

Upon This Rock

by Vance Havner

The sermon emphasizes the importance of stillness and reflection in a busy world, and the need to prioritize our relationship with God in order to avoid losing our souls and our connection with God.

Duration: 27:16

Scripture: 1 Kings 18:21, 1 Kings 19:12, Jeremiah 2:36, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 27:51, Matthew 28:2, Acts 2:3

Topics: "Promises Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of finding time for reflection and stillness in our busy lives. He shares his own experience of taking time to watch the sunset and listen to the birds during the depression. He references Jesus' example of finding a solitary place to pray and encourages listeners to make time for prayer and reflection. The preacher also highlights the danger of being caught up in the rat race and urges people to prioritize their spiritual well-being over worldly pursuits.

Transcript

Please, you recognize that as the comforting word of the angel to the rugged prophet under the juniper. If there ever was a man who seemed equal to any journey, it was this granite-ish creature. He was built for the storm and the stress.

And like the New Testament Elijah, John the Baptist, he was not a reed taken to the wind. He was not a wearer of soft clothing and keen trousers, but just the same he collapsed under pressure. We do well to take warning.

It had been a great day on Carmel. He had prayed down fire and prayed down water. He had annihilated the prophets of Baal, and he was established as easily the foremost champion of Jehovah in the land.

But any man in any generation who calls for a showdown between Baal and the true God, instead of peaceful coexistence, is in for trouble. You notice Elijah didn't try to arrange a summit conference on Carmel. When a man takes a stance like that, he takes a terrific toll of body and mind.

The next day after Carmel has put many a prophet under the juniper, after our Lord's baptism came his temptation. Dr. Graham Strogie says, after the dove came the devil, and Paul tells us about his third heaven experience, and then right on the heels of that, the thorn in the flesh. They needed rain in Israel.

It had been a long dry spell, but before the showers there had become the showdown, and before the showdown there had to be a prophet. We've been singing showers of blessing for a long time. We've had a sprinkle here and there.

There'll be no downpour of revival until we face the issue, Baal or Jehovah. How long, Paul thinks, between two opinions. Elijah asked that, and you remember that that fifth amendment crowd answered him not a word.

They wouldn't commit themselves. You have all the elements of revival on Carmel. You have a prophet calling the people to God in a day of apostasy.

You have a confrontation with the forces of Baal. You have the rebuilding of God's altar. You have the sacrifice and the supplication, then the fire of God's power and the flood of God's blessing in the rain.

It is a great day on Carmel, but any preacher who calls his people to detest the fire today better be ready for trouble. It's easier to preach on other subjects, and you may save yourself a trip to the wilderness and a session under the juniper. On top of all this came this threat from Jezebel.

I'll kill that preacher. She was one of the wickedest women of all time. She had brought her heathen religion into Israel, had set up an altar to Baal alongside the altar to Jehovah.

Her daughter, Aphaliah, did the same thing in Judah. So, between the two of them, they corrupted both kingdoms, but Jezebel still with us. And any prophet who calls for a showdown on Carmel better be ready for a head-on collision with Ahab's queen.

In the book of Revelation, you still have Jezebel and the church of Pharaoh, mixing the mystery of iniquity with the mystery of godliness, trying to marry the church in the world. And any preacher who challenges Baal today and who refuses to be manipulated by Babylon, infiltrating under various disguises, will hear from Jezebel. I read when you saw that, and he arose and went for his life.

Now, there was a man who used to stand before the Lord God of Israel. Now he let the wicked woman carry him almost out of his senses. It reminds us of Peter.

We read when he saw the wind moistened. He was afraid. I never knew you could see the wind, but I guess when you get that stage, you can see almost anything.

So, Elijah made the greatest mistake of his life. He was on the threshold of a great revival in Israel. The prophet of Baal had been slain.

The people had cried, the Lord is God. If he had stood his ground, I believe the seven thousand faithful believers would have rallied to him, and the history of the nation might have changed. Meaning, a preacher has let the devil and Jezebel carry him out of the greatest victory of his life.

Meaning, a pastor has judged his own sin in the church, called for a showdown, won the first round of the battle. Then the devil put on the pressure. Some prominent member said, do, and Elijah resigned, took off to the wilderness and said, Lord, it's enough.

All the good folks are dead but me, and I'm not feeling so well myself. Well, God knows our frame, however, and remembers that we are dead. The angel of the Lord said, Elijah is going to sleep.

Some preachers have had too much food and too much sleep. God save us from overeating and oversleeping. Others haven't had enough, and have worn themselves out, taking strange and weird experiences when they need good food and more.

Elijah had the greatest experience of God after he was fed and rested. At church, he learned the lesson of God's provision. At Carmel, he learned the lesson of God's power.

But in the cave, he learned the lesson of God's presence. He had a lot to learn. God met him in the cave and said, what are you doing here? Many a man who has run from his post have given you to hear that voice.

But instead of confessing his mistake, Elijah began to justify himself. I've been very jealous for the Lord of those. Well, preachers ought to be.

Not jealous of other preachers, but for God. Paul said, I'm jealous over you Corinthians with a godly jealousy. God's jealous in the Old Testament with a capital K. And we ought to be when we see church members living with a divided religion, when Jezebel sets up an altar to Baal.

But it's a poor place for Elijah to be hiding when he ought to be standing up to Jezebel in Samaria. I, even I, am less. There are three lessons that grow out of this.

There's a lesson himself too here. I'm the surviving saint. He had a murder complex.

Any preacher with a preacher of prophet in him always is in danger of imagining himself to be the lone survivor of a vanishing breeze. I'm the last of the old school. Then he has a second lesson to learn, a lesson in statistics.

Good men, jealous for God, often have trouble with statistics. God had a different set of figures from Elijah. I have 7,000 faces.

He has a remnant today. I know that most of our people can be counted, but they can't be counted upon. But in Sardis there were a few even in Sardis.

They were a minority. Sometimes they don't control the policy of the church, but God knows they're there. And Elijah should have stayed in Samaria, rallied that 7,000 into a spearhead for God and righteousness.

God has his 7,000 today, and if his prophets would stand in Samaria and defy Jezebel and exalt the Lord, I believe the 7,000 would take heart and rise up and be counted. I'm not about to get under the juniper and hide in a cave. There are plenty of good people, good old grassroots Christians, who don't like the way things are going either in church or faith today, and I have no intention of letting Jezebel and the prophets of Baal carry me into the wilderness.

I'm not spending my time sighing for the good old days. Some of the good old days weren't so good. Somebody wrote to a noticer some time ago and said your magazine's not as good as it used to be.

He said it never has been, and we feel that way about the good old days. We need to stand on caramel and call for a showdown and repair God's altar and pray down fire and water until there is the sound of abundance of rain. But the third lesson that he learned was a lesson in stillness.

God spoke with the whisper, not in wind and earthquakes and fire. Now remember, though, that God does speak sometimes in the wind as a tentacle. He does speak sometimes in earthquakes.

Our gospel, beloved, started out with a double earthquake. When Jesus was crucified, there was an earthquake, and when he rose from the dead, there was an earthquake. Thank God we've got an earthquake in America.

He started with two earthquakes, and then God works sometimes in time, proven time, baptism of the Holy Ghost and the fire. But he also speaks in the whisper. Elijah had been living through days of wind and earthquakes and fire, and he needed to be still and know God.

It's wrong to hide in the cave in quiet solitude cultivating our souls when we need to wrestle with the stormy issues of our days. Some of the old mystics tried that back in the middle ages. They hid in caves, but not any holier by hiding in a hole.

And they eventually discovered that. I think some of them were not mystics. I think they were mystics.

It's equally wrong, however, to get so involved with controversial problems of our time that we have no secret communion with God. We're living, we're dwelling in a grand and awful time, in an age on ages telling to be living and surviving. But we can become so wrought up over movements and counter-movements that we try to live on karma all the time, and end in collapse.

Then the tempo of religious life today has been set such that the journey is too great. I don't know sometimes whether I'm abounding in the work of the Lord, or just bounding in the work of the Lord. I think sometimes my verse ought to be Jeremiah 2 36, Why gladdest thou about so much? Traveling preachers need to appropriate that.

The Christian life, beloved, is not a glorified Saint Bible, and there's too many today who ought to be willing disciples, and all they are is whirling dervishes. The Lord's not interested in quantity projection. That's an American standard, not a Bible standard.

Some of us would do more if we did less. I heard of a little girl who was practicing her piano lesson, and everything was mighty quiet over there, and Mother said, What are you doing? She said, I'm practicing the rest. Well, it's a good thing to do sometimes, practice the rest.

The Bible has as much to say about resting as it does about working. Commune apart and rest awhile. I can't find anywhere in the Gospels that Jesus was ever in a herd.

He was busy, but I don't get the idea that he was carrying around all the time in a terrific way. We need to learn the gate, the G-A-I-T gate of Galilee. John Wesley said, I don't have time to be in a herd.

That's a great statement. Are there not twelve hours in a day? There's always time to do God's will. Many of us grew up in the country, we've moved to town, we've paid the price of moving from a rural to an urban civilization.

We're beset now with all the discomfort that comes from living in these modern towers of Babel. I believe that many of the ills of today, especially the nervous and mental breakdown, have descended upon us because we no longer have time to be still. I think the ministry today needs to learn, along with the lesson of prayer that was brought with such terrific force to us this morning, along with study which we so often

neglect, I think there is a third art of, shall we say, reflection, meditation, solitude.

Why, the average American today knows nothing about solitude. To be alone for a day drives him to distraction. I don't think anything more calamitous could happen to an average American than a rainy day with T.V. out of order.

The average American can't endure his own troubles. Billy Graham says we have the highest per capita rate of boredom of any country in 30 years. We can't even walk alone and meditate.

When have you seen anybody out just strolling or meditating, just thinking? See a fella come along the highway now like that, he figures he's either out of his head or out of gas. Walking is my only un-American activity, and I don't believe the situation with us today, brethren, can be remedied by an occasional vacation. I think golf's good.

I don't play it. I think it's good as exercise, but it isn't it. Meditation, we need rest and diversion, but meditation and reflection, I know, but he makes room for that.

Every preacher ought to find a patch of wood to relate somewhere, far from the nagging crowds of noble strife. Slip away every chance you get, never let any of the church members know where it is, and he'll be following the lord in this matter. Elton Trueblood said we must hide somewhere every day.

A preacher who is always available is not worth much when he is available. Now, you may have to skip the civic club sometimes, you may have to miss a meeting of the sons and daughters of I Will Arise, and you may have to miss an invocation of some worthless and useless affair, but it'll be worth it. My lord was an outdoor preacher.

He knew about boats, and fishing, and flowers, and wind, and weather, and solitary places, and growing grain, and sunset, and sheep, and sparrows, and the humble life of simple people. I'm glad he never set up an office in Rome, Athens, Alexandria, or even Jerusalem. He spent his days in a tiny little Roman province, never went abroad in his public ministry.

He was a country preacher. He traveled at a slow pace, and in this bedroom of 1967, with his heart attack, and his nervous breakdown, living on tiptoes and tranquilizers, we desperately need to learn how to live at his temple, the Gate of Galilee. I was down in South Carolina some time ago, and a friend told me about visiting a nearby town.

He said, I encountered an old southern gentleman who charmed me by his appearance. He asked, where are you from? And I told him, he said, well, I used to go over to your town a lot back in the old days. He used to drive over that horse and buggy.

It took me all day. He said, I can go down in 30 minutes, but I don't have time. See what I mean? I grew up in the Carolina hills, a country boy, in the peaceful years just before 1914, when the world went crazy.

I still go to public libraries and ask them, let me see the literary digest, old files before 1914. That was an outstanding magazine, and you get into another world. After 1914, America turned the corner.

Life has never been the same since. Those farmers among the red hills and the cotton lived close to elemental things. They saw the sunrise and sunset in the pregnancy season.

When life was over, they were buried in little country churchyards. In the summer, we had revivals at lay and by time, not below between springtime and harvest. We met at the morning service, ate dinner, not lunch, dinner in each other's homes, and sat on the front porch and talked all afternoon.

Nobody does that now. My father used to keep the preachers who came once a month. We had one sermon a month, it wasn't long enough to last a month, but we had one sermon a month.

And Father kept the preachers, and on that Saturday night before the fourth Sunday, he'd let me sit before the fireplace with him and the preachers in the winter as they'd talk long and late about the saints of God. And I tell you, it deposited a sediment of conviction in my soul that had stood restrained for years, built a wall around me to whirl the place, and the devil never been able to break down. We had time to live and time to walk and time to think, and now up and down that country road, even there, I still own the old place as a sort of a for memory's sake, but there's nobody's farms out there now.

They're all in the right place, they're all commuting, and even the preachers hurry in and out on their way from Dan to Beersheba. If Jesus came to our Bethany today, why, Mary and Martha wouldn't be at home. And if they were at home, they'd never turn down television long enough to hear what he had to say.

The South has become mechanized, industrialized, and paganized. Paul Harvey says, I don't feel at home here anymore. He says, I never left the old country.

The old country's left me, and I know what he means. When I had my first country, Patrick, there was an old farmer there by the name of John Brown, one of the slowest men I ever saw, but he had time, and he was a man of deep insight. He used to go of an afternoon over to where he was plowing on the creek.

I should have been visiting, he should have been plowing. We'd talk all afternoon until the sun drove us home, and the next morning I'd go back, and we never said good morning, just took where we'd left off the day before, and continued with our conversation. He had time, and do you know that in 30 years since, I've never found a man with that much time.

Just to meditate about things worth thinking. Oh, you say, but you can't sell sunrises and sunsets on the market. No, my friend, you can't buy them on the market, either.

And for what shall it profit a man to gain the world of travel and nuclear know-how and gadgets and gimmicks if we lose our souls? The biggest joke is the illusion of progress. One civilization after another started in hardship and grown rich and rotten, cherished the victim of its own devices. America is no exception.

We're a nation of sheep, prisoners of our own inventions, enslaved by the very system that was meant to set us free. I thank God for the benefits of the schools and the roads and the hospitals and medical advances and leisure and all the rest of it, but we're unable to enjoy leisure because our machines have made beggars of us without any resources. I was walking alone in the beautiful Springwood the other day, and there came a fellow along with a transistor radio in his pocket, bleeding out the most horrendous music I ever listened to in my life, and I said, well, he's got no music in his heart, he has to carry it in his pocket.

We don't have it with us. And I don't care how big your house and how big the car and how much money in the bank, if we've lost our souls, we're paupers already on our way to the poorhouse. When we left the farm for the tractor in the country for the city, somewhere, somewhere we lost our souls.

What a time I have, trying to find a spot of calm today. I was up in Virginia, Bassett, in those lovely mountains, back in the summer. When I arrived at the motel, I realized that motels are made for motorists, not for pedestrians.

But I tried to find a path and found one that meandered up to the top of the hill and then over a ways and out to a view, a vista, a panorama that was out of this world. And I got up at 5 30 every morning in order to climb that hill and spend some time, and I thought of what my lord did. Arising a great fire before his day, he departed into a solitary place.

Now, for a time and place, a great fire before his day, a place, a solitary place. If you can't find time, dear friend, make it. Make it.

But our lord's pattern, you can't improve on that. Now I know that you can't go back to the good old days, right? We're caught, we're set up in this rat race. But unless you can find time or make time for reflection, to be still and know that he's gone, you'll be only a puppet on a string and a figure in a computer and a cog in a wheel and the prisoner of your time.

I made up my mind as a country boy a long time ago that I would not become so occupied with life baggage that I missed the journey. My program might be laughed at by some of the go-go boys today, but I noticed some of the go-go boys not going very much. And I'm still busy.

I'm glad I took out time to watch the sunset, listen to the song of a bird strolling the woods during the depression. Oh, Will Rogers was doing pretty well while college graduates were walking the streets looking for work. One day, Will said to a friend, I've got to eat.

I ain't ate yet. And his friend said, you mean I haven't eaten? Will said, well, I noticed a lot of fellows that haven't eaten ain't ate. The man who takes time to be still and get his message from God will never lack for a place to preach it.

As a boy, I used to walk out the old road on top of the hill in Catawba County, listen to the wood parish sing and watch the sun go down behind Table Rock and then for the mountain waves. And I used to say, God, give me a message and I'll preach it unedited and unrevised. The devil told me if I preached like that, I'd starve to death.

Now, from the way I look, some of you may think the devil was right, but I'm not. And after all, the surgeon said I'd rather be a lean bird in the woods than a fat bird in a cage. I committed my schedule, my date, my future, especially 28 years ago when I left the pastor into the hands of a good Lord.

I have never lifted a finger from that day to day to ask any man for a date. I'm not criticizing somebody he may feel like to do that. I'm just telling you my story.

But I do know this. I believe that when you commit it to the Lord, trust also in him, he will bring it to pass. He'll make a way for any man that he has called and to whom he has given a message.

You've got nothing to fear. It used to make me nervous if a big preacher showed up in the congregation. But I learned that if he's really a big preacher, he's the easiest man in the world to preach to.

If he just thinks he's a big preacher, he ain't preaching to. The man who gets his orders from heaven need never fear the faith of mortal men. Old John McNeil in Scotland had some trouble in his church one time.

And on Sunday, he arose and said, God and John McNeil have come to an understanding. You take your hands off John McNeil. That's the best recipe I know.

The man who has a secret trick with God, and a private agreement with the Almighty, is absolutely invincible. He has teamed up with omnipotence. Hands off a man like that.

He's the Lord's anointed. Brethren, the world is too much with us, and the journey is too great, and we're under the juniper, and we'd better find our way to Horeb and the still, small vines. Let me close to say, you remember what happened after that? God said, Elijah going on Hathaël, Jehu, and Elijah.

Now, there's your detail work. I'm not decrying detail work. It's significant that God didn't give Elijah a new revelation or great vision.

I think maybe at the convention, if you didn't hear, I didn't hear, Dr. Huggins. I wasn't there. Yes, but he let me read what he was going to say up there, Dr. Huggins, and it had to do with Elijah, and he said the thing that has impressed me is that Elijah maybe thought if I could get back to Sinai, back to Horeb, maybe I'd get another great revelation, such as Moses had, and he said, and he got back there.

No! God didn't do any such thing. God said, now get on with your day. Send him on a business trip to fill three offices, and two of those fellows were very ordinary characters.

Here's where your committee meetings, and your deacons meetings, and all the rest of it come in. But, they followed a section with God in the cave. Don't get too busy anointing Hathaël, and Jehu, and Elijah before you've had your orders from Horeb.

God grants you a church to know the provision of God, and at Carmel to know the power of God, and in the caves to know the presence of God, and then you're saying you're forced to carry out the program of God. I wish I could say it as I feel it today. I wish God that our ministries, along with time for prayer, and time for study, and time for recreation, and they're all indispensable, would make time for yet a fool is half brother to all these, and yet is neither of them.

Time for reflection, for meditation, just to be still and know that he is God. Make a place for that on your program at all costs believing, because it's on the program of our Lord it was when you did it, and I'm confident that it's on his program for you.

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