

# A Still Small Voice

by Charles Alexander

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*The sermon highlights the importance of true religion and perseverance in the face of adversity, using the example of Elijah's experience with Jezebel.*

**Duration:** 36:57

**Scripture:** Genesis 18:25, 1 Kings 19:18, Isaiah 55:8-9, Romans 8:28, Romans 12:19, Galatians 6:7, 1 Peter 5:7

**Topics:** "Voice Of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the wickedness that exists in the world and the mystery of God's ways. He acknowledges that even the best of men can be driven to despair by the sinfulness around them. The preacher emphasizes the importance of God's restraining hand in preventing us from committing cruel acts and sinning. He shares a personal story from his grandmother about the potential for unguarded moments to lead to terrible consequences. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the fall of man and the hidden depths of our hearts, urging us to be aware of our capacity to harm others.

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## Transcript

We turn this evening to another great episode in the life of God's prophet Elijah. In the first book of Kings, chapter 19. It is difficult to select a text from this chapter.

It is so rich in that which ought to imprint itself upon our memories. So we will take the whole of the chapter as our text this evening. Reminding ourselves of the story which it tells.

How Elijah, having destroyed the worship of Baal and Ashtareth, respectively the sun god and the moon god of ancient times. Having broken the power of this superstition and heathenish error. With all that goes with it in sinfulness, contamination, immorality.

He finds himself now threatened by that evil person, the woman Jezebel. Who sat queen upon the throne as the consort of the Israelitish king Ahab. An evil man and a ten times more evil woman.

Who had taken a leading part in the introduction of heathenism in its worst and most virulent forms in the land of Israel. Despite the grace and favor of God in their history and in their present situation. Jezebel of course was no Israelite herself.

Ahab had married her as the daughter of the king of Sidon. The ancient Phoenicians you know. The people who used to sail their vessels all over the world.

Just like the Phoenicians did in a later time. And as the British did in a more recent time. They were the world's traders were the Phoenicians.

They were also leading the world in, or a part of the world at any rate. In education and knowledge. But above all they were world leaders in the form of religion which pollutes the mind.

And which destroys the soul. And in making an alliance with the court of Sidon and of Tyre. By marrying the daughter of the king of Sidon Jezebel.

Ahab was committing himself and his people to a situation of appalling danger. A danger not of warfare but a danger of national pollution and decay. For let us be very sure of this.

That it is only through religion which keeps human society in order. As we are finding out to our cost in this country of Great Britain. In the decline of religion.

In the decline of the gospel. And worldly people will say that well the churches cease to be of any consequence in the land. No doubt because there's nothing in religion don't you see.

We're getting on very well without it but they're not. That's just the point isn't it. They're not getting on very well without it.

You ask the elderly people. And we mean folk around Norris Green. They're afraid to venture out into the dark at night.

On their own. Or even sometimes a company. And this has all happened in this last 20 years.

And we very well know this is a new situation which didn't exist. When this council housing estate was first founded after the First World War. Some of us remember all about that.

We walked round this estate when these houses were only half built. We walked in and out of these places. They weren't subject to vandalism at that time.

People came round on a Sunday afternoon to see how the estate was getting on. No windows were broken in the half constructed houses. No lead was destroyed or taken away for gain.

People came and went freely. What an alteration there is. Not even safe in our own homes now.

I don't know what might happen when there comes a knock at the door. I assume our ladies can tell even recently of excitements in their own locality. In their own streets.

At dead of night. And of people ringing up the police because they are startled out of their wits with what is going on. Oh they are doing fine without religion.

Fine indeed. I speak to anyone here this evening who is doing fine without religion too. We would have met you could do fine without some religions.

Israel could have done fine without this religion of Baal which Jezebel intruded upon them. It only brought mischief and trial and trouble in the end. Which you can't do without true religion.

And Elijah stood for that. True religion. Because of that he was regarded as a troubler of the peace.

Happy indeed is. Without true religion which comes from the throne of God. Which troubles the wicked.

And gets them into a state of excitement and opposition. There must be something in it or they wouldn't oppose it. And so Ahab goes home and he tells Jezebel.

All that Elijah had done and how. The 400 prophets of the groves and the 450 prophets of Baal. Had been destroyed in one afternoon.

Through the ministry of God's servant. And we read that Elijah slew them. Of course he didn't slay one of them.

Not with his own hand but the people. As a consequence of Elijah's ministry and prayer. Rose up as one man and destroyed these.

Who were troubling Israel. Not only so but. That day the hand of the Lord was turned towards them.

And three and a half years of famine came to an end. And the rain descended in great torrents. In immense downpours of rain.

And soaked the thirsty land. And everything became fresh and green once again. And the people's hearts were made glad but not Jezebel's heart.

Not her of course not. I wish some people would have a look at her portrait sometime. And see the real kind of people.

Who oppose the true religion of the word of God. And find it inconvenient and uncomfortable. Well they might indeed.

And so she sends a message to Elijah. So let the gods do to me and more also. If I make not thy life as the life of one of those prophets.

By tomorrow about this time. The cruelty of woman. And it's strange that through the fall of man.

Through the entry of sin into the world. Such monsters of cruelty as Jezebel. Should arise.

And she was a woman. A woman who was created to be the help meet of man. His comfort in affliction.

His nurse in his illness. The one who encourages him when all things are against him. How many a man has gone home in despair.

From his work or the lack of it. And has found a true and faithful and wise counselor at home. Never mind she says.

We'll see it through together. You and me together we'll see it through. Don't worry don't let anything upset you.

Many a man has had new strength. New inspiration to go on. The blessing of a faithful woman beside him.

Here was Jezebel. To think that woman could have sunk so low. Or reach such heights of iniquity and power.

Terrible thing this isn't it? I suppose we're not unduly scandalized when. A man becomes a tyrant. Was a terrible thing it seems to be.

Something awfully raw about it. When a woman becomes like this. We had one of them on the throne of England at one time.

Thank God there have not been many of them. Most of the women who have occupied the throne of England have been many of them. But all of them with about one exception that I can recall.

Have been good women. Women who have done the country a power of good. Stretching from Elizabeth I right down to Elizabeth II.

There's Queen Victoria. There's good Queen Anne. There's Queen Mary who shared the throne with.

Equally as monarch. With William of Orange. But then there was.

Mary whom they called Bloody Mary. She was the cousin of the first Elizabeth. Or rather the half sister.

Daughter of Henry VIII. One or other of his wives. But not the same one.

I think it was Anne Boleyn wasn't it who gave us. Elizabeth I. Not quite sure of that. Correct me if I'm wrong afterwards.

But not at the moment. But Mary. Ah yes she sought to bring potpourri back to this realm.

With fire and sword. Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley. The martyrs of Smithfield.

Unknown gracious men and women. Ordinary operatives. Away there in Lewis.

In Sussex in the south of England. Burnt at the stake at the market place. Seven of them.

Four men, three women. For no offence at all. That they.

Met together to. Hear the word of God. And to support it's proclamation.

We all ought to be careful aren't we? Whether we are men or women. We ought to be careful whether we are young or old. That sin does not take hold of us.

That darkness does not claim our minds. Lest the day should come. When we should sell ourselves entirely to the devil.

To do evil. Oh there would be a day of reckoning we know. And life is very short.

And shorter still for many. When Jezebel came to her appointed end. She was devoured by dogs.

Outside the window of her own palace. As the prophet of the Lord. Had said would be the case.

You can't succeed. Against the throne of God. Forever.

The destruction that she decreed for others. Returned upon her own head. There's always a day of reckoning if not in this world.

At the judgment seat. Let us see by these things. How grievous is the fall of man.

And his state of sinfulness. That goes for me and it goes for you. For all of us.

There are hidden depths in many a heart. In all our hearts. We might be astonished.

And incredulous. Concerning the capacity which is in you and me. To do harm to others.

Yes even after a lifetime. Of believing in the Saviour. Of being a Christian.

What we could still do. The cruelty we could still show. The sin we could still commit.

But for the restraining hand of God. My old grandmother said once to me. When I said how on earth could it have happened.

To that particular woman. About whom we were speaking. Who belonged to an earlier generation.

Who was a very fine Christian woman. Oh yet something terrible happened in her life. She said how is it possible granny.

Ah she said. My boy. Unguarded moments.

In the best. I never forget that. Unguarded moments.

In the best. What is it in the worst. We cannot take liberties.

With our own soul. And we cannot take liberties with sin. For it will destroy us if we do.

So it was in this case. And so she threatened the life of God's prophet. And when Elijah saw that.

He arose and went for his life. He came to Beersheba which belongs to Judah. Left his servant there.

And then went a day's journey into the wilderness. Cast himself down under a juniper tree. Why a juniper tree? You know what a juniper is.

Especially out in tropical climates. And in desert places. It's foliage is so thick.

And it grows so near the ground. A kind of a shrub. That you crawl underneath it and find absolute shade and shelter.

As though you had a fine cool roof over your head. And so he sits himself down under a juniper tree. And prays to God that he might die.

It is enough. Now Lord take away my life. I am no better now than my fathers.

Who were in their graves. And I would be better if I were in their grave with them. This is what he was saying.

And you know there are occasions when the best of men. Are driven almost to despair. By the wickedness that is in the world.

And they know their God. Too. But somehow or other there is a great mystery.

In the ways of God. It was in Elijah's day. So it is in ours.

We wonder why God doesn't rise up and smite the wicked. And make such an alteration. But then you see.

We do not know. All the. Inward mystery.

Of God's work. That he must perform. The judge of all the earth who sees everything.

And knows all. Doesn't legislate simply. For one man.

But for all men. Even those who know him not. Who are rebels against him.

He doesn't immediately sweep the wicked away. Doesn't immediately arrest their hand to do evil. Because it is part of the plan of God.

That evil. Should work itself out to its own destruction. And in the end there is no other way of dealing with evil.

But giving evil liberty. To destroy itself. This is part of the.

Wisdom of God. In creation and we see it. Rising to its.

Utmost limit. At the cross of Calvary. Where God himself.

Submitted himself in weakness. To all evil. As the only way by which.

Its awful load. Of guilt could be lifted from your soul and mine. And the things so dealt with.

So answered. That creation. When the time came.

Might be relieved of it. Forever. And that there might never be a return.

You see God is working to. A very very great program. Far beyond all our comprehension.

And although it would be natural for us to say. Oh Lord this evil is so great. I don't seem to make any headway against it.

It would be better that I should die. Than I should continue that. It is not the language of a man.

In despair. As concerning his own salvation. But it is a situation in which many good people.

Men and women. Are likely to find themselves in. From time to time.

When they see no way out and no way through. The problems either of the age. Or that which affects them in particular.

We've got to understand our Elijah. And his situation then. Remember that all the time he was not acting for himself.

He was acting prophetically. Because he was a prophet. And everything that befell him.

Had a meaning and a purpose there in. But though he knew this. It did not relieve him of the pain and the anguish.

Of his situation. And this comes. To its full limits.

In the case of our Saviour. Especially in his agony in the garden. Where though he knew from all eternity.

That this would be the situation. And that there was no other way. And he'd been drawn into this world to this very end.

Yet he says. In his human suffering. And in the human situation.

In which depriving himself. And refusing to lay hold. Upon the advantages of the divinity which belong to him.

Was going forth to meet the enemy. And all sorrow. Is only the weakness of a human heart.

He cries to the Father. If it be possible. Let this cup pass from me.

Nevertheless not my will. But thine be done. For unless he felt the burden of it.

The pain of it. The anguish of it. It would all have been a mere charade.

In which he was engaged. No, no. The death was real.

The agony was real. It had to be all evil. Which he took upon himself.

And felt the burden. The pain. The anguish of it.

And that. Every tear drop that had ever been shed in this world. In sorrow.

And every pain that had ever been endured. Through the agony of sin. Should come upon him.

In his absolute totality. And be forced through his soul in one night. That he might endure it all.

If you say there is mystery here. Well we would agree. Mystery indeed.

And so. Elijah was in. Such a situation.

Differing of course by infinite degree. From the totality of the Saviour's suffering. But there away in his misery.

Feeling that death. Would be a welcome visitor. At that moment.

But God's mind was different. Now I don't want to spend too much of your valuable time. In vindicating God's prophets.

We've done it so often. I'll just remind you of some of the things that have been said. By good men too.

I think it was Dr. Krummacher. Dr. Frederick W. Krummacher. A great German divine.

Of the early part of last century. Who wrote. The classic book upon Elijah.

Entitled Elijah the Tishbite. A book. Which is a rich mind.

Of meditation. And the divine truth. And yet great man though Dr. Krummacher was.

Yet. He failed. In this episode.

Of the history of Elijah. He regards Elijah as. Temporarily having.

Lost his courage. That he should not have fled from Jezebel. He who the day before.

Had presided over the great triumph of. The Lord Jehovah. He is the God.

Who sent down fire from heaven. And consumed the sacrifice. So that all the people turn.

Back to God with their great cry. The Lord. He is the God.

The Lord. He is the God. Now he frees.

From the face of a woman. So Dr. Krummacher having. Helped to set the style of it.

Others very eagerly followed in his footsteps. I just refresh my mind today. Out of one particular book.

Which is otherwise quite a good book. Which the writer upon this particular. Portion of the life.

Of Elijah say. Describes him as. A craven.

And a coward. A man paralyzed with terror. Drifting on he knows not where.

Demoralized and panic stricken. Lost all confidence in God. The crouching coward of the wilderness.

Wonders why some. Degree of common sense didn't restrain this dear man. From writing like that about God's prophets.

Why wasn't Elijah always fleeing? This wasn't the first time that Elijah had fled. He had fled from Ahab at the beginning of the. Of the three and a half years famine.

He had to find a secret place in the wilderness. Where a spring was bubbling up out of the ground. Though there was no rain coming down from heaven.

A little brook. And ravens coming night and morning. And feeding them with bread and flesh.

And Ahab looking. Not only throughout all the land of Israel. But to all the adjoining lands.

And taking an oath of the kings thereof. That they didn't know where Elijah was. The Lord had hidden him.

And when the brook dried up. He went across the border into. The region of Tyre and Sidon.

And there the Lord commanded a widow woman to sustain him. And the barrel of meal did not waste. And the crews of oil did not fail.

Until the time when God would send rain upon the earth again. And they were looking for him everywhere. Yes even in Phoenicia.

In Tyre and Sidon. But they couldn't find him. Because the last place on earth they ever thought that he would be.

Would be in the house of a poor widow. And all she had was a little barrel of meal. And a little horn of oil.

To make a cake. In order that she might eat. And then die.

And so the Lord hid him in the widow's household. And nobody looked for him there. And he was sent.

You see Elijah was always fleeing. He had to flee. This was part of his prophetic office.

And arising out of his fleeing. Why wonderful things have come to you and to me. If the Lord had not fed Elijah with the ravens.

There's many a poor man and many a poor woman. Who wouldn't have known what to pray when they came down to the last cross. But they have said.

In their widowhood and they've said in their affliction. Oh thou who didst feed the raven. It is not beyond thy power to feed me.

I am many a poor widow who's come down to. The very last and sees nothing but despair ahead of her. Especially in those days when there was no widow's benefits.

Of any kind at all. Some of you widows are old enough to remember when. These benefits first came in.

Before that there was nothing. No there was nothing. Nothing except the poor house.

Nothing except a pauper's faith. I am many a poor widow. In the long ages which came before our welfare state.

Who've gone back to the widow's Zarephath and say. Oh Lord. Their travel of meal didn't waste and their cruise of oil didn't fail.

And I'm in a similar plight. Oh Lord help me. And although he didn't help her in exactly the same way.

Somehow or other. The God of the widow and the orphan. Came to her relief.

Oh it was. Not for no purpose that Elijah fled. And fled by the will of God too.

And so it comes about. That he fled now into the wilderness of Beersheba. And from there into the wilderness of Sinai.

Where he came to Horeb. And he sat on the very mountain. And probably in the very cave.

Where Moses. Had once been hidden. In the thunder and the lightning.

The storm the tempest which broke over Sinai. When God gave his law. And Moses said I do exceedingly fear and quake.

At the presence of the law. You see Elijah didn't get to Horeb. That is Sinai.

He didn't get to Horeb. Simply because he was fleeing from Jezebel. He didn't need to go that far.

He was already safe in Beersheba. Because that belonged to Judah. It didn't belong to Ahab's jurisdiction.

He was there safe under the protection. Of a godly king. Who was prepared to look after him and preserve him.

He had no need to go any further. This is what these dear men who write books. And preach sermons against Elijah.

In this episode forget all about. If Elijah had not gone. Had not fled from Jezebel.

We wouldn't have had. The great lessons of chapter 19. Of first Kings.

We wouldn't have heard of the earthquake. The wind and the fire. We wouldn't have known.

Of the still small voice of calm. And that great American poet. Would not have written.

That hymn for us. Speak through the earthquake. Wind and fire.

Thou still small voice of calm. It brings peace to us still. Doesn't it to know.

That God is not in the earthquake. He's not in the wind. He's not in the fire.

He's not in the tokens of judgment. And anger so much as he is. In the sweet.

Voice of peace. Still small voice. Which sounds only.

Through all the tumult of our hearts. In our innermost being. And we know that it is God who speaks.

Speaking his gracious words. Son. Daughter.

Thy sins are forgiven thee. Mercy. Comes down from heaven.

The cross. Appears before our eyes. We hear the Savior's words.

This day thou shall be with me in paradise. Father forgive them. They know not what they do.

It is finished. The work of salvation. All that voice which rings out in the darkness.

Spells out the message of mercy. Of love and compassion. Through it is that God is a God of judgment too.

But God is known. God's true character is shown. Not in his judgment.

But in his peace. His gentleness. And his humility.

For even there upon the mount. In the time of Moses. When the rocks bent and the earthquakes shook.

And the storm. And the fire. Descended around God's servant.

You remember. That he asked God to give him a token. Of his presence.

And of his mercy. And God said I will make all my goodness. To pass before thee.

And in Exodus chapter 34. What do we find? We find Moses. In this very selfsame cave.

Probably. In which Elijah saw these manifestations. Chapter 34.

And verses 6 and 7. And God. Thus proclaiming. Verse 5. The Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there.

And proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed. The Lord.

The Lord God. Merciful and gracious. Long suffering.

Abundant in goodness and truth. Keeping mercy for thousands. Forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.

And that will by no means clear the guilty. This is the character in which he appears. There will be a recompense for the guilty.

And for the impenitent. But God first of all enlarges. Upon that mercy against which they sin.

And maybe someone here this evening. Sinning in unbelief. And resentment still against the mercies of God.

Oh hear these words. The Lord. The Lord God.

Gracious. Merciful. Full of kindness.

Loving kindness and truth. Delighting in mercy. Rejoicing in forgiveness.

Of all transgression and sin. And your sins can be forgiven. Wiped out this night.

And God saying in the depths of your soul. I will not remember them. Anymore.

Against them. Forever. For when God forgives.

He forgets in the only way in which God can forget. And that is by bringing them not to mind. Anymore against us.

All the forgiveness of sins. Thanks be to God that he sent Elijah on his journey. There is much more to say about this chapter.

We have no more time tonight. Let this suffice. That God sent him on his journey.

For a new revelation of his grace. His mercy. His long suffering.

His forgiveness. And Elijah comes back to us. And it is his hand that writes this record.

Because there was nobody else with him. He left his servant behind. In Beersheba.

There was nobody else with him. And so he writes this record himself. Not his critics.

But Elijah himself. And he puts the whole story in. And it is part of the word of God.

For your assurance and mine. Oh that he might this evening speak. Through the earthquake, wind and fire.

In his still small voice. Of calm. To you and to me.

Amen. Now we close by singing number 883. I am not ashamed to own my Lord or to defend his cause.

Maintain the honour of his word. The glory of his cross. 883

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