

Troubler of Israel

by Phil Beach Jr.

The sermon highlights the problem of apostasy in the church, characterized by a seared conscience and a lack of love for self, and calls for a return to the message of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Duration: 50:52

Scripture: 1 Kings 18:16

Topics: "Christian Life", "Apostasy", "Divine Testimony"

Description

Phil Beach Jr. preaches on the theme 'Thou that troublest Israel,' focusing on the confrontation between Elijah and King Ahab in 1 Kings. He emphasizes that Elijah, often seen as the source of trouble, actually points to Ahab's apostasy and the forsaking of God's commandments as the true cause of Israel's distress. The sermon highlights the characteristics of religious apostasy, including a seared conscience and a departure from God's truth, while also presenting Elijah as a divine testimony against such corruption. Beach calls for a return to the message of the cross and the power of God to restore the church amidst spiritual famine.

Transcript

First Kings chapter 17, we're going to be, with the help of God's grace, looking at this morning. And as a text this morning, or as a title that we feel would be appropriate for this message, the name of this message, we had been ministering on this for quite some time, and the Lord has just not let us go, so we're continuing on in this theme. The name of this message is, Thou that troublest Israel.

Thou that troublest Israel. And we're going to be finding that that's a very statement that was made in First Kings chapter 18. First Kings chapter 18, verse number 16 and 17 and 18.

Verse number 16, 17 and 18 in First Kings chapter 18. This is when Elijah confronts Ahab, the wicked king of Israel. First Kings chapter 18, verse number 16.

So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him. And Ahab went to meet Elijah. And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? You see, Elijah had a real reputation in this day, a reputation where he had troubled Israel, but I want you to notice what Elijah's response was to King Ahab's indictment against him.

First Kings chapter 18, verse number 18. Elijah's response to Ahab's indictment, questioning him saying, Aren't you the one who is bringing trouble to Israel? Aren't you the one who is troubling the nation of Israel? Aren't you the one who is making us feel uncomfortable? Aren't you the one that is always coming to us demanding that we look at ourselves and look at what we're doing and seeing how it lines up to God's will? And listen to what Elijah said to Ahab. And he answered, I have not troubled Israel.

I have not troubled Israel. Elijah says, I'm sorry that I have that reputation King Ahab, but I am not the source of trouble in Israel. I am not the one who is making your life miserable or who is making the nation of Israel miserable.

But I want you to notice that Elijah put the blame right where it belonged. But you, you and your father's house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and you have followed Balaam. Aren't thou the troublest Israel? I am not the one that troubles Israel.

But you and your house have forsaken the Lord and that's the source of trouble in Israel. I want you to, if you would please, turn your Bibles to 1 Kings 16, beginning in verse number 29. And what we're going to do is we're going to look at the condition that surrounded Israel at this time and look at some of the characteristics of this condition.

Beloved, please listen very, very closely. We see in the story of Elijah and we see in the circumstances that surround Elijah a picture of what is happening in this late hour right now. There are two things going on now and we're going to see many of the characteristics of these two things in 1 Kings chapter 16 and then we can learn from this story exactly what the Lord is doing.

But the two major characteristics that are occurring right now, number one, there is a great apostasy. The word apostasy means a falling away, a departure. And the apostasy, I tell you, beloved, is not in the world.

The apostasy is not going on in Washington, D.C. It's not going on in the land of Saddam Hussein. It's not going on in the capitals of the nations. It's not indicative or it's not revealed because of the United Nations.

The apostasy that is going on in this particular story in 1 Kings chapter 16 and it relates to and correlates to what's going on today, it is not a secular apostasy. It is a religious apostasy. It's going on in the midst of God's people.

It's not an apostasy that is chiefly going on in the world. The world has always been in enmity to God. The world has always been under the power of the devil.

The world has always had in it the desires and the ways that are contrary to the Lord. This apostasy that we see in 1 Kings chapter 16 is focused in and is related to a falling away in the nation of Israel. It was a falling away in the midst of the house of God.

But not only do we see an apostasy going on, beloved, 1 Kings chapter 16, we see, number one, an apostasy. And we're going to see the characteristics that characterize this apostasy. We're going to see the characteristics that made up this apostasy so we can get a handle and see exactly what the Word of God says is going to be duplicated in the last day that we're living in.

But not only do we see an apostasy, but we see a divine testimony. We see that when there is an apostasy, when there is a falling away, when there is a forsaking of the Lord's commandments, when there is nothing more than a mere religious shell, but inwardly there is corruption in every evil work, and

that characterizes the place where God's name is. Remember, Israel was to be the place where God's name was.

Israel was to be that unique place where the world would see what God was like. Recently I asked a question that if they were in another country, or rather if they were here living their lives and someone from another country who'd never got a Bible, who'd never read a Bible, meticulously followed them around for one month, how much would they learn about the life of Jesus Christ? How much of the life of Jesus Christ is being revealed right now in the way that you live, in the way that you talk to people? How much of Jesus Christ is being revealed, beloved? Remember, this apostasy is in the church. It's in the religious system.

It's a falling away. How much? So therefore, the divine testimony, listen, the divine testimony that Elijah represents in the Old Testament during this setting of apostasy is God's response to religious apostasy. God has a response to religious apostasy.

When the testimony is removed, the testimony is Jesus Christ, the testimony, the spirit of prophecy is Jesus Christ. When the spirit of Jesus Christ is removed from the religious scene, and it's nothing more than apostasy and religious externals, then God responds by raising up a testimony, and in the person of Elijah we see a picture in the Old Testament of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and those who are united to Him in resurrection life, who are united to Him and who yield to the life of His Spirit and let Him, who is the true Elijah of God, who is the true prophet of God, let Him live His life through yielded vessels. That's what this story in the Old Testament is all about.

So, let's look here in 1 Kings 16, verse 29. And in the 30 and 80th year of Asa, king of Judah, began Ahab, the son of Omri, to reign over Israel. And Ahab, the son of Omri, reigned over Israel and Samaria twenty and two years.

And Ahab, the son of Omri, did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that was before him. So, first of all, we see that Ahab was reigning in Israel and he did evil in the sight of the Lord. Listen, that was beyond all the other kings.

So, we see in Ahab a picture of almost like the sin of the past coming to fruition. The sin of the past gathering up, coming into a ripening sort of a, if I can use the word, testimony. Ahab is a picture of all the past sin being gathered together.

A comprehensive picture of all the sin of the past all being gathered together into one particular generation, into one particular time frame, which is the time frame that we're looking into now. So, Ahab is a very evil pernicious man and he has an evil pernicious heart and he seemingly is almost a picture of all the past sin in Israel, all the past sin starting from when the house of David was divided and his two sons, Jeroboam and Roboam, were in derision against each other and the Lord divided the kingdom and the sins began to multiply in the house of Israel. That happened many years back.

It seems like all of those sins all came to a ripening maturity, came to a place where they were fully manifested and they all came and got on King Ahab and King Ahab was like the personification of the ultimate apostasy, the ultimate sense of turning away from God. That's what we see in King Ahab. A terrible, terrible picture of a falling away.

Verse number 31, And it came to pass as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam. And it came to pass as if it had been a light thing. One of the outstanding characteristics, and

beloved, please listen closely, listen closely, one of the outstanding characteristics that was evident in the life of Ahab which characterizes apostasy, religious apostasy, is that the conscience is seared.

The Bible says here that it was a light thing for Ahab to walk in the sins of Israel. It was a light thing for Ahab to engage in all the abominable adultery, all the abominable idolatry, worshiping Baal, despising the true prophets of God. Jezebel hated Elijah.

Jezebel wanted Elijah's blood. She despised the testimony of God. Remember, Elijah represents the testimony of God.

He represents the Spirit of Jesus Christ having free course to flow through a remnant people who are holy and entirely dedicated to the Lord God of heaven and earth. She despised him. So one of the outstanding characteristics of Ahab is a seared conscience.

Now I want to show you in 2 Timothy, 2 Timothy. This is exactly what Paul said was going to characterize the last days. You know, beloved, this is no sermon.

This is not a sermon. I don't want you to listen to it as a sermon. You know that.

It is a message. It is a message as feebly as it may be from this vessel of clay. This is a message from the heart of the Lord.

This is a burden from Him. 2 Timothy chapter 3. 2 Timothy chapter 3. A seared conscience. Can you see this, beloved? That one of the characteristics that was in the life of King Ahab was it was a light thing for him to continue to live in rebellion against God.

Do you know how dangerous it is? Do you know how diabolical it is? Do you know how devastating it is when our conscience becomes insensitive and it no longer troubles us or bothers us when there's things in our life that are not pleasing to God? Do you know how dangerous it is when God's house... Remember, we're not talking about the world. Don't you say, oh, I know exactly what you mean, that people in the world are so hard and they're so callous and they're so envious and they're so full of sin. No, I'm talking about in the house of God, the place, the sanctuary, the sanctuary, the true sanctuary, which is the place where God's name is.

That's Christ. God's name is Christ. Christ came to reveal the name of the Father.

And it's the church. It's when these things begin to happen in the church, when the alarm begins to go off, how terrible it is. How terrible it is.

Religious apostasy is characterized by a seared conscience. A seared conscience is not being shamed anymore. A seared conscience is not matter of what we put before our eyes.

How holy is the music you listen to? How holy is it? What are you doing with your body? The body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. What do you set before your eyes? Well, brother, hey, I'm free. I'm a Christian.

Did you ever hear that? I'm free, brother. I'm called to liberty. I don't want legalism or bondage.

The freedom that we have in Christ is the freedom to become slaves to righteousness. And whenever your freedom takes you from the posture of being a slave to what is right, your freedom has become perversion. It's not gospel freedom.

God does not free people in order to do what they want. God frees people in order to have the testimony of Paul. I'm a bondservant of Jesus Christ.

So, beloved, we need to understand that freedom, it's true, it is great freedom. There's no greater freedom that any man has than to be free in Christ. But it's not a freedom in Christ to do what we want.

It's a freedom in Christ to be free from the slavery of sin. It's a freedom in Christ to be free from the tyranny of self. It's a freedom in Christ to be free from the voluptuous powers of this world that allure us and bring us into perdition.

It's a freedom that liberates us from being slaves to our fleshly nature and enables us to live in Christ, a life that is on the altar of service for God. Oh yes, this is what freedom's all about. 2 Timothy chapter 3. This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come.

I just recently received a letter from the dear brother Leonard Ravenhill. We have been privileged over the years to correspond with him through our printed messages. And he just recently wrote me a letter.

You know, he's up almost 90 years old. God bless him. I understand recently that he needs people now to help him when he goes and speaks.

He's up real high in age, up almost 90. He was just speaking at a minister's meeting in Tyler, Texas. And we went and heard an evangelist, the evangelist that was up at your church, Gary.

And he said that he was invited to come for one of the sectional meetings for the minister's fellowship. And he said he preached on prayer. And before he got the message done, half the altar was full of weeping ministers coming up who confessed that they had forsaken prayer.

They were no longer praying. They were no longer seeking the Lord. And this guy, brother Lundmark, said that it was a very, very powerful message on prayer and seeking God.

So I said that to say this, that the first thing he said in his letter was, Dear Phil, these are perilous times that we're living in. Perilous times. And that's just here what Paul says.

This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come. Now, beloved, I do not, again, want you to equate this as a prophecy that relates to things in the world. Listen, the world has always been perilous.

The world from the beginning has been corrupt. Way back when God condemned the world through Noah's preaching, it was wicked. It's been wicked ever since.

Paul here is writing to Timothy and he is warning Timothy that the perilous times shall be in the assembly. It's the perilous times that shall come into the house of God. The things that I'm about to read are things that are not predominantly in the world anymore.

They are now in the lives and in the fellowships of those that call on the name of Christ. This is the great sign that we are living in a time that is like the time when Ahab was living. Because it was Ahab and Israel, God's people, that Elijah rebuked.

Not the world. Now, notice these sins here. For men shall be lovers of their own selves.

Beloved, the one place that we should be able to see the absence of love for self is in the church of God. The one place in this sin-cursed world that we should be able to see selfless people living for the glory of God is in the house of God, in the sanctuary of God, in the place where God's name is. But yet, Paul says that in the last days there shall be lovers of self.

Now, beloved, I'm just simply going to say that the reason why there is so much love for self is because the message of the cross has been removed from Christianity. We are under the influence of, in a national and an international scope, we are under the influence of a crossless Christianity. You remove the cross from Christianity, you remove the power of the preaching of the cross as the place where the sinner is not just forgiven, but the sinner is crucified with Christ.

Paul says in Galatians 2.20, I am crucified with Christ. Paul saw the gospel, Paul saw the cross of Jesus Christ so clearly that he not only saw it as the place where he was acquitted, he not only saw it as the place where God forgave him as a rotten sinner, but he saw it as the place where he went and he was crucified right along with Jesus Christ. And that it was the end of Paul, it was the end of Paul's will, it was the end of Paul's desires, it was the end of Paul's aspirations, it was the end of Paul.

Paul was no more. Now it was Christ who liveth in me. It was Christ now.

It was the man in glory. I am his servant now. I am bound to do his will.

Paul can no longer have a say in the matter. Paul can no longer be the man that runs his life. Paul's got to throw out all of his religion.

Paul's got to throw out all of his self-righteousness. Paul's got to throw out all of his hope in meriting favor to God. Now Paul has to see himself as a sinner, not just forgiven, but crucified with Christ.

The only way that we can be free from love for self is if we are brought back to the message of the cross of Jesus Christ and it becomes the central message of the church once again. I am crucified with Christ, Paul said. Romans chapter 6. What, know ye not that as many as you as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? That means, sinner friend, don't you know that God not only provided your forgiveness at Calvary, but he provided a complete and sure death for you? So that when you come up, you are to come up a new person living for the glory of God under the power of the Spirit of God.

And that needs to be not only a one-time crisis, but that needs to be a continual crisis where the believer is brought to where they acknowledge that they are crucified with Christ and the only life now that they can pursue after and yield to is that life of Jesus Christ. Love for self has come and is controlling families. Love for self is controlling churches.

Love for self, and I am not just talking about an open, obvious kind of a love for self, but there is a spiritual love for self. The pursuing of personal kingdoms in Christianity. The lifting up of names.

The glorifying of self. It is all a religious abomination to God and the spirit of Elijah is opposed to it. The spirit and testimony, the divine testimony, whenever God can get a people that can get low enough, that can get down enough, that can get broken enough, that can get their eyes off themselves enough to where they can start seeing that there is only one chief in the kingdom of God.

His name is Jesus Christ. There is only one big honcho. His name is Jesus.

When we can get low enough to see that the first thing that starts happening in the lives of people is they start seeing how abominable their desires are, how abominable their aspirations are, how they have not even knowingly tried to take the place of Jesus Christ in their life. Yes, this is what happens. This is the divine testimony.

Now you see why Ahab said, O thou troubler of Israel, O you troubler of Israel, the testimony of Elijah always rubs the people of God wrong when they are backslidden, when they are following after their own self, when they are determined to build a kingdom from their self, when they are determined to omit the cross of Christ from the Christian message and make the Christian message some kind of a message where they are going to become something. Let me tell you, there is no bigwigs in the kingdom of God. There is only one Son and it's His image and His glory and His likeness that all the children of God must be made after.

It's only Him. And this is a very offensive message. It's offensive.

But Paul said, God forbid that I should remove the offense of the gospel, the offense of the cross. Paul's hope was the cross. Paul saw the cross was his end.

Praise God. So, this is just the first one here. Lovers of their own selves.

Covetous. The covetousness in the house of God is despicable. The desire for more and more and more and more.

Covetousness is tearing up families. Covetousness is motivating people. We ought not to be motivated by covetousness.

Remember, Jesus went to two brothers and they said, the one brother got a hold of Jesus and really thought that he was going to get a good answer from Jesus. He said, oh, hey, Jesus, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me. And you'd think Jesus would say something like, well, you know, that is a reasonable request.

It's true now, brother. You ought to share your inheritance with him. It's probably not all yours.

Jesus never listened to what people said. He always saw what was in their heart. And he responded to their heart.

And instead of sitting there and being a nice arbitrator, which this guy thought Jesus was going to be, he thought Jesus would side with him because no doubt the guy was being covetous. But you know what? The guy was being covetous, but Jesus saw that his desire to want to share the inheritance was greed itself. It was beyond.

It was beyond the right thing to do. So what did Jesus say? Beware of covetousness. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of things which he owns.

And then Jesus went on to tell a story. So these are some of the sins that characterize religious apostasy that's going on. And I'm telling you, beloved, only, only, only if the power of the gospel is restored and the divine testimony, the testimony that Elijah represents, he comes on the scene right in the middle of religious apostasy, and he stands up and he says, As thus saith the Lord, whose presence I stand in.

He stood in the presence of God and he spoke God's word. Only, only will these things be overcome in the life of God's people. Only as the testimony of Jesus Christ is secured.

All right, let's just read some of these things. Covetousness, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God. Listen to this.

Verse number five is how we know where this is going on. The world does not have a form of godliness, but this, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof from such, turn away. So there you see it right there.

Now, for your information, the form of godliness, what that actually means is it actually implies a shell. It implies a shell and the outward shell appears to be godliness, but it's denying the power. Now, the power, beloved, that this scripture is talking about here, it's not power in a fleshly way.

It has nothing to do with power to be successful or anything like that. The power that this is talking about here is the power that the essential message of the gospel produces. It's the power of God that produces salvation.

Listen, it's the power that delivers us from these things that Paul just mentioned. It's the power that delivers us from love of self. It's the power that delivers us from covetousness and greed.

It's the power that delivers us from boasting. It's the power that delivers us from walking after the spirit of this world. It's that power.

It's the power of the cross. And that power is absent in religion. In the church, externally, generally speaking, it's absent.

There's all kinds of stuff going on, but God doesn't look at that. He sees the essential place that the cross of Christ has, the essential place that the exaltation of Jesus Christ has. He sees exactly how much people are being transformed from earthly to heavenly creatures.

He sees exactly how much people's lives are being changed and being free from greed and covetousness and selfishness. And that's the judgment that He uses. The judgment in the house of God.

It's not a judgment based on codes and regulations. It's a judgment based on a person. Jesus Christ comes and stands in the midst of His church and He says, See me? See what I'm like? That's the standard that I'm going to judge my people by.

The very essential character and nature that's in Jesus Christ is the only kind of character and nature that God accepts in His house. It's the only kind. Any other kind of character and nature is from the first Adam.

And God took the first Adam, brought him to the cross, buried him, but He didn't resurrect him. He resurrected the last Adam. The only life that God accepts is the life and character and nature that comes out from the last Adam.

The Lord of glory who sat down at the right hand of God. It's only that life being transmitted and assimilated into the believer through the power of the Holy Spirit. Only that life.

It's only that life that's free from greed. It's only that life that's free from covetousness. It's only that life that brings glory to God.

The natural man. The natural life. The sinful life.

No place in the house of God doesn't belong there. So we need the gospel to come. We need the gospel.

All right, beloved. So these are some of the characteristics of what's going on here in 1 Kings chapter 17. Ahab gathers up in himself all the sins of the past.

A seared conscience. He doesn't care at all what he does. That's verse number 31.

It's a light thing. Not only that, but he took the wife of Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbel, king of the Zionians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria.

Now, beloved, I just want to read one more characteristic here. And this is very significant. Verse number 34.

Verse number 34. In his days did Hiel, the Bethelite, build Jericho. Oh, beloved, how significant this is.

Do you know that in Joshua 6.26? Joshua 6.26, when Jericho was destroyed, Joshua pronounced a curse upon that city, and he pronounced a curse upon anyone who would try and rebuild that city. And it just so happens that during the day of Ahab, during the day of religious apostasy, during the day when the conscience is seared, men are rebuilding Jericho. Now, Jericho in the Old Testament represents the cursed thing.

They're dabbling with the cursed thing. Now, significantly speaking, what this means is when Jericho is rebuilt, what that is, spiritually speaking, is God's people go back to the life that is cursed. God's people go back to the accursed thing.

God's people begin to dabble into that cursed life that God says, don't dabble with now. The only life the Christians should be involved in is the life of Christ. It's the life of Jesus Christ.

So the outstanding characteristic in the apostasy days of Ahab is a seared conscience, not troubled over getting involved in all the sins, and also there is no restraint any longer. And the city of Jericho is rebuilt. See, Jericho was destroyed when God's people marched around it seven times.

And that Jericho city represents all that the resurrection of Jesus Christ destroyed, all that the resurrection of Jesus Christ triumphed over. The church has nothing to do with the accursed life. Christ was made a curse, and all those things, all the sins in the world, all the sins of the flesh, all the life of the old man is cursed.

And God does not want us to dabble into it. But now, the whole church is playing with the old life, being infatuated with the soul, being infatuated with the fleshly things, being infatuated with the old. And it's an abomination to God.

Beloved, I'm telling you, your families will never be in order, your lives will never be in order, until you see things the way God says, and pray God give you eyes to see. We cannot dabble into the things that are cursed. The Bible says, Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world.

All that is in the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life, these are not of the Father. They're under a curse. God's people should be preoccupied with Jesus Christ, and bearing His image every day, reflecting His image, revealing to the world a different kind of life.

A different kind of life. That's the life that we need. So this is the side of apostasy.

This is all that Ahab represents. There's much more that we won't get into. So we see simultaneously along with apostasy, there's a God who has an Elijah.

And Elijah comes on the scene. Chapter 17, check it out. And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, There's a confrontation, spiritually speaking, with Ahab, the one who is in apostasy, and the divine testimony.

Elijah. Which is the head and the body. Remember, the head and the body are one.

Those united to Christ bear the testimony of the great Elijah, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. There's a confrontation, and here's what the confrontation is. As the Lord God of Israel liveth before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

The first predominant characteristic of those who partake of the divine testimony and who are brought into a living union with Christ and who will come under the government of the Holy Spirit is that they stand in the presence of God. They stand in the presence of God. You need to build an altar in your home, beloved.

You need to seek God. You need to live out of God's presence. You need to pray.

You need to draw your strength from the presence of God. Elijah stood up. Here he was, a man.

There's religious apostasy on every end, and here is a man standing up saying, as God lives before whom I stand. He knew the word of God. He knew the God of the word.

He was filled with the presence of God. And that is a picture of what the church ought to be. The church ought to be the vessel through whom God is made known to the world.

The church ought to be the vessel through whom Elijah, the true Elijah of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom his voice is heard. The church ought to be a testimony coming against the greed, coming against the covetousness, coming against the sin, showing the world what this man, Jesus, is like because he's living his life through us. So not only does Elijah stand in the presence of God, but he also pronounces judgment, a famine in the land.

Famines in the Old Testament were signs of God's judgment because people had forsaken the Lord. And the famine right now that we're experiencing is not so much a literal famine as it is a spiritual famine. In Amos, the Bible says that God was sent a famine in the last days, not of bread, not of water, but of hearing of the word of God.

And this is the famine that we see today, beloved. It's a spiritual drought. It's a spiritual famine.

But God's testimony, God's Elijah, the Lord Jesus, and those united to him recognize there's a spiritual famine. And they flee to him, the Lord Jesus Christ. They flee to him.

They draw their life and they draw their strength from him. And that's what the Lord is calling all of his people to do, to draw their life and strength from him. Now, as we go on here, we're not going to read the whole thing.

We're going to just continue on as the Lord helps us here at a later time. But as we see here, Elijah confronts Ahab in chapter 18. And in verse number 20 of chapter 18, we see that one of the outstanding characteristics of the testimony of Elijah is that he brought the people back to the God who answers by fire.

Now, in the Old Testament, when we see the God who answers by fire, by sending fire down and consuming the sacrifice that was on the altar, that's what happened on Mount Carmel. That is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and his atonement and his death, burial, and resurrection. The outstanding characteristic of the divine testimony is that they demand, the divine testimony demands that God will not answer from heaven except it be on the basis of Calvary, except it be on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ.

That's what this whole picture on Mount Carmel represents. It's God in the Old Testament telling us that what meets the need of spiritual apostasy? What meets the need when all the religious system has gone after Baal and is worshipping false gods and is controlled by all the sins of the flesh? What meets the need? How will God come? How will God respond to this? What is it that will bring God back? I'll tell you what it is. It's the message on Mount Carmel.

It's the God who answers by fire. It's the preaching of the cross of Jesus Christ. It's God who will not move, who will not heal, who will do nothing except it be on the basis of the Calvary work that Jesus did 2,000 years ago.

And when that message is brought back by the power of the Holy Spirit and God's people are commanded to repent, commanded to turn from sin, come back to Calvary and see Calvary as the basis upon which God moves, the basis upon which God will bring restoration back to our families, back to whatever we need restoration in. It's when that testimony is brought back to the people of God is when something happens. You'll find that as you read this story in chapter 18, you'll find that not only did God answer by fire, but the second thing that happened as a result of God being honored in sacrifice, the prophets of Baal were gathered together and they were destroyed.

They were consumed by God's power. So not only do we see God restoring, not only do we see God moving from heaven when the message of Calvary is exalted, because that's what Elijah did, that's what that whole thing represents. God is saying right there, I won't do anything until the message of Calvary is brought back to the church.

I won't do a thing. Not only is the message restored, but the false prophets are exposed and destroyed. Their influence is destroyed.

When God's people come back to Calvary and they become acquainted with the true moving of the Holy Spirit and the true Lord Jesus in heaven, they can sniff a false gospel just like that. Because you get to know what Jesus is like. You get to know when the Holy Spirit's moving, Jesus is being glorified.

You get to feel and sense and know the Spirit of God. When God's Spirit is moving, people are not glorified. People are brought low.

And hearts begin to worship and cry out to God, begin to praise Almighty God. So when the message of Calvary is brought back, the false prophets are gathered together and their influence is killed. Their influence is killed.

Thirdly, verse 41, chapter 18, And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain. Oh my Lord, this is incredible. Firstly, the message of Calvary's got to be restored.

Secondly, the influence of the false prophets have got to be destroyed. And then thirdly, the abundance of rain is heard. You want to know a sure way for God to bring back spiritual refreshing to the church? A sure way for the sound of rain to be once again heard in the ears of God's people? It can only follow, it never comes before.

It only follows the preaching of the cross and the accepting of the cross and the restoring of the message of the cross back into the hearts and lives of God's people so that the cross governs what they do. Remember, the cross to the Christian is my end. It's my end.

It's all that I am. I'm over. My will, my desires, my aspirations, it all goes to the cross and is buried.

It's in the tomb with Jesus. Now the only thing that comes up out of the life side of the cross is Christ's life, Christ's will. So the Bible says that after the sacrifice, after God answered by fire, after he destroyed the influence of the false prophets, then the Bible says that the abundance of rain was heard, verse 42.

So Ahab went up to eat and to drink and Elijah went up to the top of Carmel. He cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees and said to his servant, go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up and looked and said, there's nothing.

And he said, go. Stop thee not. The rain came.

The famine ended after the sacrifice was instituted into the nation of Israel, after God proved that he would not move on the basis of anything other than the sacrifice of his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and after the influence of the false prophets were lifted from the nation. Then the rain came. Then the time of refreshing came.

Then God sent a great move of the Spirit of God. And that's how it's going to happen in our lives, beloved. That's how it's going to happen for the church.

So are we ready this morning to hear the Word of God, to recognize that at the time of apostasy there is a time of divine testimony. And this testimony is nothing more, nothing less than the Spirit of Jesus Christ on the basis of Calvary, on the basis of people coming back to Calvary, the Spirit of Jesus Christ once again moving, showing the world what God is like through broken earthen vessels. But he wants to start in your home.

He wants to start in your life this morning. He wants to set up his testimony in your life. Now, will you let him? Will you let him? If he sets up this testimony, he's going to come against all that Ahab represents.

He's going to come against all those sins of 2 Timothy chapter 3. But he's going to also produce the power of Jesus Christ. All right, beloved. Let's bow our hearts for a moment, all right? Just ask the Lord to grant us this testimony.

Thank you, Lord. Father, how thankful we are this morning for thy presence, thy Spirit, Lord, for the work that you've done. And Lord, we thank you for your Word and we pray that today, Lord, you would so help us to see that in the midst of this great apostasy, this great falling away, there are people who through their union with and their identification with the Lord Jesus Christ are standing against, in their own little way, the evil religious ruin, the evil religious apostasy that Ahab represents.

Lord, may we be the people in whom you would deal severely and bring us to an end through the power of the Holy Spirit and the working of the cross so that we can be vessels through whom the great Elijah, the greater Elijah, the Lord Jesus Himself can be seen, can be heard, His reign can be established, His power can be seen, and demonstrated. Oh, dear God, we pray, come into our homes and to our families and establish this reign that we might be faithful witnesses in our generation of the living reality of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Continue this work, Lord, in all thy people everywhere, Lord, for thine own glory, we pray, in Christ's name.

Amen. And amen.

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