

# Life of Elijah - Part 2

by Major Ian Thomas

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*Major Ian Thomas explores the profound relationship between God and humanity through the life of Elijah, emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit and the significance of Christ's sacrifice for redemption.*

**Duration:** 1:06:51

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 17:12

**Topics:** "Elijah"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher uses the story of Elijah and the widow in 1 Kings 17 to illustrate the provision of God in times of extreme poverty. The preacher emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in equipping believers with the resources of deity. The story also highlights the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross as the ultimate provision for humanity. The preacher encourages listeners to prioritize God in their lives and trust Him to take care of the consequences.

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## Transcript

You're told what to do, do as you're told, and even the birds will feed you. These are God's logistics, but when a friend of God meets the friends of God, whether a bunch of birds or a bankrupt widow, you can be sure that you'll see God in action. A bunch of birds, dried up brook, and a bankrupt widow.

That was the first thing that we concluded in our morning session. So let's turn back again to the first book of Kings and the 17th chapter. And in the balance of this chapter we see a very beautiful picture painted for us.

Elijah said unto her in the 13th verse, Fear not, go and do as thou hast said. Make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and afterward make for thee and for thy son. Me first.

Or as we recognized this morning, by virtue of his command to this woman, God first. And then leave God to take the consequences. Handful of meal in a barrel.

That's a picture of human poverty. Man at his extremity. A little cruise, a little oil in a cruise.

And oil in the Bible, no matter whether in the Old Testament or in the New Testament. The Holy Spirit. The one who in co-equality with the Father and the Lord Jesus in the triune Godhead, by agreement between all three, is the one through whom a man may make his humanity available to God, and through whom God makes himself available to a man.

That's the person, work, and office of God the Holy Spirit. And if I may remind you again, as I in all probability will in these days on several occasions, when God created man, he was so engineered that the presence of the creator within the creature is indispensable to his humanity. That man in normality is to be distinguished from the animal kingdom by a quality of life that has no possible explanation but God.

Himself, he, God, resident in the man. That's why it's important that you and I should understand how we were so engineered that our humanity, body, soul, spirit, mind, emotion, will, and the totality of our being may be made available to God, and so that he, in all the fullness of deity, may make himself available to a man. Not making man God, but allowing God to be God in the man, and man enjoying his maker, the Holy Spirit.

True of our Lord Jesus, and if it's true, it'll always be true of him. What isn't true of him isn't true, because he is the truth. Said the Lord Jesus, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

He didn't come just to preach about the truth, or even just to explain the truth. He said, I am the truth that I proclaim. And if you care to scribble this in the margin of your Bible, Hebrews, and chapter 9, verse 14, Christ, who through the eternal spirit, offered himself without spot to God.

How did the Lord Jesus, in the sinlessness of his humanity, make himself available to the Father as God in heaven? Through the eternal spirit. And then in John's gospel, chapter 3, verse 34. You can scribble that in the margin.

John's gospel, chapter 3, and verse 34. I'd like to read it to you out of the Amplified New Testament. It's just that little bit more succinct.

John 3, verse 34. Since he whom God has sent, speaks the words of God. In other words, by virtue of his availability in the totality of his being, to the Father as God, he, the Father, could make articulate through the Son, everything that he, the Father, wanted to say.

Because he whom God has sent speaks the words of God. God does not give him his spirit sparingly or by measure. Boundless is God's gift to him of his Holy Spirit.

So the means whereby the Lord Jesus made himself available to the Father as man, the Holy Spirit. The means whereby the Father as God made himself available to the Son, the Holy Spirit. And that's a principle.

The Lord Jesus described this relationship as he being in the Father and the Father being in him. And the agency, the Holy Spirit. And he came into this world to re-establish that relationship between all mankind as the creature and himself as the creator.

So that we are to be in him and he in us. For remember, you and I were so designed that everything that God is, is available to the man who is available to everything that God is. And that's a principle.

Hebrews chapter 11. Scribble this in the margin of the Bible if there's any room there. Hebrews 11 and verse 6. He that cometh to God must first believe he is.

And secondly, that he who is, is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. In other words, everything that God is, is available to the man who is available to everything that God is. How available was the Lord Jesus as man to his Father as God? Totally.

How available was the Father as God to his Son as man? Totally. In other words, there was total mutual inter-availability. And by virtue of that fact, the Lord Jesus knew as man that the Father had given all things into his hands.

John 13 verse 3. All things into his hands. Because of his total availability to the Father, he knew that the illimitable resources of deity had been vested in him. And his responsibility as man, though the creator playing the role of creature, was to let God loose in every area of his being.

And the fantastic thing, of course, is it was for that precise reason that he as God created you and me as men. And he came to restore that relationship. And because of the total inter-availability as between Father and Son, there was no margin of difference between what the Lord Jesus did as man and the Father did as God.

There was absolutely no margin of difference between what the Lord Jesus said as man and the Father said as God. There was absolutely no margin of difference between what the Lord Jesus was as man and the Father is as God. And that's why the Lord Jesus could say, I know that it was true, he that has seen me has seen my Father.

And in so doing, he simply implemented that purpose which he as God created you and me. For he said, remember, let us make man in our image and in our likeness. And in the likeness of God made he him.

So that man, when he's functional, gives a valid expression of God's glory. So created that all creation, if it could, looking at man would know exactly what God was like. That's normality.

Only one has ever walked this earth since Adam fell in that normality and thus discharged the office of true manner. When God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit in that triune deity looked at the man whom he had created in his total, perfect, unblemished image, who do you think God saw? Himself. Himself.

Just if you were a sculptor and you were to fashion a model in your perfect image, who would you look at when you looked at it? Yourself. As God, when he created man in his complete likeness to reflect his glory, looking at man in his innocence. So himself.

Only once has that ever taken place since Adam fell. In the person of God's Son of whom he could say, this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. And if the Lord Jesus could say, he that has seen me has seen the Father.

Who do you think the Father saw when he looked at the Son? Himself. Himself. First time it ever happened because the Lord Jesus, as I explained this morning, in the sinlessness of his humanity, demonstrated the innocence of a pre-fallen Adam.

He was man. In normality. And that's why there was only one possible explanation for the quality of life that he lived.

God. He himself in the man. The Father who lives in me, said the Lord Jesus, he does the work.

My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. No man has seen God in any time. The only begotten in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.

The German word used, which is rather interesting for those of you, and there are a number of you who are German speaking, er hat ihn verkündigt. He's proclaimed him. It doesn't mean that the Lord Jesus

preached one long sermon.

Though I'm happy to say, to my great encouragement, he preached plenty. And a lot of them were long. But the totality of his being, 24 hours a day, was a revelation of deity.

In the flesh and blood of his humanity, God incarnate, Emmanuel, God with us. But it was when man believed the devil's lie, that he could be man without God, and forfeited the divine presence, that he became totally bankrupt. Physically, he survived.

Soulishly, he remained active. The animal part of him remained. But his human spirit, empty of the Holy Spirit, he was alienated from the life of God, dead in trespasses and sins, and by nature, the child of God's judgment.

And it was to remedy this, man's total depravity, his complete bankruptcy, in his alienation as creature from the Creator, that source of life, which alone, is that from which righteousness derives. But the Lord Jesus came. This is beautifully pictured for us, here in this 17th chapter of 1 Kings.

Just a handful of meal in a barrel. And the word there for meal, is that of the cheapest on the market. Man in the ultimate of his extremity.

But in the little cruise, there was oil. Speaking of the gracious ministry of God the Holy Spirit, through whom a man may be vested with all the illimitable resources of deity, by virtue of the presence of the Creator within the creature. A handful of meal in a barrel.

Man's poverty. A little oil in a cruise. God's provision.

What else? Two pieces of wood, where the fire burned. Does that tell you anything? Where on two pieces of wood, did the fire of God's judgment burn itself out? Carried on the shoulders of a man not more than 30, not less than 30, not more than 50. As he went from the city of Jerusalem, there upon that lonely hill, to lay down his life, a ransom for many.

A cross. In the Old Testament, it's the lamb that was slain, or the dove, or the heifer, or the goat, or the bullock. And there the fire burned, and consumed the sacrifice.

But there on those two pieces of wood, where God's dear Son died, that you and I might be reconciled to a holy God, the sacrifice consumed the fire. In the Old Testament, the sacrifice was brought again, and again, and still again. And those who were the priests, were not allowed to continue, by reason of death.

But our Lord Jesus, having brought that one sacrifice for sins forever, and being raised again from the dead, is our high priest, after the order of an endless life. His body will never again be broken, his precious blood will never again be shed. He could cry from the cross, and know that it was true, it is finished.

Tell a less tale. A simple expression used then, as often now, as a form of receipt, on a debt that's already been paid. A bill that has been fully satisfied.

No further demand to be made on this account. And the marvelous thing, was that when our Lord Jesus cried from the cross, it is finished. He was inviting any boy, girl, man, or woman, out of any nation, kindred, tribe, tongue, race, creed, class, or color, to plead his holy name before a holy God, and know, that for his dear sake, whose blood was shed, there would be no further account, no further demand made on that account.

Blotting out our transgressions like a thick cloud, putting away our sins as far as the east is from the west, and burying them in the depths of the sea. God says, I'll put them behind my back, and remember them no more. Though red like crimson, white as wool, though scarlet, whiter than the snow, difficult to conceive of anything whiter than the snow.

And yet all of us know, that every snow crystal is formed, around a tiny speck of dust. And that's why God said, whiter than the snow. Because nothing remains, when the blood of Jesus Christ, God's son, cleanses us from all sin.

This was the redemptive act, that precipitated the regenerative purpose, because we must recognize, that the Lord Jesus didn't die upon the cross, to get us out of hell and into heaven. That's purely incidental. I'm thankful that it's true.

I never had any ambition about going to hell. I'm thankful that as a boy of twelve, there came a moment in my life, though totally untutored, from my earliest childhood, as to why Christ died upon the cross, I accepted him as my redeemer. He was in a boy's camp, as I may have mentioned to some of you, on other occasions.

I was taken there by a kid of thirteen, who one year previously, in that particular evangelistic boy's camp, found Christ as his redeemer, and being my friend, finding a good thing, wanted to share with me, the good thing that he had found. And so he took me all unsuspecting. I didn't go to become a Christian.

I didn't know I wasn't a Christian. For one thing, I was born in England. England.

My face was white, and above everything else, my name was Thomas. Now, what better qualification could anybody have for going to heaven but that? This was the crazy idea in which I was raised. Christianized in a nation that is anything but Christian.

To which we've all become tragically accustomed. If anybody had suggested to my family that we weren't Christians, we'd have sued them for libel. What do you think we are? Cannibals? It wasn't that we didn't go to church.

We went once every Sunday morning. Never twice. That would have been fanatical.

But once was respectful. Every member of my family had a Bible. We never read it.

That would have been vulgar. You know what I mean? And so I was utterly ignorant of the issues that are involved. When I went to that camp to sleep in a tent under canvas by the sea and have heaps of fun, eat ice cream, a habit that I have never as yet divested of myself.

The man who was a preacher there wasn't a professional preacher, but he had a lovely way of communicating with those of my ilk, about 150 young rascals in camp. His name was Lawrence Head. We called him Bubbly because he frothed at the mouth when he spoke.

And that helped me greatly keep looking in the right direction. Instead of watching the earwigs going up the tent pole, I watched the bubbles on each side and had a game, you know, which was going to burst first. And as soon as the one burst, you could start the game all over again.

There was absolutely endless supply of bubbles. It was like a chicken laying eggs. But I remember the third night of camp, he talked about the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep, told the story

of God's redeeming love.

When his plenitude in Christ to become mine in the person of the Holy Spirit was to match my poverty as one born dead in trespasses and sins. There was no invitation, there was no after-meeting, there was no instruction. He simply said, if you've never thanked the Lord Jesus, nor ever received him into your life as your Redeemer, don't you think it's time you did? And I thought it was.

So I didn't tell anybody, but in the silence of my heart as we concluded that service in prayer before we went out, I said, Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for me. And I invite you into my life to become my saving. And he did.

Nobody knew, save the one to whom I had spoken, Jesus Christ. Quarter to nine, Saturday night, 13th of August, 1927. Nobody knew for three days.

Then one of the men in camp said, he knew a Christian. I said, yes. And he was surprised.

I don't think I'd given any particular evidence of piety to that day. He said, well, when did you become a Christian? I said, on Saturday night, three nights ago when I received Christ into my life. And I knew it.

Because the word of God tells us, you see, Romans 8, 16, that the self-same Holy Spirit who seals that redemptive transaction bears witness with our spirit that we're the children of God. That inner witness that is greater than the testimony of man. If we hear the witness of man, John tells us in the fifth chapter of his first epistle, the witness of God is greater.

And that witness of God says he is within you. That's what makes a converted man, woman, boy or girl genuinely born of God so aggravatingly certain about their salvation. And to a person who is only religious but less than regenerate, that is very aggravating.

Because a person who thinks they're going to earn their way to heaven, you see, understands when you say, I am saved, that you are saying, I made it. I've arrived. I've accumulated enough good works to make absolutely certain I'll get to heaven.

Well, the only person who knows, knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that they're redeemed is the person who long since has admitted they could never ever deserve it. Only receive from God a gift that nobody can deserve for which we can never pay because the debt has already been paid. It is finished.

And if you're number amongst those who have uncertainty as to your salvation, or if alas, misguidedly you still imagine you can get to heaven other than through faith in Jesus Christ, then before the end of this meeting, in your heart, talk to him. Say, Lord Jesus, thanks. I'm one of those sinners for whom you died.

And I'm sorry because my sin added to your load. But I'm so thankful that on the cross, when you died for sinners, you remembered me. And then opening your heart, who knocks, saying, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, extend to him that welcome to which he immediately responds by his unchanging presence, who promises three times in the original, never, no, never, no, never to leave you nor forsake you.

And that's something. Well, that's the beautiful picture that we have here. Man's poverty in the one hand and God's plenity on the other.

And the place where these two meet, the place where two pieces of wood are found in the fire, burns. All right. Just check on that.

Turn to the 29th. Keep the place. 29th chapter of the book of Exodus.

Exodus in chapter 29. A passage that will become relevant to us as we continue to unfold the story. Exodus in chapter 29.

38. Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar. Two lambs of the first year day by day continually.

The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning. The other lamb thou shalt offer at evening. One was called the morning sacrifice and the other was called the evening sacrifice.

With the one lamb, the blood of which was to be shed, a tenth deal of flour, just a handful of meal in a barrel. And the fourth part of a hin of beaten oil, just a little oil in a cruz. And the fourth part of a hin of wine for a drink offering.

The other lamb thou shalt offer at evening and shalt do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning and according to the drink offering thereof for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the Lord. For there the sacrifice was to be consumed as one day in the glorious consummation of God's redemptive plan the one who came to be the substance of the shadow would consume the fire. This, verse 42, shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord and the object of the exercise, this beautiful picture of that redemptive transaction that reconciles guilty sinners to a holy God was to precipitate a regenerative purpose that makes real again to the experience of every forgiven sinner the presence of a risen Lord reinvading a man's humanity.

There, God said, I will meet you. End of verse 42. There, I will speak unto you.

There, I will meet with the children of Israel and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar. I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons to minister to me in the priest's office.

I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God and they shall know that I am the Lord their God that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt that I may dwell among them. I am the Lord their God. In other words, this redemptive sacrifice was to introduce a restored relationship with the living God as your conversion of mine when we respond in obedience to the command of God repent and be converted that your sins might be blotted out is calculated to precipitate that regenerative purpose when not by any works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saves us by the washing of regeneration, rebirth, the renewing of the Holy Ghost whom he sheds abundantly upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior the Lamb slain so that the Holy Spirit restored to the human spirit may by his presence in life abolish death and he then re-established the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus as king in his kingdom that his glory may fill the temple don't you know that your bodies are the temples of the living God the morning and the evening sacrifice but calculated on the grounds of redemption to introduce every forgiven sinner to the hilarious adventure he having suffered a death like ours now of sharing a resurrection like his now that's the gospel that's the gospel he suffered a death like ours he paid a debt he did not owe because we owed a debt we could not pay he suffered a death like ours only that you and I now might enjoy a

resurrection like his that as then the Father restored the Holy Spirit to the Son in the day that he was begotten the firstborn of many brethren the first fruits of them that slept the first man who ever died spiritually and to whom that life, the life of God was restored that you and I might have restored to us now for his sake that life that was restored to him resurrection and you step out into the dawn of every new day knowing that the creator of the universes has come to take up residence within your humanity that all the limitable resources of the Godhead have been made available to you and that's why God says be still I want you to know something what is it?

I'm God anything else you need to know? I mean if any given situation into which the next step takes you you'll pause just long enough to know who he is God, living where he does who's come to take up residence within your humanity by his presence making available to you all his wisdom, all his power, all his love the God who knows the end from the beginning with all the limitable resources of the triune Godhead what else do you really need to know? I mean where's the panning?

I mean you mums and dads if you've got kids at home and you say you're a Christian what you're telling them is this in my body the God who created the universe and threw these stars into space lives in my heart and all that he is, he's made available to me well what do you think your kids would say? well why do you look so worried? why do they hear you say what you did when you were talking to that lady down the road on the phone?

I mean if you and I would just pause long enough to know who he is and where he lives if you dare to say I'm a Christian which means he lives in me what can you worry about? you see the moment he comes to take up residence within your heart all your worries become his worries except that he doesn't worry and you don't have the right to worry about worries that he doesn't worry about and that in the Bible is called the peace of God that staggers the neighbours that passes all understanding and you know in this beautiful picture that's given to us here we have just that as a conclusion to the redemptive transaction turn back to 1 Kings 17 came to pass verse 17 of that chapter after these things that the son of the woman the mistress of the house fell sick and his sickness was so sore that

there was no breath left in him the little boy died and said she to Elijah what have I to do with thee thou man of God art thou coming to me to call my sin to remembrance and to slay my son he's dead God has been pleased to tell us nothing about the melancholy past that is wrapped up in those few words have you come to bring my sin to remembrance he's dead and said Elijah to the woman give me thy son he took him out of her bosom and carried him up into a loft where he abode and laid him upon his own bed he cried unto the Lord and said O Lord my God hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourned by slaying her son he's dead he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried unto the Lord and said O Lord my God I pray thee let this child's soul come into him again

and the Lord heard the voice of Elijah and the soul of the child came into him again and he revived raised from the dead and Elijah took the child and brought him down out of the chamber into the house and delivered him unto his mother and said see thy son liveth you see what God is telling us is this he cannot restore in life anything that hasn't first gone into the place of death in so many words Elijah said to this lady madam the past with all its shadows with all its melancholy memories with all that heaviness of heart from which so long you suffered is buried when that boy died but now the future has been given back to you from God in the power of his resurrection life and you see this is the promise that God gives to you and to me that objectively the Lord Jesus died there upon the

cross the cross upon the hill but in the timeless economy of God you and I were judicially executed in and with him he took us into the place of death that's why God says I will remember your sin no more and the moment you and I identified with our Lord Jesus in the death that he died are identified with him in the resurrection that he enjoyed life is given back to you without the shadow of the past and Satan who is the accuser of the brethren has now no longer any power over you because you overcome him by the blood of the lamb don't misunderstand what we are told there in the book of the revelation that when Satan comes as the accuser of the brethren we overcome him by the blood of the lamb that's not talking about his death because blood is not the symbol of death blood in the bible is

the symbol of life the life is in the blood and when John in his first epistle in the first chapter and the seventh verse says the blood of Jesus Christ God's son cleanses us from all sin he's talking about the life of Christ that is yours of course and mine only by virtue of the fact that that life was first laid down in the shedding of blood that's the blood transaction we call it redemption but when you and I claim redemption the blood transaction through the shed blood of Christ a marvelous thing happens in that moment of time he risen from the dead comes in the person of the Holy Spirit to share his life with us and that is a blood transfusion and from that moment you and I are inhabited by the life of God himself it's incredible so then to whom do these hands belong?

Christ himself to whom then do our feet belong? Christ himself to whom do our lips belong?

Christ himself we've been added to the Lord we become members in particular of that new body corporate the second body the father presented to the son on the day of Pentecost when the first 120 men and women in all time since Adam fell were raised from the dead in the receiving of the Holy Spirit who could not till then come for till then the Lord Jesus had not yet been glorified but the moment ascended to be with his father welcomed back into that which is his timeless home he came in the person of his other self the comforter to invade their humanity and of course it was that that revolutionized their lives and they stepped out to share his resurrection and to become those through whom he would live his life on earth again and continue that which is essentially his ancient quest seeking

and saving that which is lost the privilege that he's given to you and to me so when you come to the Lord Jesus identify yourself with him in death you can step out in the dawn of every new day identified with him in the power of his resurrection and no matter what the past may have held of lament you can know that with Christ it was buried and yours now is a future restored in the power of his resurrection the woman said to Elijah verse 24 now by this resurrection I know that thou art a man of God and that the word of the Lord is in thy mouth is truth in other words by virtue of the fact that this boy is alive again truth behaves and when truth behaves that's righteousness God in him there's nothing more convincing in the world in which you and I have been placed as those who claim to be

redeemed than the impact of his resurrection life released by our availability to the one who having given himself for us been risen from the dead has given himself to us now it's not your personality it's not your mere skills inherent gifts not even those that may have been acquired though all of these things are not to be despised and God will use them but ultimately it isn't bad that raises the dead it is the spirit himself and the impact that you and I if we are to have any lasting impact upon those among whom we live whether it be our own family circle around our own breakfast table or those within whom you labor within your own particular vocation your airline or whatever else it may be that which will ultimately make impact and cut through the gloom penetrate the darkness and raise

the dead is the life of Christ released by virtue of your availability to his divine indwelling in that unshatterable confidence that he is alive not just in heaven but in you so you begin every day and say Lord Jesus it's going to be exciting to see what you're going to do in and through me today I may have absolutely no clues to what you have done and to me now it's a matter of total irrelevance because all that matters is not that I see what you've done but that you did it and that's the privilege that he's given to us I don't know whether I have it here or not I usually carry a copy around with me I think I have but you know I was up in Toronto Canada been there a number of times and there was one man Geddes Broadhurst who had come to a number of meetings there and I always view with

some alarm anybody who advances with a determined look you know in their eye and a piece of paper in their hand because normally it's poetry and they wrote it somehow when the preacher gets eloquent the congregation gets poetic I remember just right now in taking this out of my pocket that somebody came over the weekend gave me a piece of paper and I haven't even dared look at it it's like the man you know who said to his friend do you think there's enough fire in my poetry and a little dryly his friend said I don't know but I don't think there's enough of your poetry in the fire and that was a little a little unkind but every now and again it's good and this is one when Jesus died for me on Calvary he paid the penalty for all my sins he suffered all the pain my simple heart to gain and

now his spirit witnesses within I'm just a suit of clothes that Jesus wears my body is the house in which he lives my voice is his to talk my feet are his to walk I'm just a suit of clothes that Jesus wears he rose again to bring abundant life to justify before his father's face I live no more but he lives out his life through me I'm just a vessel fashioned by his grace as life goes on I fear not come what may he carries all my burdens and my cares for me the battle's done for he's the victory one I'm just a suit of clothes that Jesus wears that's the privilege that God has given to you and to me that purpose for which he created us to be indwelt by deity so that you get up every morning as a forgiven sinner who's been restored to that relationship that allows him as God to be to you now

what for 33 years he allowed the father as God to be to him you say, Lord Jesus, good morning, here's your suit of clothes have a good day and then you reign in life by one Christ Jesus and exhibit that quality of life that distinguishes man from the animal kingdom that can have no possible explanation but Christ in the Christian putting God back into the man came to pass, verse 1, chapter 18 after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year saying God show thyself unto Ahab and I will send rain upon the earth and Elijah went and when you're sent and went, what happens? you're put how do you become one of God's friends? told what to do, you do as you're told how do you meet God's friends? be sent, went and put and the chances are you'll meet one of God's friends

and that's exactly what happened Elijah went to show himself to Ahab and there was a sore famine in Samaria and Ahab called Obadiah who was the governor of his house and then in parenthesis, now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly one of God's friends where was he to be found?

He was the governor of the household of that wicked evil man King Ahab and that painted hussy Jezebel now, what a context for one who was a friend of God he feared the Lord greatly for it was so when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord that Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifty in a cave and fed them with bread and water now you and I, of course, piously might uphold our hands in holy horror and say, how dare you be in that kind of context fancy living in a house like that call yourself one of God's friends do you know what God would say to you? mind your own business I don't have to ask your permission for the kind of friends I have nor do I have to ask your permission for where I put them there

were at least one hundred prophets who were profoundly thankful that one

of God's friends lived in that particular context his mission was hardly to be envied and I'm glad I didn't have the assignment but it may well be that God will put you precisely in just such a situation one day don't complain it may be tough and you may hunger for the fellowship that you enjoy on such an occasion as this but remember that if God puts you in just such a place as this, it's because he has something very important to do and may be the only person he can trust with that kind of an assignment some of us would be too soft and sissy to stick it out especially some of the implications of being put in such a barren context Ahab said in the fifth verse go into the land unto all fountains of water unto all brooks peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and the mules alive

that we lose not all the beasts so they divided the land between them to pass throughout it and Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself looking for water can you imagine how utterly frustrating that must have been to this man of God Obadiah who knew perfectly well why there was no water, why the dearth had come and for how long it was going to last until by the word of God on the lips of his servant Elijah the drought was lifted and yet he had to go grubbing around in the dirt for what he knew God alone could send from heaven mustn't that have been terribly frustrating you know you and I on occasions find ourselves in precisely such a context even within the Christian constituency where we know we're surrounded by a lot of baby Christians who are fully engaged

in nothing more than carnal sweat and because they expect you to be on the band wagon you have to go grubbing around in the dirt for what you know only God can send from heaven well stick it out because it goes on to say in verse 7 in the very process of doing what must have been to him an exercise in futility and utterly distasteful it says as Obadiah was in the way now there are two different ways you can say that you can either be in the way or in the way and most of us find ourselves more often in the way than in the way if you know what I mean Abraham's servant I being in the way the Lord led me you can only know that you're in the way and not in the way so long as you have been sent and when? then you'll know that you've been put then you'll be in the way and not in the way as

Obadiah was in the way behold Elijah met him and he knew him and fell on his face and said art thou that my Lord Elijah? he answered him I am tell thy Lord behold Elijah is here and that was viewed with some dismay by Obadiah what have I sinned said he verse 9 that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab to slay me as the Lord thy God liveth there is no nation or kingdom whither thy Lord hath not sent to seek thee and when they said he's not there he took an oath of the kingdom and nation that they found thee not now thou sayest go tell thy Lord behold Elijah is here and it shall come to pass as soon as I'm gone from thee the spirit of the Lord shall carry thee whither I know not it always happens he's hunted for you everywhere and you're always that elusive and you want

me to go to tell the king that you're around and when I come and tell Ahab and he find thee not he'll slay me but thy servant doth fear the Lord from my youth was it not told my Lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord how I hidden hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave and fed them with bread and water now thou sayest go tell thy Lord behold Elijah is here and he'll slay me Elijah said as the Lord of hosts liveth before whom I stand I will surely show myself unto him today I've received my instructions and I'll do as I'm told so Abadar went to meet Ahab and told him and Ahab went to meet Elijah and there was the confrontation came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah said he to him art thou he that troubleth Israel it's amazing how men always are ready to blame

God for the consequences of their own sin said Elijah I have not troubled Israel but thou and thy fathers has in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and thou hast followed Baal and now he said send and gather to me all the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty and gather all the prophets of the groves another four hundred eight hundred and fifty idolatrous priests infidels so Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel he gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel and Elijah came unto all the people and said how long halt ye between two opinions if the Lord be God follow him but if Baal then follow Baal one of my former colleagues whom some you may know Stuart Briscoe came to my home when he was a kid at about fifteen, sixteen years of age to our teenager program

couldn't understand although he had been brought up in a Christian home was himself converted why we got so excited about the resurrection because he had never discovered the real reason why Christ died for him he thought it was only to get him out of hell and into heaven change his destination get him off the hook but when he got to the age of twenty-one he suddenly discovered what it was really all about the way he put it he was on our staff for ten years living at Cate and Ray in England and speaking to a whole bunch of teenagers he said you know once I thought the Christian life was easy found I was wrong then I thought it was hard and really worked at it and found I was wrong again I then discovered that it was neither easy nor hard but a sheer impossibility and for the first time in

my life I realized the significance of the resurrection that there's only one person capable of living the Christian life and that is Jesus Christ that he died for us then only that he can live in us now and he's the only one who's got what it takes and I remember him on one occasion talking to a whole bunch of our young folks from this particular passage and the way he put it was this if Jesus Christ be God follow him if not forget it but whatever you do don't play the fool that's pretty good advice if Jesus Christ really be God follow him if not forget it don't play church because to play the church is to play the fool response of the crowd you could hardly say it was hilariously enthusiastic the people answered him not a word why not because it involved a moral choice spare that in

mind he presented them with a moral choice they actually had to make up their minds that's the last thing in all the world that the average congregation wants to have to do entertain, yes but face a moral option, no said Elijah let them therefore give us two bullocks and let them choose one bullock for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on wood and put no fire under and I will dress the other bullock and lay it on wood and put no fire under and call he on the name of your gods and I will call on the name of mine and the God that answers by fire let him be God response of the congregation wildly enthusiastic all the people answered and said well spoken fantastic why because they weren't now faced with a moral option they were going to watch a show you see give the church of Jesus

Christ even today entertainment they will be there and there are tens of thousands organize a big rally give them a sing up and send them high on Jesus and they will be there swaying from side to side but face them with a moral option uh uh just a solemn group of individuals and answering not a word Dr.

Towson one of his books said it's almost impossible today to get anybody to church where the only attraction is God you can't get people today to assemble in any great numbers unless you give them a banquet or a hay ride or a vaudeville program bunch of dancing girls all singing about Jesus or a magician I was in Dallas not too long ago and saw a program for what's called quotes revival the evangelist was going to cut his wife in half on Wednesday night she was going to drive blindfold through the city on Thursday and that was a revival that isn't revival that's circus but you give people that they'll be there and there are tens of thousands applauding and shouting and screaming just like a bunch of people with the

Rolling Stones and that's why we import their hideous stuff into our

churchmanship and call it sacred of satanic origin occultic moral option no, entertainment yes, put on the show the big thing evangelist descends by parish elephant rides for all under the age of 17 this is evangelism 1983 and it's for the birds except that by and large the ravens are more intelligent than to accept it all the people answered said well spoken we're going to have a show Elijah said to the prophets of Baal choose you one bullet for yourselves and dress it first for you are so many you're in the majority you have first innings call the name of your gods put no far under and they took the bullet which was given them and they dressed it and they called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon and saying oh Baal, hear us but there was no voice nor any that answered and

they leapt upon the altar which was made and it came to pass at noon Elijah mocked them he said cry aloud shout a little louder he's obviously deaf hard of hearing he needs to adjust his trumpet cry a little louder he's a god either he's talking maybe he's deep in conversation or he is pursuing or maybe he's on a journey or paradise he's having his afternoon nap and must be awake and shout at man a little louder you may be will stir him out of his lethargy and indifference he had a whale of a time came to pass when midday was passed and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice that there was neither voice nor any to answer nor any that recorded and Elijah said it's time for church the pantomime is over enough of the fun and games it's time for church you see

now it was the time for the evening sacrifice Elijah took twelve stones verse 31 according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob under whom the word of the Lord came saying Israel shall be thy name for you see that was the occasion when Jacob wrestled with God and said God there must be something more to knowing God than what I've had served seven years for one wife and served seven years for another and got two served him right and he said change my wages ten times what a miserable existence from the day that Bethel the house of God he met God conversion but for those miserable fourteen years he'd lived in self-imposed poverty and wrestled with God and God said what's your name and he said my name is Jacob and that of course as most of you know translated into English means

cheat sneak swindler and in so many words God said thanks for calling yourself by your own name now I'll change it God will change your name if you'll call yourself by your real name repentance just admit yourself to be what you are and put your need at his feet that's true faith not a gun at God's head your need at his feet and God said now I'll change your name Israel Bethel was the house of God the place of conversion Peniel was the face of God where he made the great discovery that God is alive cares enough to listen is big enough to do something about it Israel means prince with God and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord and he made a trench about the altar as great as would contain two measures of seed and he put the wood in order and he cut the bullock in

pieces and he laid on the wood and said fill four barrels with water pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood and he said do it the second time and they did it the second time and he said do it the third time and they did it the third time and the water ran round about the altar and he filled the trenches also with water came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice that Elijah the prophet came near and he said Lord God of Abraham Isaac and of Jake of Israel let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel and that I am thy servant and that I have done all these things at thy word let them know that thou art God and that I am all that I am because of all that you are and everything I do is because of what you say when a man can look into God's face and say

let them know who you are and that I am what I am because of who you are and what I do is because of what you say he's in a strong position if you'd slipped up to Elijah's side and said Elijah you're sticking your neck out you're in the presence of a wicked king 850 hostile priests and a sullen crowd you're on your own what are you doing there and with a grin from ear to ear you know what he would have said put put I was sent and went and when you know who sent you and it's God who sent you you know who put you and if it's God who put you nothing can frighten you hear me oh 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 father of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the

dust and licked up the water that was in the trench and when all the people saw it they fell on their faces and they cried the Lord he is God the Lord he is God so in all its sublime simplicity the first thing we learned this morning was that when you're told what to do and do as you're told when you're sent and went and put even the birds will feed you and the second thing we learned tonight is that when you're told what to do and do as you're told you're sent and you went and you're put the fire will burn even when the wood is wet now next time you're discouraged with your circumstance your environment some of you may even come from godless homes a hostile environment you say I believe I could have so much more blessing if I wasn't right here many have made that mistake they imagine

changing from one church to another one pulpit to another one field to another that's going to change things that's not the problem if you're in the place where God puts you the fire will burn no matter how wet the wood because a God who can't burn wet wood is no good well that's the introduction to Elijah but I'm glad for your sake and mine that God doesn't leave us there at that stage of the story he's got some great encouragement for us because as James reminds us in his epistle Elijah was a man of like passion as you and I and tomorrow morning though it might seem sad that we have to tell this part of the story we read of a man who was not sent, went and put but it was spent and went and shot and you can hardly believe this he ends up weeping in self pity under a juniper tree wishing

he were dead incredible and we need to discover how it happened now let's pray we're thankful again dear Lord for your faithfulness to your servants thank you again for that precious blood that we shed upon the cross where those two pieces of wood met and you as the son of God wearing the crown paid the price of our redemption thank you that you have imparted to us by your divine indwelling all the fullness and power of your resurrection thank you dear Lord that our circumstance no longer need frighten so long as we're in the place of your divine appointing thank you that not only will the birds feed us but the fire will burn even in the most discouraging circumstance no matter how wet the word that in the heart of some little boy some girl, man or woman there comes the cry thou art God

grant that clothing your divine activity with our humanity in our presence some child with our hands will feel your touch through our lips some lonely woman will hear your voice and some man crushed by circumstance and fleeing from life itself may look into our face and see you smile a God who cares enough to listen a God who's big enough to do something about it who seeks still only that he might save that which is lost thank you for your quest that one day cornered us and found us at last submissive enough to admit our need and lay claim to what we could never deserve we thank you that your grace delights to give what we could never earn you wait only for us to take and say thank you and live in the good of all that fantastic provision that has been made for those who grasp only a

handful of meal give to us we pray that true repentance that relinquishes the last handful of self-sufficiency in obedience to your word that we might live in the plenitude of your provision knowing who it is that lives

where he dies in our hearts that every day truly it may be the adventure of reigning in life by one Christ Jesus unafraid and undismayed we don't ask to be delivered from vicissitude danger or even sorrow but only that we may know where our resources lie and learn to draw upon them and in all things give thanks and quenching not the spirit through whom we share your resurrection we ask it all loving savior because you deserve it for you died to make it possible and all in your own dear and peerless name Jesus the one who knows the worst about us and loves us just the same

there's only one who loves like that Jesus is his name Amen

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