his faith as he simply obeyed God's direction.

Was this planned that God had for him logical? To go and sit beside the Brook and let the ravens feed him? Was the plain practical, was it sustainable?

These are questions we ask at times when we are trying to make decisions and it is good to ask them but when God's will for us is plain do we stop questioning and move forward in faith as Elijah did?

We can almost imagine the questions that might have come to Elijah's mind.

Don't people need a spiritual leader?

Doesn't Ahab need a regular "Thus saith the Lord"?

Isn't it time to start tearing down the altars of Baal?

But the word was, Go, hide yourself, and he obeyed.

Simple obedience brings God's richest blessing.

What were some of the blessings that came to Elijah?

What are some of the blessings that come to us when we submit ourselves to the discipline of obscurity?

Well one is the time of blessed communion with God.

There was only the blue sky for a roof, rocks for walls and the rippling brook for music and only the ravings for company Elijah had long hours of uninterrupted communion with God.

We can be sure that Elijah also learnt the lesson of patience; it was possibly a year that he spent beside the Brook Cherith, a lesson in patience waiting on God, waiting for God to reveal the next step, God's next plan for him

It was also the lesson of enduring hardness.

Elijah lived a rugged spartan life in this year beside the Brook Cherith, there were no sweet or dainties, no soft bed, no comfortable house.

The word Cherith I found it interesting to learn means to cut away, to cut down, and so as Elijah spent time here at Cherith all the essentials were cut away, stripped away and he was left with the bare necessities of life and it was a school of self-sacrifice, of self-discipline for him, he learnt to be content with little, to be content with only the necessities.

Certainly these and many more with the lessons that Elijah learned by the Brook Cherith.

We could also think of the lesson of daily dependence on God, waiting for God to supply each meal as it was needed when at this time.

Properly another benefit, were not told for sure, but possibly had this in mind as he sent Elijah into hiding was that the people would suffer the full force of God's judgement for their sin.

And I think we see this in [Amos 8:11-12](#) we have a description of the other time in Israel's history or possibly this will be future, I did not research the setting,¹¹ Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD:¹² And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find *it*.

The people of Israel had turned away from God, they have rejected God, they had gone to worship idols, he was a prophet came into their midst to remind them that there was still a God of heaven, and then God sent that prophet into hiding, it was time for them to bear the brunt of the punishment that they deserved, the famine for three years.

Possibly if Elijah had gone up and down the land preaching the word of God people would have begun to repent and turn back to God and then Elijah would have stopped praying to God to withhold rain, but God's plan was for them to endure this famine, this famine not only naturally but spiritually also to prepare them, to prepare the nation for Mount Carmel.

And so it was God's will he would go into hiding and as Elijah obeyed God's plan could unfold step-by-step.

The fifth phrase we would like to consider is: The ravens brought him bread and flesh. [1 Kings 17:6](#)

God told Elijah even before he went how his needs would be met, even before he faced the need, possibly even before he prayed about the need, God told him how he would be supplied.

And so God graciously provides many of our needs even without us asking. [Isaiah 65:24](#) gives us this wonderful promise: And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

The ravens would bring him bread and flesh.

Nothing is too hard for God, all creation is His to be used to fulfil His purposes, even the birds will run God's errands for Him at his command.

But wait a minute, what kind of promises this, ravens to bring food for a man?

According to the law, according to [Leviticus 11](#) and [Deuteronomy 14](#) ravens were considered unclean. Leviticus 11 says, Ye shall have them in abomination, ravens are carrion eaters, they are dirty, despised.

Would God use them to bring food for a man to eat? Could a man eat the food that they bring, would be fit to eat?

We see that God often uses unexpected, even despised means to do His work and the answer may come, the answer to our prayer may come in such a lowly way that we way wonder, Was this planned by God?, Is this God's doings?

Years ago in Germany lived a poor widow and her young son and they had great difficulty in making ends meet and one cold winter evening the mother and her son sat huddled in blankets, cold and hungry, their firewood was gone, the cupboards were bear, they had nothing to eat, but they had one thing left and that was the Bible and as usual they turned to that for comfort, they turned to God for their security.

And the story that mother read that evening was this story we just read, the story about the ravens feeding Elijah, and she made the story come alive to the young boy and he said, "Mamma, could God sent a raven bring us food to eat?"

And the mother said, "Yes dear, God can do that."

And with shining eyes the boy replied, "Mamma, I'm going to open the door so the raven can come in."

And before she could say anything he ran to the door and flung it open and the mother did not have the heart to squelch this of young boy's faith so she said, "While we wait let's kneel and pray."

And as she was praying the Burgomaster of the town was hurrying down the street toward his cosy house in a warm supper and he was surprised to see a door standing open, so he went to investigate, he stepped inside and could see in a few glances what the situation was and the little boy explained to him that he opened the door so that Elijah's raven could bring them food.

The Burgomaster replied, "I will be the Raven this evening."

He went home and soon returned home with firewood and food for them and in the coming days he continued to meet their needs.

And so we continue to serve the God of Elijah today, the God that can still meet needs today and He uses many and various means to answer the prayers of His people and to meet their needs.

The ravens would bring bread and fish in the morning and in the evening, God was meeting his needs amply, meeting is basic needs, they were not bringing anything fancy, anything extra but he had what he needed to sustain life and they came morning and evening, very regularly, very dependably.

Did Elijah ever miss a meal? I think not, I think they were there every morning and every evening.

God is faithful, we can always depend on Him, His timing is perfect.

Let's consider lastly the phrase, The Brook dried up. [1 Kings 17:7](#).

Not only did Elijah face the discipline of obscurity now he faces the discipline of declining resources.

What a test of faith to sit there beside the Brook day after day and watch it gets smaller and smaller.

Did his faith begin to waver? Did he begin to question God's plan?

We have no record that he did.

We have probably all experienced the discipline of declining resources, we have probably all at one time or another, or maybe now, sitting beside a declining Brook.

Maybe it is a health that is draining away, our elderly brothers and sisters certainly no what that's like.

Or maybe it is a friendship that is dwindling, that seems to be drying up.
Or maybe it is the dwindling supply of finances, the bills are getting bigger
and the finances dwindling away.

Will God has a plan for us in this if He has us sit beside a dwindling Brook
and that is that we would turn to them rather than trusting in the earthly
things, that we would realise that all our sufficiency is in Him, that He is
our all in all and that we do not place our trust or confidence in the material
things.

What was Elijah doing as he sat there alone day after day?

Will doubtless he was praying. What was he praying? Do we know?

We notice the last time in **James 5:17** that the phrase prayed earnestly
means prayed prayers, he was praying repeatedly, time and again, an ongo-
ing prayer that it might not rain, that God would withhold rain.

And now the Brook dwindles, why? Well because there had been no rain in
the land verse seven tells us.

So God was answering his prayer and the Brook was dwindling.

Elijah what will you do now, now that it touches you personally, will you
waver, will you change course, will you begin to pray for rain?

Well no, Elijah remained steadfast, if it meant dying of thirst he would be
true to God's plan.

There are several lessons for us in this.

One is that God's servants are not exempt from suffering with the wicked.

What did Elijah do to deserve suffering the drought that God has sent as
punishment of the nation?

And along with that, What did the 7000 do that were faithful to God that
were also suffering there under the same drought?

Well it was simply because they were Israelites, they were part of the na-
tion.

And the question as we suffer along with the wicked is not why we deserve
to suffer but why do we serve not to?

Do we deserve any of God's mercies to us?

If we got what we deserve we would get much more suffering then what
we presently have.

And so rather than focus on the suffering let's focus on the mercy of God,
the mercies that He has given us undeservedly.

Another lesson that we see here is an answer to our prayers may mean suffering.

Did you pray last Sunday that God would perfect you, that He would continue to perfect you?

Have you felt His chastening hand this past week?

He is answering your prayer, He cannot perfect us without putting us through the fire.

Have you prayed for patience?

Then expect a situation will come that will test your patience to limit and will go on and on because that is the way patience develops as it is practised, as it is put to practice.

Did you pray that God would help you love your spouse more?

Well then you can expect an issue will arise that will test your love, that will stretch your love.

God is answering your prayer.

Have you prayed for humility?

Then you can expect to go through a humiliating situation.

God is teaching you humility, He is answering your prayer.

Let's remember that as our prayers are answered to thank God for it rather than pray for relief, rather ask God to continue to teach us that lesson that He has for us through this situation and to, as Elijah did to leave the Brook Cherith a better person then when we came to it.

So in conclusion if God sends us into hiding, if God sends us to hide at Cherith may we respond as Elijah did, may we learn the lessons that God has for us at the Brook Cherith.

#3 – Elijah Serving at Home in Zarephath

We want to consider this morning the third chapter in the life of Elijah. I invite your attention to first Kings chapter 17, we have already noticed Elijah standing before Ahab and hiding at Cherith. Today we want to look at Elijah serving at home in Zarephath from first Kings 17 verses eight through 24.

The setting is that it is in the middle of the famine that Elijah was praying for, the judgement on Israel since, the three-year and a half year famine, Elijah was in hiding, Ahab's men were scouring the country for him, there was an arrest warrant out for him.

I had to think of the pictures in *The Merchandiser* that are pictured every week I believe of men that are wanted, men or women that are wanted because that is an open arrest warrant for them.

Just imagine what that would be like to have your picture published that you are wanted person, suddenly you would wonder, Where can I go? Where can I hide? Everywhere I go someone might recognise me and realise that on wanted.

I'm told that many of those people whose pictures appear in the newspaper actually turn themselves in because they cannot stand suspense or the pressure of being a wanted person.

So Elijah was a wanted man but he was hidden by God, when God hides a person no one can find them unless God permits it.

Psalm 31:20 says: Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence.

And what better place is to be hidden than to be hidden in the secret of God's presence and that is how Elijah was as God was hiding him.

Let's read in first Kings 17, Brook Cherith had just dried up verse eight:

1 Kings 17:8-24 And the word of the LORD came unto him, (Elijah) saying, ⁹ Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which *belongeth* to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

¹⁰ So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman *was* there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. ¹¹ And as she was going to fetch *it*, he called to her, and said, Bring

me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. ¹² And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I *am* gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. ¹³ And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go *and* do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring *it* unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. ¹⁴ For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day *that* the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. ¹⁵ And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat *many* days. ¹⁶ *And* the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah. ¹⁷ And it came to pass after these things, *that* the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. ¹⁸ And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? ¹⁹ And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. ²⁰ And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? ²¹ And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. ²² And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. ²³ And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. ²⁴ And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou *art* a man of God, *and* that the word of the LORD in thy mouth *is* truth.

I gave the title as Elijah serving at home in Zarephath.

At home, yes, Elijah was away from home he was in hiding but this was his home for possibly 2 ½ years as he lived with this widow woman.

We see God graciously giving us a glimpse of Elijah at home and at home is the real test of godliness.

Many people pass the public tests with flying colours, they can stand tall before Ahab or on Mount Carmel but they fail miserably at home, but a man or woman that has the spirit of God as Elijah did will be as sweet and patient and kind and private as they are in public.

We want to notice this morning some evidences of godliness in Elijah's life as he served at home.

The first one, there are five we would like to notice, the first one is: Rest in changing circumstances.

Could Elijah not have stayed Cherith?

There he was safely hidden, his needs were being met, he had time for blessed Communion with God but there is something within us that does not like change, we had rather stay with the tried and proven and change can bring unrest to us at times.

But maybe God knew that the miracles would have become commonplace for Elijah if he had stayed at Cherith on and on, the miracle of the ravens bringing bread, we see that happening in the story of the children of Israel how the miracle of daily manna became commonplace to them and they came to the place that it says they even loathed the manna, they no longer appreciate the daily miracle of the manna.

And so God has a way of using changing circumstances to help us to realise afresh our dependence upon him. One Brook dries up so that the barrel of meal can be opened.

I had to think of the verse, the description in Jeremiah 48, let's turn to that, here we find a verse how God uses changing circumstances for our good, it is actually given in the negative but I think we can take a positive illustration from it,

[Jeremiah 48:11](#) Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.

This is a picture of the old process of distilling wine, as they distilled wine they would let it set in a vessel, the lees settled out the sediment settled out and then they poured it very carefully, they poured the good wine of from the old vessel into a new vessel and left the dregs, the sediment, behind and kept only the pure wine and they repeated that process several times and each time the lees settled out, they poured off the good wine and the wine was getting purer and purer each time it was poured from vessel to vessel.

It says that had not happened to Moab and he was not being refined, his taste remained in him and his scent is not changed.

But God uses the changing circumstances of life to purify us, to let the dregs settle out and then He pours us into a new vessel.

We face the changes in family life that can at times be unsettling.

Two of our families here had the recent experience of their children leaving home, getting married, changes in family life, or it may be the children getting older and starting school or getting older and getting a driver's licence or getting a job or moving away from home to serve in another area, those changes in family life can be unsettling, maybe it is even moving to a new property, selling the one we have in buying another one, moving, they can be unsettling.

But God wants to purify us through the changing circumstances of life and we can find rest in that as we realise that He is working to make us better.

Elijah was commanded to go to Zarephath.

Zarephath was outside the land of Israel, in fact it was in the country of Zidon, now what is significant about that?

Well Zidon was the home land of Jezebel, Jezebel wicked King Ahab's wife who brought idolatry, brought Baal worship into Israel and now Elijah is being told to go to Zidon to her homeland?

Why to such a heathen place? Would he even be safe as a man of God in an idol worshipping country?

Is it even worth being a missionary in that country as corrupt and as wicked as they were?

I found it interesting to discover that the word Zarephath means smelting furnace, God was not finished refining Elijah, there were more trials ahead for Elijah, God was continuing to refine him to bring him through more trials to make him better, to make you more useful, and so Zarephath would be another grade of God's training school for Elijah.

And we see how patiently God persists in training His people and working with them and so He does with us today and He gently and persistently moves us from one great to the next continuing to refine us to make us better.

And so while Elijah was still in hiding God had worked for Him to do, there is a poor widow that needed to be led to God, there is a heathen village that needed the influence of a godly man.

Humanly speaking this plan did not make much sense, go and live with a widow during a famine?

What resources which she have? But Elijah calmly obeyed and his trust in God was firm, he knew that if the ravens could feed him why could not a widow woman?

So he rested even in the changing circumstances of life.

The second point we would like to consider as we look at this story is: Elijah's faith in daily need.

After 100 mile track through dangerous territory right across the land of Israel under a baking sun Elijah approaches the gates of Zarephath and here immediately is another trial of his faith.

As he approaches Zarephath, hot, dusty, tired, thirsty, hungry, he sees a woman gathering sticks, Is this the woman he is looking for?

Yes it is, God's guidance is perfect and His timing is right on and how Elijah knew that this was the woman we are not told, probably God affirmed it to him that this was the woman he was looking for, and so Elijah at once asked for the promised sustenance. God had promised that this widow woman would sustain him, so immediately asked for a drink of water, and yes, she could do that, she immediately response, most likely she had somehow been prepared for Elijah's visit.

God had told Elijah I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. So probably she some man had been prepared by God for Elijah is coming and she was graciously ready to extent the hospitality that she good to this stranger.

But then Elijah presses forward in his claims of God's promise, Bring me a morsel of bread.

We see he did not demand a loaf only a morsel, but even this small request revealed the extremity to which this widow woman had come, she and her son were about to starve to death, only one small meal stood between them and starvation.

Apparently all human help had been exhausted for her in her situation.

Now how would Elijah respond?

I travelled all this way to be met by a widow who has nothing? Does he complain or cry or criticise?

No, he responded with a calm sure faith, he knew he was serving a God who could send ravens with food and could supply food for a widow woman also.

And he knew that he served a God who cares for the widows and the fatherless in a special way, let's turn to [Deuteronomy 10:17-18](#) For the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: ¹⁸ He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

Here we see that mighty all-powerful God, the God of heaven concerns Himself especially with the widows and the fatherless and the strangers, those that need His care of especially and look to Him for all there needs to be met.

[Psalm 68:5](#) tells us that God is a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, *is* God in his holy habitation.

And Elijah knew that he was serving that God, God who promised to care for the widows and in fact at this moment Elijah probably began to understand what God had sent him to this widow woman, it was to help supply a widow's need that God had sent him here, not only would Elijah's needs be met but the widow and her family's needs would be met also by his coming to be with them.

And so Elijah gently calls her to also step out on the journey of faith.

Not only was Elijah secure, supplied and satisfied in his walk of faith he wanted others to share the blessings of the walk of faith.

Now we wonder, What was this widow's background? How did God work with her in the past?

It seems that she must have had a heart that was somehow yearning after God, wanting to know more about Him and His way and His people.

Let's turn to the New Testament commentary on this widow woman which is found in Luke chapter 4 this is at the beginning of Jesus' ministry as He was speaking in Nazareth to the people of His own hometown in verse 24 he says:

[Luke 4:24-27](#) Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. ²⁵ But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; ²⁶ But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, *a city* of Sidon, unto a woman *that was* a widow. ²⁷ And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

So here Jesus showed that this widow woman was providing an Old Testament glimpse into God's New Testament plan of taking the gospel to the Gentiles, that the Jews would rejected but the gospel would be taken to the Gentiles.

And so this widow woman of Zidon of Zarephath, was seeking after God and God was opening the way to her to be led to Him.

And Elijah had a further message from God for this widow woman.

And what a marvel but there is a message straight from the God of heaven for this heathen penniless widow in Zarephath and what a gracious message it was.

We see Elijah's words in [1 Kings 17:13](#), Fear not, but go and do as thou hast said.

"Fear not", how often do we need that reminder.

Sixty one times, if I counted correctly, is the command "fear not" given in the Bible and if you find yourself some time being fearful or doubtful look up some of the "fear not's" of the Bible and right some of them down and carry them with you, God tells us to fear not.

And the message continues in verses 13 and 14, Go and do and make your cake as you wanted to but first bring some to me. [1 Kings 17:13-14](#)

First, if you step out in faith, if you give the last of your food to this stranger then God will meet your needs, God will reward you with an unceasing supply of food.

But what a test, give away your last food to a stranger.

Well God has ways of bringing us to the point where He can see if we are really ready to cast ourselves completely on Him, Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: and all these things shall be added unto you. [Matthew 6:33](#).

Will how did the widow respond to this test?

Amazingly she too responded by an act of faith.

And again we can only guess at what brought this response of faith, was it Elijah's calm trusting demeanour that inspired her? Was God working in her heart to draw her to Himself?

Well probably both contributed and her answer I believe gives us a clue she said, As the Lord thy God liveth.

What is revealed in that answer, in that phrase?

Well it tells us that first of all she did not yet have a personal relationship with God, she call them the Lord thy God, but we do see that she had come to believe that the God of Elijah was the God of heaven, was the living God, as the Lord thy God liveth.

She believed that the idols she had been serving were only dead, were not living, but there was a God that was living, as the Lord thy God liveth.

She had come to believe that the God of Israel was the living God, the true God and God had plans to bring her into a relationship with Himself.

What a test of faith this was to give away the last of her food!

And so we too need to step out in faith at times, if we had a choice between an abundant supply of food in our pantry in our freezer and money in the bank account or living a life of depending on God for our daily food which would we choose?

Well most of us like the security of knowing where neck me was going to come from, we like the security of having a year's supply of food in the house and sometimes we talk about being financially independent, you know that is the goal for most of the people in the world that they would get to a place where they are financially independent where they can stand on their own two feet but God would have us be dependent, dependent on Him and there is bountiful blessings of the life of faith.

Each morning as this widow woman went to make the day's food she found enough oil and enough meal for that day's food, for that day's meals, was the barrel full of meal or was the barrel multiplied, did she have barrels of meal stored around the house?

I think not, I think there was enough in the barrel each day for what she needed for that day and it required a continual exercise of faith.

You know I was reminded of that children's song, Little is much if God is in it.

And we see that Elijah and this widow woman lived contentedly, they were content with little but it was enough.

There is a verse in [Proverbs 17:1](#) that describes the situation in that household as they had the little that God supplied, it says: Better *is* a dry morsel, and quietness therewith, than an house full of sacrifices *with* strife.

They had just that morsel, just that morsel of bread that Elijah asked for but it was that each day and with their contentment and trust in God I'm sure it was a happy peaceful household as they lived a life of faith.

How blessed it was to see that daily miracle, how restful it was to trust completely in an un-failing God.

With the plenty that we enjoy today may be sometimes we don't learn full blessings of the life of faith but God has ways of testing our faith and we need to trust God for daily strength to earn a living, we need to trust Him for safety each day, we need to trust Him for spiritual protection and most of all we need to trust Him for our spiritual nourishment, for our spiritual life, it is only from Him that these things come.

And so all that we are all that we have depend on God and His sustaining power.

George Mueller after 30 years of living the life of faith, praying to God each day for supplies to be given for the orphans that he was caring for had this testimony:

“On January 1, 1859, he wrote in his diary, I cannot tell you how happy this service makes me, instead of being the anxious careworn man many persons think me to be I have no anxieties and no cares at all. Faith in God leads me to roll all my burdens upon Him for many are my necessities apart from those connected with money and in every way I find God to be my helper even as I trust in Him and pray to Him in childlike simplicity about everything.

Be encouraged the fellow believer to go this blessed way yourself and you will see what peace and joy it affords.”

So the blessings of living the life of faith.

The third point we would like to consider in this picture of Elijah at home is: Gentleness in provocation.

And so peaceful days passed at Zarephath, while others were scraping and scrounging and possibly starving the widows household was well supplied, not with abundance but with the necessities met.

What did it Elijah spend his time doing?

Will surely he again spent much time in Communion with God and surely also he talked to this widow about his God and tried to lead her to a relationship, a personal relationship with God.

While she properly listened respectfully for some reason it seemed like he couldn't get past a certain point with her, it seems as though there was a barrier beyond which he could not go and past which she could not come and God needed to do some further work in her life, God needed to bring something into her life to get her full attention and to break down that wall, that barrier between her and God.

And so God also works today in bringing trials, if life would be an uninterrupted come would be understand and need for God, would be turned to God?

But we are told in Hebrews 12 the reasons for the trials that come upon us, while we view those trials as negative many times while we are in them, yet we are told that no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby, ([Hebrews 12:11](#))

And though this widow and Elijah both were to come into one of these times of testing, one of these times of chastening it would yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

And one day this widow's son took ill, the sickness was sudden and severe and before she could fully grasp what was happening he was dead.

Now this was not the first time she had faced death, she knew what was like to lose one she love best, but that experience had left even more vulnerable for now how could she give up all that was left to her, her only son. The last joy and comfort of her life, he was a hope, he was her future, all her life was tied up in this one son and now he was dead.

So God often works with us, He lays his finger on the one thing that we think we cannot give up, the one thing that we love the best and He needs to bring us to the place where nothing stands between us and Him, we are always on the altar.

Her response to this happening was a natural by one who is not fully surrendered, she turned bitterly on the one she felt was responsible for this calamity. She turned on Elijah and said, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance and to slay my son? [1 Kings 17:18](#).

She accused him of being a murderer and we marvel at Elijah's gentle response to this false accusation, there was no denunciation of her sin that she was admitting to, there was no reminder of the fact that if he had not been here she and a son would have been dead long already. Remember that we are observing Elijah at home and this where we are tested the most.

Now the ideal is that home is a peaceful and loving place where are harmonious relationships but we know that realistically the pressures of life and we do fail at times and we do subject those around us to test like this.

We saw that in our Sunday school lesson how one person's failure subjects another to a test.

Well how do we respond to the pressures of home life, to a provocation, to a barbed comment or even to an accusation?

Well Elijah continued to show love in action and we see that he completely ignored the comment that she made, the accusation that she levelled against him.

And Jesus responded that way when He was falsely accused, He answered not a word. ([Matthew 15:23](#)).

We gain nothing by defending ourselves because the truth will stand on its own without our defence, if we rise up in self-defence often we will allow our feelings to get involved and we will end of saying things that we were later regret and tension will escalate, the conflict will escalate.

But may we respond like Elijah did with gentleness under provocation.

Fourthly we would like to notice Elijah's peace in calamity.

A person that is living by faith can remain calm in crisis knowing that God is in control, Elijah's response to this unspeakable calamity was simply, Give me thy son. [1 Kings 17:18](#)

Did Elijah have questions or doubts? Well yes, he did but he wisely took them to the right place, he took them to God, he waited until he was alone

with God to give voice to his questions and loam in his room with the boy's body Elijah poured out his heart to God.

And we might wonder did Elijah have the right spirit, wasn't it criticising God, by what he said wasn't he questioning God?

And it could be that there were some of that in his prayer, we see that in God's response God did not rebuke Elijah for his prayer but answered his prayer.

And it could be that Elijah was saying when he said O Lord my God as thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn by slaying her son? [1 Kings 17:20](#).

Elijah might have been saying I know that you wouldn't bring evil upon this woman, I know that everything you do is for good so reveal the good that you are wanting to do to this widow and when that good is accomplished then give her back her son. That seemed to be his prayer and God could answer that prayer.

This was the secret of Elijah's strength in calmness in calamity, the fact that he had a secret place to go to be with God and that he had Communion with God, communication with God.

Elijah was hiding, yes he was hiding from a hat, but he was also hiding in God's secret place, he was hiding in the presence of God and he knew that nothing could touch that was not God's will.

[Psalm 27:5](#) also talks about hiding, For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

There we see the stability of those who are hiding with God, there is nothing that can shake them nothing that can trouble them, nothing that can get them down because they are on a rock, they are hidden with God.

And so Elijah because of the safety and security that he had because he was hiding with God could bring the same into the widow's life and could bring her peace also in time of calamity.

Fifthly and lastly we would like to notice Elijah's power in confronting sin and death.

Elijah had been the channel of power, the channel for the power of God to touch this widow's life and she recognise that, she recognise the truth of that when she said by what she said in verse 18 by saying that he was a man of God and that because of him God was touching her life.

It seems as though she was saying that if it hadn't been for you God would have left me alone, He would have not of visited my sin upon me. But Elijah was there, he had brought the standard of God's Holiness to her, he had brought it into her home and that standard of Holiness had uncovered her secret sin.

Apparently this woman was carrying a long buried never confessed sin and it was that which was standing between her and God and to this point it had been like a wall between her and God, she had not been able to get past that to have a personal relationship with the God of Elijah.

But now at last through Elijah God was working and by touching her son He brought it to the place where she realised that it was either confess her sin and be clear with God or give everything up, she was brought to the place of full surrender.

And so if there is any of us who are carrying a burden of guilt, carrying an unconfessed sins there will be no peace or rest until we bring it out into the open and confess it and make it right with God, turn it over to Him, confess that we are at the end of ourselves, we are done fighting this thing, we are tired of trying to cover it up and we want peace with God at all cost.

It is the only way for a peaceful relationship with God and with others around us.

When Elijah said, Give me thy son, he was giving her the opportunity to demonstrate her surrender.

And was this an act of surrender or was it an act of desperation when she handed over her dead boy's body to the man she had just accused of being his murderer? [1 Kings 17:18-19](#)

We don't know for sure but I think deep down inside she knew that Elijah represented the last hope, her only hope, and that turning to his God would be their only place of refuge, that the God she had been holding out against was still calling, drawing her to Himself and so she surrendered and in that act of giving up her son's body to Elijah we see her saying, Take him Lord I surrender him to you.

She was at the point now where she was ready to acknowledge and confess her sinfulness and the need of God's power in her life, she was brought to the end of herself and now the power and blessing of God could be revealed and Elijah again could serve as the channel of God's power in this time to bring life and healing and happiness.

And we see her response at the end of the chapter in verse 24 she says: Now by this I know that thou art a man of God and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth. [1 Kings 17:24](#)

Now there was no more reservation, no more holding out, now she was ready except everything that Elijah said as a message from God, ready to respond to it, ready to walk with him in the life of faith, ready to walk with God, ready to be one of His children.

And so today we serve the living life giving God, are we being a channel through which God can work and touch others' lives? Are we presenting the standard of Holiness that will bring conviction to their life?

And then are we also willing to give ourselves in intercessory prayer as Elijah did so that God's life can be channelled through us to them?

May we follow the example of Elijah and the channels through which God can pour His life into our homes so that our homes can be peaceful happy ones.

I would like to conclude with [Matthew 10:41](#) where this widow woman is not mentioned specifically but certainly it applies to the situation: He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

And certainly that is what this woman had done, she had received a prophet, she had taken him into her home and through that received a reward beyond which she could ever imagine, a relationship with the prophets God, with the God of heaven and God promised that there would be an eternal reward for her for doing that.

#4 – Elijah Contesting on Mount Carmel

We want to continue our look at the life of Elijah, you may open your Bibles to first Kings chapter 18, the title of our message this morning is “Elijah Contesting on Mount Carmel.”

I would like to introduce this account by reading a poem that one of our children recently memorised in school entitled “Courageous Elijah.”

Down below Tyre and the west of Endor
Where the Great Sea breaks on the prominent shore
Or sometimes lapses into a lazy tune
On a hot still day of an Orient noon
There where the land juts out to the sea
Mount Carmel spires majestically.

But go where its head is bare to the sky,
Above the clouds where the sun rides high
Circled by bold hounds of Baal
Stands Elijah, Jehovah’s flail
Lord and Creator protect him well
for he is a reed in a rolling swell.

To left and to right like a churning cloud
Israel’s thousands surged and crowd
Zealots of Baal four hundred or more
impatiently waiting to settle a score
Ahab’s men their swords half drawn
sworn to rid Israel of this thorn.

Ahab’s Queen the spawn of hell,
Israel’s blot, black Jezebel
But no one dares to lift a hand
as long as the people take no stand
Elijah, the Lord sustain thee now,
O Moses rod on Carmel’s ground.

The priests of Baal their bullock slew
and to the altar its carcass drew

Then waving their arms for all to see
invoked their idol industriously
But when the fire failed to appear
They slashed their bodies in frenzied fear
For well they knew their fate congealed
as long as Baal's power stood unrevealed.

Elijah mocked their impudence
and chided their god's indifference
"Perhaps he sleeps or is gone for the day
or perhaps he hunts the Queen's Milky Way"
"Or he may be dead," a cynic said,
like stillness that followed a sudden shock.

The crowd stood dumb like a stricken flock
But then there arose such a raw of assent,
That rocks re-echoed and clouds were rent
Take courage Elijah of Gilead
the favour of God anoints your head
Jehovah's hand wove in and out
touching minds still devout.

They remembered days when with mighty hand
The Lord blazed trail to the Promised Land
"The plagues of Egypt," an old man shouted,
the wind whipped sea dread Pharaoh routed
Like sparks to tinder the word struck fire,
Staccato shouts rose higher and higher
"The fire by night, the pillar by day,
the fate of Korah, the scorched highway."

Elijah of Israel happy your lot
Now shake the iron, the metal glows hot
The prophet of God with practised hand
slew his bullock and took his stand
Sons of Levi sprang to his aid
their sinewy arms the offering made.

They drenched it thrice at his behest
Then filled the trench at his request
Assurance showed on Elijah's face,
his was the fight, his was the race
Then raising his hand toward the God he knew
his heart spoke fully; his words were few
"Hear O Lord my prayer's refrain,
return these sheep to your fold again."

All Israel heard those fervent words
that soared to heaven like homing birds
Before his lips had ceased to move
a bolt descended, truth straight as groove.
It burnt the wood, the flesh, the bones,
licked up the water, devoured the stones.

Prone on their faces the people fell,
refined like ore in a furnace well
While fingers dug the cooling earth
cold faith experienced a new rebirth.

In first Kings 18 we come to the high point of Elijah's life, the story for which he is best remembered, we see him standing alone for God proposing a dramatic conquest between God and Baal, praying fire down from heaven, single handedly returning and nation to its God.

We left Elijah at the widow's house in Zarephath after he had brought a son back to life and her into a relationship of faith with the God of Israel.

[1 Kings 18:1-2](#) And it came to pass *after* many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. ² And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And *there was* a sore famine in Samaria.

After the trials at Zarephath it appears that Elijah had many peaceful quiet happy days living there and God knew that He needed to prepare him for the strenuous battle ahead, when God's word came Elijah was ready to move, ready to go, just as before when God speaks Elijah base without question, without needing a sign, without even getting a message from God

to take to Ahab, without even a miracle, without even an explanation of how things are going to work out.

Elijah simply went. God said go and Elijah went.

We're going to skip over the story about Elijah meeting Obadiah and go to the actual contest on Mount Carmel.

We would like to look at this with six points this morning.

The first point we would like to consider is: Elijah reproving sin.

[1 Kings 18:17-20](#) And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art thou he that troubleth Israel?* ¹⁸ And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim. ¹⁹ Now therefore send, *and* gather to me all Israel unto Mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. ²⁰ So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel.

Elijah reproved sin first by rebuking Ahab for his idolatry. Ahab brazenly accuses the prophet of being a troublemaker.

And how often God's people are blamed for the troubles of the world.

Haman said of the Jews, their laws are diverse from all people, neither keep they the King's laws, therefore it is not for the King's profit to suffer them. [Esther 3:8](#).

When Jesus Himself was on the earth the chief priests accused Him of stirring up that people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. [Luke 23:5](#).

And the Apostles as they carried the gospel message around the world were accused of turning the world upside down, [Acts 17:6](#).

Yes standing for truth proclaiming God's message does often stir up the adversary and we should expect that we will be excuse of being troublemakers. Are we willing to bear this reproach?

Elijah boldly spoke the truth to King Ahab even though it wasn't pleasant. Elijah standing before this tyrant who held the power of life and death in his hand might have quickly told him about the coming rain to placate him, but no, instead he spoke the truth, it is not me that is troubling Israel but

you, you and your fathers you have been troubling Israel because you are worshipping idols.

You have forsaken the Commandments of the Lord and followed Baalim.

Well today also the Commandments of the Lord are being forsaken.

We think of the keeping of the Lord's Day, we think of marriage for life, we think of the Christian woman's veiling, we think of modesty, all around us we see the Commandments of God being broken.

Are we ready to speak the truth of God's word on these subjects and stand for God in these areas?

Ahab seems to have quailed before Elijah's powerful denouncement and Elijah's God given courage won the day, Ahab had known what to say after Elijah boldly confronted him with the truth.

I'm reminded of the verse in [Proverbs 28:1](#), but the righteous are bold as a lion.

And another saying I enjoy is, A heart unspotted is not easily daunted.

Before Elijah's righteous indignation Ahab became as docile as a lamb, he knew that he did not have the moral authority that Elijah did and so he meekly submitted to what Elijah requested, he followed Elijah's orders to gather the people together and even obeyed Elijah concerning the prophets of Baal and commanded them to appear as Elijah requested.

And so we see a striking example how God strengthens His people to speak His message and to confront wickedness.

That was Elijah reproving Ahab in sin but Elijah went further he also reproved the people when they gathered together, his first words to them were words of reprove and by this he laid bare the people's hypocrisy and their indecision. Verse 21,

[1 Kings 18:21](#) And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, 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 not a word.

From far and near the Israelites came streaming to Mount Carmel, many likely came to get a glimpse of this prophet of whom they have heard so much in the past three years, some may have come planning to get rid of

this man who was bringing so much harm to the country, and a few were hoping to see Elijah display God's mighty power and defeat the forces of darkness, but most apparently did not know what they want.

Yes they wanted rain, they were probably even praying to God for rain but at the same time they were held under the spell of Baal's prophets and were bowing do need to Baal, they were halting between two opinions.

Elijah goes right to the point, how long do you halt between two opinions? You cannot serve both God and Baal, choose you this day.

And the people smitten with the truth of the accusation stood silent, they answered not a word and not even offered one word in self defence of their reprehensible actions.

How long halt you between two opinions?

Does that question come to us today?

If you have not yet responded to God, if you are hearing His call, if you have not yet surrendered to Him that question is coming to you, How long halt you between two opinions?

Is Satan to be your master or God? There is no middle road, you must make a choice.

If what God says is true, if He can give true joy and real peace and complete fulfilment and eternal life why hesitate, follow Him.

But if Satan's claims are true, if there is no live after death, if there is no God in heaven, if the race no judgement to come, well then follow him, go ahead plunge headlong into wickedness.

Why do people halt between two opinions?

Well it is because their consciousness of God's stamped deeply into their being that they cannot get rid of their sense of accountability to their Creator.

Yet Satan's offers are so attractive they cannot refuse them and so they end up trying to please both, they want the best of both worlds.

So if you are here this morning and this question is staring you in the face we want to give you an opportunity to settle this question, at the end of the message we are going to extend an invitation so that you can settle this question, How long halt ye between two opinions?

But this question may also come to us after we are Christians.

You claim to be following God but yet you are sampling what the world offers, you are standing with one foot in the world and one foot in the

church, you profess to walk in the spirit and yet leave room to indulge in the works of the flesh. How long halt you between two opinions?

You cannot serve God and mammon, ([Matthew 6:24](#)) you cannot be a friend of the world and a friend of God, ([James 4:4](#)) you cannot listen to the world's music or read the world's books were seek the world's pleasures and serve God.

God does not want half of us He wants all of us, so let's choose to serve God with all our heart and soul and strength and mind ([Mark 12:30](#)).

Secondly we want to consider in this account Elijah challenging Baal.

[1 Kings 18:22-29](#) Then said Elijah unto the people, I, *even* I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets *are* four hundred and fifty men.

²³ Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under*: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay *it* on wood, and put no fire *under*: ²⁴ And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. ²⁵ And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress *it* first; for ye *are* many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire *under*.

²⁶ And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But *there was* no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. ²⁷ And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he *is* a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, *or* peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. ²⁸ And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them.

²⁹ And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that *there was* neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.

First we want to consider Elijah's standing alone for God.

He was Elijah one against 450, one against a nation, where was Obadiah, wherewith the 7000 that had not yet bowed the knee to Baal? ([1 Kings 19:18](#)) Apparently not one had the courage to take a public stand for the Lord.

We said Elijah was standing alone, was he?

No, he was not alone, for he had the God of heaven by his side.
We sang this morning, He who loves Thee ever feels himself alone.
And truly Elijah was not alone, one with the Lord is a majority. Elijah had spent years in God's school of faith and he could now with complete confidence, with unshakeable calm, with steadfast faith pose this contest.

Do we ever need to stand alone for God?

Thankfully usually we are surrounded by faithful brothers and sisters to support us in our stand but sooner or later we may find ourselves needing to stand alone and at that time let's remember the example of Elijah who by faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouth of lions, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness was made strong and waxed valiant in fight.

Secondly Elijah shows Baal for what he was.

According to the international standard Bible encyclopaedia Baal was known as the Sun God and now Baal had his chance to prove his power by sending fire.

It could be that Baal's prophets had deceived the people by hiding fire at the sacrifices and pretending that the Sun God had lit the fire, had lit the sacrifice.

Now Elijah proposes that the God who can actually send fire would be prove to be the true God and that people said it was well spoken. They agreed that these were terms that they could support.

Under the thousands of watchful eyes Baal's prophets had no chance to smuggle fire under their sacrifice and Elijah to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that there was no fire under his sacrifice later drenched it with water. Elijah had no doubt in God's power to send fire, after all he was serving the God who had created the sun, and he was serving the God who had often revealed Himself by fire.

God had appeared to Moses in the burning bush ([Exodus 3:1-3](#)).

God had led Israel with a pillar of fire in the wilderness ([Exodus 13:21](#))

God had descended upon Mount Sinai in fire ([Exodus 19:18](#))

Gideon's Angel brought fire out of the rock to consume the sacrifice. ([Judges 6:24](#))

At the threshing floor of Ornan God sent fire from heaven to burn David's sacrifice ([1 Chronicles 21:26](#))

And again at the dedication of the Temple, Solomon's Temple, God sent fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice ([2 Chronicle 7:1](#)).

And this is the God of whom it is said, For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, [Deuteronomy 4:24](#).

So Elijah by faith could claim God's power to send down fire.

Baal's prophets went through their heathenish rituals of dancing, leaping, shouting, working themselves into a frenzy to they were even leaping on the altar and cutting themselves until the blood gushed out and after that demonstration then Elijah mocked them.

Why did Elijah mock them?

Well he was driving home the truth of the matter, he wanted to show how absurd, how foolish it was to call on a dead god. He wanted the Israelites to see Baal worship in all its absurdity and he wanted not a doubt to remain in the Israelites minds.

And despite Baal's prophets desperate demands Baal answered not a word, not even a wisp of smoke appeared.

Thirdly we want to consider Elijah inviting the people back to God.

[1 Kings 18:30](#) And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was* broken down.

What a contrast to the frenzied worship of Baal's prophets Elijah's calm quiet invitation, come near, come near unto me.

The worship of God is decent and orderly, there is no shouting or dancing or leaping, and God still speaks in a still small voice ([1 Kings 19:12](#)) and the same gracious invitation goes out today, Come near unto me.

Jesus said come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest, ([Matthew 11:28](#))

In the Ephesians we find these words, but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar of a made nigh by the blood of Christ ([Ephesians 2:13](#)).

Have you heard this invitation to come near, have you responded?

Fourthly we want to consider Elijah restoring true worship.

[1 Kings 18:31-35](#) And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came,

saying, Israel shall be thy name: ³² And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. ³³ And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid *him* on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. ³⁴ And he said, Do *it* the second time. And they did *it* the second time. And he said, Do *it* the third time. And they did *it* the third time. ³⁵ And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water.

First we see Elijah rebuilding the altar.

Elijah did not need a new altar he only had to re-build one that was established by faithful saints in the past.

It is interesting to notice how often in Bible accounts men of God returned to their altars, to the altars that either they or their fathers had built earlier and they found stability in the unchanging worship of an unchanging God. God had established timeless principles and forms of worship and we don't need a new altar today, the same altar that served our fathers serves us today. If it has been neglected or broken down it needs to be rebuilt.

These 12 stones that Elijah gathered together represented the 12 tribes of Israel, as we are told in verse 31.

We might wonder why this note is in here at the end of verse 31 about unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name.

It is an interesting historical note what the children of Israel should have been reminded of by the building of this altar, by the 12 stones being used, it should have reminded them of their covenant with God, the covenant that God had established with Israel.

The name in shall meant Prince with God, it is reminding them of the relationship they could have had, that God wants to have within, their relationship with the God of Israel, they could be Princes with God rather than bowing the knee to this heathen stone idol.

Well we too have monuments that remind us of God and His requirements, His covenant with us.

We think of the ordinances that God has given us, they are symbols, natural symbols that remind us of spiritual truths and stand as monuments for us to bring to our mind of the things that we should be remembering.

This altar being built reminded them of God's love for them, God's care for them, the promises in the past and how God was still seeking them and wanted to restore the broken relationship.

Next I would like to consider this bullock that Elijah offered. In verse 33 we are told that he put wood in order and cut the bullock in pieces and laid him on the wood.

This choice of animal is very interesting, why didn't Elijah choose a lamb or a goat or a heifer?

Well bullock or a male ox was the largest and most valuable animal that the Israelite could offer, it would be like a farmer offering his tractor today, and according to [Leviticus 4](#) the bullock was the animal that a priest offered for his own sins.

It would be interesting to take time to turn to that, I don't think we will but you may get that, but it was the animal that the priest needed to offer to consecrate himself before he represented the people to God and by choosing this animal Elijah it was acknowledging his need as a prophet for a sacrifice, his need for a sin offering.

He knew that before he leads the people to God he needed to be and a right relationship with God himself and that principle still stands the day, we must take care of our own spiritual needs before we try to minister to others in spiritual things.

It is sure that we cannot let people closer to God than we have gone ourselves.

Do you want to be more effective in leading your children to God? Do you want to have more power in witnessing to your neighbours? Do you want to be more inspirational conducting Sunday school classes or devotionals?

Then go deeper with God yourself and then you can say come see what I have found, you can invite others to join you in taste the good things of God.

Well this bullock also according to [Leviticus 4](#) was the animal that was offered by the congregation when they had fallen into sin and Elijah by choosing this animal was reminding of their need for Atonement as a nation for the sin of idolatry.

This was the only way for them to restore the relationship with God. It was the God prescribed way, it was the way of the altar, the way of sacrifice, the way of blood, it was the only way for them to have their sins forgiven. God had established the principle that blood must be shed to cover sin and only by following God's way could they hope to be brought back into a relationship with God.

And so it is for us today also, we can come to God only by one way, by the God provided way, by the way of that perfect Lamb of God that was shed for the sins of the world we can find forgiveness for our sins.

Let's consider in the fifth place Elijah praying fire down from heaven.

1 Kings 18:36-39 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 of Israel, let it be known this day that thou *art* God in Israel, and *that I am* thy servant, and *that I have done* all these things at thy word. ³⁷ Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou *art* the LORD God, and *that* thou hast turned their heart back again. ³⁸ 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. ³⁹ And when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he *is* the God; the LORD, he *is* the God.

Elijah's prayer certainly ranks amongst the great prayers of the Bible, we could have spent all morning on focusing on this prayer but what impresses me in this prayer that Elijah's sole desire was for God's name to be vindicated, for God's honour to be established.

He said, Let it be known that thou art God in Israel and that this people may know that thou art the Lord God and that I am thy servant he said.

He himself was hidden behind God he was only a servant doing God's beating and if only God's name would be exalted he would be happy.

And so this must be our attitude in any work that we do for God, not that we seek any credit or any glory for ourselves but that we are only seeking the honour of God's name and that His kingdom will be furthered on this earth.

We see that God always hears and answers the prayer of faith.

Elijah said here me O Lord, hear me. Did God hear was He listening or was He liked Baal who only as a stone ear to offer?

Know in all of history God has not missed one sincere prayer, He always hears the prayer of faith and not only does He hear He has the power to answer, we cannot pray anything that is too hard for God as we heard in our devotional meditation.

Elijah seem to want to make it as hard as possible for God to answer his prayer, he poured water and more water and more water on the sacrifice, it seemed as though he was heaping up the obstacles in God's path that God had to overcome.

Well we know it was not actually that way to God because nothing is hard or hard or impossible for God, Elijah was only making it a great miracle in the eyes of the people.

How strong is our faith? Can we delight in seeing the obstacles pileup knowing that it will be an opportunity for God to get great honour as He works through it provides a way for us?

Well God answered the prayer by sending fire, sending fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice and not only the sacrifice but the stone, the wood, the stones, the dust and the water, all were consumed, there was no question as to God's power, God's ability to answer prayer.

And the people responded by falling on their faces before God returning to God and acknowledging Him as the true God, is the God of Israel.

May that be our response toe as we consider God's mighty power, we are serving the same God today, God with the same power and may we honour Him as the Almighty God.

We would like to consider yet finally Elijah destroying idolatry.

[1 Kings 18:40](#) And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

It seems like very drastic, very hardhearted action to slay these 450 men, who was it really necessary after the battle was one, after God's power had been shown and His name and be vindicated?

Elijah it was moving in obedience to God's command and God had clearly said in [Deuteronomy 13:6-10](#) If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which *is* as

thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; ⁷ *Namely*, of the gods of the people which *are* round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the *one* end of the earth even unto the *other* end of the earth; ⁸ Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: ⁹ But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. ¹⁰ And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

Certainly these priests of Baal were worthy of the sentence which fell upon them, they were worthy of death, not only had they themselves worshipped idols they were enticing the whole nation to follow them and to also sin against God and forsake God.

So we see that rooting out sin does require drastic measures.

Jesus said if your hand offend you, cut it off, if your eye offend you, pluck it out rather than suffering the hellfire ([Matthew 18:9](#)).

We must be willing to pay any price to gain victory.

Are you failing in some area this morning?

Maybe you are not taking drastic enough action to deal with it, maybe you should make a public acknowledgement of that sin, of your failure, your struggle to find victory.

Is there is sin you need to deal with this morning, do you need to turn to God in repentance?

Are you halting between two opinions?

Do you hear the gracious invitation, Come near.

#5 – Elijah Facing Discouragement

We want to continue our look at the life of the Prophet Elijah this morning, our character study on his life and we are ready for first Kings chapter 19, so I invite you to open your Bibles there.

We left Elijah on the scene of a glorious victory on Mount Carmel and we find him today defeated and discouraged.

How are the mighty fallen! (2 Samuel 1:19, 25, 27) This could be both an exclamation and the question, how did it happen in such a short period of time?

How did Elijah fall from the triumphant pinnacle of Mount Carmel to the depressing desert floor, lying under a Juniper tree wishing to die?

We like a hero's unblemished, we like to keep them on the pedestal up above us, would like to think that they are made out of different stuff than what we are and by this kind of reasoning we can excuse ourselves are not measuring up to their attainments, and so when we come across this story about the great man's failure we would rather prefer to avert our eyes and pass on, we may even be tempted to minimise his mistakes or to find excuses for him.

But God has recorded the failures of great men of God for a reason, the Bible clearly states that Elijah was a man of like passions as we are (James 5:17), and proved it by the story we have before us this morning.

Elijah was not made of different stuff than what we are, he was not super-human, and so this story that we are looking at this morning should serve as a warning to us, it should help us to avoid the snare of discouragement that Elijah fell into but it should also be comforting to us, these great men and women of God of the past that God used so mightily with people just as we are, people with the same weaknesses, the same limitations, the same temptations in the same failures.

And we want to be impressed this morning with God's gracious work and patient effort in restoring Elijah and helping him out of the Slough of despond and bring him back into useful service God's work.

Let's read first Kings 19.

1 Kings 19:1-18 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. ² Then Jezebel sent a

messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do *to me*, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.

³ And when he saw *that*, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which *belongeth* to Judah, and left his servant there. ⁴ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I *am* not better than my fathers. ⁵ And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise *and* eat. ⁶ And he looked, and, behold, *there was* a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. ⁷ And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise *and* eat; because the journey *is* too great for thee. ⁸ And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. ⁹ And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? ¹⁰ And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. ¹¹ And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks 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: ¹² And after the earthquake a fire; *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. ¹³ And it was *so*, when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, *there came* a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? ¹⁴ And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, *even* I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. ¹⁵ And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael *to be* king over Syria: ¹⁶ And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint *to be* king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint *to be* prophet in thy room. ¹⁷ And it shall come to pass, *that* him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. ¹⁸ Yet I have left *me* seven thousand in Israel, all the

knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

We would like to go through this account and focus on some of the phrases that are found here.

First of all let's consider the phrase When he saw that, [1 Kings 19:3](#)

Here we have the first indication that something was wrong something is going wrong, He saw that.

What did he see? He saw the danger, he saw the threat to his life and the threat came from the wicked woman whose 450 prophets he had just slain, no wonder she was vengeful.

But Elijah should have considered the source because Jezebel was acting in character, Elijah should not have been surprised by her reaction.

Like the story of the young boy who was learning to work with mules, when the mules would kick and he would get upset and his father said, Consider the source, the mule is just being a mule and if you allow yourself to get upset then you are labouring yourself to the level of the mule.

And so today we should consider the source when we face rejection and hatred and slammed doors as we heard in our Sunday school class. Consider the source, accept that wicked people will rage and threaten and if we really respond in kind we are lowering ourselves to their level.

Let's remember that they are only acting in character.

We might wonder why did Jezebel send a warning to Elijah if she was intent on slaying him?

Why did she give him a chance to escape?

She probably knew that she didn't dare to lay hands on him because of the people so she tried to scare away and she succeeded.

And we think of the ringing answer of faith that Elijah might have sent back to this wicked Queen.

John Chrysostom, an early church father, whose zeal and preaching of the Bible offended Empress Aelia Eudoxia sent a similar message that Elijah was sent, his reply to the Empress was, "Go tell her I fear nothing but sin". *[Ed. He made an enemy in Aelia Eudoxia, the wife of the eastern Emperor Arcadius, who assumed (perhaps with justification) that his denunciations of extravagance in feminine dress were aimed at her]*

And really what did Elijah have to fear? Wasn't he serving the God who had sent fire from heaven, why would he be afraid of one woman's threats? But Elijah's faith wavered, he looked at that, he looked at the circumstances instead of looking to God.

And it is so easy for us to do the same thing to shift their focus from God to the circumstances that are troubling us.

We think of Peter is the classic example for this when he could walk on the water as long as he was looking at the face of Jesus but when he looked at the waves that were around them he began to sink, his faith wavered ([Matthew 14:25-31](#)).

And so on the day when everything since to be going wrong we get tense and frustrated because we are focusing on the circumstances and forgetting about the big picture.

In family life we might focus on all that the children need to learn yet, others might focus on the mounds of laundry and stacks of dirty dishes and sewing projects that are waiting to be done.

Fathers might focus on the unpaid bills and the long to do list.

In church life we might focus on the pressure is that are facing the church or in the inconsistencies of some members, or the failures of leadership.

But if we focus on the circumstances we are looking at that, what should we be looking at instead of looking at that?

Well Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up and His train filled the Temple, ([Isaiah 6:1](#)) let's keep our perspective on the God of heaven, the God of heaven and earth who controls all these circumstances, the One who has let us to this place and who can give us the Grace to carry us through, the One who has promised to carry us through to the end.

Second let's consider the phrase; He went for his life, also in [1 Kings 19:3](#). Elijah's misplaced focus caused him to think only about himself and his safety and if our focus is not on God we quickly become focused on self instead. And so Elijah went for his life, he went without seeking God's will or God's direction, he said his own course, he was thinking only of himself and where he wants to go to escape from his life.

What about continuing the revival that has only begun that day?

What about replacing Baal worship with true worship?

He thought only of himself, only of going for his life.

You probably all heard the saying already that a person wrapped up in himself makes a very small package. And so Elijah found himself very weak and helpless as he focused only on himself.

And Jesus said, Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, ([Matthew 16:25](#)) certainly Elijah found that to be true, he went for his life and then ended up wishing he didn't have it after all, didn't think it was worth having.

Well being overly concerned about protecting ourselves will lead to defeat and discouragement.

We must be fully surrendered to God and willing to suffer anything for Him then we will have His strength to sustain us and to carry us through and to help us face whatever dangers and threats and even harm and suffering that we may need to suffer for His sake.

In the third place we would like to consider the phrase, He left his servant there. [1 Kings 19:3](#)

Elijah went as far and as fast as he could go, he had to do so to get away from Jezebel and he did not stop until he was 90 miles away at the southern edge of Judah in Beersheba.

Halfway on his journey to Beersheba Elijah left the country of Israel and entered the country of Judah, at that point he was safely out of Jezebel's reach but he didn't stop there he went twice as far as necessary and he didn't stop here either and worse yet he left his servant, he cut himself off from all company and support.

And while we don't know exactly what was going through Elijah's mind it appears as though there were irrational responses to the danger that is facing him, it appears as though fear was ruling his life and the only thing he could think of was to go, go, go, get as far away as possible. It appears as though this mighty prophet of God because he focused on the problem, he was wrapped up in himself instead of in God he lost his moorings, he was adrift on the sea of doubt and despair.

And so when we find ourselves discouraged or depressed that's be ready to reach out for help, to go for others, to go to others for help rather than withdraw into ourselves and shutting ourselves off from others. In Sunday school we referred to the verse that says, Woe to him that is alone when he falls, for he hath not another to help him up. ([Ecclesiastes 4:10](#))

To withdraw is natural because it is easier for us to clam up rather than to open up and share our struggles and admit our need for help, it takes humility to admit our need and to ask counsel of others.

God's plan is that others can help us, that we help each other, that we strengthen each other, and we left each other up when we are falling, and let's not like Elijah cut ourselves off from others help.

Fourthly let's consider the phrase; He requested for himself that he might die. [1 Kings 19:4](#)

We see that Elijah was ready to give up the fight, he thought it was not worthwhile to continue.

His ideas and dreams of how things were going to happen did not work out, he may have expected the Israelites to rise up and to destroy this idolatrous Queen but instead he finds himself fleeing in danger for his life from her.

And so when we see evil seemingly triumphant and the righteous seemingly defeated we too may grow discouraged.

We may ask a question, Why if Elijah was running for his life did he now wish to give up his life?

Well again we see the giving into despair leads to irrational thinking and Satan takes an opportunity like that to plant thoughts in our mind that at other times we would not consider, thoughts of worthlessness, thoughts of giving up, thoughts of wishing for death even thoughts of suicide.

Now it is not wrong to wish to depart to be with the Lord as Paul did but when Paul said that he also acknowledged that to stay continue serving would be better for those that he was serving and he was willing to do that.

[\(2 Corinthians 5:8\)](#)

And so while on one hand we do wish for death, wish to be released from the cares of this life, from the limitations and sufferings of our body yet we are willing to stay here as long as the Lord has worked for us to do here. And how foolish it is for man to dictate to God his time to die.

If Elijah had died now there would have been no Elisha trained to take his place, if he had died now he would not have had the opportunity to establish the schools of prophets that benefited Israel for many years to come, if he had died now he would have died like a dog here alone in the desert in-

stead of that glorious departure that God had planned for him to experience.

Fifthly let's consider the phrase; I am not better than my fathers. [1 Kings 19:4](#)

This is another clue to Elijah's stumble, had he been thinking that he was better than his fathers, and it could be that he had, possibly his fathers had failed to stand up against their wickedness that was pervading the land, maybe they had moved to the East side of the Jordan to escape the corrupt influences in the nation of Israel and wanted only to serve God quietly by themselves.

And here Elijah was called by God to do something different, to take a public stand for God, to challenge their wickedness, even the king and queen themselves, and with God's help he proclaims the truth to all those who would hear it and have an opportunity to repent and return to God.

Did you get a bit lifted up by that calling from God?

When God chooses to use us, weak vessels as we half, it is so easy for us to get an inflated sense of our importance and when we do get lifted up we are setting ourselves up for a fall.

And like Elijah we will fall hard.

Are we better than our fathers? Well most of us can probably see some weaknesses, and some failings in our fathers lives that we would like to rise above and that by God's grace that we are determined to rise above and while we may be excelling them in some areas we should recognise the fact that we may be failing in other areas and we need to keep a humble view of ourselves.

Isaac Newton reminds us if we see further than those who were before us it is because we are standing on their shoulders.

And we need to acknowledge the contribution that our fathers have made to our lives and appreciate all of that; and not to think of ourselves as better than them.

As William Knox put it so well in some of the verses in the poem, "Oh why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" He said;

For we are the same our fathers have been;
We see the same sights our fathers have seen;

We drink the same stream, and view the same sun,
And run the same course our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking our fathers would think;
From the death we are shrinking our fathers would shrink;
To the life we are clinging they also would cling;
But it speeds for us all, like a bird on the wing.

They loved but their story we cannot unfold,
They scorned, but the heart of the haughty is cold,
They grieved but no wail from their slumbers will come.
They joyed but the voice of their gladness is dumb,

They died, aye! they died; and we things that are now,
Who walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
Who make in their dwelling a transient abode,
Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage road.

'Tis a wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath,
from the blossom of health to the paleness of death.
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud, ---
Oh why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

Let's consider in the next place, Arise and eat. [1 Kings 19:5](#).

Now we come in the story to God's gracious care for His downcast servant.

Thankfully God does not grant every foolish request we make of Him instead He gives us strength to continue serving. He knows better what to give us than what we even know to ask.

Elijah had not asked for food, he asked for death but instead God sent an angel to minister life to him and not just one time but two times.

God knew what lay before Elijah, God knew the work that He had for Elijah to do yet and so He was giving him the strength to continue his journey.

I'm impressed by the fact that God ministered to Elijah's body before ministering to him spiritually.

We had that question in Sunday school, How should we relate to the humanitarian needs?

But from this example we want to note that depression may have physical causes, when our bodies drain physically it can affect our emotions, sometimes a good night of rest or a number of good nights of rest can do wonders in restoring our outlook on life and we need to proper care of our bodies, some people need more rest and sleep than others and let's be realistic with the amount that we need and make sure that we are taking care of the body is that God has given to us and it will contribute to our emotional and spiritual health.

The angel said to Elijah, Arise and eat. And it was physical food that God gave to Elijah but I'd like to apply it also to the spiritual meals that God provides for us.

How does God say to us today, Arise and eat.

The journey ahead is too great for us, the angel said the journey ahead is too great for thee.

What we have to journey through is too much for us to face in our own strength, we need divine nourishment if we are going to make it through faithfully and so God lays a meal for us and He does it every day, every morning we can arise and pick up His Word and find a meal ready and waiting for us.

The spiritual nourish meant that we need for the day and for the journey ahead.

Every Sunday morning He invites us to arise and eat as we come to church, and there is the Sunday school lesson to study and the Word that is preached, it is a meal that is spread before us and all we need to do is to reach out for it and receive it and let's be sure to thank God and appreciate these meals that He is providing for us, that He is spreading for us and accept them and find the strength that He would have us received from.

Next let's consider that he came to Horeb the Mount of God. [1 Kings 19:8](#) And I think this is to Elijah's credit that while he began his journey with a heedless headlong flight he ended it at the Mount of God.

We don't know when the idea came to him to head for Mount Sinai but when he came to the end of himself that is where he had it and we see that God had even graciously helped him on his journey.

This prophet who had failed God so sadly at the critical moment God now helps him on his journey and gives him regular sustenance to carry him those 40 days and 40 nights on his journey.

Why? Why didn't God turn him around right here and say, Now Elijah go back, go back where you belong, get busy.

Why did He give him the strength to travel 40 days away from his post of duty?

I'm not sure we have all the answers but we see that God is working to restore him and God probably knew that in the journey it there would be some benefits to Elijah, at least 40 days spent in the desert, retracing the journeys of the children of Israel had some benefits for Elijah.

We can imagine him recounting in his mind as he journeyed all of God's workings with His people in the past and God's purpose for His people even though the present looked so dark of God's people.

It must have been a good experience for Elijah to travel through the wilderness with God's help is 40 days and 40 nights.

He travelled approximately 200 miles, those 40 days that makes the average about 5 miles a day which does not seem like a long distance that you have to remember that Elijah was tired, was weary, was a drain physically and emotionally and it appears though as he took his time on his journey.

When we have failed let's come like Elijah to the Mount of God, let's never stop seeking God, let's return to the place where God has spoken, the place where His word and will is made known.

Where is that? The book of Hebrews tells us that we are not come to Mount Sinai but unto Mount Sion.

Let's turn to those verses in Hebrews chapter 12 and these are especially comforting verses to us when we have failed, we know that we don't need to go to Mount Sinai which is smoking and on fire with the people trampled in fear of God, we see that description in verses 18 through 22.

Verse 18 says, "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned and that quaked....."

Verse 22: But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

²³ To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴ And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood

of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel. [Hebrews 12:18, 22-24](#)

How comforting that we are come to Jesus our mediator, that we are come to the church, that we have our brothers and sisters to help us to forgive us, to restore us when we fail.

In the eighth place let's consider: The word of the Lord came to him. [1 Kings 19:9](#)

And how comforting this is also to know that when we have failed the word of the Lord may still come to us.

As long as we are sincerely seeking God He will have a word for us He has no desire to keep us in the dark about His will His word when it comes may come with challenge and conviction as it did to Elijah, it will come with comfort and consolation after we have repented and it will come with instruction and direction for the future.

The water of the Lord will come.

And so the word of the Lord is it came to Elijah comes to us today, yes we must have hearts that are prepared and seeking God's word but God does not make us sick as to the ends of the earth for His word, He does not make us to send up to heaven to find His word but he brings it to us and we have in Deuteronomy where God says: Neither *is* it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? ¹⁴ But the word *is* very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. [Deuteronomy 30:13-14](#)

So God brings His word right to our doorstep, right to our hearts that we may hear and know what His word is for us today.

Let's consider in the next place the question that God asked Elijah: What doest thou here, Elijah?

What a heart searching question this was for Elijah. Why have you left your post of duty?, Why have you left the company of others, why are you running to save your life, why are you not trusting in me, what are you not representing me to Israel?

And pour Elijah it is very lame excuse to give the God for why he was where he was.

And so God brings things into our experience that causes us to stop and think where we are.

It may be the voice of the brother or sister sharing a concern with us, it may be a challenge that we find in the word of God, it may be the Holy Spirit speaking to us through our conscience, What doest thou here?

When we hear that voice let's stop and consider an answer to that question, Why are we here, how did we get here, where did we go wrong?

And let's be willing than to acknowledge our mistakes and to repent and not make excuses for ourselves. How good it is for God to arrest us, to not let us go on without warning but to stop us with the question that causes us to consider.

We are also impressed with how gentle God.

We don't see any sharp rebuke for reproof just a question, a question to make Elijah think and to consider.

And so that is how God often works with us today.

Now let's consider Elijah's response.

He concluded his response, I, even I only am left. 1 Kings 19:14

Elijah's answer showed that his focus was still on himself, he could only think about the injustice his treatment after he had served so selfishly and so zealously.

Apparently he was forgetting that after we have done that we are commanded to do we are to consider ourselves only unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10) and when we lose this perspective then we are candidates for discouragement.

What happens is that we begin to think that the work is our work and we get defensive about the work and when it doesn't go the way we think it should go then we despair.

And this answer also showed Elijah's limited perspective and we too have the same limitations. We stand in the centre of our little world and we have trouble seeing very far beyond that.

Elijah said, I, even I only am left. But God told Elijah that His work was 7000 times bigger than what Elijah thought it was for God had 7000 others that are still serving Him and that had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Let's consider now the wind, the earthquake, and the fire that we find in [1 Kings 19:11-12](#)

And it might be, we might wonder why God brought these demonstrations to Elijah if He himself was not in them, what was God trying to teach Elijah, what was the purpose of the wind in the earthquake in the fire? Wasn't it an object lesson for Elijah?

Elijah thought this is how God should work and God did use Elijah mightily to bring down fire from heaven and to thunder against the wickedness in high places but now God wanted Elijah to realise that this is not the only way He works and that more of His work is done otherwise than by these demonstrations of power.

Yes God does at times use mighty demonstrations of power to do His work but much more often He works quietly and invisibly in the hearts of men and real change in men's hearts must be brought out that way, must come with the quiet work of God's spirit in the heart.

And could it be that God was demonstrating to Elijah that this was a turning point in His work with the nation of Israel.

The nation of Israel had lost their last chance returning as a nation and finding mercy, now their doom was sealed and judgement were sure and that from here on out God would only be working with them as individuals, individuals in the nation could turn to God and experience a relationship with Him.

We know it wasn't many years until the nation of Israel was captured and dispersed, taken into captivity for their idolatry.

And this difference in God's working or we could say the difference between Elisha's and Elijah's ministry would seem to bear this out, Elisha's ministry was a much more quiet ministry geared to individual seekers compared to Elijah's ministry.

And now let's consider the still small voice in verse 12 that Elijah heard. Now finally Elijah hears God speak. After going without message from God for many days and nights and seeking that now he hears God speak and finally Elijah humbly hid his face and went to meet God and the command to Elijah was to go forth and stand upon the Mount before the Lord.

And is this not the secret in coming out of the Slough of the sponsor and rising above discouragement to go and stand upon the Mount before the Lord and to hear God speak.

Elijah came out of his cave of doubt and fear and depression, he moved out into the light of God's presence and he stood humbly waiting for a word from God.

And God still uses His still small voice today to speak to us, it may be a verse in our personal devotions that we come across, it may be the holy spirit speaking in our hearts, maybe the voice of the friend, maybe the words of a song, maybe a line of poetry, maybe the beautiful sunset we see with a bouquet of flowers, we hear God speaking in His still small voice.

And here this still small voice we need to be quiet and still and small ourselves because the still small voice can easily be drowned out and ignored in the hustle and bustle of life, especially if we hurrying about on our own way, our own plans, our own projects, as we stand before God stand upon the Mount before the Lord then we can hear His still small voice.

Let's consider next God's direction to Elijah: Go return on thy way. [1 Kings 19:15](#)

Just before this after Elijah heard the still small voice we might be disappointed to hear Elijah repeating the same self-defence of lines that he had repeated earlier, and we wish that would have been a dramatic change in his words like there was in the story of Job when Job came to the end of himself and said, I lay my hand on my mouth and repent in dust and ashes ([Job 40:4](#), [Job 42:6](#)).

And we wish Elijah would have spoken similar words.

Why did he repeat the same thing he had said before after he heard the still small voice?

Well were not sure but one lesson we can learn or draw from this is that when we are in the rut of despondency change comes hard and it takes time for us to be reprogram ourselves to reprogram our mind and not think self-centred despairing thoughts.

We hope that there was at least a change in the tone of voice that Elijah used, I'd like to think that there was and that the complaining of whining, self-pitying tone was now gone from his voice as he spoke these words because God did not rebuke him and instead God gave him a command, God is restoring him to service and it seems as though God knew that the best solution at this point for Elijah was not more dialogue but action, get busy

and do what needs to be done and don't continue to dwell on the past and what went wrong but go on from here.

So I think there was a change in Elijah's heart that he had repented as he went and stood before the Mount to receive the word from the Lord and he was now ready whatever God told him to do, he was ready to go back and get busy and stop his running away and return to his post of duty.

And so we see God graciously giving him work to do again.

When we fail God does not put us on the shelf as a marred vessel that is no longer useful to Him but He will be make us, every mould us and continue to use us in His service.

How thankful we can be for that.

And God not only gave Elijah work to do but he gave him a companion to share in the work so that there would be a future guard against Elijah falling into the same snare of depression and discouragement.

And so let's learn the lessons that God has for us when we come to a time of discouragement and set up safeguards for ourselves that we do not fall back into the same snare.

So in conclusion may we be alert to the snare of discouragement and dependency which Satan has used so successfully in the past and is still using and when we do stumble and fall let's follow Elijah's example of returning to God and allow Him to restore us again to useful service in His work.

Let's kneel for prayer

#6 – Elijah Finding Ahab

I invite you to turn to first Kings 21.

We would like to continue to look at the character of Elijah, we see we have a gap of six or seven years in Elijah's life that we don't know what was happening.

We left Elijah last in Sinai, we saw how God had graciously lifted him out of the slum to despair and gave him another chance, restored him to usefulness and entrusted him with more assignments, then Elijah disappears for six or seven years.

What was Elijah doing? We are not told but we do have some clues.

Before this time, remember Elijah was serving in the northern kingdom, the northern kingdom that 10 tribes had broken off from the southern kingdom, the northern kingdom had an unbroken line of wicked kings, from Jeroboam we set up the golden calves on through each King which was more wicked than the one before until 250 years later they were carried into captivity by the Assyrians, and this is about, I didn't check, but probably about the half way point in the 250 year history where Ahab was King and seemingly at the pinnacle of wickedness.

In the northern kingdom we find up until this time very few prophets serving, we can imagine that most of the prophets, most of the faithful men of God went to the southern kingdom to live so that they could least worship at the Temple and could serve the true God even though it was not all a good kingdom the southern kingdom either, there were police at times the times of revival and true worshipping established.

There were two prophets in the northern kingdom and some of the prophets that are mentioned travel north from the southern kingdom, we think of the prophet that went to prophesy at the altar in Jeroboam's day.

Now we are told that in Obadiah's time that he hid 100 prophets in a cave, (1 Kings 18:4) that seems to be some about like what the prophets were doing in the northern kingdom, that are covering in fear in silence, hiding in a cave and they were allowed Elijah to stand forth as the lone voice of truth to the extent that Elijah thought that he was the only one left that was standing up for God.

And when Elijah finally broke under that heavy weight of responsibility God gave him a young helper, Elisha to help in this work.

But as we read on before long we find prophets appearing at regular intervals in the northern kingdom and we will notice some of that as we move along in this message, and on Elijah's last journey when he was travelling to his appointment with the chariot that was going to carry him to heaven we find him stopping at different schools of the prophets along the way.

And so we wonder what was Elijah doing during these six or seven years? Was he spending his time gathering zealous young men together and forming schools of prophets?

It appears very probable, possibly the work of training Elisha inspired him to do the same for others and to bring more young men into the work of serving as prophets.

Now we come to the next recorded appearance of Elijah in first Kings 21 and we find him again being called to confront a corrupt King Ahab with God's standard of truth.

One day as King Ahab surveyed his palace grounds his gaze found a lush vineyard next door and he began to think, If only that Vineyard were mine, that would be a perfect spot for the herb garden that I've been dreaming about.

So he began to dream what he would do with this plot of ground if it were his, he could picture in his mind what he would plan where, where he would lay it out and the more he thought about it the more he wanted it and finally he decided I have to have that vineyard.

So he called the owner, a godly man named Naboth and demanded, Give me that vineyard. He said I will pay you what you want for it or I will even give you a better Vineyard instead if you prefer that.

Without a moment's hesitation Naboth said, No, God forbid that I would sell you my fathers' inheritance.

Naboth had a reason for his denial God had said that should not sell the land and if the man by poverty was forced to sell his land in the year of Jubilee it was to be restored to him and Naboth certainly knew that Ahab had no respect for God's law and would have no intention of ever returning his vineyard one came into his possession.

So Naboth had to say no, based on the law, based on God's commands.

Well King Ahab responded to this denial like a bratty child, he threw himself on his bed sulking, when the Queen, Queen Jezebel came and asked him what had happened she mocked him and said, Aren't you the King of Israel, can't you get what you want? If not I can get it for you. And it did not take long to come up with a fiendish plan to get what they wanted.

She commanded the rulers of the city to frame Naboth and having put to death on false charges.

The shrewdness and quickness of this thought makes you wonder if she and the city rulers that didn't have some previous experience in plans like this.

Well the devil's deed was done, Naboth and his sons were murdered, **2 Kings 9:26** would tell us that not only Naboth but his sons also were included in this murder.

And so with no heirs the land could be claimed by the King and no one would be the wiser, or so Ahab thought.

That brings us to the account we would like to look at this morning **1 Kings 21:17-29** And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ¹⁸ Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which *is* in Samaria: behold, *he is* in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. ¹⁹ And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. ²⁰ And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found *thee*: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD. ²¹ Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, ²² And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked *me* to anger, and made Israel to sin. ²³ And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. ²⁴ Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat. ²⁵ But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. ²⁶ And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all *things* as did the Amo-

rites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. ²⁷ And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. ²⁸ And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ²⁹ Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: *but* in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.

We would like to look at this story by focusing on three different quotes that we find here.

The first quote we would like to look at is the question that God asked, Hast thou killed and also taken possession? [1 Kings 21:19](#).

God also often uses questions when approaching man:-

Adam, where art thou? [Genesis 3:9](#)

Cain, where is Abel thy brother? [Genesis 4:9](#)

Saul, what meaneth the bleating of the sheep? [1 Samuel 15:14](#)

Gehazi, whence comest thou? [2 Kings 5:25](#)

Does God ask questions like this to learn the answer?

Well we know that God knows everything; He knows the answers so it doesn't need to ask the questions to discover the truth, rather He asks the question to give man an opportunity to consider the answer, to consider what he is doing and to give him an opportunity to repent of it.

Ahab at this juncture could have cried like David did, I have sinned and shed innocent blood.

Hast thou, hast thou killed? God asked Ahab.

Ahab could have said, It wasn't me, it was Jezebel.

Jezebel could have said, It wasn't me, it was the rulers of the city.

The rulers of the city could have said, It wasn't us it was the people who threw the stones.

But God said to King Ahab, Hast thou killed? Thou, thou art the man, thou hast killed Naboth.

Ahab was a weak willed King who was easily manipulated by his strong-willed wife, he found it easier to lay in bed and let Jezebel do what had to be done, even though she wrote the letters he let her use his seal and God laid the blame where it belonged.

Jezebel had said in effect, aren't you the King? Implying that Ahab could do whatever he wanted.

But God was saying, You are the King and you are responsible for what you allow to happen.

And so it is a reminder to us that if we go quietly along when others plan wrong we become guilty of that wrong also.

What about when we are in a circle and foolish jesting or disrespectful talk takes place, do we stay in that circle and don't speak up? By our very presence we are lending support to that and we become a party to that also.

May God give us the courage to speak out the truth or to at least leave the circle so that we are not supporting what is happening by our presence.

Ahab thought that once Naboth was killed he could take possession.

God said, Hast thou killed and also taken possession?

He was reminding Ahab that it wasn't his to decide who possesses the land, he was forgetting that the earth is the Lord's and that God decides who possesses the land.

We heard that in our devotional that we may work hard to possess our land but finally how much claim do we have to it, how long will we have it?

So it is a good reminder that nothing on this earth, possessing anything on this earth is fleeting and all that we have is God's, it comes from Him and will return to Him someday.

Let's move next to the question that Ahab asked Elijah.

Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? [1 Kings 19:20](#).

We can picture Ahab sauntering through the vineyard, gloating over his recent acquisition and his heart and conscience apparently doesn't say a word.

Suddenly he freezes, catches a glimpse of someone coming down the road, who is it? It can't be, it can't be Elijah! I haven't seen him for six or seven years, and he had hoped that he would never see him again!

But he could not deny his eyes, it was Elijah.

And he must have thought, Not here, not now! And without stopping to think he probably crouched down among the grapevines hoping against hope that Elijah had not spied him and as he peers through the leaves his worst fears have realised, he sees Elijah turning in at the gate purposefully striding straight for him.

Realising that he had been spotted the King straightens up and snarls, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?

What was happening here?

Well Ahab conscience wasn't working and God had to send him and external conscience. And once Elijah appeared Ahab's conscience was suddenly prodded to life.

Does that ever happen to us? Well with probably all had the experience sometime other that we slipped into doing something without giving it a lot of conscious thought or maybe we rationalised our way into it and quietened our conscience but when a brother or sister appeared suddenly we realise that we should not have been doing this and we begin to feel guilty and our conscience begins to work.

Well let's thank God when He sends someone to serve as our conscience, to help our conscience, to stimulate our conscience.

And we must also be willing to be that for someone else to help our brothers or sisters if there conscience needs a prod.

O mine enemy!

Who was Ahab talking to? Who was he calling his enemy?

Well it was the prophet of God. Why did he consider the prophet of God to be his enemy?

Well Ahab probably without realising it was betraying the fact that he himself was in rebellion against God and was the enemy of God.

And when a person is at enmity with God he is also in enmity with God's people. Well we too had one time were enemies of God, weren't we? [Colossians 1:21](#) And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.

How thankful we can be that we don't need to remain in enmity with God, with His people.

But it is a reminder that if we are having trouble getting along with God's people we had better examine our relationship with God because when we are at peace with God we will also be at peace with His people and will not need to consider them our adversaries.

An enemy is an adversary, someone who is working against you, trying to harm you, and what Ahab did not realise is that Elijah was doing just the opposite, Elijah was working for his good, Elijah had his soul is eternal welfare in mind, that is why Elijah was doing what he was doing. So Elijah should have been considered his best friend based on what Elijah was doing for him but rather Ahab considered him his enemy.

King Ahab had a value system that was strangely twisted.

In the chapter before, chapter 20, King Ahab was fighting for his life, fighting for his country's very survival, he had an enemy in the King of Syria, Ben Hadad who was determined to wipe out the country of Israel, to annihilate them and bring them into subjection.

With God's help and God's mercy Ahab and the Israelites one of victory over the Syrians and Ben Hadad's army was destroyed and Ben Hadad himself was running for his life and Ahab was pursuing him and as Ahab approached Ben Hadad's hiding place Ben Hadad he sent his servants out and said, We have heard that the Kings of Israel are merciful, go and plead for my life.

The servants came to King Ahab and said, Ben Hadad thy servant is asking for his life.

And Ahab said, Ben Hadad! He is my brother! And he spared Ben Hadad's life and made a covenant with him. [1 Kings 20](#).

So we see how perverted Ahab's value system was, his worst enemy he called his brother and his best friend who call this enemy.

Of that illustrates how Satan mixes people up, our Satan deceive people, he is not content and people are so mixed up that they call good evil and evil good as Ahab was doing in this account.

By this account we are reminded that we should expect slander from wicked men, our righteous lives should be activating their guilty consciences and when we stand for the truth we may be accused of being the enemy of public peace as they had earlier accused Elijah.

One wise man said at one point, What have I done wrong to make all these bad men speak well of me?

Jesus also said, Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you. [Luke 6:26](#).

If we never raised the ire of the ungodly men we have to wonder if we are really testifying for the truth as we ought to.

Let's move now in the third-place to Elijah's statement; I have found thee.

1 Kings 21:20

We see this calm response of Elijah, Elijah did not rise to the bait that Ahab place before him, he did not respond to the insult of Ahab, he calmly ignored it and went on with the message that he came to deliver.

He did not try to defend himself against the charge being Ahab's enemy.

We think of all that he could have said to Ahab why the situation was so the way it was but he only went on and delivered the message that God gave him to deliver.

I have found thee.

God always finds the sinner.

It is not that sinners can play hide and seek with God because God knows where they are all the time. Jonah discovered he could not run away from God.

David testified that he could not escape from God's all seeing eye.

In [Psalm 139:7-11](#) David said, Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? ⁸ If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. ⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; ¹⁰ Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. ¹¹ If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

Well sinners may tried to hide from God's messengers as Ahab apparently did even then God can direct their paths together so that the message of truth is brought to them, they cannot escape God's message of judgement, even if they manage to hide themselves from God's messengers now there will come a time when they wish that they could hide from God and won't be able to and they will even call for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them to hide them from God's face ([Revelation 6:15-16](#)) but it will be futile, they will be brought into God's very presence for judgement.

Nothing stays hidden that God won't reveal, be sure that your sins will find you out.

People go to great lengths to cover their tracks, to hide their sins.

I was recently reading a book on the collapse of Amron, the energy trading company that went into bankruptcy several years ago and it told the story

of how to reporters began to investigate Amron and some of their business practices and the deeper they dug in the business and the more they turned up of deceptive practices that were being used they discovered false companies and partnerships and fronts to cover up the money that was being, that the officials were taking out of the company at the expense of the stockholders, and as these investigators turned that up and reported on it public confidence in the company decreased, their stock value went down, credit disappeared and the company went into bankruptcy in 24 days' time. That was an example of wrong trying to be covered but being brought out into the open, being revealed. Some of those company officials went to jail and I believe they are still in jail today for their misdeeds.

I have found thee!

God was seeking Ahab, God was seeking Ahab not just to punish him but to give him an opportunity to repent.

And I was impressed with God's great mercy and how often He sent prophets to King Ahab.

I mentioned that prophets began appearing at regular intervals, let's just look at chapter 20, [1 Kings 20:13](#) And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the LORD,

And he had a message of mercy, message of victory, that God would give the victory over the Syrians.

Verse 22,

[1 Kings 20:22](#) And the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest: for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against thee.

God sent a prophet again to warn him against an upcoming attack of the enemy.

Verse 28

[1 Kings 20:28](#) And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD...

And again he had a message of victory that he brought to the Israelites.

Verse 38 after Ahab made a covenant with Ben Hadad

[1 Kings 20:38](#) So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face.

And he had a message of judgement on Ahab for making that covenant with Ben Hadad.

In chapter 21 we read how God sent the prophet Elijah with that message for King Ahab.

In chapter 22 Ahab is again going to war this time with Jehoshaphat King of Judah helping him and the prophet Micaiah was there to again bring the voice of truth and the message of God to King Ahab and in fact warned him that he would die if he went into battle. God gave him that one last opportunity, told in that if you go to this battle you will die but Ahab went disregarding God's voice and did lose his life.

We see how merciful God again and again sent prophets to King Ahab giving him one chance after another to hear the message of truth and to respond to it.

Well God is still seeking sinners today.

Jesus said for the son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost, [Luke 19:10](#).

Jesus in [Luke 15:4-6](#) told the parable of the Shepherd who had one hundred sheep and lost one little lamb, he left the ninety and nine and went out into the wilderness, went to great lengths to find that which was lost, and when he found the because friends and neighbours together and said rejoice with me for I have found that which was lost

The challenge to us today, Can God use us like he used Elijah to seek sinners? Are we able to say I have found thee. To what lengths do we go to seek those out that are enemies of God?

Are we willing to go to Harrisonburg, are we willing to go to New York City, to Boston, are we willing to go to other countries if God calls us?

Let's be sensitive to God's voice and in God's leading, allow Him to use us to seek His lost sheep today.

Elijah said, I have found thee.

God had sent him but Elijah had to respond, Elijah had to allow himself to be used, he had a personal part to play in this situation.

We can imagine that this was not an easy test for Elijah, we can imagine the excuses that may have come to his mind, he may have said, Well God, this is not good timing, his hands are still bloody as it were from Naboth. And you want me to go and to confront him? If I do that I'll end up like Naboth.

No, Elijah courageously obeyed God and went.

Elijah had probably acknowledged the fact that he may needs to give his life and was willing to risk is life to obey God to bring God's message to King Ahab.

Why was Elijah looking for Ahab?

Well it gives the answer in verse 20, I have found the because thou has sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord. [1 Kings 21:20](#)

Ahab had sold himself.

It is tragic when one man is sold as a slave to another man but it is worse when a man sells himself as a slave to Satan and this tragedy, the desperate circumstances that these people were in that have sold themselves should lead us to go looking for them to warn them of what they have done to bring them the message of judgement if they don't repent and God's mercy if they are willing to repent.

We should be seeking people to bring them deliverance, those that are in bondage to Satan.

Elijah also found Ahab to deliver message of judgement.

And again this was not an easy pleasant message to deliver, he had to tell Ahab of his impending death, he had to tell Ahab that his house would be completely destroyed, he had to tell Ahab the dogs would eat his wife, he had to tell Ahab that his family would die violent deaths, their bodies would be left unburied for the animals to eat.

But Elijah passed on this message at God had asked him to.

So we too face the challenge, do we unashamedly give men the Bible message and warned them to flee from the wrath to come?

We heard in devotions has sometimes it is easy to be quiet, how we find excuses to excuse ourselves from speaking, we might look at ourselves and think about our faults and wonder how we can bring a message of judgement to someone else, but as we heard in our Sunday school devotions that we first allow God to deal with us and cleanse us from our faults and then He can use us to present His message to others.

Think of examples of other men of the Bible who had an unpopular message to give and did it unapologetically and convincingly.

We think of John the Baptist and Jesus and Peter and Stephen and Paul, each of them and it would be interesting to turn to those accounts and look

how they brought the messages that are not easy to bring but did it, and God could use them to bring salvation to people, to bring people to Himself.

Well Elijah seeking Ahab resulted in Ahab's repentance.

But we have to ask the question, What kind of repentance was this? Was it true repentance?

Did Ahab's repentance result in his salvation?

Ahab of what we read in [1 Kings 21:27-29](#) certainly sounds good and we see that God did honour it to a certain extent, but was it sincere and life changing for Ahab?

If you look in the next chapter I think we have the answer to those questions, in verse six Ahab and Jehoshaphat had come together to go to battle and Ahab called together 400 prophets but Jehoshaphat said, Is there not a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him? [1 Kings 22:6-7](#).

Apparently these were prophets of Baal that Ahab was calling together and Jehoshaphat saw that they were not prophets of the LORD and Ahab said, Well there is one man, Micaiah by whom we may enquire of the Lord but I hate him, for he does not prophesy good concerning me but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the King say so. [1 Kings 22:8](#)

So we see that Ahab did not change his life, his attitude toward God, towards God's messengers and God's word was the same as it was before, he still considered God's messengers his enemies and he had hatred in his heart for those that would bring God's word to him and he calls that message from the Lord evil, he prophesies evil concerning me, he would not acknowledge it is the truth.

And we see that apparently Ahab did not continue in his repentance or did not allow it to change his life and at the end of the chapter [1 Kings 22:51-53](#), is the last commentary on Ahab, the Bible commentary after his death it says, Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. ⁵² And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin: ⁵³ For he served Baal, and wor-

shipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

So Ahab goes down in history as one of the worst Kings that Israel ever had.

So we might ask the question now, What was lacking in Ahab's repentance? Why was he acting like this?

Well I believe that Ahab was distressed by the message of severe judgement, he was sorry that he was caught, he was pitying himself for what he and his house would have to suffer but he did not have the fortitude to follow through and make the changes that were necessary to escape the coming judgement, to get right with God, he would have had to go against his wicked heathen wife and make her stop worshipping idols or put to death if she would not, he did not have the fortitude to do that.

It would have meant reversing that all he had given his life to doing to building up Baal worship in Israel.

Well if Ahab was not sincere or was not willing to follow through whole way then why did God give Ahab some credit for his repentance?

I believe it was because of was a step in the right direction and God wished to rewarding to this much, He wanted to encourage him to take the next step and to go all the way.

And so again we see God's mercy, God's graciousness and when Ahab humbled himself God extend mercy to him and if Ahab had continued we know God's mercy would have continued, God would have possibly even remove the judgement or postponed the judgement further if Ahab would have done what was right.

Did Ahab deserve this mercy, this warning, this offer of another chance, this postponement of judgement?

Well no he certainly did not and he deserved it no more than we deserve God's mercy that He shows to us but we think Him for His mercy and His continued mercy in dealing with us.

Well in conclusion as we looked at this story we saw a great contrast between two men, a contrast between a cringing might guilty sinner and a bold upright man of God that He could use to seek lost sinners.

May we pattern our lives after the life of Elijah and allow God to use us and be faithful and be diligent to take God's message to the lost about us and may we never need to be to fear being found as Ahab did but to have our lives open before God.

Let's kneel for prayer.

#7 – Elijah's Message to Ahaziah

In second Kings chapter 1 we see Elijah approaching the end of a long useful life, the very next chapter marks/tells the end of his life on earth.

How do we see Elijah spending his last years on the earth? Does he retire to some secluded spot to enjoy his remaining years in peace and quiet?

Well no, we find him still in harness, God can still send him on demanding dangerous missions.

We are reminded of the verse in Psalm 92 that says they still bring forth fruit in old age, [Psalm 92:14](#).

Elijah was fruitful until the end and we can imagine that his prayer was like the psalmist's prayer in [Psalm 71:18](#) Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto *this* generation, *and* thy power to everyone *that* is to come.

Elijah was still endeavouring to be useful to stand for truth and to proclaim God's message even at the end of his life.

Let's read second Kings chapter 1.

[2 Kings 1:1-18](#) Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.

Remember our last look at the life of Elijah's was when he confronted Ahab in Naboth's vineyard and presented the message of severe judgement and although Ahab repented and humbled himself God pushed off the judgement until after Ahab's death. Ahab had still hardened himself and

continued to rebel against God and met the death, a bloody death that God had foretold for him. So then after Ahab's death Ahaziah was reigning.

2 Kings 1:1-18 Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab
² And Ahaziah (that would be Ahab's son) fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that *was* in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease. ³ But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, *Is it* not because *there is* not a God in Israel, *that* ye go to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? ⁴ Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed. ⁵ And when the messengers turned back unto him, (that would be unto the King) he said unto them, Why are ye now turned back? ⁶ And they said unto him, There came a man up to meet us, and said unto us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, *Is it* not because *there is* not a God in Israel, *that* thou sendest to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron? therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. ⁷ And he said unto them, What manner of man *was he* which came up to meet you, and told you these words? ⁸ And they answered him, *He was* an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, *It is* Elijah the Tishbite. ⁹ Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him: and, behold, he sat on the top of an hill. And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down. ¹⁰ And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, *If I be* a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. ¹¹ Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly. ¹² And Elijah answered and said unto them, *If I be* a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. ¹³ And he sent again a captain of the third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight. ¹⁴ Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties: therefore let my

life now be precious in thy sight. ¹⁵ And the angel of the LORD said unto Elijah, Go down with him: be not afraid of him. And he arose, and went down with him unto the king. ¹⁶ And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron, *is it* not because *there is* no God in Israel to enquire of his word? therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. ¹⁷ So he died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And Jehoram reigned in his stead in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; because he had no son. ¹⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

We want to consider a number of points from this story as given in this chapter and then turn to the New Testament reference to this story and notice some lessons for us from that account also.

First of all we want to consider Elijah's circumstances as we see in verses one and two.

King Ahaziah was the wicked son of a wicked father and mother, if possible he was even more hardened than his father because he had the warnings that God had given to his father, the judgements that God had pronounced on his father but King Ahaziah disregarded those and continued to heap up iniquity upon iniquity.

The last verses in first Kings 22 describe Ahaziah's reign.

[1 Kings 22:51-53](#) ⁵ Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. ⁵² And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin: ⁵³ For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

Because of the wickedness of the nation of Israel it was a time of national weakness, we see in verse one that Moab who had been in subjection to Israel was now able to rebel and throw off Israel's yoke and Israel without God's help found themselves helpless to keep Moab in subjection. And so we see that these circumstances were much like our circumstances today.

The wicked being in power, the nations being weakened, God trying to get the nations attention through calamities.

Well King Ahaziah fell under God's judgement, this lattice, it is mentioned that he fell through a lattice could also be translated balustrade or banister, apparently he leaned against the banister and it collapsed and he fell from second story and was injured, severely injured. [2 Kings 1:2](#)

But Ahaziah simply supposed it to be an accident and never thought of turning to God in repentance and pleading for healing from God.

We see in this how dangerous to depend on the world's security, to lean on the world's banisters, Ahaziah felt secure, he was at home in his own Palace, the safest place to be and is mortally injured. He was not facing the dangers of the battlefield but he was at home in his Palace when he fell under God's judgement.

Secondly we would like to consider Elijah's foe,

Who was Elijah's foe in this chapter? Was it the wicked King?

Well yes but there was a larger conflict and this becomes obvious as the story unfolds, the conflict was not just between Elijah and Ahaziah but between the God of heaven and the false god Baalzebub.

Who was Baalzebub? Well he was the God of Ekron.

Ekron was one of the main five cities of the Philistines. You remember from Bible geography that the Philistines held the coast along the Mediterranean Sea and they had been there from the time the Israelites into the land, the Philistines were one of the Canaanite nations that God had told them to drive out of the land and Israel fail to do that so God said they will stay there as a thorn in your side.

And again and again He warned them against the snares of the false gods of the Canaanites that remained in the land and here we see a clear example of this happening.

The King of Israel himself sent to the god of the Philistines for answers for help.

Baalzebub means Lord of the flies.

Now why would anyone worship a god named Lord of the flies?

Some Bible scholars think that this means they worshipped an idol in the actual shape of a fly, we know that the ancient Egyptians did things like

that, they worshipped frogs and other animals. Others think that this god supposedly was the god who created the flies or controlled swarms flies.

But there is probably a deeper meaning here.

We tend to think of idols as helpless maybe even harmless chunks of stone or metal but in actuality the idols, the false idols that people set up to worship were linked to the demon world and this is brought out in first Corinthians 10.

In first Corinthians Paul is addressing this subject of eating meats offered to idols and at one point he says we know that an idol is nothing (1 Corinthians 8:4) and that is true as far as an idol having any true spiritual health or being linked with the true God but then he goes on to give this warning in first Corinthians 10 verse 20,

1 Corinthians 10:20-21 But I *say*, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. ²¹ Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

So this Baalzebub, the Lord of the flies, was actually a Lord of the Demons, a Lord of the swarms of evil spirits and the New Testament bears this out. When Jesus was on earth and casting out devils the Pharisees accused Him of casting out devils by the Prince of devils, and what name did they give to this Prince of devils?

And notice in Luke 11:14-20 And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. ¹⁵ But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. ¹⁶ And others, tempting *him*, sought of him a sign from heaven. ¹⁷ But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house *divided* against a house falleth. ¹⁸ If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. ¹⁹ And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? therefore shall they be your judges. ²⁰ But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.

Here we see that Beelzebub and Satan are used synonymously and this is the same word that we find for the name of this god, this Baalzebub, this false god, the god of Ekron that is in our text today.

So what was happening here was that the King of Israel was seeking through contact with the Demon world to learn his future and this method of dealing with difficulty was not uniquely to Elijah's day, all through time up to our own day and ever increasingly men turn to the power of darkness try and learn about the future and as society moves further and further from God they are more susceptible to Satan's deceptions.

And we need to be careful that we stay far away from any attempts to foretell the future such as fortune telling, or horoscopes or astrology or palm reading.

The world uses the term white magic to refer to magic that is not all for magic that appears harmless or even is used for doing good, the popular Harry Potter books and films today are an example of the world's intrigue with white magic, but we see this as part of Satan's efforts to get even children interested in even accustomed to magic and dabbling with the powers of darkness and we see how very dangerous that is as they get drawn in deeper and deeper under Satan's control.

Maybe closer home to us today are the health remedies or other practices that lack scientific explanations and that propose to link or use energy, unexplained energy for healing.

We know that sometimes even plain people get drawn into things like reflexology or applied kinesiology or biofeedback or homoeopathy, and these things are usually explained in terms of energy flow or energy fields or body magnetism.

And you don't need to do much reading until you see that there is an energy that we are tying into or dealing with that is unexplained in scientific terms.

Just a quote here from a book on reflexology it says:

"You might want to imagine healing energy flowing, if your lower back aches you might picture a healing blue light flowing to that part of your back, you may see it first above your head and pull it into your body with each breath you inhale then send it to your lower back feel your back heal as the blue light floods that area."

Another quote from the same book:

“So clear your mind and centre your attention before you begin, breathed deeply drawing in the healing energy of the universe, make it your intention to be a channel of healing for the person that you are working on keeping in mind that it is not your own personal energy that passes into the feet that you are holding but you are tapping into unlimited universal energy.”

Now we know that scientists continues to make new discoveries and that some things that were unexplainable in the past are explained scientifically today but as God’s people we need to keep our guards are up and be very careful about dabbling into things that are not explainable scientifically.

And another at a challenge today is that even medical doctors are incorporating some of these things into their practice and are turning more and more towards holistic healing.

Recently in a Doctor’s brochure I read this statement, “We minister to the whole body, mind and spirit.”

Well that’s good if you’re a Christian doctor, if I’d be a Christian doctor I’d want to minister to people spiritually, also yet we need to be aware if we are going to a doctor that is not a Christian that they may be attempting to Minister to us spiritually and we need to keep our guards up and be alert to things like this that we are not drawn into entanglements with the powers of darkness.

Elijah was sent by God to challenge this attempt to contact the spirit world and we too should be alert and willing to speak out against any involvement with the powers of darkness, especially as our world turns more and more to them.

A few verses from the New Testament about the powers of darkness, [Ephesians 5:8](#). For ye were sometimes darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord: walk as children of light.

[1 Thessalonians 5:5-6](#) Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. ⁶ Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober.

[Romans 13:12](#) The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

May we be like Elijah willing to confront the powers of darkness in our day.

Thirdly we would like to consider Elijah's message. We see this in verses three and four, [2 Kings 1:3-4](#).

Elijah came with the message and it wasn't the message of his own choosing, it wasn't his own opinions that he was bringing, he was coming with a message, Thus saith the Lord.

This was a message from the God of heaven, this was a message from the all-knowing God, God knew where these messages were going, He knew when they were going, He knew why they were going, He knew the heart of the King and He knew the future that the King so badly wanted to find out about. In fact it was God who had planned the future and controlled and to future so it was he they could give this message, Thus saith the Lord.

Well we today too must be carrying the message of God, not our own words. When we witness we should use God's words to witness, when we warn people about their sin about the judgement to come we should be using God's words, Thus saith the Lord.

When we offer comfort and encouragement there again we can offer God's words, we can bring God's words and it needs to be God that is speaking through us, we are messengers, we are His messengers carrying His words to the world about us.

Part of Elijah's message is: Is it not because there is not a God in Israel? [2 Kings 1: 3](#)

That's an interesting phrase, and we might have thought that God would say: Is there not a God in Israel that you can turn to?

But no, God was saying there is not a God in Israel, Israel as a whole, Israel as a nation had turned their back on God and rejected Him and so God was acknowledging this fact that there was not a God in Israel.

How sad.

But how true is that of our country today? Is our country is turning further and further from God is trying to disassociate themselves from God, taking prayer and Bible reading out of the schools, trying to take "We Trust in God" from the money, take and the displays of the 10 Commandments out of the courtrooms.

How soon will God need to say, Is it not because there is not a God in America that you are turning to the powers of darkness?

And so these people because they could not turn to the true God there was not a God in Israel to be enquired of. Elijah told King Ahaziah that they had to turn to the powers of darkness, to the evil spirits and the Demons and fall down and worshipped them instead of the true God.

Elijah had more to his message, he had a message of judgement, Thou shalt surely die. [2 Kings 1: 3](#)

This was part of the severe judgement that God had pronounced on Ahab's house and it had begun to be fulfilled and would continue to be fulfilled and it was Ahaziah's own risk that he would ignore this judgement, but yet it would seem that even here he did not humble himself as his father did when the message came to him he persisted in his hardness of heart, refused to hear and fell under that message of judgement, he died, after only two years as King he died.

We too need to be proclaiming the message that sin brings death and that all who do not turn to God and except His offer of life will die.

Let's not be ashamed to pronounce that message but to hold forth the light and the life that God is offering so that people do not need to die spiritually.

Let's consider in the fourth place Elijah's appearance.

This is the only description we have that I'm aware of on Elijah's appearance. And it is interesting that the King recognised him immediately from these few words of description of who this man was. [2 Kings 1:8](#)

Elijah apparently was consistent in his appearance, he had not changed, they knew that if the man looked like this he must be the prophet Elijah.

This description of Elijah is a hairy man literally means a man of hair and it could mean, it could refer to the fact that Elijah had taken a Nazarite vow as Samson did and therefore the left his hair and his beard grow uncut, but more likely it refers to the hairy garments that he wore, and maybe it referred to both.

Hairy garments or rough garments with the marks of a prophet in Old Testament times.

We find this in [Zechariah 13:4](#) where we have a negative reference to this but it show us, it illustrates the point: ⁴ And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:

A rough garment means a hairy garment so it is referring to the same thing so that was obviously the mark of a prophet.

When John the Baptist came he came in the spirit and power of Elijah (Elias in the New Testament) and it is interesting how similar his description is or how similar his appearance is described to Elijah's description. [Luke 1:17](#) And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, And his description is found in [Matthew 3:4](#) And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, (notice a hairy garment) and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.

Why did the prophets appear like this? Why did they dress like this?

Well as a symbol of self-denial, they were not living a soft easy life, Jesus at one point asked them, What did ye go out to see when you went out to see John the Baptist, did you go to see a man in soft raiment? ([Matthew 11:7-9](#))

Well no he was a man in rough clothing, he was living a self-denying life, he ate a simple diet, self-denying diet.

And we wonder how much of the lesson we would have to learn from these men, how much more power would we have if we had the power of Elijah and the power of John the Baptist if we lived more self-denying lives, more simple life?

Let's take a challenge to live the life that God calls us to as we saw in Romans chapter 12 in our Sunday school is in that we would live lives that are living sacrifices to God ([Romans 12:1](#)).

Next let's consider Elijah's power.

After delivering this message to the messengers they went back and tell that to the King and Elijah stayed in the area, he stayed nearby, he did not run in fear for his life as he had done on another occasion.

Elijah apparently had learnt the lesson that if God was on his side he had nothing to fear, so we sat down and waited apparently.

Did he know, did he expect that the messages would be back, that the King would send men to arrest him?

Well if so he could sit calmly and weights because he knew he was an instrument in God's hand that nothing could happen to him that God did not allow.

And before long there was a clank of armour as a contingent of soldiers marched down the road but Elijah stayed where he was, stayed on the hill where he could see them coming and watched calmly as they came closer and closer.

When the captain approached the hill he called up to Elijah, Thou man of God, the King hath said, Come down. And Elijah replies, If I be a man of God then let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy fifty. And it happened [2 Kings 1:9-10](#).

Why?

What had the captains and his soldiers done to deserve such a swift and severe judgement?

Well I think the clue lies in Elijah's cry, If I be a man of God.

The unbelieving King and his wicked advisers did not believe in the God of Israel, they believed in Baal and Baalzebub and they dared to attempt to silence God's voice by attacking the messenger that God had sent and this brazen captain carried the same attitude, in essence he was saying, You're claiming to be a man of God, you're saying, Thus saith the Lord. But I'm telling you Thus saith the King.

It is not God you need to fear, it is the King you need to fear. You think you can defy the King, will show you who really is the boss around here.

And Elijah said, If I am a man of God then let fire fall. And it fell!

Elijah was concerned about the honour and glory of God and God's name was being blasphemed, His name was being disrespected and just as on Mount Carmel Elijah wanted Israel to know who the true God was and he said, if I'm a man of God, if I'm bringing a message from God, if God is in heaven He is the true God then let the fire fall, and it fell.

And this happened not once but twice, you see how hard these people were against the voice of God, even fire falling from heaven did not get their attention to it happened the second time.

Well the third captain was a wiser and or humbler man then the other two and he came trembling before Elijah, and before Elijah's God, he fell down before Elijah and pleaded for mercy and God was ready to give him mercy and to spare his life and the life of his men.

So again we have a picture of God's mercy just waiting to extend to those that turn to Him in repentance. God is not willing that any should perish, ([2 Peter 3:9](#)) he is not eager to bring judgement on wicked men. He would rather extend mercy if they would only humble themselves and accepts His offer of mercy.

Next we see Elijah's submission.

And we have an interesting scene before us, this powerful prophet, who had just called down fire from heaven to burn up 102 soldiers, now meekly surrendering and walking escorted under guard to appear before the King.

Why?

Because God told him to, at God's word he was willing to do it, at God's word he called fire from heaven. And we know that it was not Elijah's work to bring this fire from heaven it was God who sent the fire, Elijah was simply doing what God wanted him to do and here where the God told him to call fire from heaven or God told him to go with the soldiers he would obey and he went.

Whether he understood what was happening, even though he was walking as it were into the lion's jaws still he went again with strong faith that God would care for him.

And in this surrender and submission of Elijah don't we see a beautiful type of Christ? who came to earth to do his Father's will and to do that withheld His power and allowed Himself to be arrested and mistreated and even crucified.

Elijah's meekness here was not weakness, we see in the King's presence he again boldly proclaimed the message of God, the message that God had given him, a message of judgement.

We see that Elijah was effective, just like his father King Ahaziah seem to be helpless in Elijah's presence he was powerless to even raise a hand against Elijah, could not even tell the soldiers to detain him apparently. We don't know the details but it appears as though Elijah walked out a free

man after delivering the message of God and his prophecy was fulfilled, King Ahaziah died as Elijah proclaimed.

Now let's turn to the New Testament account in Luke chapter 9.

One day Jesus was travelling through Samaria and probably he and his disciples past the very hill that Elijah had sat upon that day, most likely they rehearsed the account, the account came to their minds and they discussed that as they walked past this hill.

With this account fresh in their minds they had an experience that made the disciples think about this again and wished they could repeat Elijah's experience.

[Luke 9:51-56](#) And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, ⁵² And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. ⁵³ And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ And when his disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? ⁵⁵ But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. ⁵⁶ For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save *them*. And they went to another village.

Ye know not what spirit ye are of said Jesus.

What spirit were they off?

Well these men were of a passionate spirit. [Mark 3:17](#) tells us that these men were called the sons of thunder, they were men that were full of fire, full of zeal, and this is good if it is governed, men like this can get much work done in the kingdom, men like this can also cause a lot of damage if their spirits are not controlled. Ye know not what spirit ye are off.

They were of vindictive spirit.

Now they would have said that they were most concerned for the honour of Christ, that they were upset about the insult that these people dared to give to Jesus but Jesus words revealed that there was an underlying motive, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are.

If they had truly honest with themselves and had searched their hearts they would have had to admit that they had been personally offended by the doors that was slammed in their faces.

Maybe there had been rude words spoken, maybe there were even racial slurs hurled at them as they sought hospitality in this town.

But they came back to Jesus nettled in spirit and smarting underneath their brave exterior and they were just hoping for an opportunity to see these villains get there just reward.

Well how often we of the same spirit?

Maybe when passing out Living Waters we are curtly refused or even verbally abused, do we think with some satisfaction about the day of judgement when this method will be set straight?

Or maybe we approach a brother or sister with the brotherly address and we get snubbed.

Are we happy for the opportunity to take another brother or sister with us to help set him straight, even better too be able to take to the church so that it gets publicly dealt with?

Not that we should not do these things but what spirit are we of and in what spirit do we do these things?

What spirit should these disciples have been of?

They should have been of the spirit of Christ, the one that they were learning from, the One whose disciples they were.

Christ taught clearly how they should respond when they were mistreated in Matthew chapter 5, did they forget these words when Jesus said, But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also. [Matthew 5:39](#).

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. [Matthew 5:44](#).

And Jesus not only told them these words He showed them by example how they should respond to mistreatment.

Did Jesus ever retaliate against those of mistreating Him? Did He ever call fire down from heaven or pronounce immediate judgement upon them?

No, He rather said, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do, [Luke 23:34](#).

They should have been of the spirit of meekness. [Galatians 6:1](#) says, ".....ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness;....."

When someone fails it needs to be with the spirit of meekness that we address them.

It takes more strength to quietly detour Jesus did then to withstand evil with strong words as the disciples wished to do.

They should have been of a long suffering spirit, charity suffereth long and is kind, [1 Corinthians 13:4](#).

They should have been of a loving spirit, speaking the truth in love, [Ephesians 4:15](#).

Yes that doesn't mean that we do not address wrong but we do it in love for the good of the person for their own benefit we address the wrong.

They should have been of a patient spirit. I believe it was last Sunday when we looked at verses in first Thessalonians 5 where it tells us to warn them that are unruly and comfort the feebleminded and support the weak and be patient toward all men, [1 Thessalonians 5:14](#).

They should have been of the Holy Spirit, we said the Spirit of Christ, that is the same, the Holy Spirit.

Jesus came to bring fire on the earth, not the fire of judgement but the fire of the holy spirit, the baptism of the holy spirit ([Matthew 3: 11](#)) and that is the spirit they should have been off.

So may we learn the lesson from the Elijah's life, Elijah was a man of like passions like as we are ([James 5:17](#)) but his passions were governed, they were under control of God's Spirit and under the old Testament methods God did use Elijah as a messenger of judgement.

May we be as strong and courageous as Elijah in standing for the right and rebuking wrong but now today we have learnt the higher way of love, the higher way of Christ that He came to bring and relate to the evil by meekness and patience and love

#8 – Elijah Entering Eternity

Today we come to the wonderful story of the end of Elijah’s life on earth. I have entitled the message “Elijah Entering Eternity” I invite you to second Kings chapter 2.

In this account we have the beautiful picture of the sunset of a life, not everyone has a sunset time of life, for some death comes suddenly, some die young, others die unexpectedly and maybe most of us will have the privilege of meeting the Lord in the air rather than passing through the sunset of life.

That we want to see in this account that it is the way that life is lived that determines the quality of the end of life.

We recently heard a message here “avoiding the dismal sunset years” and this story this morning portrays the exact opposite of that, in fact it would be harder to find a sharper contrast between Elijah’s life and the end of his life because here we will be looking at one of the most beautiful sunset pictures that is found in the Bible.

Let’s read second Kings chapter 2 verses one through 16.

2 Kings 2:1-16 And it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

² And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Bethel. And Elisha said *unto him*, As the LORD liveth, and *as thy soul liveth*, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Bethel. ³ And the sons of the prophets that *were* at Bethel came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know *it*; hold ye your peace. ⁴ And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, *As the LORD liveth*, and *as thy soul liveth*, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. ⁵ And the sons of the prophets that *were* at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know *it*; hold ye your peace. ⁶ And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, *As the LORD liveth*, and *as thy soul liveth*, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. ⁷ And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan. ⁸ And Elijah took his mantle,

and wrapped *it* together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground. ⁹ And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. ¹⁰ And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: *nevertheless*, if thou see me *when I am* taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be *so*. ¹¹ And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. ¹² And Elisha saw *it*, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. ¹³ He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; ¹⁴ And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where *is* the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over. ¹⁵ And when the sons of the prophets which *were* to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him. ¹⁶ And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send.

We would like to look at this account in seven main points.

The first one I would like to consider is: Elijah's Last Work.

We see in this work that Elijah was busy in the Lord's work right to the end of his life.

There were no retirement occasions for Elijah, no lakeside cottage, no winters in Florida, no motorhome, no trips to Europe, he was busy travelling but it was in the Lord's work.

Elijah was available for service right up until the end of his life.

Yes we recognise that older people may need to slow down, they may need to retire from manual labour because of failing strength but there should be no retirement from God's service because God has work from each of his children to do that as long as they are on the earth.

They can be prayer warriors bearing the burdens of the church and the burden of struggling souls bearing those to God's throne.

They can be scribes writing letters, articles, stories.

They can be worshippers; you remember Brother Amos and his diligent efforts to come to church until the end of his life.

They can be parents and grandparents and great-grandparents, these roles never end as long as there is life.

We are also impressed with Elijah's obedience to God's commands.

We noticed that over and over again probably each time we looked at the life of Elijah we noticed obedience to one of God's commands; he was faithful in obeying and obeying promptly.

Three times in this account he says, The Lord has sent me. And he went.

And if you look back you will discover that his journeys on this last day of life, if it was one day or more than one day were not sure, but his journeys took him in a large circle, he began at Gilgal which was close to the Jordan river, travelled west to Bethel about 15 miles and then back another 15 miles to Jericho and then approximately 5 miles more over the Jordan river. A journey of about 35 miles.

And we don't know if he knew where his journey would end when he started, each time he got somewhere the Lord told him where to go from there, but either way he obeyed, he went where God sent in without questioning.

Each time he simply said, The Lord has sent me. He was ready to go.

This was not something that Elijah started doing late in life but this obedience was simply a culmination of a life of obedience to God, he was in the habit of obeying promptly without questioning, it wasn't something he had to stop and decide if he would do or not, he was in the habit of obeying every time God spoke.

Now let's look a little closer at the specific work that Elijah was involved in, looking at Elijah's last work.

What work was he doing? Well he was visiting the schools of the prophets. Now this term the schools of the prophets is not found in the Bible but rather we have different glimpses of groups of young men, they are called the sons of the prophets, that apparently were gathered together in a school for the purpose of instruction in spiritual things and preparing for service in God's work.

We have various questions about the schools of the prophets, were they something that Elijah started in his lifetime? It appears as though that the mention of them begins or at the least increases during Elijah's in Elisha's lifetime.

Or was it from the time of Samuel when it talks about Samuel and the company of prophets that Samuel was with.

We're not sure about that but probably Elijah, we can see that Elijah was investing effort anyway into this work and instructing the young men, and it would appear as though Elijah like Samuel before and like Elisha after him had a circuit that he travelled on visiting these various schools of the prophets and spending time instructing them.

We see this in [2 Kings 4:38](#) as Elijah continued the work and it says, And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and *there was* a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets *were* sitting before him:

It is a picture of students at the feet of their teacher and Elisha came again and again had a period of instruction with these young men.

And in [2 Kings 6:1](#) And the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us.

So again he was spending time, quite a bit of time with them, they said that they dwelt with him, he dwell with them in their place.

So Elijah was involved in this work of visiting the schools of the prophets and he went on right on doing what he was accustomed to doing right on to the end. Apparently God had told him what was going to happen at the end of his life. Verse one would tell us that the Lord would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind. [2 Kings 2:1](#), but he could go right on doing what he had been doing.

How is it with us? If we knew that we had three days left of life on this earth what would we do?

If we would do anything that we are not doing presently then we had better do that thing now. Oh that we would be living in such a way that if we knew that this was our last day on the earth and we could continue our normal pattern of life serving God.

In these schools of the prophets we see a parallel to our Bible schools today and their purpose of preparing our young people for the lives of service

and it reminds us too that any effort that we put into this work is not wasted effort. Parents, sometimes it may seem hard to let our young people go and to lose the help or their income for three weeks or our sisters may be burdened with the food that they need to supply for the Bible school, maybe we begrudge the gas and the time that it takes to go visit at Bible school. Let's remember that we have thousands of years of precedence of this kind of investment, the work of preparing young people for the lives of service, let us follow Elijah's in Elisha's example in this.

We see that these men had a burden for the ongoing work of the Lord. They did not make the mistake of Hezekiah who said, If there be peace and truth in my days it is good. [Isaiah 39:8](#).

They had a vision for the work going on beyond them, that young men could pick up the work and carry it on into the next generation. What are we willing to invest today in the oncoming generations?

And that leads us to the next point, still considering Elijah's last work. His work was mentoring his replacement.

We are impressed in this account with the relationship of Elisha and Elijah, how they work together in the work, travelling together, working together, talking together, walking together. In [2 Kings 2:6](#) it summarises this by saying, And they two went on..

What a beautiful picture, the young and the old, walking shoulder to shoulder in the work.

This is God's plan that the older would mentor the younger ones in the work and as younger ones are we willing to be mentored? And the older ones should be willing to prepare the younger ones, to invest in preparing younger ones to take up the work.

We won't spent much time on this part of the message; Brother Matthew had brought us a message focused on youth taking up the mantle focus on this part of the story so we won't spend more time on it.

So let's move to the next point and consider: Elijah's desire to be alone. Why did Elijah tell Elisha over and over to, Tarry here. [2 Kings 2:2, 4, 6](#).

He was saying you may stop, you may stay here, let me go by myself, why was he saying that?

Did he not want Elisha with him, was he being selfish in his desire to be alone?

We are not told exactly why but I think there are several reasons we can see in this, possibly Elijah did not want to be a burden to Elisha. Maybe he knew that Elisha had other things that he could be doing rather than walking alongside an old man.

As we noticed it was a long journey, it took a considerable amount of time and effort; maybe he did not want to selfishly keep Elisha to himself and wanted to release him from other service.

Maybe he was testing Elisha's commitment, would Elisha stay with him to the end?

More likely it was because it was a very sacred time for Elijah, Elijah it may have felt that what was about to happen was too sacred for other eyes to see and it appears that even up until the end he wasn't sure that Elisha would be permitted to see what was going to happen not because in first 10 he says: "..... If thou see me when I'm taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." [2 Kings 2:10](#).

And we recognise that the step from time into eternity is a momentous change and the approach of this step is enough to make even the best prepared pause and consider;

Am I truly ready for this step, am I truly ready to stand before God?

Have I done all I should have on this earth?

Is there any wrong that I need to make right before it is forever too late?

And with these things to ponder we can understand that Elijah wished for some time to be alone. And it seems that Elisha recognised his need and when the young men of the prophets came to talk about what was going to happen Elisha said, Be quiet, hold ye your peace ([2 Kings 2:5](#)), let him alone, don't bother him with talking about it.

And probably another reason and the most important reason was Elijah's humility. He knew that what was going to happen was extraordinary, we could even say something spectacular, something that had only ever happened to one other person on the earth and that was Enoch, ([Genesis 5:24](#)) he would be translated up without seeing death.

Elijah did not wish to make this a public spectacle; he was willing for it to be kept completely quiet and no one else to see it. It seems as though he desired that no other person would witness the great honour that was to come his way.

And if we stop and imagine that we were in Elijah's shoes I wonder how we would have responded? Would we want someone else to see what was going to happen to us so that they could tell the story and spread the news? Well apparently God had to reveal to others, not a word crossed Elijah's lips about what was going to happen to him but God had to tell Elisha and God had to reveal it to the sons of the prophets because Elijah it was truly humble, he only wanted God to receive the glory, he wanted no attention drawn to himself.

And what a rebuke this is to us, how eager we are to tell others about what we are doing for God.

Yes the maybe a place for us to talk about what God is doing with us but not what we are doing for God.

I wonder how much more God could do with us if it would not tempt us to self-exaltation?

Let's allow the spirit Elijah, yes the Spirit of God to make us simply quietly truly humble as Elijah was.

Let's consider in the third-place: Elisha's desire to be with Elijah.

We noticed Elijah's desire to be alone but now let's consider Elisha's desire to stay with Elijah.

Why was Elisha so insistent on accompanying Elijah?

These were strong words that he used, As the Lord liveth and as thy soul liveth I will not leave thee. He swore an oath that he would not leave Elijah. Why such a strong declaration?

We see first of all his deep affection for Elijah, this man was his spiritual father.

Now the poor truth that we have of Elijah in the Scripture is a rather rough and rugged man, a powerful and passionate man, and we can imagine that he was not the kind of man that would have been easy to be good friends with but Elisha was and he was bound with the ties of a love that was strong and true.

The picture that we have of Elisha in the Scripture we could say is almost the opposite of Elijah. Elisha was a gentle, meek, mild man compared to Elijah.

Maybe this is a case of opposites attracting and that they complemented each other and worked together well in the work, but Elisha was determined he would stay with Elijah until the last moment because of his deep affection for Elijah.

But in this we also see Elisha's sense of duty.

Elisha had heard God's call to be Elijah's servant and from the time that Elijah had called him up until now he had filled this role.

In [1 Kings 19:21](#) we have the record of the call of Elijah, in verse 19 we find that Elijah through his mantle on Elisha and in verse 21 it says: "And he returned back from him" tells what he did at the end of the verse it says: "Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him." ([1 Kings 19:19, 21](#)).

He became Elijah's servant and he continued in that role. In fact he was known even after Elijah's passing for that role.

In [2 Kings 3:11](#) it says, this was the King inquiring for a prophet and it says: And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.

So Elisha was known for being a servant of Elijah and Elisha was determined to fill that role as Elijah's servant until the end. He would not leave him to face the end of life alone.

And so we too can learn a lesson from this, we too should stay close to those who are entering the valley of the shadow of death, we should be willing to support them to the end and if we do like Elisha will find that we receive more blessing on what we give in that experience.

Another reason probably that Elisha did not want to leave Elijah was that Elisha decided to learn all that he could from Elijah while Elijah was on the earth. We notice his attitude toward himself and his work further on, but Elisha did not want to miss a single opportunity to glean some nuggets of truth that would help him in his work.

Do we as younger ones feel the same as we see older ones nearing the end of life to take all the opportunities that we have the visit them, to learn from them, to learn from the vast store of experience?

And closely related to this was Elisha's desire to see God at work, Elisha apparently knew that something miraculous was going to happen, that God was going to be performing a mighty work and he wanted to be as close to that is possible to see it if at all possible.

We cannot blame him for wishing to catch a glimpse of God's glory, he had the desire like Moses did who said, Show me thy glory, [Exodus 33:18](#), and pled with God for a glimpse of God and His glory.

Elisha had a heart that longed after God.

How is it with us? Are we diligent not to miss any chance that had being where God is working?

I think of special services with God moves in a special way, Bible meetings, or ordination services or baptismal services, we can think of every church service is a place with God's presence will be and where God will be working, we have a desire to be there to witness God is working, to gauge another glimpse of God's glory.

Let's consider in the next place: Elijah's last miracle. [2 Kings 2:8](#)

This was the last in a string of mighty miracles that God worked through Elijah and this one would almost wonder at the purpose of it, we almost wonder at Elijah's audacity to expect God to perform a miracle just so he could cross the river.

Could they not have waded across like everyone else did?

Was this a selfish request?

Well we need to remember that Elijah was at the end of his life and maybe he physically was not able to withstand the rushing torrent of the river, maybe the river was in flood stage and it was impossible for them to cross otherwise.

But whatever the cause we know that Elijah was a man of action and a man of faith.

And God had told him to go somewhere and this river stood in the way but he knew that this river could not stop him from obeying God's will, carrying out God's plan, not even for one moment could it stop him.

With faith as strong as ever he pulled off his mantle and smites the waters, they part hither and thither and away is opened that they can go through on dry ground.

Has God called you to a work and it seems like an impossibility that looms in the path?

Well remember with our God there are no impossibilities, there are no mountains too tall, no canyons too deep, no rivers too strong, no financial needs too great, no health issues too severe for our God is to handle.

Yes, He may test our faith by letting us come right up against the obstacle, we may even need to step into the water like the priests said when they approached the Jordan river when Israel crossed it but Elijah's God still lived today, He can part the water is before us and we could say with the apostle, We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. [Philippians 4:13](#).

And unless Jesus returns first we will all face the Jordan river before we enter eternity, the Jordan river of death flows between us and our heavenly whom, we have faith that the waters will not overwhelm us.

We have that beautiful picture in "The Pilgrims Progress" of the pilgrims crossing the Jordan River for the last time, the river of death and how that they were sustained through that.

And we to each will have that last miracle happen that God is sustaining grace will take us through the Jordan River and it will carry us through and help us to be faithful to the end.

Let's consider in the next place: Elijah's bequest and Elisha's request. [2 Kings 2:9-10](#)

After they crossed the river as they walked on together and talked together Elijah turns to Elisha and said, Ask what I shall do for the you before taken away. You may ask for anything you want.

Well we see Elisha's persistence now being rewarded.

What if he had stayed behind at one of the places as Elijah had suggested? Because he had serve faithfully to the end, because he persistently sought to witness God's presence through Elijah he now offered him this marvelous opportunity to ask what I can do for thee.

I was reminded of two stories from Russian Mennonite history, two different accounts when Russian Mennonites were brought before the Czar of Russia and offered the same opportunity to ask for anything they wanted. One of them was Gerhard Weibe, who was the head of the Bergthaler Mennonites who led them in their immigration to Canada, and as he stood

before the Czar's representative with tears running down his cheeks he pled for only one thing and that was that his people could emigrate.

And their wish was honoured, their desire was granted.

And then Czar's representative said, "You may now ask something for yourself."

And he was tempted immediately to ask for something for his family, for military exemption for his children or for a few hundred acres of land but God helped him to withstand the test and he said "I ask only that I may emigrate with my people."

And that wish was granted.

Another Russian Mennonite, Johan Klassen, who was one of the leaders of the Mennonite Brethren had their colony visited by the Czar himself, Czar was complimenting them on their wonderful colony, and the economic improvements that they had made and said, "Now you may ask for something, anything you want for your colony."

And Johan Klassen said, "We would like a railroad, if a railroad could be brought to our colony then we could have even more access to markets."

It would be interesting to trace the posterity of those two men and to see the difference that it made because of those two different requests.

Well here Elisha what request would he make?

Apparently he did not need to think long about the request that he would have, it was something that was a burden, it was burning on his heart, the burden of the work.

What do you think Elijah and Elisha had discussed all day as they walked together? It was probably the ongoing work, the unfinished work, thinks that Elijah wanted Elisha continue doing and with that burden Elisha said, Grant me a double portion of thy spirit. [2 Kings 2:9](#)

What was he asking for? Was he asking to be twice as great as Elijah was?

Well in the original meaning of double portion means two parts and Elisha was actually invoking the law of the firstborn. You remember the firstborn was supposed to receive two parts of the inheritance, he was the one that received the responsibility of leading out in the family, he had the heavy weight of being the head of the family, the heavy weight of responsibility and he received two parts of the inheritance to help them carry out that responsibility.

And so Elisha was asking to be Elijah's heir, he was asking to be able to continue the Ministry that Elijah had begun and not only was he asking for the privilege of continuing in the work, of carrying the work, the burden of the work but he was asking for the resources to be able to do so.

He recognised that it was only by divine power, only by God's spirit that Elijah could do what he did and so he said, So let me have a double portion of thy spirit so that I may continue this work and be faithful in the work.

Elisha recognised that the work was bigger than he was, that he needed God's help to do it.

And so we are reminded of their recent Sunday school lesson that the disciples were told, Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, [Acts 1:8](#).

And we too have the holy spirit which is the earnest of our inheritance, it [Ephesians 1:14](#), we too are promised the inheritance of the holy spirit, the help of the holy spirit to do the work that God has called us to do.

Now let's consider in the sixth place: Elijah's departure. [2 Kings 9:11](#).

Now we come to this thrilling moment that the angels appeared to bear Elijah home.

We might ask why was Elijah taken from earth without dying? And if he was going to be translated why was he not translated quietly as Enoch was? Why the horses and chariot of fire?

Was not God's indicating Elijah's work and message?

Member this was in the days of great spiritual darkness in Israel, the country was overtaken almost completely in idolatry, they were ruled by the wicked Ahab and brutal Jezebel, and God's people were few and possibly faint in the work.

And so God was using another dramatic display of power to get the people's attention.

When this story of Elijah's departure in the horses and chariot of fire was spread through the land certainly people would be reminded of the fire that Elijah had called down on Mount Carmel and the fire that Elijah had called down on the companies of 50 who came to arrest him.

It was God's indicating Elijah's work and showing that it was God's work and that Elijah was God's servant up until the end, this was a message from God that he was bearing.

It was also God's way of honouring Elijah, just as conquering general was pulled through the streets in triumph in a chariot so God sent a chariot to give Elijah a triumphant departure from this earth.

Another result of Elijah's departure was to reassure the faithful remnant, assuredly an Almighty God was on the throne, there was a glories eternity ahead, there were rewards awaiting the faithful.

One writer suggested that this may be that all the righteous but taken home, and he referred to the verse in [Psalm 68:17](#) where it says: The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *even* thousands of angels:

In the case of Elijah because Elijah left the earth visibly so the chariot became visible.

That is an interesting thought.

But even today as we read this story we are reminded of the approaching day when all the righteous will be caught up from the earth to meet the Lord in the air, they too, the righteous that are living at that time will leave the earth without passing through death's door.

Why did Elisha cry, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof. [2 Kings 2:12](#).

We see this as a cry of honour and respect. Elijah was a spiritual father to him, Elisha had followed and obeyed Elijah's son as a father but it was also a cry of parting, no longer would he have Elijah's company, Elijah's teaching, Elijah's example, Elijah's advice.

This cry also serves as Elijah's epitaph, Elijah would have no tombstone on the earth, no effort to half engraved for future generations to read, but Elisha's words were engraved in the most permanent record possible, the eternal Word of God, and Elijah's epitaph reads; The chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

God had told Israel not to put their trust in horses and chariots because He would be their defence against their enemies.

In Elisha's experience God at one time pulled back the curtain and revealed the mountains full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding the city to defend the city against the enemy. (2 Kings 6:17).

And so Elijah as a prophet of the true God was Israel's best defence from the enemy, he was the chariot of fire.

Elijah said that sin had weakened the people and he brought them under God's judgement, Elijah was calling them back to repentance to obedience to God and by doing so he was opening the door to God's presence, to God's blessing, so God's people are always the strength of a nation.

Are we that in our day, are we the chariots of our country today, are we shining the light of God's holy standard on the corruption around us? Are we the channel of God's presence to those about us?

It is also interesting to notice that Elisha had the same title at the end of his life. In 2 Kings 13:14, Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

So Elisha too bore this title of the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.

Well we could look at Elijah's mantle and how Elisha took that up but our time is up and so in conclusion; Elijah did not decide at the end of his life to have a beautiful ending to his time on earth rather this was God's crown on a life well lived, on the life live for Him.

And so may we each be challenged to live for God today so that our end will be likewise glorious.

We each too can anticipate a glorious home going.

Whether we pass through death's door or at the final resurrection we will be raised, we will meet our Lord in the air and pass into our glorious eternal home.

So may we be inspired by Elijah's example to be faithful until that day.

#9 – Elijah’s Enduring Influence

When I brought the last message on the life of Elijah I wasn’t sure if that would be the concluding message or not, we had eight messages on the character, a character study of Elijah, and our last one was on Elijah’s departure from this earth.

As I considered how much more the Bible has to say about Elijah I was led to bring one more message entitled “Elijah’s Enduring Influence.”

We will be looking at eight different places where the Bible talks about Elijah after his departure from this earth and as we consider that we may well ask what is the lasting legacy of a person’s life or what is the enduring influence of a person’s life?

Sometimes after a person is gone, after the charisma or the personality or the special interests of the person are gone with his death then only we can see what the lasting legacy, the enduring influence of their life is.

The first place I would like to consider is in second Chronicles 21.

Most of what we consider will be in the New Testament but we have two in the Old Testament that we will look at first.

Second Chronicles 21, we know that Elijah ministered in the northern kingdom, the 10 tribes, the northern kingdom, the tribes that were not serving God that from the but very beginning of the division until the end of their time they were worshipping idols, worshipping the golden calves and in the days of Elijah, the days of King Ahab they were even worse, worshipping Baal.

But now the scene shifts to the southern kingdom, to the kingdom of Judah, and we see that Elijah had a bit of influence, a bit of ministry to the southern kingdom and this was after his death.

How did this work? [2 Chronicles 21:12](#) says and there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet.

Who was the him? Well this is the King of Judah, verse one tells us, Now Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.

What kind of King was Jehoram?

2 Chronicles 21:4-6 Now when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword, and *divers* also of the princes of Israel. ⁵ Jehoram was thirty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. ⁶ And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab: for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought *that which was evil* in the eyes of the LORD.

Verse 11, **2 Chronicles 21:11** Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah *thereto*.

So this was the son in law of Ahab and Jezebel and he was influenced by their family, he followed in their ways and introduced their worship into the southern kingdom.

Verse 12, **2 Chronicles 21:12-15** And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of David thy father, Because thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Asa king of Judah, ¹³ But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring, like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, *which were better than thyself*: ¹⁴ Behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods: ¹⁵ And thou *shalt have* great sickness by disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day.

We said that this was after Elijah was taken to heaven, if we compare, and we won't take much time with this, our text last time was in second Kings two where Elijah was taken up to heaven and then in **2 Kings 3:1** it says Now Jehoram the son of Ahab[notice that there are two Jehorams on the throne, Israel had a Jehoram, Ahab's son and the throne of Judah had a Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son, this is talking about Jehoram of the northern kingdom] the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah.

Jehoshaphat reigned 25 years, so seven years before Jehoshaphat died Jehoram in the northern kingdom began to reign and in chapter 8 verse 16 it tells us that, **2 Kings 8:16**, And in the fifth year of Joram [Jehoram] the son

of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat *being* then king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah began to reign.

So five years after Jehoram (Ahab's son) began to reign in the northern kingdom Jehoram (Jehoshaphat's son) in the southern kingdom and Elijah had been taken from the earth in the reign of Jehoram (Ahab's son) in the northern kingdom.

So this was at least, and if this letter came six years into Jehoram's reign because we see then second Chronicles 21 later in verse 19 it says two years after the letter came he died, (**2 Chronicles 21:19**) so 6+5 would be 11 years, it is approximately in 11 years after Elijah was taken from the earth when this letter came to Jehoram.

How could this be?

Did Elijah prophetically write the letter before he was taken from the earth and leave it with Elisha to send it to him (Jehoram) or did God direct him to send it back to the earth after he left the earth?

There is no explanation given of how we came to be, just a simple statement of fact and we accept by faith that it really did happen.

If God could take Elijah away in a whirlwind and bringing back thousands of years later on the Mount of transfiguration certainly he could also have a letter come back from Elijah to the earth after he was gone.

Now why did God choose Elijah had to send this letter?

Couldn't the prophet Elisha have written the letter?

Well possibly it is because Elijah had so prophetically pronounced judgement on Jehoram's father in law and mother-in-law and brother-in-law, we think of the specific judgements that Elijah pronounced on Ahab and Jezebel, Ahaziah, and each one came to pass exactly as Elijah had pronounced it and of all people to give the message that Jehoram would trust it would be the prophet Elijah.

And so we see God's mercy in using this dramatic method to get this wicked King's attention in sending a letter from a man that he knew whose word would come to pass, sending it after he was gone from the earth for a number of years.

It was one last opportunity for this King to repent and turn back to God, turn from his wicked ways, he could have even followed the example of his father-in-law Ahab who when Elijah pronounced the judgement on him in Naboth's vineyard humbled himself and repented and God said because of his repentance He would postpone the judgement.

But Jehoram didn't even do that, he continued brazenly in his wickedness and in his hardness of heart did not change his ways and so the judgement fell.

We are reminded of the rich man who after his death found himself in hell and pled with Abraham to send Lazarus back to his brothers and to warn them so that they would repent and not come to this place and Abraham said, they have the prophets, they have the law and the prophets let them read them.

And he said, No, but if one came back from the dead they would listen to him.

And Abraham said, No, if they won't listen to the law and the prophets neither will they listen if one came back from the dead. [Luke 16:19-31](#).

Maybe Abraham said that thinking of Jehoram's experience here, even a letter from the dead could not stir him to repentance.

Well God speaks to us today also in a letter, not written 11 years ago but 2000 years ago and the message that we have today is as fresh and as applicable and living as the day was written and it applies to every person on the face of the earth.

What are we doing the Word of God that has come to us?

Are we going to ignore it as Jehoram did or will we read it and heed it?

Elijah, just noticing some of what Elijah wrote to Jehoram, he reminded him of his godly legacy, he said you had a godly father, Jehoshaphat, you had a godly grandfather, Asa, and you had a godly great-great-great-great-grandfather, David.

And he was reminding him of all those examples that he had to follow these men all had wonderful experiences of God working mightily deliverances for them, miraculous deliverances. They were models of men who sought after God, who sincerely sought after God with their whole hearts and yet Jehoram turned his back on as godly heritage and turned to the vile worship of Baal.

Is this a temptation to us, to turn our backs on the godly legacy that has been left for us?, Are we asking for the old paths and the good ways so that we might walk therein and find rest for ourselves as it says in Jeremiah 6:16.

We know that there are constantly new things coming among us and not all change is bad but are we cautious in evaluating that change, we careful to keep the values and the traditions that have been passed on to us, or are we seeking new things and turning our backs what has been handed down to us?

We know that often these new trends show up among our young people, and it seems like young people especially are interested in new things, doing things new ways, but I would encourage you this morning young people appreciate what has been handed to us, appreciate the Conservative lifestyle, Conservative practices that have been handed down to us and not go after the new ways of doing things.

Also in this account yet I would like to point out the value of writing, of a written legacy.

Probably all of us have things that have been handed down to us from our parents or grandparents or maybe we wish we did, writings that have been written that we could treasure, that we can read and reread, are we doing that for our posterity, are we writing things that will be a legacy that they can appreciate?

A written legacy is very worthwhile, very valuable.

Moving to another part of Elijah's influence we will turn to the last verses of the Old Testament.

Malachi chapter 4 and here we will see Elijah and prophecy.

[Malachi 4:4-6](#) Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, *with* the statutes and judgments.

⁵ Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: ⁶ And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Elijah and prophecy.

Next to the Messiah Himself Elijah became the most looked for figure in Jewish history.

We are told that at the end of each Sabbath the Jews have a ceremony called the “havdalah” and part of the “havdalah” at the close of the Sabbath is a song about Elijah, a song that recites the deeds of Elijah and ends with the refrain of these words, The prophet Elijah, the Tishbite from Gilead, may he come to us soon with the son of David the Messiah.

And at each Passover at the celebration of each Passover a place set at the table for the prophet Elijah, and at a certain place in the ceremony a child is sent to the door to open the door to allow the prophet Elijah to come in. *[Ed. The same song mentioned above is also sung at the Passover Seder].* Why? Well because they are looking for him as the Herald of the Messiah. They are maintaining their hope in the coming of the Messiah, for when Elijah appears then the Messiah will not be far behind.

What is the purpose of the coming of the prophet Elijah?

We are told he that he will turn the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to their fathers.

We often use this verse to talk about parent/child relationships, and that is certainly involved in here, but if you look at the message in the book of Malachi, the whole message of the book is a call to repentance, a call to turn from wickedness to God as their Father., To turn from the wickedness that they were in to the ways, the right ways of their fathers.

Just notice in chapter 1 verse two.

Malachi 1:2 2 I have loved you, saith the LORD.

Malachi 1:6 A son honoureth *his* father, and a servant his master: if then I *be* a father, where *is* mine honour? and if I *be* a master, where *is* my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

Malachi 2:4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.

Notice he is reminding them of the covenant with their fathers.

Malachi 2:10 Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?

And especially then in light of the coming Messiah the call is to return to God there Father, to the way of their fathers.

Malachi 3:1 Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.

Malachi 3:7 Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept *them*. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?

Malachi 3:18 Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

So then coming to the concluding verses we see the messenger's work as preparing the way for the Messiah will involve repentance of the ungodly and rebellious children which will result in a reconciliation with their godly fathers, with the ways of the godly fathers.

And that meaning is brought out when this prophecy is repeated in **Luke 1:17**: And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, [now notice this] and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just;....

So the phrase the children to their fathers is translated as the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.

And the prophecy goes on and says that this will not happen if they do not repent, the children are not reconciled to the ways of their fathers then it will be judgment, there will be a curse on the earth. And that judgement will also be part of the Messiah is coming, He will come not only to bring salvation but to bring judgement on those that refuse His salvation.

Verse one of **Malachi 4:1**: For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

So Elijah was prophesied to be the messenger that would prepare the way for the coming Messiah.

Thirdly now let's turn to the New Testament and consider Elijah and John the Baptist.

Let's turn to John chapter 1, with the Jews eager anticipation of Elijah coming it is no wonder that they asked him, Are you Elijah?

Let us read [John 1:19-26](#) And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? ²⁰ And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. ²¹ And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? [This is the Greek form of Elijah] And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. ²² Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? ²³ He said, I *am* the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. ²⁴ And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. ²⁵ And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?

And then John answered and said I baptise with water but there is one standing among you whom you know not and then goes on to prophesy about Jesus and His coming.

Now let's think about some of the similarities between John the Baptist and Elijah.

Both of them came out of the wilderness.

Both of them wore hairy garments and with goeth with a leather girdle.

Both of them proclaimed a dramatic call to repentance and impending judgement.

Both of them boldly confronted a wicked King about his misdeeds.

Both of them prepared the way for a gentler but mightier ministry which followed them.

And when the angel announced John the Baptist's birth in Luke chapter 1, let's turn to Luke one and read a few verses he said that John the Baptist would be coming in the power and the spirit of Elijah.

[Luke 1:13-17](#) But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. ¹⁴ And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. ¹⁵ For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. ¹⁶ And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the chil-

dren, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

So why then does John say, I am not Elijah, if he was the fulfilment of that prophecy?

He was the one that is coming in the spirit and the power of Elijah.

Will talk a little bit more about the fulfilment of this prophecy, but notice the angel did not say that he would be Elijah but he said he will come in the spirit and power of Elijah and he specifically, God specifically gave John's name, he said, He shall be called John. He did not say he shall be called Elijah.

He shall be called John.

So Elijah served as a model for John's Ministry and we can only imagine how John the Baptist must've eagerly studied the history of Elijah, the life of Elijah as his pattern, as his hero, as his model, and when John the Baptist found himself before King Herod he must mind must've gone back to Elijah's stand before Ahab and it must have given him courage to take the same stand and to be faithful to death in his stand for the Lord.

Well let's consider in the next phase: Elijah and Jesus.

Let's turn to Matthew 16, it is not surprising to notice that Jesus also was considered possibly to be Elijah when He came.

[Matthew 16:13-16](#) When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? ¹⁴ And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. ¹⁵ He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? ¹⁶ And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Was there any reason to compare Jesus to Elijah?

Well the life of Elijah did typify Jesus in many ways.

Think of how much time Elijah spent alone communing with God.

Think of Elijah's compassion in dealing with the widow's son.

Think of how he raised the dead widow's son to life again.

He was the only prophet other than Elisha that we have recorded that he raised the dead to life.

Think of the miracles that he did to prove that he was sent from God.

Last but not least think of his miraculous ascension to heaven that's so typifies our Lord's ascension into heaven.

So it is no wonder that the people thought that Jesus might be, might have been Elijah.

And the challenge for us that I see in this is that do our lives mirror the Lord Jesus, our people reminded of Him when they see us?

I remember a story that one brother told recently when he was travelling, to brethren travelling together, and they stopped to help a black lady along the road change her flat tyre and when they walked up she said, You must be Jesus and one of his disciples.

Well, they said, we are not Jesus but we are His disciples.

And this that what people think of when they see us, do they think of Jesus, think of our Lord, do they see Him in us?

Let's consider in the fifth place: Jesus teaching about Elijah.

And this will help us understand the relationship between John the Baptist and Elijah.

Turn to Luke chapter 4, one place we Jesus taught about Elijah and then we will look at another place where he explained the relationship between John the Baptist and Elijah, but in Luke four we have the account of Jesus being in the synagogue in Nazareth, in his home town, we see this in verses 16 and 17, they gave in the book to read and he read the prophecy about Himself.

Now verse 22 of Luke four, [Luke 4:22-27](#): And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? ²³ And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. ²⁴ And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. ²⁵ But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; ²⁶ But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, *a city of Sidon*, unto a woman *that was* a widow. ²⁷ And many

lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

And it goes on to say when they heard those words they were convicted and filled with wrath and tried to kill Him by throwing Him over the brow of the hill. (Luke 4:28-30).

Jesus was using Elijah to teach that just as Elijah's message was rejected by his own countrymen so Jesus message was rejected by His own people and then just as Elijah carried God's Grace to a Gentile widow so Jesus would bring salvation to the Gentiles.

And Elisha also was an illustration of this, Elisha likewise brought healing and salvation to a Gentile and to an enemy captain at that.

So God used the Old Testament prophets, Elijah and Elisha, to prefigure New Testament plan of salvation for all, for all the world, Jews and Gentiles.

And we are reminded that we too were in that category as we heard in our devotions, we too were alienate it and enemies, Colossians 1:21, And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.

We were part of the Gentiles who were brought in through the grace of our Lord.

Another part of Jesus teaching about Elijah is found in Matthew 17, this is where we find His explanation how John the Baptist and Elijah were related to each other.

Matthew 17, this is just after the Mount of transfiguration with the disciples had seen Elijah on the Mount, we will be looking at that next, but Matthew 17:10-13 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? ¹¹ And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. ¹² But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. ¹³ Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

The disciples were perplexed, what was the relationship between Elijah and John the Baptist?

And notice they said, Why do the scribe say, why did they ask it that way, why did not say why do the scriptures say.

Well the reason they asked why do the scribes say is because the scribes had developed many theories and stories about Elijah's supposed reappearance.

In the rabbinical writings even today you can read many stories about the prophet Elijah, one source said that rabbinical tradition contains more material about Elijah than any other Bible character, and so the disciples were wondering is everything that the scribes are saying is it true, other all going to happen and when are they going to happen?

And so Jesus explained that John the Baptist's ministry was a partial fulfilment of Malachi 4.

But notice that Jesus used two tenses in referring to the fulfilment of this Ministry, future and past.

He said Elijah truly shall come – future tense.

And then He said Elijah's is come already – past tense.

So Jesus was saying that there is going to be a dual fulfilment of this prophecy from Malachi, John came first and fulfilled part of it and he, Elijah, will come again. Just as Jesus came two times, (is to come twice,) His first coming and the second coming so there will be a messenger each time to prepare the way before His two comings and we remembered that Malachi's prophets mentioned the great and terrible day of the Lord.

That we know is the day of Judgement that will take place at Jesus second coming, the Judgement at the end of time, so we will look at the fulfilment, the final fulfilment of this prophecy in just a bit.

Let's move now to the Mount of transfiguration, this is probably where we see Elijah, where our mind when first when we thought about Elijah's enduring influence, and let's turn to Luke's account, there are three of the gospel is that record the Mount of transfiguration story but I chose to read the one in [Luke 9:28-36](#) And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. ²⁹ And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment *was* white *and* glistening. ³⁰ And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: ³¹ Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. ³² But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep: and when they were

awake, they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. ³³ And it came to pass, as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. ³⁴ While he thus spake, there came a cloud, and overshadowed them: and they feared as they entered into the cloud. ³⁵ And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. ³⁶ And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone. And they kept *it* close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.

We could have spent all morning looking at this account and F.W. Krummacher in his biography of the prophet Elijah uses four chapters to cover the Mount of transfiguration, so we can only look at briefly this morning.

Why were Moses and Elijah chosen for this great honour?

And it is interesting to note that these two men were both mentioned in Malachi 4, the last verses in the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah.

What is the significance of these two?

Well Moses as the lawgiver represented the law; Elijah was the best remembered prophet and represented the prophets.

So we have the law and the prophets which were both used to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus.

Philip said we have found Him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets did write (John 1:45)

So here we have the law and the prophets, representatives of the two, both giving testimony to Jesus as the son of God.

What did they talk about when they came to talk with Jesus?

Did they talk about the wonder of His incarnation?

Did they talk about the victory of his triumph over temptation?

Did they talk about the marvel of the resurrection?

Did they talk about the glory of his ascension?

No they talked about the decease that He should accomplish, they talked about His death.

On His sacrifice hung the salvation of the world even their own salvation, even the salvation of the Old Testament saints dependent on the death of Jesus as a sacrifice for sin.

We are told that the prophets were fascinated by this subject of Jesus death. [1 Peter 1:10-11](#) Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace *that should come* unto you: ¹¹ Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

And we could say that as these two came to talk to Jesus about His death they were probably carrying the theme that all heaven was talking about because even the angels were wondering about this.

The next verse says: ¹Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. [1 Peter 1:12](#)

So as Jesus approached the hour of His death we can imagine that this was the theme of all heaven and as Moses and Elijah appeared to talk Jesus about His decease they were bringing the conversation of heaven to earth, to talk about it with Jesus.

Well we too should often be meditating on Calvary, on our Lord's suffering for us.

These two were probably reminded of their need for the Lord's death and of their own failings, their own weaknesses, their own sins that needed to be atone for, Jesus was going to die to atone for, and we too in light of Calvary are reminded of our need for that, our sins which cost our Lord to go to Calvary to offer Himself as a sacrifice for sin.

Notice that He talked about the decease that He should accomplish, His life was not taken from him, He gave His life, He gave himself as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.

This discussion, their discussion of this subject certainly served to strengthen Jesus for the ordeal that lay ahead and it was also to prepare the disciples. Peter, James and John doubted the plan that purpose of Jesus suffering and death they would think back to this moment when the law and the prophets and God himself confirmed the divine plan of Jesus suffering and death.

Peter recalls the effect of this experience in second Peter one, we won't take time to turn to that.

Jesus himself, God himself testified of his love for Jesus and the requirements that all should listen to Him, that all should listen to His words and the glory that blazed around Jesus and Moses and Elijah served to remind Jesus and the disciples of the eternal glory that awaits the faithful.

Let's turn now to James chapter 5 and notice in the seventh place Elijah's example for us.

James chapter 5 we have the words of admonition to the sick in verse 14, that they should pray, it says the prayer of faith shall save the sick, verse 15. (James 5:14-15) And then James 5:16-18 ¹⁶ Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. ¹⁷ Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

Elijah is used as an example of the effectual fervent prayer.

From the entire gallery of saints of both Testaments Elijah it was the one chosen for this illustration, and surprisingly the prayers that are mentioned here are not even recorded in the Old Testament.

We do have a record of some powerful prayers of Elijah when he raised the widow's son, when he called fire from heaven, but these specific prayers were not recorded for us but here we are told about them.

What can we learn from Elijah's example?

Well first we can see it is the prayer of a righteous man that is effectual. Only prayer from a life that is pleased to God will be answered.

Stonewall Jackson was a general in the civil war, famous general, and he was known to be a praying man but he led his life as a soldier involved in the bloody business of killing people and teaching others how to kill people.

He left these words he said: “I have so fixed the habit of prayer in my mind that I’d never raise a glass of water without asking God’s blessing, never seal the letter without putting a word prayer under the seal, never take a letter from the post without a brief sending my thoughts heavenward, never change my classes in the lecture room without a minutes petition for the cadets who go out and for those who come in.”

But yet there was a split between his religious live and his practice because he did not live as the Bible taught and what was the end of his life?

Well his life was ended when he was shot by his own men by mistake.

And it certainly illustrates that those to take the sword shall perish with the sword ([Matthew 26:52](#)).

So for our prayers to be effective they must be accompanied by a life that is pleasing to God.

Now we know that God heareth not sinners but if any man be a worshipper of God and doeth his will him he heareth, [John 9:31](#).

Does this mean that Elijah lived a perfect life? That he was a superhuman? No, we are specifically told in this account he was subject to like passions as we are, he was as you and as we are, he had the temptations, the infirmities, the failures of all humanity but he was living a life of obedience and consecration and God answered his prayers and we too can have the same confidence that God will hear an answer our prayers if our lives are pleasing to Him.

Finally let’s consider Elijah in the end times.

Let’s turn to Revelation chapter 11.

In my mind a study of Elijah would not be complete without looking at the possible end time of appearance which would fulfilled prophecy of Malachi 4, I realise that not all agree on this interpretation, but in Revelation we read the account of the two witnesses, this is in the first half of the tribulation period, the first half of the seven years of tribulation and in the first 3 ½ years God sense two witnesses to prepare the way for the final coming of the Lord and Judgement.

Revelation 11:3-12 And I will give *power* unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. ⁴ These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. ⁵ And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. ⁶ These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. ⁷ And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. ⁸ And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. ⁹ And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. ¹⁰ And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. ¹¹ And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. ¹² And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

Now we might say, Where do we see Elijah in this, Elijah's name is not mentioned.

No, these two are not mentioned but we do have some definite clues that give us their identity and even schoolchildren can answer these questions.

Who in the Bible had power to shut heaven that it would not rain?

Who in the Bible was able to call fire down from heaven to destroy his enemies?

Who in the Bible could turn water into blood?

Who in the Bible could smite the earth with plagues?

Well Elijah is obviously the answer to the first two questions and Moses is the answer to the second two.

These two also had unusual departures from the earth, Moses did not die a natural death of old age but rather God took him alone in a mountain in his

full health and strength and gently released his spirit from his body, buried his body and ushered him into eternity.

Elijah had even the more unusual experience of leaving the earth in a world went without passing through death's door.

And so on that line of thinking some have thought that these two witnesses must be Enoch and Elijah and I suppose that could be that based on the now familiar combination of Moses and Elijah in Malachi and on the Mount of transfiguration and ever deadly here it seems to make sense that Moses and Elijah how here represented.

So we see God using these two to witness to His power, to the coming Judgement and to prepare the way for Christ's final return to the earth in Judgement.

And after their work is finished they are again lifted from the earth in a glorious departure.

Well may this look at Elijah's influence me remind us that we too each have an influence here on the earth, and influence for good or ill on those about us and our influence will live on long after we have passed off the scenes of time if God tarries.

So may we each be faithful so God can use us as He used Elijah.

Let's kneel for prayer.

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