

# The Call of Elijah

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon highlights God's power and mercy in the story of Elisha's call and the Israelites' victory over the Syrian army.*

**Duration:** 25:06

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 19:19

**Topics:** "Elijah"

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## Description

In this sermon, Pastor Chuck Smith focuses on the story of Elisha and his call by God. Despite Elisha's corrupt and sinful nature, God shows incredible patience and grace towards him. The sermon highlights the long-suffering and mercy of God in dealing with His people. The story also emphasizes the importance of trusting in God's power and not relying on human strength or strategies.

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## Transcript

Oh, let the Son of God enfold you With His Spirit and His love Let Him fill your heart and satisfy your soul  
Oh, let Him have the things that hold you And His Spirit like a dove Will descend upon your life And make you whole  
Welcome to The Word for Today, the broadcast ministry of Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel, Costa Mesa, California. Pastor Chuck is currently leading us on a verse-by-verse venture through the entire Bible. And on today's edition of The Word for Today, we'll be focusing on the call of Elisha as we pick up in 1 Kings 19, verse 19.

And now with today's message, here's Pastor Chuck Smith. And he found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen that were before him. I mean, this is, you know, this guy doesn't do things in a small way.

Twelve yoke of oxen. And he was with the twelve. And Elisha passed by him and took his mantle and threw it on him.

And he left the oxen and ran after Elisha and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and mother, and then I will follow you. A guy who was ready to make an immediate commitment. All I want to do is go home and kiss my parents, man, and I'm with you, you know.

I'll follow you. And Elisha said, What have I done to you? Go home. And he returned back from him and he took a yoke of the oxen and he slew them and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen and he

gave unto the people and he did eat.

And then he arose and went after Elijah and became his servant. So Elisha became the servant of Elijah. At this time, Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria, gathered all of his hosts together and there were 32 kings with him, horses, chariots.

And he went up and besieged Samaria and warred against it. Now these 32 were vassal kings. They weren't kings of major nations, but they had in those days sort of city states and each city had its king.

And so Ben-Hadad, king over Syria, had 32 of these vassal kings that joined with him. They probably were paying tribute to him and when he went out to war, they would come and support with their troops. He sent messengers unto King Ahab, king of Israel, and said unto him, Thus saith Ben-Hadad, Your silver and your gold is mine.

Your wives and your children, even the goodliest, are mine. The goodliest is a word in Hebrew that means handsomest. So your children are mine.

All your handsome sons, they're all mine. And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to your saying, I am yours and all that I have. He realized that he was outnumbered by the Syrians and he was willing to give this tribute to the king of Syria.

The gold, the silver, his wives and children. And they said, Thus speaketh Ben-Hadad, saying, Although I have sent unto you, saying, You shall deliver me your silver and your gold and your wives and your children, yet I am going to send my servants unto you tomorrow, about this time. And they're going to search through your house and the houses of your servants and it shall be that whatever it is that is valuable that you have, whatever is pleasant in your eyes, they're going to put in their hand and take it away.

Now he asked for the silver and gold, wives and children, and Ahab is willing to do this. But he only comes back with a stronger demand. No, don't send them to me.

I'll send my servants and they'll pick up anything else that they see that they want, that they desire. And so the king of Israel called all of the elders of the land and he said, Mark, I pray you and look how this man is seeking mischief. For he sent to me for my wives and for my children and for my silver and for my gold and I did not deny him.

And all of the elders and all of the people said unto him, Do not hearken to him nor consent. Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Ben-Hadad, Tell my lord the king that all that you did send for at the first I will do, but I won't do this last which you've required. And so the messengers departed and brought word to Ben-Hadad and Ben-Hadad sent to him and said, The gods do so unto me and more also if the dust of Samaria will suffice for the handfuls for all of the people that follow me.

Now this is a typical boast of Oriental kings and it was something that was quite common in those days. They would try to sort of cower their enemies with threats. I've got so many men, you know, that if they each took a handful of dust out of Samaria there wouldn't be enough dust for them.

One of the Midianite kings in sending a threat said, Our arrows will be so many it will blacken the sky. It will be like night. That's how many arrows we're going to shoot at you if you don't capitulate, you know.

Make the sky dark. And so they had the way of threatening. Of course it's quite obvious that Ben-Hadad just is looking for a fight.

So the king of Israel answered and said in a proverb, Let not him that girds on his harness boast himself as him that puts it off. In other words, as you're putting on your sword and your shield and all, you may boast of what you're going to do but better to wait until the battle is over and do your boasting. You know, when you see what the outcome is.

Because it may be a different story when the battle is over. And so, you know, it's like saying, Man, we're going to pound you to a pulp, you know. You go out and you take a real shellacking, you know, and your heads are down and when you leave the field you've really been beat, you know.

And all of this bravado and talk beforehand and then it's a whole different thing when you face them on the field. So, let not him who puts on his harness boast as one who takes it off. And it came to pass when Ben-Hadad heard that message as he was drinking.

He and the kings there in the little booths that they had made, he said unto his servants, Set yourselves in battle array and they set themselves in array against the city. I mean, he was really all right, you know, that's it. And behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab, the king of Israel.

Now, you remember when Elijah, after being hid for three and a half years, appeared first of all to this guy Obadiah, who was a friend of Ahab. In fact, he was a servant of Ahab, chief servant of his house. And they were looking for grass for their animals that they would not perish.

And Elijah appeared to Obadiah, you remember the story, and he said, Go tell Ahab that I'll meet him here. And Obadiah says, Hey, come on, man. I'm a good man, don't you know? I fear God.

And when the king put to death the prophets, I hid a hundred of them in caves, fifty in each cave, and I fed them with bread and water. Why would you do this to me, man? Because if I say that you're here and the king comes and the spirit of God has caught you away someplace, then he's going to kill me. Why would you want to kill me, man? I'm a God-fearing man, you know.

And this prophet is perhaps one of those that Obadiah had protected and shielded from the king when he was killing the prophets of God. This prophet came to the king. Interesting that God didn't use Elijah at this time.

But this prophet came to the king and he said, Have you seen this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand this day and you shall know that I am Jehovah. Now God sent fire that he might know that he was Jehovah. Now God is promising another sign.

I'm going to deliver this great multitude of the Syrians and these Confederate kings into your hands and you will know that I am Jehovah. And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith Jehovah, even by the young men, the princes of the provinces. And he said, And who shall lead them into battle? And he answered, You.

Now to me, another classic example of the grace of God. That God would still deal with Ahab who was totally wicked. I mean, you talk about redeeming features.

There is not one redeeming feature in this man. He is corrupt. He has led the nation down the tubes in corruption and still God in his grace deals with him.

I marvel at the patience of God. I marvel at the long-suffering of God. Here is a man who turned his back on God over and over again.

Here is a man that had set himself against God and yet God is so patient in dealing with him and gives him chance after chance after chance. Oh the grace, the long-suffering, the mercy, the compassion of God. And how we abuse that so many times.

Ahab, God still speaking to him. If I were God I wouldn't speak to that guy anymore. I'd just say let the Syrians go for it.

Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces and there were 232. Not very many against the vast armies of Syria. And after them he numbered all the people, even all the children of Israel 7,000 that had come to battle.

I mean you've got a case almost like Gideon against the Midianites. Just a few men against this vast host of Syrians. And they went out at noon.

But Ben-Hadad was drinking himself drunk in these pavilions which were little thatched the word is booths in the Hebrew or the Sukkoth. They would make these little pavilions instead of the tents for the kings. And he and the kings, the 32 kings that were helping him and the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first and Ben-Hadad sent out and they told him saying there are men that have come out from Samaria.

So word comes back to Ben-Hadad who's pretty drunk at this time. You know some men have come out from the city. And he said if they have come out for peace take them alive.

If they've come out for war take them alive. They're to capture them alive even if they are emissaries of peace. So the young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city and the army which followed them and they slew everyone as men and the Syrians panicked.

They fled and Israel pursued them and Ben-Hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with his horsemen. And the king of Israel went out and smote the horses, the chariots and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter. And the prophet came to the king of Israel and said unto him go strengthen yourself and mark and see what you do for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against you again.

So prepare yourself get ready because he's coming back in a year. And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him their gods are the gods of the hills. Therefore they were stronger than we.

But let's fight against them in the plain and surely we will be stronger than they. And do this thing. Take the kings away every man out of his place.

Put captains in their rooms. These drunk kings they're no good. Let's get the military.

Politicians can't fight wars. We've learned that too haven't we? Let there be the professional, the captains. Let them be over the host.

And number an army like you had. Man for man. The one you lost.

Horse for horse. Chariot for chariot. And we will fight against them in the plain and surely we shall be stronger than they.

And he hearkened unto their voice and did so. Now they had their concepts of God were very provincial and they had gods that they could localize. Their gods are evidently the gods of the hills and that's why when we fought them in the hills they were able to beat us.

But they're not the god of the plains. So let's get them out in the plains and then we can wipe them out. Thinking that their god was limited to the hills.

They're the gods of the hills. Thinking of God in locality. Now we don't like to do this but sometimes even in our phrases we sort of give off the concept of a god of locality.

So that as we gather in church and we pray we so often say, oh God it is so good to gather in your presence. As though God is a god of locality and he dwells in this building but he doesn't dwell in your car. Or he doesn't dwell in your home.

And so we've gathered in the presence of the Lord. Well yes we have in a sense but we were in the presence of the Lord when we left our houses. We were in the presence of the Lord as we were driving here.

As we were walking in. When we were yelling at the kids. You don't escape his presence.

Whether shall I flee from thy presence David said. If I ascend into heaven thou art there. If I descend into hell thou art there.

If I take the wings of the morning and flee to the uttermost parts of the sea even there you surround me. Paul the apostle in talking to the Greeks who had local gods. And had gods for every emotion.

Every feeling. Gods of love. Gods of hate.

Gods of war. Gods of peace. Gods of anger.

Gods of joy. As he talked to these Athenians. He said I perceive that you people are very religious.

Because as I've been walking through your streets here I've seen all of these altars that you have built under your gods. And he said I passed by one altar and I saw the inscription to the unknown God. I'd like to tell you about this God.

He's the one that created the heavens and the earth. And in him we live and move and have our being. We're surrounded.

We don't escape him. He's everywhere. And so they had this idea.

He's the God of the hills. Let's meet them in the plains and we'll go out with the same size army and boy this time we'll just meet him in the plains and we'll really take care of them there. It came to pass the return of the year that Ben-Hadad numbered the Syrians and he went up to Aphek to fight against Israel.

Now there are several Apeks in the Bible and just where this one is is a matter of conjecture. And the children of Israel were numbered and were all present and went against them and the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of goats but the Syrians filled the country. I mean it's sort of a

pitiful thing.

Here's the battle set up and the Syrians come with these massive troops and chariots and everything else and they just fill the country. And here are these two little units of Israel. They look like just a little flock of sheep here on the hillside against this huge host of the Syrians.

And there came a man of God and he spoke unto the king of Israel and he said, Thus saith Jehovah, because the Syrians have said that Jehovah is the God of the hills but he's not the God of the valleys. Therefore will I deliver all of this great multitude into your hand and you shall know that I am Jehovah. Again God proving himself to the king.

Now I like this. He's the God not only of the hills but of the valleys. He's not only the God of the mountaintop experiences but he's God also of the valleys.

And he is with us in the valley as well as on the mountaintop. So many times when we go through some of these valley experiences of life we feel sort of destitute like God has forsaken us. And you know many times I find that God becomes more real to me in the valley than on the mountaintop.

Now because they have said he's the God of the hills not the God of the valleys, tell you what, this time you're going to meet him in the valleys and really wipe him out. And so they pitched one against the other for seven days. They just stood there face off looking at each other for seven days.

And it was so after the seventh day that they began to battle. And the children of Israel slew the Syrians a hundred thousand infantrymen in one day. But the rest fled to Aphek into the city and there a wall fell on 27,000 of the men that were left.

And Benhadad fled and came into the city into an inner chamber. And his servants said unto him behold now we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings. Now that was something unusual.

Usually kings weren't very merciful. The Syrians were noted for their cruelty, for the way they would brutalize the captives, mutilating their bodies, torturing them, pulling out their tongues, cutting off their noses or ears and mutilating their captives. They were so horrible, so unmerciful that many times entire cities would commit suicide rather than be captured by the Assyrians.

They were noted for their cruelty. But we've heard that the kings of Israel are merciful. Yes they were because they knew God and had received mercy from God.

And so he said let us I pray thee put sackcloth over our loins and ropes upon our heads and let's go out to the king of Israel and perhaps he'll save your life. Let's just submit to him. We'll return with more of our verse-by-verse study through the book of 1 Kings in our next lesson as we continue with The Second Victory Over Syria.

And we do hope you'll make plans to join us. But right now I'd like to remind you that if you missed any part of today's message or perhaps you'd like to order a copy for that special friend or loved one, you can do so by simply contacting one of our customer service representatives and they'd be more than happy to assist you with the ordering details. Simply call 1-800-272-WORD and phone orders can be taken Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific Time.

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And be sure to join us again next time as Pastor Chuck Smith continues his verse-by-verse study through the book of 1 Kings. That's right here on the next edition of [The Word for Today](http://TheWordForToday.org). Now once again, here's Pastor Chuck Smith.

May the Lord be with you and strengthen you and bless you and keep you in all your ways as you walk in fellowship with Him. May your life be enriched in the fullness of that mercy and grace that He has extended towards us through Jesus our Lord. God bless you and give you a beautiful week.

Strengthened by the Lord, may you abound in all things in Christ. To the glory and the praise and the honor of our God, our Savior and our Lord. In Jesus' name.

In the light of God's special gift to us, why not celebrate this Christmas with a gift that acknowledges our Lord's birth. When thinking of gifts this year, consider [The Word for Today's](http://TheWordForToday.org) selection of resources. This season, give the gift of God's Word.

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