

# A Day's Journey Into the Wilderness

by Carter Conlon

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*Carter Conlon's sermon explores the journey into spiritual wilderness, emphasizing God's unwavering support and the importance of relying on His strength during times of despair.*

**Duration:** 56:38

**Scripture:** Isaiah 54:17, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:31, 2 Corinthians 5:21, James 4:7

**Topics:** "Wilderness"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the power and authority of God. He references the story of Elijah and how God demonstrated His power by consuming the captain and his 50 men with fire. The preacher highlights that no one can stand against God or resist His judgment. He also encourages spiritual leaders who may be feeling discouraged or weak, reminding them that God is good and will never fail or forsake them. The sermon concludes with a call to gather as a church to pray and witness the fire of heaven.

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## Transcript

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None of these messages are copyrighted and you are welcome to make copies for free distribution to friends. 1 Kings chapter 19, if you turn there with me please, 1 Kings chapter 19. I feel today that God has brought specific people into this service.

Both in this sanctuary and the education annex or wherever you happen to be watching this service on any of the jumbotron screens that are mounted in the different rooms and hallways. I believe that there are specific people that God has ordained you to be here today to speak to your heart and to set you free. There is going to be a shout of freedom.

He has promised me. I feel that there are some spiritual leaders that are here today that God has drawn you. Some may be right at the end of your rope.

You're discouraged, you feel like you've failed God. You don't understand why such a loneliness and depression and confusion has come upon your life. There are others that are living for the Lord.

You love God with all your heart and all of a sudden you find yourself in a place of terrible weakness. Tormenting thoughts beginning to come into your mind, wondering if you've failed God. Thoughts about others, thoughts about people.

It seems that the enemy is pressing in on you on all sides. But today by the grace of God we're going to open his word. We're going to unmask the powers and tactics of the enemy.

We're going to see the goodness of God. God is good. He'll never fail you.

He'll never forsake you. He'll never leave you. Throughout this entire day I have a witness in my spirit that God, by the power of the Holy Ghost, is going to encourage this church body.

It's going to be a wonderful day of encouragement all day today. A day of worship, a day of rejoicing in the goodness of our God. 1 Kings chapter 19.

Father, I just thank you for the anointing of your Holy Spirit. God, I thank you for your strength and your power. I thank you, Lord, that you have never asked me to stand in my own strength.

You have never asked me to preach from my own knowledge. God, I thank you for that, Lord, for I don't have any strength. I don't have any knowledge.

Lord, I wouldn't even be able to know what direction to go in were it not for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. God, I thank you for your presence. I thank you for your power.

I thank you, Lord, where the Spirit of God is there is liberty. I thank you for great tremendous liberty today for those who have come into this house to hear your word. I cast down every contrary argument to sound doctrine.

I cast down the lies of the enemy. I cast down every weapon of the devil that's formed against the heart and mind of any of God's people. Father, I thank you today that your kingdom is going to advance with great power.

I thank you that prison doors are going to be opened. I thank you that blinded eyes will see. I thank you, Lord, that feeble hands will be lifted up and weakened knees will be given strength.

God, I thank you that this day, this very day, that your kingdom will come into many hearts and there will be a shout of joy. A shout that says, Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. We welcome you, Lord Jesus, and we ask you to move sovereignly and powerfully in every one of our lives in our hearts.

We ask it in your precious name. Amen and amen. A day's journey into the wilderness.

A day's journey into the wilderness. Some folks that are here today, I'm going to preach your life right now. They're going to say, Pastor, you have been in my house.

I don't know how you got there. You've been standing in a corner and you've been monitoring my very existence. But today, I know that God's going to set you free.

First Kings chapter 19, beginning at verse 1. And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and with all how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Now, these are the false prophets that were leading the

people. Then Jezebel, this is the wife of Ahab the king, 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.

Now, this is like if basically she's saying, let the gods do the same to me if I don't kill you as you killed the prophets of Baal. And when he saw that, he arose and he went for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness.

Has anybody ever gone there? You ever taken a day's journey into the wilderness? You've come from a great victory in God. Sunday just couldn't have gotten any better. If Sunday was any better, you would have gone right through the dome of the church.

You'd be right in the presence of God. You walked out and you knew you had the victory. You came to the altar and God moved in power.

And you knew you had that triumph of God. And maybe it was at the tail end of a wonderful week. You couldn't do anything wrong.

Everything you set your hand to prospered. Every person you spoke to, their tears came into their eyes. It seemed that there was an anointing on your life that was unprecedented, just like Elijah had known just before this.

And then all of a sudden, you walk out of the house of God, not even knowing where you're going. And in a moment of time, you're in the wilderness. You're looking around.

Everything is gone. Where's the anointing? Where's all my friends? Where's the touch of God that was so evident upon my life just a few days ago? And you've walked a day's journey into the wilderness, not even knowing why you're there. And he 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 father's. In chapter 18 of 1 Kings, a great, great victory had been won. The false prophets of Baal had been leading the people into Baal worship.

Elijah stood in the power of God and began to confront these contrary arguments to truth. He challenged the false prophets to build their altars and call upon God and see if God would answer them. And he made a declaration before the people.

He said, OK, the God that answers by fire, he said, let him be God. And everybody said, this is a great idea. So the prophets of Baal built their altar and danced around it and cut themselves with stones and cried out unto Baal.

At the end of the day, there was no answer. And Elijah stood upon the top of Mount Carmel and rebuilt the altar of the Lord that had fallen down. And after he had rebuilt the altar of the Lord, he commanded the sacrifice to be placed on the altar.

And he commanded them to saturate it, not once, not twice, but three times at least. He commanded them to saturate that altar with water so that there would be no chance that there would be any kind of a spontaneous ignition or combustion on that altar apart from the power of God. And then he stood back to pray.

And we see a culmination, I suppose, of one of the most tremendous victories. There are many in the Old Testament, but this is a powerful victory for truth. And God was using a man who was set apart for him and whose heart and affections were turned towards the honor and praise of Almighty God.

My brethren, God always has used this type of person throughout history, in the recent past, and also today. This is the type of heart, this is the person that he is looking for, that man, that woman whose heart is towards him, who wants him, who loves him. Who's not looking for power, not looking for prestige, not looking for personal wealth, not looking for personal honor, but whose sole purpose is for the honor and glory of God.

Elijah was a man in touch with God, and he was so concerned that the one true God that he knew be honored, that he was infuriated that these false prophets were allowed to lead the people into a type of worship that took their hearts away from truth. And away from the God who really could protect them and give them his power and presence and set them free. In 1 Kings 18, 37, he stands back and says, 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.

Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, the wood and the stones and the dust and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and they said, the Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God. When they saw the true fire of heaven come down, they said, the Lord, he is God.

This is why we are gathering to pray as a church. This is why it's so important to have our lives in order, in tune with the very heart of God, to offer our lives with our prayers. Elijah had taken a tremendous step, a step of faith, because he knew that he would be in a perilous position if he called out to God and there was no answering upon that altar.

But he had faith in his heart and a confidence in the God that he served. The people all around, the people of Israel fell on their faces and said, the Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God. Then Elijah said to them, to the people, take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape.

And they took them and brought them down to the Brook Kishon and slew them there. And then Elijah said to Ahab, the king, get up and drink. And there's a sound of an abundance of rain.

The next time we see Elijah, he's on the top of the Mount Carmel, casting himself down to the earth. He puts his face down between his knees and begins to pray and ask God now to send rain on the land as a sign that the people, that God's blessing was back on the people, whose hearts had turned back to him again. He saw a hand coming over the servant of Elijah, just saw a hand coming over the horizon like a little cloud.

And then he sent word to Ahab, he said, go. And he said, run, there's going to be an awful thunderstorm here. There's going to be a rainstorm.

And so we see Elijah witnessing the incredible power of God working through his life, a tremendous victory. And right after, it's as if he's driven right into the wilderness, pursued by a fear that he himself is not even fully able to comprehend. In verse four, he feels so overwhelmed, perhaps ashamed at having so, this is in chapter 19, perhaps ashamed at having so little confidence in the God whom he knows has such power that he requests for himself that he might die.

Elijah says, and you and I, I suppose, could be in exactly the same position that he was in that day. He went a day's journey into the wilderness. And when we embark on that journey into the wilderness.

Now, this is a wilderness that he's driven into because of a fear that has found a place in his heart. And in that place, he requested for himself that he might die. He said, God, this is enough.

I am no better than my father. All of a sudden, Elijah is thinking, he's thinking about the children of Israel. He knows the history and the legacy having coming out of Egypt.

He's thinking about all the signs and wonders that God did in the sight of the people and how through unbelief, they grieve the heart of God. And instead of going in and conquering their enemies, they ended up running from their enemies. And here's Elijah just having, I'm sure he was a man in his heart that he had determined that this is not going to happen to me.

I am never going to dishonor God like this. I'm never going to run from any of my enemies or the enemies of God. And all of a sudden, he's driven into the wilderness by an evil report and an absolute feeling of being overwhelmed by a sense of failure.

He said, I am no better than my fathers. I am in the same boat that the children of Israel were in. They saw your signs, they saw your wonders, and then they ran from their enemies.

And a man, those that are zealous for the things of God, there's a downside sometimes to a great zealousness for God. Those that are really zealous for God, if a sense of failure comes into their life, sometimes it can lead to a tremendous despair, beginning to overwhelm them. It seems now for a season, in verse 5 and 6, he said, he lay and slept under a juniper tree.

And an angel touched him and said, arise and eat. He looked and behold, there was a cake baking on the coals and a cruise of water at his head. And he did eat and drink and laid him down again.

And it seemed for a season that all he could do was get up, eat what God had provided and go back and lay down again. In spite of all that provision, he was still so tired. And there are some in this church today that you have come into this house of God today and you say, Pastor, you are speaking my life.

Right now, I come into Times Square Church or I open my Bible every day and God feeds me and he talks to me about his power and he talks to me about his faithfulness. But it seems that I'm unable to lay hold of it in this season in my life for whatever reason. I want to be able to live for God.

I want to be able to serve him. I want to rise up in power. But it seems that all I can do, such a despair, such a loneliness has come into my life.

That it seems that all I can do is get up and eat a little bit every day and go back and sleep again. A despair has begun to overwhelm my soul. We hear that cry in the heart of David, the king, the sweet psalmist in Psalm 6, when he says, O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak. O Lord, heal me, for my bones are vexed. My soul is also sore vexed.

But thou, O Lord, how long? Return, O Lord, deliver my soul. O save me for thy mercy's sake. For in death there's no remembrance of thee.

In the grave, who shall give thee thanks? I'm weary with my groaning. All the night make I my bed to swim.  
I water my couch with my tears.

As David once knew this time of this season of wilderness experience and despair, now Elijah is knowing it. And in verse 8 it says, As 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. In this place of despair, Elijah travels only in the strength of God.

I have come through times in my life where I have known that it is only God and God alone that has given me the strength to go one more day. I have known times of great weakness. I remember one time in particular walking down a gravel road out in the country so weak, so tired.

Having had a great zeal for God and having such a sense of having failed God come over me. And I remember crying out to the Lord in that state of despair really, which was threatening to just overwhelm my very soul. I remember crying out to God.

I said, God, whatever you do, however you move, it's always been in my heart that Jesus, you would be glorified, that you would move upon people's lives. God, that you would tear down all that's false and let the true worship of Christ be exalted in the nation. And I said, God, if I'm not able to be used anymore of you, if for whatever reason I've displeased you, all I ask of you is that you just let me live to see it.

God, just let me live to see the day when you move in power upon a people. Let me live to see your kingdom advance. Whether or not I'm even part of it, it doesn't matter anymore.

I just ask that you let me live to see it. He's walking only in the strength of God. And he knows it.

And there are some of you here today that you are simply walking in the strength of God. You have no assurance of the day after tomorrow. You know that you're here today.

Some are even wondering how you even made it to the house of God today. There are others who are here and you say, God, if I don't hear from you today, it's all over for me. I have got to hear from you.

You've got to speak to my life. You've got to tell me why I'm in this place. If I've grieved you, tell me how I've grieved you.

If I've failed you, Lord, and you're angry with me, Lord, you've got to take your hand of chastening off of my life. And you've got to set me free from this place. We need to be careful that in these wilderness times of discouragement, it is often during these times that we are prone to making wrong judgments, firstly about other people, and secondly, wrong judgments even about the very motives of God.

In chapter 19, again, in verse 10, the Lord asks him, he says, what are you doing here, Elijah? He says, I've been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts and for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars and slain thy prophets with the sword. And he says, and I, even I only am left. In that place of despair, sometimes we can begin to make false judgments about the spirituality of other people who are around us.

We need to be careful of this. This was a grave mistake in Elijah's life. He had such a zeal for God that he thought, well, how come other people are not suffering like I am? How come they're not a day's journey in the wilderness? And how come I had to stand on that hill all alone? Are there no other Christians? And

then all of a sudden he came to the conclusion that there are no other Christians.

He was the only one that was standing for God. I'm the only one left. But Jesus said in Matthew 7 clearly, judge not that you be not judged.

He's talking about an unrighteous judgment. He's talking about when we form in our hearts an irreversible opinion that we are righteous and others are not, that we are living for God and they're not living for God. We become judge, jury and executioner of somebody else's life and walk with God.

He says, for with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged. And with what measure you meet, it shall be measured to you again. I, even I, only am left.

Now God corrects him very gently a little later on and tells him in verse 18, he said, I have 7,000, Elijah and Israel, that have not bowed the knee unto Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him. 7,000 others, he had made a fateful mistake. God had a remnant, God had a people that were living for him, that he considered righteous, that had not bowed their knee.

And so it's not for you and I to judge the condition of others around us. We're best to focus on where we are with God, each and every one of us individually. And then the second thing, he said, in verse 10, he says, I, even only I, am left, and they seek my life to take it away.

They seek my life. Be careful when you get into a time of depression, a time of loneliness. Perhaps when it seems like everybody is, there can come that lie of the devil into your life, like everybody is after me, they're all against me.

You come into the house of the Lord and you're walking around as if you're on eggshells, and you're looking at everybody with these strange eyes. Didn't say hi to me today. They're against me.

Look at that usher, doesn't like me. The seat next to me is empty. I knew it, nobody wants to sit next to me.

They're all against me. They seek my life. Now, who are they? Who are they? Now, Elijah is saying, I'm the only one left, and he's wrong.

And then he says, and they seek my life. He's wrong about that too. Who are they? Are they the people? The last that we heard of the people, they were shouting, the Lord is God, the Lord is God.

That's the last we heard about the people. The last we saw of the people, they were helping him slay the false prophets at the Brook Kishon. All of the people that had been gathered, they were with Elijah.

There was nobody among the people that I can see that were seeking his life. Even the king Ahab, the last we heard of him, he was awaiting Elijah's instructions as he sought the face of God. On the top of Mount Carmel.

So the king wasn't after him. And the people that were gathered around Mount Carmel weren't after him. So who are they? Well, they are the devil, Jezebel, and a messenger.

That's who was after Elijah. The devil, a queen that he had access to her heart, and a messenger that she sent. Now, those are they.

It's true there can be people after us. It's true that somebody can come in a moment of weakness, can speak a word that puts a root of fear in your heart. But be careful in that state of depression or discouragement that you and I don't begin to tar everybody around us with the same brush.

Because one evil messenger has come to you from another evil messenger who is really motivated by the devil himself. That doesn't mean everybody is against you. Now, in verse 11, in chapter 19, God displays in the cave.

He leads Elijah to a cave, and in that cave, he displays his power to show Elijah how suddenly he could change any situation or circumstance or even nation for that matter. And he said after he had made this confession, I'm the only one left and they seek my life. In verse 11, 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 break in pieces the rocks before the Lord. And the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake.

And after the earthquake, a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, a still small voice. Elijah, he's telling Elijah, you've never been alone.

I've been with you every moment in all of my power, just as I was at the beginning. Not one ounce of my power has diminished in your life and on your behalf. I have not left you.

I've not forsaken you. I have been with you. There is a purpose in everything that is happening in your life right now.

He sends firstly a wind, a great wind so strong that it breaks the mountains. Can you imagine that? I was on Mount Carmel one time in that area. You look around Israel, there are numerous mountains all over the place.

It's hard to imagine a wind so strong that it breaks mountains apart. And it says that it breaks in pieces the rocks before the Lord. And God is saying to Elijah, Elijah, what kingdom has ever been able to defy my might? In Zechariah chapter 4, Zechariah the prophet was writing to the governor, Zerubbabel, who had been sent back after the Babylonian captivity to encourage him to trust that no opposing force could withstand God's plan to reestablish his people and rebuild the temple.

The people were becoming discouraged. And God spoke to Zechariah, and Zechariah wrote down and spoke to Zerubbabel. And he said to him these words, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.

And then in verse 7 he says this, Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain. In other words, who can stand when God has a plan? Who can stand against it? Who can move his hand against what God wants to do in anyone's life? If God has a plan for your life here today, who can stand against it? What power of hell can oppose it? This is what God is trying to get through to Elijah. He sends the wind and says, I have been with you just as I was on Mount Carmel.

Nothing is diminished. If I determine a plan for your life, nothing can stop it. Nothing.

Even though for a season you might be in the wilderness and you might not understand what it is that's happening in your life, nothing can stop what I have determined to do in your life because it's got nothing to do with you. It's not by your might. It's not by your power.

It's by my spirit, saith the Lord. Who are you, O great mountain? Who are you, O depression? Who are you, loneliness? Who are you, discouragement? To stand and think that you can stop a servant of God, that I have placed my hand on it. Before him, he says, you will become a plain.

In other words, you'll become a flat piece of land. There'll be no opposition whatsoever. And he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings crying, Grace, grace unto it.

In other words, Zechariah was saying to Zerubbabel, the Lord was speaking through Zechariah to Zerubbabel, you're going to finish, you're going to finish by the power of my spirit what I have begun to do in your life. And nobody is going to stop it. I am an all-powerful God.

And what I have determined to do in your life, I'm going to do it and I'm going to finish it. You're going to run your race and finish your course. And when you get to the end, the capstone in this case is not the cornerstone, it's the finishing stone on the top.

The very last stone to be placed in the temple. And when you are finished, when the work that I have determined for you to do has come to completion, you're going to put the last stone in place and you're going to raise your hands and you're going to shout, grace, grace, the goodness of God, the favor of God, the power of God, the faithfulness of God has brought me to where I am, has rebuilt my life and caused me to stand in the midst of all opposition. God's goodness and grace has brought me through.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Brethren, this work in your life and mine began by grace.

It will continue by grace and it will finish by grace. It's got nothing to do with you or I. It's everything to do with a surrendered heart, inviting Christ in in the power of the Holy Ghost and walking with Him in that power. We need to understand these truths.

Elijah understood this truth. There was a time in his life when he understood that I can stand in the power of God and nothing can oppose me. That's what gave him the courage to stand on Mount Carmel.

But now, he's a day's journey into the wilderness. Next, it says the Lord sent an earthquake after the wind, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. It's not that God wasn't doing it.

It's that what He was trying to get through to Elijah was not to be found in that earthquake. When He sent the earthquake, He's speaking and saying, what plans of man can stand when I arise to shake them? The prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 2, verses 17 and 19, speaking of a day that's coming soon. He says, Hallelujah.

The New Testament writer says, He will arise and shake everything that can be shaken, that only that which cannot be shaken might remain. What plans of man can stand when I arise to shake them? Jezebel hears from the devil, sends a messenger, and sends the man of God into a wilderness. And God's saying to Elijah, what plans of the evil one have ever stood when I stand to shake them? Hallelujah.

Didn't the scripture say to us, no weapon formed against you will ever prosper? And every tongue that rises against you in judgment, you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. Their

righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.

Every tongue that has risen against you in your time of weakness, God says, open your mouth and declare that the righteousness you possess is not of yourself. The righteousness you have is because Jesus Christ died on a cross and you have trusted him for your salvation. Therefore, open your mouth and condemn the accuser right to his face.

Say unto him, I rebuke you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is my righteousness. And lastly, says he sends a fire in verse 12. But the Lord was not in the fire.

Later on, we see after the death of Ahab in 2 Kings chapter 1. Please don't turn down. I'll just share it with you. There was a new king, Azariah, who had been rebuked by Elijah.

Elijah did get out of the wilderness, by the way, if you've never read the story. And this king was incensed that Elijah had rebuked him because he was seeking after another god. And he sent a captain with 50 soldiers to take him.

And Elijah is sitting on top of a mountain. And this man with his 50 soldiers came to take Elijah. And he said, Thou man of God, the king has said, come down.

Now, here's an earthly king sending a soldier captain with 50 soldiers. And Elijah is sitting on a mountain all alone. He's rebuked the king.

This is after this entire scenario that I'm reading about in 1 Kings 19. And Elijah says to him, Well, if I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume thee and thy 50. And fire came down and consumed the captain and his 50 right on the spot.

But back before this happened, God was speaking to Elijah and he was telling him, Who can stand before God? Who can resist the power of God? Who can resist the fury of God? Who can stand against the judgment of God? Elijah, when I stand to do something, when I send a man to do something, who can resist him? Who can stop him? Who has the power? Who has the numerical resources? Who has the authority to stand against the king of the universe and ever prosper? Brethren, that's why Paul says that your eyes would be enlightened, that you would see who Jesus Christ is, where he sits at the right hand of all power and all authority. Every name that is named is in subjection to him. And he is the head of the church.

This is the end of side one. You may now turn the tape over to side two. ...against what he has determined to do in your life.

Who has the authority? Who has the power? That's why David the psalmist could say, Though 10,000 come against me, I'll not be afraid of them, because God is with me and his commission is upon my life. Hallelujah! Elijah could, after the victory on Carmel, easily have been caught up in the victory parties. He had won a marvelous victory.

And Israel, at least in that momentary respite, was turning back to God. At least the people around the mountain were turning to God. The false prophets had all been slain.

And no doubt there would be a tendency, when that kind of thing happens, to have a victory party and celebrate and rejoice, which is an okay thing. Elijah could have easily ended up traveling the circuit and

retelling the story of what happened on Mount Carmel one day. You know, there are many, many preachers that have known great victories in their ministry, and rather than pursue and go on into deeper things of God, they end up on the circuit and they just retell the story.

Aren't you thankful today? Aren't you thankful that Pastor David doesn't stand here every Sunday telling stories about what happened in 1958 in New York City? Aren't you thankful? It was a great victory, and that victory is known all over the world. But unless you press him for it, he'll never talk to you about it, because he's not concerned about what happened in 1958. He'll tell you what happened this morning on his knees before coming into church.

He'll tell you what happened yesterday or the day before, but he's not talking about what happened way back then. And there are many, many people who get caught, and they have a victory, and God uses them, and the church wants to know about it, and so they end up on a circuit. And that's all they ever talk about is what happened way back then.

And they build a tent around it, they eulogize it, and before they know it, they're actually worshiping a past experience and forgetting about the God of today. Elijah could have become the new head of the building committee. They're reestablishing the altars the correct way committee throughout the land of Israel, going and say, okay, it's 12 stones, this is the way it was done, 12 stones, Zebulun goes here, Naphtali goes here, Levi, okay, build it that way, you build a trench, this is the way it's done, and it could have easily happened to him, because in the hearts of the people, they would want to rebuild the altars, but God said, no, no.

Now, there are a lot of theories about what happened to Elijah, and certainly one of the most credible theories of all is that Elijah suffered burnout. He had had a great, great, great spiritual victory, which involved great physical strain, a great expense of emotion, which left him very empty and very momentarily weak after it was all over. And there is great truth in that.

And all it took then, he could withstand all these prophets of Baal, he could even withstand all of the people who are worshipping false gods, he could risk his very life on the fact that God was going to send the true fire upon this altar that he had built, and then just a few days after, run from just an evil report from a messenger. I suppose it is probably one of the most credible scenarios that he was just simply tired, and we need to be careful when we've been involved in great spiritual conflict and when fatigue comes upon us that we don't fall prey to loneliness or despair, discouragement. But I want you to consider something else.

In addition to that, it's a truth that we would be wise not to ignore, and it's simply this. God had allowed Elijah to be chased away. God allowed it to happen.

And not too many people are willing to consider that. The God who sends winds and smites the mountains, the God who sends earthquakes, the God who sends fire on a captain in his 50, could he not have just burnt Jezebel right on the spot? Could he not have just taken the breath out of the messenger before he even got to Elijah? Could he not just have put a hedge around him and stopped it? But he didn't stop it. He allowed the enemy to plant that seed in Jezebel's heart, he allowed the messenger to get to Elijah, he allowed him to speak those words, and then he allowed Elijah to run.

He allowed him to be chased away. I personally believe that at this particular time that God was not willing to lose this man to any other pursuit. God had found a man after his own heart.

He had found a man that was seeking him, that loved him with all of his heart, that so burnt with a jealousy for the altar of God that he was willing to risk his life and reputation for it. And he had just won a marvelous victory. But God was not willing to lose him to the building committee or the retelling circuit or any other such thing, and he allowed him to be chased into the wilderness.

He allowed this time... There is nothing, brethren, that can come into our lives that God has not allowed. We need to understand that. Sometimes there's a purpose to even loneliness.

There are people here today that are crying out saying, God, why am I so lonely if I'm one of your children? Why is it that day after day, it seems that I have no close acquaintance, nobody close to me, and this loneliness is upon my life. Why am I so lonely? Why am I so alone if I am a servant of the living God? There are things that God allows into our lives for reasons that are beyond what the natural mind can understand. And oftentimes he's working something into us that we will only understand as we continue trusting him.

When we get to the other side of the wilderness, we'll look back and we'll understand what it was that God was trying to accomplish in our lives. He had found a man after his own heart and he was not willing to let him go. It's as simple as that.

In addition to the fact that Elijah was no doubt weak and vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy, God found a man that he could use. And the basis of that usability in the hand of God was this man had a tender heart for God. He had a relationship with God.

He had a passion for God. And God said, I'm not going to let that go. That's been the basis of why I could use this man's life.

That's why I could send the fire on the altar. I knew that he loved me so much that he wouldn't take the glory upon himself. That's why I could manifest my presence so exceedingly powerfully and so rarely in this generation because I found a man that wanted me with all of his heart and wasn't concerned about power and prestige and all these other things.

And I'm not willing to lose it. And so I allowed him to be driven today's journey into the wilderness. I allowed it to happen.

God could have stopped it, but he didn't stop it. And that's the pivotal point of what I wanted to speak about this morning. God comes now to Elijah, not in the strong wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire, but a still small voice.

The original translation says, comes to him with a delicate whispering, a delicate whispering. And he says, Elijah, what are you doing here? And verse 13 says, was so when Elijah heard this delicate whispering, when he heard it, he wrapped his face in a mantle and he went out and stood at the entering into the cave and behold, there came a voice to him and said, what doest thou hear, Elijah? Elijah, what are you doing here? Elijah was familiar with the wind. He's familiar with the fire.

He's familiar with the earthquake, but he's not familiar with this delicate voice. And it caused him to wrap his face. God.

I have no problem with the other. I have no problem of thinking you, of you as a God of wrath or a God of power, God of might. But what is this now that you are speaking to my heart? And I believe that the Lord is

just saying to Elijah, Elijah, I love you.

I've never stopped loving you. My power has not been on your life to tear down kingdoms and false concepts, irrational arguments. My power has not been on your life because of any other reason.

I have been working through you and with you because I love you. And Elijah, I don't ever want you to be focused on anything but the fact that I love you. I'm not angry at you because you're weak.

I'm not angry at you because you've, in your own heart or mind, failed. I'm not angry at you because all you can do is get up and eat in the morning, go back and lay down the rest of the day. I'm not angry at you.

My love goes far beyond that, Elijah. I love you. I love you.

And then he just says, what are you doing here, Elijah, with this tender whispering? And Elijah says, I've been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant. In verse 14, thrown down thine altar, slain thy prophets with the sword and I even only I am left, and they seek my life to take it away. He still doesn't even have it all right.

God doesn't even say anything about it. He just says, Now, go return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you come, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.

And Yehu, the son of Nimshi, shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel. And Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abel-Melola, shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. So God, just in the intimacy of the moment, just says, Elijah, you're not done. Elijah, your life is not over.

Your ministry is not finished. Your strength is not diminished. It never was in you in the first place.

I just didn't want to lose you. I allowed you to be driven into the wilderness so that you would be able to hear my voice again. So that it would be the most... You see, it was in that intimacy that Elijah had been launched into ministry in the first place.

With God. And can you imagine, there are some here today that if you were in Elijah's place, you're lonely, you're discouraged, you're depressed, you think people are against you. You don't even know if there's anybody else around that's living for God.

And God comes with a delicate whispering and says to him, Now go, anoint kings. First of all, he says, I've got two kings I need you to anoint. A king over Syria and a new king over Israel.

And he says, on top of that, a new prophet that's going to follow you one day, Elijah. And that guy will be a friend to you and encourage you, he'll walk with you. Elisha was known as the man who washed Elijah's hands.

I'm going to take away your loneliness. Doesn't the scripture say, Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you. All these things.

So God restores his ministry, which in effect he had never lost. Don't let the devil convince you because you're tired that your ministry is lost. Don't let him convince you that you're finished because you're going

through a time of despair and discouragement.

Don't let him convince you that people are against you just because for a season you might be experiencing a loneliness that you've never known before. Everything that comes into your life is for a reason and my life is for a reason. And always and in all things that God allows into our lives is because he is drawing us to himself.

That we're not going to find our fulfillment in friends. We're not going to find our fulfillment in ministry. We're not going to find it in the admiration of men.

We are going to find our fulfillment in our life in the Lord Jesus Christ and in none other. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

Now go to 2 Kings quickly with me, chapter 2. God had many things that I don't have time to talk about it all today but He had many things that he still wanted to do and was going to do through Elijah's life. But I love this account of the end of Elijah's I can't say his life because he didn't die. In 2 Kings chapter 2, verse 11 He's walking with Elisha.

God has done much good now through this man's life and the two of them are walking together and in verse 11 it says 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 world went into heaven. God says I love this because God says that's it, that's it. I can't stand it anymore.

I love this man. I love this man. I love the relationship I've had with him.

He's down there in a sense and I'm up here. Enough is enough. Go get him.

Go get him. And a chariot of fire comes down. Hallelujah.

And it's the hand of God. Scoops this man up and says I'm going to now show you some things that you've never seen before. I'm going to draw you into my presence.

We sang about it today. It will be worth it all. It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

All the struggles, all the trials. All the hard times that we will have gone through one day, one day, one day. What happened to Elijah is going to happen to me.

I believe that. I feel I'm living in the generation that's going to see the rapture of the church of Jesus Christ. I believe that with all my heart.

One day, I'm just going to be walking down the street talking to somebody here about the things of God, maybe. Some of you, hopefully, attend Times Square Church and we'll be walking and talking about how good God is. And in a moment of time, in a moment, the hand of God comes down.

The trump of the Lord sounds and God lifts us up into His presence and we are forever with Him. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

And now, Elijah leaves and Elisha is left. Verse 12 says, Elisha saw it and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof. Now that's a cry that the people cried when they thought our defense is gone.

What we trusted in is left. Elijah is now gone and Elisha is crying out in a sense, Oh God, Oh God, this was the manifestation of your power. This was your presence.

This is how your kingdom moved. Now you've taken this man and he saw him no more and he took hold of his own clothes and rent them in two pieces. And he took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and went back and stood by the bank of Jordan.

And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and smote the waters and said, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? When he had smitten the waters they parted hither and thither and Elisha went over. There comes a time in each person's life when we have to let go of the past with all of its triumphs and all of its disappointments. Those who have kept the faith and those who have let us down.

We have to throw off the discouragement and the confusion and the loneliness. And by taking up the legacy of the faithfulness of God towards those who have gone before us, God was faithful to Elijah. We can say that.

We have the history. We have the story. In spite of all his fears and frustrations and failures, God was faithful to him.

We have to take that up and smite all that opposes God's plan for our lives and move forward in newness of heart, newness of faith, and newness of relationship. It's not enough just to read about what God did for Elijah and shout about it in this church and say, Oh God, thank you. You were so good.

He was so discouraged, so despairing. He made so many mistakes. The devil so played with his mind.

But God, you came through. God, you came through. It's insufficient for us just to know that and to walk out and hit Broadway at 12, 15 today and say, Oh God, I'm so discouraged.

God, I'm so lonely. God, I'm so despairing. God, I'm so weak.

There comes a time when we've got to take our own clothes like Elijah and tear them off, our own attempts at righteousness, our own attempts at getting out of the place we're in. And he picked up the mantle of Elijah, which was a type, I suppose, of us, hearing the story and saying, God, if you did that for this man, then you will do that for me. You never change.

You're the same yesterday, today, and forever. You are a never failing God and a never changing God. Thank you, Lord.

Thank you. Thank you for taking me into this wilderness time. Thank you for showing me how weak I am without you.

Thank you for loving me so much that you're not willing to let me lose my affection for you, even in relationships or friendships. Thank you, God, for what you've done for me. And you take up the legacy of what God has done for others and smite whatever waters are before, whatever problems, whatever trials are before you, you smite it and say, Where is the Lord God of Elijah? Hallelujah.

It's a type of faith that God asks us to have. That we stand up and say, Lord, I'm not, I'm tired. I hear now what you did for this man and you're speaking right to my heart.

You're calling me with that delicate whispering, that tender voice. You're calling me out of my despair. You're calling me out of my weakness.

You're calling me out of my failure. God, you called Elijah out. You anointed him and your plan went on in his life and hell couldn't stop it.

Nothing could stop it. Hallelujah. The day it stopped is when you reached down and picked him right off the face of the earth yourself.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Glory to God.

We have the privilege today of hearing this story and we have the choice. We can sit in clothes of despair and discouragement and loneliness and depression or we can get up and tear it off. Pick up the story and stand and face what opposes us and say, in the strength of God, in the power of the risen Christ, I believe that the same God that was faithful to Elijah will be faithful to me.

And you take that and smite whatever that river is, whatever that problem is before you smite it. I want to read to you very quickly a scripture. And God gave this to me for somebody here this morning.

Last night, you've heard it many times but you're going to hear it again. And new and fresh. And I know that God gave it to me last night for somebody who has come into this service today.

And it's from the prophet Isaiah. Let me read it to you. Thus saith the Lord, which makes a way in the sea and a path in the mighty waters.

Which brings forth the chariot and the horse, the army and the power. They shall lie down together, they shall not rise. They are extinct.

They are quenched as tal. He's talking about the time that he made a pathway through impossibility. He has all throughout history for his people have trusted in him.

And no matter what has pursued them, God has made them lie down. He has destroyed them. Remember not the former things and neither consider the things of old.

Behold, I will do a new thing. Now it shall spring forth. Shall you not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness.

I'll make a way for you in your wilderness time and rivers in the desert. God's saying I'll open to you a spring of life. I'll open to you a wellspring of water.

I'll open my word to you and I'll show you the way out. The beast of the field shall honor me, the dragons and the owls because I give waters in the wilderness and rivers in the desert to give drink to my people, my chosen. This people have I formed for myself and they shall show forth my praise.

The Lord says to you today, I have formed you for myself. No weapon formed against you will prosper. No tongue that rises against you in judgment will triumph over you.

No amount of despair, isolation, confusion or loneliness will cause me to take my affection away from you. Nothing, nothing, nothing will stop what I have determined to do in your life and through your life. Get up now, lay hold of the word and believe me with all of your heart and I will give you water in the midst of your

wilderness and I will give you strength.

Father, I thank you today. I thank you for triumphing over the powers of hell and darkness and giving strength to your children, to your chosen. This day, Lord, you have told me that you're going to unlock prison doors.

You're going to give life. You're going to give water. You're going to give bread.

You're going to give renewed strength to those who make a choice to place their trust and confidence in you in the midst of their trial, in the midst of their struggle, whatever their circumstance is. Father, we thank you today. I thank you from the depths of my heart that your kingdom has come in great power.

I thank you for great release from all of the oppressions of the enemy. Thank you, Lord, that you are faithful even in the midst of our trials to be drawing us closer and closer to the very center of your heart. We give you praise and honor and glory for this in the mighty name of Jesus.

Hallelujah, hallelujah. If I have preached your life today and you're among those that say, Pastor, you have just, you have been hiding in my closet. You have spoken my life.

I want you to get up out of the cave and hear the word of the Lord today and trust God to take you through your time of depression and loneliness and discouragement. God will be faithful to you. He'll not fail you.

He'll not forsake you. I want to give a special invitation. I honestly feel that there's a pastor in particular who's here today.

I feel the Holy Spirit speaking it to my heart that you are on your last legs and you said, God, I've got to hear from you or I'm finished. Well, you've heard from the Lord and now God invites you. Let's stand together.

In the education annex, the ushers will tell you how to come to this altar. Would you come? We're going to pray together and believe God for a mighty victory in this house today. If you're backslidden, you need to get back to God, would you come? If you need to be saved, would you come? And Christ will save you.

Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Listen to what David said.

Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul there is no help for him in God. But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me, my glory, and the lifter of my head.

I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. I laid me down and slept. I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.

I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O Lord, save me, O my God, for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheekbone. Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

Salvation belongs to the Lord, and thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah. There's not a whole lot for you to do, those that have come to the altar today, but to receive the word that God loves you.

He's not angry with you. He's not mad at you because you've been weak. He's not displeased because you've been discouraged.

If you have allowed willful sin into your life, then this is your opportunity to lay it down and say, God, I want to walk with you. I want to go your way. He's going to be faithful to you.

He's going to keep you. He's going to sustain you. He's going to give you joy.

And the purpose and plan that he established for your life is going to go on. It's going to go on in the full measure that God determined for your life. Hallelujah.

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus, thank you for loving me. Thank you for drawing me and showing me how much you desire intimate fellowship with me.

I thank you, Lord, even for this hard time in my life. I've not fully understood it, but I know one thing. You died for me.

You rose again from the grave. You love me so much that you said in your word that you wrote my name on the palms of your hands. I am continuously before you.

Thank you, Lord, that you're not willing to let me stray from your love. I thank you today that I can hear your voice. I hear you speaking to me and you're talking about your love for me and your plan for my life and that you will meet every need that I have.

Thank you today for the knowledge that every need that I have is found in my relationship with you, Lord Jesus. Thank you for loving me. And one more thing.

I believe that someday soon you're going to come and get me and you're going to take me home. And every struggle and every trial, everything I've gone through will one day look so small, be so far in the past, when I finally see you face to face. I'm going to live with you for all of eternity.

I love you, Jesus. Thank you for encouraging me and giving me strength. This is the conclusion of the tape.

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