

Elijah's Battle with the Prophets of Baal

by John Piper

This sermon emphasizes the sovereignty of God in turning the hearts of people back to Him, using the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel as a backdrop. It highlights the need for individuals to recognize God's role in their salvation and the importance of prayer in seeking God's work in the hearts of others. The main point is to understand that God is the one who rules and turns human hearts, leading to repentance and faith.

Scripture: 1 Kings 18:37, Romans 11:5, Proverbs 21:1, Matthew 9:38, 1 Corinthians 5:13, Hebrews 13:8

Topics: "God's Sovereignty", "The Power of Prayer"

Description

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Transcript

Let's pray together. Father, what a tremendous privilege to sing with these brothers. Such glorious reality.

So thank you. And I ask now for your help in penetrating into what you mean for us to understand and to become through this portion of your Word. Guard me from sin and error and pride and self-consciousness and free us all to stand before you and hear your voice.

Come, do your heart turning work in these few minutes, I pray in Jesus name, amen. So when I read a story in the Old Testament, I want to read it on its own terms and not take my ideas from other parts of the Bible and force those ideas onto the story no matter how true they are. And since I believe the whole Bible is the Word of God, I find it thrilling to see a main point in the Old Testament story, see how the New Testament lays hold on that point and then brings it all the way over into 21st century London.

And so that's what I've enjoyed doing in my preparation for this. Seeing that point, and this is what I want you to see, I want to see the the point of this story that was just read to you, how the New Testament picks it up, and then how it makes a difference in your life here in London. So let's walk through the text together and see if we can discern together the main point, and I don't mean to imply that a story in the Bible only has one point.

I think every story has a main point that everything else is serving, but I don't think that's the only thing you can learn from a story because that's not the way the Bible handles the Bible. However, in this message that is my goal. I want to know, if I were talking to Elijah or the author of this book in particular, I would want to know why did you tell that story? What were you after? What did you want to happen when we read it? So that's what I'm after.

Here's the setting, and you know most of this probably. It's been about a hundred years since David ruled over a united kingdom. Kingdom of Israel has divided into a north and south.

Ahab is the king, and he has forsaken Yahweh. He is serving the idol of Baal, and his wife Jezebel, the infamous, has driven all the true prophets into their caves, and Elijah is the dominant spokesman in that day for God, and he has prayed, and it's been without rain for almost three years. In chapter 17, this is not printed in your book, but I'll just set it up.

Chapter 17, verse 1. As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years except by my word. That's Elijah saying, not going to rain here until I tell it to rain. Chapter 18, verse 1. After many days the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, didn't that long, saying, go show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth.

So it's going to happen. Rain is going to come. God says so, but don't make the mistake of thinking, as so many do so many times, if something is certain, then it doesn't matter what happens in between, it's going to happen.

If God ordains the end, it's going to rain. He ordains the means that may be necessary for it to rain, and there are amazing intervening events here that must happen as a means to the raining coming. So that's a principle I'd love you to hold on to throughout your life.

If God says something will definitely happen, don't assume there aren't necessary human means to it happening, which God ordains to happen. So it is going to rain, but what a showdown there is going to be on the way to the rain. So the actual confrontation begins where the reading that you just listened to began, verse 16, 1 Kings 18.

I'm working out of the ESV, sorry I didn't know the NIV would be printed, so you make the adjustments, they're close. 1 Kings 18, 16, middle of the verse, Ahab went to meet Elijah. The king, who's worshiping the false god, goes to meet the prophet of the true God.

When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, is it you, you troubler of Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel, but you have, in your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals. You think this famine is trouble, Ahab? You're gonna see trouble real soon, and I'm not the problem, you're the problem. I'm just a voice.

You're gonna meet God, God's gonna be your problem, because you have chosen another God and you're about to see trouble. Verse 19, Elijah continues, now therefore send and gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel. All Israel.

This is going to be a major spectacle. Elijah is setting this up for something absolutely stunning nationwide. He goes on, and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table.

So she's got her own special idol and her own special prophets, and I want all of them here to see what's about to happen. Verse 20, so Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel, and Elijah came near to all the people and said, how long will you go limping between two different opinions? That's a very loose translation. I'm gonna even check what you got there in the in the NIV.

If the Lord is God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him, and the people did not answer him a word. Now it may be that the point here is stop being indecisive. That might be the point.

What a tragic waste. I mean, I'm looking at you men, although it's so dark I can't see your faces up there, and if anybody wanted to turn the house lights up just a bit that'd be nice, but I'm not going to complain. I'm in London, you do what the London people do.

I like to see mine. I'm looking at you men and I'm thinking what a waste, what an absolute waste if you stand between two things and can't make up your mind. I know there's church and there's God and there's Jesus and that's what I was taught as a kid, but I've got all this that feels so different and you don't have any resolve to go either way.

That's a waste. What a tragic waste to be a fence-sitter all your life, to be wavering all your life. That might be the point here.

However, I have a question. Why is the word limping here? Hobble, limp, and hobble. It's not a real common word in the Old Testament.

How long, verse 21, second half of the verse, how long will you go limping or hobbling? Like you're lame, like you're lame. Why does he bring up this image of lameness when you are worshipping a false God? Oh Baal, answer us. But there was no voice and no one answered.

I'm reading verse 26 because here's the other place, the only other place in the story where the word limping is used, which just strikes me as not coincidental. So I'm at verse 26. Oh Baal, answer us.

But there was no voice and no one answered, and they limped, same word as back in verse 21, they limped and hobbled around the altar that they had made. I'm going to suggest another point, maybe they're not mutually exclusive, that when he is crying out, why do you go limping between gods, why do you go limping toward Baal, is that if you walk away from the true and living God and you start to embrace a false god, any false god, Baal in particular, if you start moving that way, you will limp all your life. You will be a lame man.

The world may call it a dance, they may say you are strong, God says you're limping, you are hobbling. I think that's the picture that this author wants to create. Verse 22, then Elijah said to the people, even I only am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty.

Now these are not good odds. One to four hundred and fifty, and that's the way God likes it, and it's about to get worse in just a few minutes. Verse 23, so keep in mind, God likes it this way.

Let two bulls, verse 23, let two bulls be given us and let them, the prophets of Baal, choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it. And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it. You call upon the name of your God, I'll call upon the name of Yahweh, the Lord, anytime you see L-O-R-D, all caps, that's the personal name of the true God, Yahweh.

I will call upon the Lord and the God who answers by fire, he is God. And all the people answered, it is well spoken. Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many.

It's like, you're 450, I'm one, I get to go last. Verse 25, middle of the verse, and call upon the name of your God, but put no fire to it, and they took the bull that was given them and they prepared it, called upon the name of Baal from morning till noon, saying, O Baal, answer us. But there was no voice, no one answered, and they limped around the altar they had made.

Verse 27, and at noon Elijah mocked them, he mocked them, saying, Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he's musing or he's relieving himself, or he's on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be wakened, and they cried aloud and cut themselves. After was their custom.

They did this all the time. They cut themselves with swords and lances until the blood gushed out upon them. Now, biblically and experientially, and maybe you've had the same experience, biblically, I would say, and experientially, mockery is of limited value in the ministry.

I mean, there's some tweeters and bloggers and Facebook users that are specialists, and I just want to say it's of limited value, but in saying it's a very, and I mean very limited, a pastor who specializes in mockery is probably not going to edify his people very much. He might be viewed as clever and get a lot of followers, but he's not going to build up his people, probably not many people are going to be saved. However, having said that pastorally, there's a little place for mockery.

And when you use it, use it well. Jesus clearly used it, and Elijah here uses it, and it can be very powerful. So I'm just saying that there are moments in your dialogue when you see somebody so self-destructive, dragging people down with them, acting like an absolute idiot, ready to jump off a cliff, cut themselves all over the place because they're their false God, it might be that the Holy Spirit would say, you need to say something really pointed here.

Verse 29, as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation. That's probably in the evening, so this is going on all day now, but there was no voice, no one answered, no one paid attention, so you got no voice, no answer, no attention, blood gushing out everywhere, total silence. The 450 have had their turn, and what's the upshot? Nothing.

Nothing. That's the payback. It's gonna get worse for these prophets, really worse.

Verse 30, Elijah said to all the people, come near to me, and all the people came near to him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been thrown down. That's interesting. He's not building this fresh thing, he's rebuilding something.

Elijah took 12 stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob to whom the word of the Lord came, saying Israel shall be your name, and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord. Now ponder this for a minute. 12 stones representing the 12 tribes who had been named Israel, the name given to Jacob when he had prevailed in wrestling with the angel in prayer.

Let's keep that in mind because what's going to happen to these stones is surprising. Verse 32, middle of the verse, and he made a trench about the altar as great as would contain two seas of seed, and he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, laid it on the wood, and he said fill four jars of water and pour it on the burnt offering on the wood, and he said do it a second time, and he did it a second time, and he said

do it a third time, and they did it a third time, and the water ran down around the altar and filled the trench with water. So not only do you have odds 450 to 1, now you have dry wood versus soaked wood, and you have dry bull versus soaked bull, and you have a trench of water versus no trench of water.

In other words, God is heightening his disadvantage. That's why I said earlier he loves this. He loves being at a disadvantage.

So if you're sitting here thinking, ah, but I'm at a disadvantage, well, what's that got to do with anything as far as success goes, as far as power goes, as far as God goes? God specializes in being at a disadvantage, and you know this, you know it from the Bible. Think of the story of Joseph, right? In prison just before he becomes vice president of Egypt. Or Gideon, 300 just before he defeats the Midianite horde, so many they couldn't even count them, 300 people take care of them.

Daniel, in a lion's den before his enemies are in the lion's den. Jesus on the cross, no hope, that's over. So this is God's way.

This is God's way of doing his work. God loves to be at a disadvantage. Verse 36, and at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word.

Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back. Well, you are turning their hearts. You are the heart turner.

Now that sentence, verse 37, is the most explicit statement of purpose in the story. So all my tentacles of attention are up, because I want the main point of the story, right? I don't want any random observation. There are loads of random observations that are wonderful in this story, but here you have the prophet himself asking God to do a particular thing, and we'll be back to it in just a minute because I do think verse 37 is the main point of the story.

Verse 38, then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones. They're gone, and licked up the dust and the water that was in the trench. Everything, bull, wood, water, stones, gone.

And you have left God. That's an impressive. It's over there, you got Baal, and his altar is standing.

The bull is still there. The wood is still there. Limping, bleeding prophets are standing all over the place.

It's all there. Religion can go on just fine. Let it go.

Religion just fine. Religion does its work just fine without God. It's all over the world.

Plenty of it in London. Plenty of religion without God. Plenty of religion without fire.

Plenty, plenty of religion without power. Just goes right on. But when God shows up, he's the main thing.

So don't toy with him, man. Don't limp around like, maybe I'll get religious someday, or maybe I'll get serious about my religion someday. That's very risky.

This God is not to be toyed with. Verse 39, when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, the Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God. Well, yes he is.

He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. Now, the reason I say that, use that sentence from Hebrews, he's the same yesterday, today, and forever, is that he is the same. The God of this moment in this story is the God who's reigning over this room right now.

He's the God who inspired the New Testament. He's the God who sent Jesus into the world. He's the God who planted and grows his church all over the world.

There is one God, he is always the same. However, his ways in the world have not remained the same. What we are about to see is something that you would never do, though it's right that it be done then.

He's gonna slaughter 450 Mormons. Kill them. Dead.

God is just, God is deadly serious about sin. Suffering will always come from unrepentant sin, and in the end it will be eternal suffering. That's never changed, that's always been true, it's true today.

Just, sin is serious, punishment is coming. That remains the same, but here's the difference. The people of God today are not a theocratic state.

We're no longer defined, the Christian church, the people of God that Jesus is gathering from, all the peoples of the world, all the nations, all the people groups. The people that Christ is gathering are not a single ethnic political regime like they were in this day. And Paul says, this is the Apostle now, this is 1st Corinthians 5:12, what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? What does he mean? He means, in the context, if there emerges sin and idolatry in the church, deal with it.

How do you deal with it? Kill them? No. It has shifted in the New Testament with the coming of Jesus, the dealing with idolatry in the people of God has shifted from execution to excommunication. Just read that plain as day in 1st Corinthians 5 and 6. How do you deal with sins that should have been executed and will be executed? Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.

If your enemy is hungry, give him something to eat. If he's thirsty, give him drink. Overcome evil with good.

This is new. So when God said to Elijah, take them out, that was right. God has the right to take them out, he has the right to appoint the executioner, and he had the right to do it in that day, and he has made it crystal clear in the coming of Jesus and the gathering of a new people from all the peoples, not in a politically monolithic regime.

That's no way we do it anymore. We do not advance Christianity by killing people. We advance Christianity by dying for people.

It's a massive shift in the way redemptive history works and the way God's justice works itself out in history. So 1st Corinthians 5:13, God judges those outside, remove the evil person from you. That's the limit of our power in the church.

We put them outside the church and say if you want to worship another God, you don't eat the Lord's Supper here, and you don't call yourself a member of this communion because we worship Jesus here, and God will deal with you out there, and we would lay down our lives to bring you back in here, but here

we don't worship false gods, and we don't live like we do. Or Romans 12, beloved, never avenge yourselves, leave it to the wrath of God. But now, here in Israel, under this regime, revealing these timeless realities of God's justice, the seriousness of sin, the punishments of coming, take them out.

Verse 40, Elijah said to them, seize the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape, and they seized them, and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon and slaughtered them there, and Elijah said to Ahab, go up, eat and drink, for there is the sound of rushing rain. So Ahab went up to eat and drink. So God had promised in verse 1, I will send rain on the earth, and now almost everything is in place for the rain.

God has showed up, Baal has been exposed as a false god, the people of God have symbolically been crucified, made nothing in comparison to God with the stones being incinerated, and there only remains one more thing to happen, namely, this rain in God's mind must be the answer to prayer. I don't know, this just comes to my mind. When I read Matthew 9, 35 to 38, where Jesus says, the harvest is plentiful, the laborers are few, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers.

I always look at that and say, are you kidding me? I am a hired hand, I'm a slave on the farm, and you own the farm, you understand farming, you know the harvest, you know what it takes to gather a harvest. Why are you telling me to tell you to send laborers? Isn't that crazy? Isn't that wonderful? I mean, prayer is weird. Prayer is awesome.

God has a purpose to gather his people, and he says, ask me to send laborers to gather my people. Ask me. Ask me.

And here, he knows he's going to send rain. Rain is coming, he's promised it. Now you go up there and get down on your knees, and if it takes seven times, I'm not doing it until you ask me and show that you are persevering in prayer.

Amen of prayer. Verse 42, Elijah went up to the top of the Mount Carmel and he bowed himself down to the earth and put his face between his knees, and he said to his servant, go up now and look toward the sea, and he went up and looked and said, there's nothing. You ever done that? And he said, go again, seven times.

And at the seventh time, he said, behold, a little cloud like a man's hand is rising from the sea, and he said, go up, say to Ahab, prepare your chariot and go down, lest the rain stop you. And in a little while, the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Israel, and the hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and he gathered up his garment and he ran.

He didn't limp. You don't limp when you follow Jesus. I don't care if you're in a wheelchair, you don't limp when you follow Jesus.

You run before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. He ran before the rain, he didn't limp, he didn't hobble, he ran. Now, that's the story.

Let's step back and ask, so what's the main point? Like I said, I don't mean to imply that all the other observations we've made are not valuable, and there are many others, but what's the main point? The one that everything else is supporting and leading toward, and I mentioned as we were going that I think it's in verse 37, because Elijah himself says, this is what I want the people to know, right? I mean, not all stories are this clear, but the prophet himself opens his mouth and gathers the whole thing together and says,

God, make them know this. Make them know this about all this. So what is that? Verse 37.

Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know. Know what? Two things. Number one, that you, O Lord, are God.

You're not an idea, you're not a memory, you're not a tradition, you're not a religion, you're not a projection of our imagination, you're not a force, you're not an archetype, you're not a symbol. You are God, the living, active, fire-sending, sin-hating, idolatry-destroying, prayer-hearing, personal God. That's number one.

Know, make them know, let them know you are God. That's really the basic need of all of us. Number two, verse 37, make this people know that you have turned their hearts back.

For DNIV, you are turning their hearts. Cause your people to know this. This is where I'm landing here.

Cause these men to know this. I think that's God's will for you from this text. It should be my prayer for you.

I pray that these men from this story would discern that you, the sovereign God, are the one who turns human hearts to God. So their hearts had betrayed God, spurned God, belittled God, devalued God, loved other things more than God, and this entire event on Mount Carmel is aiming to make God's people know if anybody turns to God, God turned them to God. That's the point of the story.

So when the people cry from the heart, verse 39, the Lord, he is God. The Lord, he is God. God did that.

God did that. It's true, the Lord rules the fire. It's true, the Lord rules the flesh of the bull, the wood on the altar, the rocks.

He rules them. He rules the rain. He makes it rain when he wants it to rain, but this text is mainly about God rules the heart.

He turns hearts. The Lord rules the human heart. Answer me, O Lord, answer me that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God and that you have turned their hearts back.

Know this, Israel. He doesn't want to just say it's a fact. He wants them to know it.

He's praying that God would cause them to know it. There must be a value for you this afternoon, tomorrow, ten years from now. There must be a value for you to know this, that if anybody's heart turns to God, God has turned the heart.

There must be a value, a thrilling value for you to know this, that Elijah would pray it as the capstone of the event. Let him know this. I mean, there's people all over the world who would say, fire falling from heaven, consuming bulls and water and wood and stones, that's impressive.

That's not what he prayed. He didn't pray that they would know that. He prayed that they would know if your heart at this moment is getting really serious about God, God is doing that.

And that to me, I mean as an American who grew up in the South where a kind of decisionism was so dominant and rampant, this emphasis was in my childhood never heard. When it came to a heart moving from unbelief to belief, you do that! You do that! Nobody stressed, God do it! Do it in this room! If you don't

do it, it won't be done! That's what Elijah is pleading for. Now you would think that at this amazing high point of his experience, that Elijah had become super confident in God to do his sovereign will among men.

But you get over to chapter 19 verse 14, read it later today and see what happens, it goes like this, I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the Lord, and I, even I only, am left and they seek my life to take it away. Elijah, how can you feel that way? How can you respond that way in view of what you've just experienced from God, and in view of what you've just said about God? To which God responds in 1st Kings 19.18, the next verse, yet I will leave, literally I will cause to remain 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him. No, Elijah, no.

I know who are mine. I have them. I turn them.

I keep them. You're not the only one left, and you shouldn't be despairing. They're mine.

I turn them. I keep them. When I paused here, I said okay, I think I've got this, that the main point of the story is God turns the hearts of people.

What will the New Testament pick up on? And of course, Elijah is prominent in the New Testament, but the main point of the story, if I'm on the right track, verse 37, is picked up on in Romans 11. Paul looks around at his day, perhaps Elijah-like, and what does he see? Messiah has come, and the people of Israel, almost en masse, have rejected him, and he relates that to Elijah's story. So Romans 11 1, has God rejected his people? He answers, by no means, and then he reaches back to the despairing words of Elijah.

Romans 11 3, I alone am left, and then Paul puts God's sovereign words over against Elijah's despairing words, quoting 1 Kings 19 18 in verse 4 of Romans 11. But what is God's reply to him? I have kept for myself 7,000 men who have not bowed the knee to Baal. I have kept them.

This is Paul's emphasis. Paul is drawing on the main point of the story. I have kept them.

I have kept my people. I have not abandoned my people. I'll never abandon my people.

I can't lose my people. I turn hearts. People are not sovereign.

I'm sovereign. Verse 5 of Romans 11, so too at the present times, like in Elijah's day, at the present time, there is a remnant chosen by grace. See how he's thinking? The main point of the story was, God, make them know that if anybody is coming to God, if anybody is experiencing repentance, if anybody is experiencing a turn in their whole mind and framework, you are at work, you are doing it, this is what you do.

And he says this is true in every generation, Jew and Gentile, that's everybody in London. In every people there is a remnant chosen by grace. God turns hearts to himself by grace.

God keeps hearts for himself by grace. That's what it means for God to be God. Make them know two things, that you are God and that you turn the heart.

You are God and you turn the heart. That's what it means for God to be God. Cause them to know that you are God, that you rule the hearts of men, that you rule their hearts, that you rule the family's hearts of

these men in this room.

You believe that? God rules your heart. God rules your children's heart. I have five children.

Two of them are not following Jesus. I would give anything to see them with me in heaven. It is no comfort to me to think God's helpless.

They're sovereign, and he's helpless. That's not a comfort to me. That may solve your problem, it solves no problems for me.

My only hope is, God, you rule the heart. I'll go down on my knees seven times. I will do anything.

You rule the heart, which means you can do it. If you have to do it by my funeral, do it. Do whatever it takes, because that's what you do.

You are God. So I'm thinking your families, I'm thinking your spouses, I'm thinking your girlfriends, I'm thinking your buddies at the pub, I'm thinking whoever you know that you've done everything in your power to show them the reality of Christ, and they're not moving. Don't ascribe sovereignty to the human heart.

It's not a comfort. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that these men may know, these men may know that you are God, and you have turned their hearts back. So the first thing he wants you to know is not just how your kids and your family and your colleagues are gonna fare, but where did you come from? I don't know where you're sitting, Humphreys, but you got on the train while we were coming here today, and he sits down, there's a guy, I don't know from Adam, wherever you are, and he just began talking, and clearly a lover of Jesus, right? He came from Mars.

Here in the middle of London, a young man, the armed services, and he's a lover of Jesus, and you should ask that about yourself. Where did I come from? How did I get to be this way? How did I ever get over my disinclination to love Jesus and now find him attractive and worthy of my life? How did that come about? And Elijah is pleading with God that you would know God did that. Because how are you gonna sing? How are you gonna be grateful? How are you gonna be amazed at grace if you think you were the decisive sovereign in your life to close that deal? You aren't.

God calls them to know that you are God, that you rule the hearts of men, the hearts of your families, the hearts of your colleagues, the political rulers. I mean, don't you love Proverbs 21.1? The king's heart is like a river in the hands of the Lord. He turns it wherever he wills.

All these huffing and puffing Trump types. You think they're sovereign? They do. What an idiot! What an idiot! They're not sovereign.

Their hearts are like a river in the hands of the Lord, which means God might be pleased in answer to prayer to do a miracle. Something like, I'm sorry I made one mistake once in my life. It is not a comforting thing to solve the problems of the world by ascribing sovereignty to human beings.

So as you look out across your nation, this city, and you may fret about secularization or Islamization, Lord cause these brothers to know you rule the hearts of men. All of them, all the hearts in this city are in God's hands. So don't be despairing like Elijah in chapter 19.

Be like the God-entranced Elijah of chapter 18. Don't say they have turned all your churches into shops and theaters and condos and I alone am left with my little flock, my friends, my spiritual resilience. No,

double no.

You're not the only one, and it wasn't your spiritual resilience that kept you from falling away. I was talking with Richard Kochen last night, I don't know, this morning at the breakfast table, and I said I find one of the most revealing questions to ask people all over the world. What makes you think you're going to be a Christian when you wake up in the morning? Why do you think you'll be a believer tomorrow morning? And the answer to that question is so revealing.

And the point of this text is if you wake up a believer tomorrow morning, God did that! We sang it! He will hold me fast. I love that song, that's my new favorite. I love it, I love it.

He will hold me fast. And the older I get, I'm 72, I really believe he's done that for 72 years. I have woken up a believer, what, 72 times 365? How many miracles can you experience and not be glad? But if you don't believe that, you won't even begin to feel that way.

I'll just do that, I'm just a Christian, you know, I have a will and I'll use it. Tomorrow morning, get on my knees and be a Christian. No, you won't.

So God has his people, thousands of them in London, thousands of them, and he means to turn their hearts. He is God. He bought them with his blood, the blood of his Son, and he will have them, and he will turn their hearts back, and he's going to use you to do it.

That's where we're going to go in the next talk after Bunyan. We're gonna say, what did it cost, what does it cost, you and God? What does it cost for God to turn the hearts of traitors to himself without punishing them? So Father, I pray now that you would cause these couple thousand friends to know that you are God and that you have turned their hearts so that all glory, all praise, all thanks goes to you. And then give them great confidence.

You can save anybody. Nobody is too hard for you. I pray this in Jesus' name.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/tUK7LF6gols.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-piper/elijahs-battle-with-the-prophets-of-baal/>

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