

Three Radical Prophets 2. Elijah

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon on Elijah challenges believers to choose between serving God and the idol of mammon, emphasizing the importance of prophetic ministry in today's church.

Duration: 57:33

Topics: "Prophets"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of not relying on money as the answer to everything. He encourages believers to demonstrate that money is not everything and that God can do anything. The preacher also highlights the need for preachers and believers to not be consumed by money but to keep it as a servant. He references the story of Elijah and how God provided for him through a widow during a famine, illustrating the importance of trusting in God for our needs. The sermon concludes with a call to pray for boldness in proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord and to be a witness for Christ in building strong families.

Transcript

So this evening we continue our Bible study on three radical prophets. Yesterday we saw Moses who was a very radical prophet and God sent him at a time to his people who had religion but who were slaves. And today many of God's people have religion, their doctrines are right, but they are slaves, they do what Pharaoh or Satan tells them to do.

Today we want to consider another prophet, Elijah. God sent him again to his people who had religion, who had Jehovah as their God, but in addition to Jehovah they worshipped other gods. And that is also the condition of a lot of Christendom today.

Believers worship Jesus Christ, but they also worship money, another God. The equivalent of Baal in the Old Testament today is money. When Elijah stood on the mountain and said, choose whom you want to serve, Jehovah or Baal, Christ said in almost similar words, you cannot serve two masters, choose God or mammon.

It is the exact equivalent of Jehovah and Baal. When you read the Old Testament you wonder, how can people worship Jehovah and Baal at the same time? Do you know believers who live for God and for money at the same time? I know lots of them. Exactly.

That is how they worshipped Baal and Jehovah at the same time. It was a counterfeit. You know very clearly that you cannot worship the true God and an idol at the same time.

Can you worship Jesus Christ and some other idol at the same time? No. Well, there's no difference between that and somebody who says he can worship Jesus Christ and mammon. We need to see that Jesus identified mammon as a God.

You know, like in Hinduism they have Lakshmi, the God of wealth. Jesus spoke about mammon. I mean, in Indian terms, I would be saying you cannot worship God and Lakshmi.

You cannot worship Jesus Christ and Lakshmi at the same time. It's the same thing I say here. It's what Jesus said, you cannot worship God and mammon.

You have to make a choice. And that is the choice that faces us. It's exactly the same as Elijah challenged Israel in his day.

And you know, the reason I chose these three prophets, and I'll come to the third one tomorrow, but Moses and Elijah is because God in his sovereignty chose Moses and Elijah to represent the Old Testament at the Mount of Transfiguration. Out of all the multitudes of prophets there were in the Old Testament, God picked out Moses and Elijah as the two most outstanding ones and made them stand on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus Christ. They represented what is often used in the expression used in Scripture as the law and the prophets.

Many times when you read of the law and the prophets representing the Old Testament, here was Moses representing the law and Elijah the prophets. They were obviously two of God's most outstanding prophets in the Old Testament. And they were sent, as I said, at a particular time with a particular ministry.

So we're thinking of the missing messages in today's Christianity. And God sends us, if we have experienced the truth, the whole counsel of God, the whole purpose of God, to share with others. You may not be a prophet like Elijah.

There are very few prophets in the church. God appoints some as prophets. But the Bible says we can all prophesy in the New Testament.

Acts 2:17. That's why we're looking at the prophets. I will pour out my spirit on all flesh and your sons and your daughters will prophesy.

So even though you may not be a prophet or a prophetess, you can prophesy. In other words, you can share in a little bit of this ministry of ministering to others and sharing with them the things that are lacking in all the things that are missing in the message they have heard. So Elijah came like all the prophets, bringing that which was missing in the midst of God's people.

That is why all the prophets were unpopular, because they did not speak about what people already knew. Now, if you go to most Christian denominations, whether it's charismatic, Pentecostal, Baptist, Brethren, Methodist, anything, Roman Catholic, you'll find generally speaking, the preacher preaches about the things people already believe and what people already accept and what people love to hear. And every Sunday they're hearing the same old thing.

What about many other things in the Bible which they have not heard? That's never preached. And God sends some preacher into that church to preach certain other aspects of the Bible which they have not heard. He'd be thrown out of every one of these churches because they don't like to hear something which they are not always heard.

And that's what produces imbalanced Christians. We need to hear that part of scripture which we have not heard. And that's what we mean by the missing messages.

So when we look at Elijah, I want to turn to 1 Kings and chapter 17 and look at a few things in his life. In 1 Kings chapter 17, we read Elijah suddenly appears on the scene. And that's usually how a prophet appears almost from nowhere.

He suddenly turns up and that's how God very often prepares his servants in secret. And I'm sure Elijah had a tremendous time of preparation before he suddenly appears on the scene. He was probably about 30 years old, but he'd gone through 30 years of training by God.

And we don't know what it was, what all he went through. But when I look at his life, I can imagine God trained him really tough, very hard. Some prophets, you read about their training like Moses.

But in Elijah's case, we don't know about his training. Some men of God, we know what God took them through. Some other men of God, we don't know what God took them through.

But no man ever comes on the scene to be a servant of God without having gone through a history with God in his private life. And God wants to lead us all in the same way, where he leads us through so many circumstances. And if we respond properly in those different trials, then God can prepare us for a ministry.

And I want to say that to every single one of you, and especially those of you who are young, who are below the age of 30. See, that was the age by which God brought people forward to ministry. So I can quite believe that Elijah was 30 years old when God led him into the ministry, just like Joseph, and David, and Jesus, and all the apostles.

So he suddenly appears on the scene, and there's something he says here, which demonstrates the way he lived. He says here, his first words in written scripture are these, as the Lord Jehovah, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand. And in that little expression, you have a description of how this man lived for 30 years.

That was his training. That was Moses' training. He was there in the mountain, alone with God.

I told you that a characteristic of all these prophets I'm speaking about was, first of all, they were alone with God. They lived before God's face. And that is what made them fearless before earthly rulers.

Moses could stand before Pharaoh. Elijah could stand before King Ahab. They were fearless.

Fear, Jesus said, is going to be one of the greatest characteristics of the last days. Jesus said, men's hearts will fail them for fear when they think about what all is going to come upon the earth. And we are living in those days.

There's fear everywhere. Fear of what will happen next. Fear of terrorism.

Right now, India is booming economically. But I don't believe things will go on like this forever. I'm not a prophet of doom, but I'm a believer in scripture.

So those who place their confidence in money and the economic boom of a country, I tell you in Jesus' name, you are going to be disappointed. Everything that can be shaken will be shaken by God. And if He loves you, He will shake you so that your confidence is not in money, but in God.

There's always this conflict. God or Baal. That was how it was in the Old Testament.

Jehovah or Baal. And very subtly, the only Baal. And that's how the devil shifts Christians also.

They are really devoted to Christ when they are poor, struggling, needy. And then he gives them plenty of money. And mammon comes up.

Then it is Christ plus mammon. Then a little more mammon, less of Christ, less of Christ. Finally, it becomes mammon alone.

But they still have religion. They still have the Christian faith. They believe in all the doctrines.

They go to the meetings, but they don't realize very subtly the devil has made them worshippers of Baal, aka also known as mammon. That's it. That's what's happened to many, many, many Christians.

And the sad thing is they don't realize it. If you realize you are an idolater, you can get out of it. But if the devil subtly moves you away, that on Sunday morning you are still clapping your hands and praising the Lord and imagining that you are worshipping the true God, and all the week you are worshipping another idol, what a work the devil has done.

He has succeeded. He has made you worship Baal and think that you are worshipping Jesus Christ. And then we can understand how the Israelites, they thought they were worshipping Jehovah.

And that required a man like Elijah to come in there and say, you can't do that. If Jehovah is God, follow him. If Baal is God, serve him completely.

Don't play the fool with both. And I believe there's a great need today for prophetic ministry that says, if Jesus Christ is God, serve him. If mammon is God, serve him.

But we have so many preachers today in Christendom who are so taken up with mammon themselves, who are saturated with the love of mammon, that they have no ability to deliver anybody else from the love of mammon. I mean, if the preacher himself loves money and is seeking to get as much money as possible from poor simple people, how in the world can he deliver people from this worship of Baal? He will only produce another generation of people who think that they are worshipping Jesus Christ. Jesus said it so clearly, you cannot serve God and mammon.

And he went on to say, either you will love the one and hate the other. Do you realize, if you love God, you've got to hate Jehovah. If you love Jehovah, you've got to hate Baal.

Let me turn you to that verse. Now, that's important for us to see it before we proceed. Luke chapter 16.

In Luke chapter 16, I want you to think carefully about these verses. In Luke 16, it says, verse 13, no servant can serve two masters. He didn't say, you can't employ mammon as a servant.

Listen carefully. You can make mammon your servant, that's okay. But you can't make mammon your master and also have Christ as your master.

That's the point. No man can serve two masters. If you try to keep both Christ and mammon as a master, you will end up, whether you know it or not, unconsciously, loving one and hating the other.

Now, who are the two masters? God and wealth. Now, if I make God and wealth, both of them my masters, that means I'm trying to live for both in this world. What will happen? Without your knowing it, you will either hate God and love wealth or love God and hate wealth.

Isn't that what it means? Is there any other interpretation? Or else, you'll be devoted to God and despise wealth or you'll be devoted to wealth and despise God. What other interpretation do you get out of verse 13? Have you ever heard a message on that? That tells you, in the words of Jesus, that if you love money, you hate God? It's here. It's in the scripture.

The words of Jesus, if you love wealth, you hate God. Not if you have wealth, but if you love wealth, you hate God. And if you are devoted to wealth, you despise God.

This is the ministry of Elijah today. If Jehovah be God, serve him. If Baal be God, serve him.

Make your choice. And I believe that the way to see this is to be absolutely honest with ourselves. And to ask ourselves, have you found, as your wealth has increased and the opportunity to make more and more money has increased, that your devotion to the Christ and to the things of God have begun to slip? Then you know, you're on that way to finally being exclusively devoted to Baal, unless you arrest yourself and say, I'm going to stop this.

Money, wealth is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master. In heaven, they have gold under your feet. That's the place to keep it.

Under your feet. On earth, they keep it on your head. And when money is over your head, you're earthly.

When money is under your feet, you can be heavenly. There's gold in heaven, but it's under the feet. And I'm a heavenly minded person, so I'm determined to keep gold under my feet, as a servant, not as a master.

Jesus used money. People gave him money. Rich women gave him money.

We read in Luke chapter 8, he took it. There was so much of it that he had to appoint a treasurer with a bag. But he never loved it.

It never mastered him. He used it for what was needed to help poor people and what he needed to feed his disciples, etc. So we need money on this earth.

And we need to earn our living so that we don't become parasites on society, so that we don't become beggars. That's why we've always encouraged everybody in our church to get a good education and earn their own living. In a country like India, that's needed.

Why? Because we don't want to be parasites and beggars in society, and we don't want to be dependent on anybody. But we have to be careful that we keep that as a servant, not as a master. You know, it's something like this.

Supposing your wife is rolling chapatis in the kitchen, cooking food there, and you have a maidservant also rolling chapatis in the kitchen. Well, they're both doing the same job, but it'll be terrible if you fall in love with a maidservant. Now, we don't have to get rid of the maidservant.

I think it's very useful. But keep her as a servant. Don't make her your wife.

That's what I'm saying. You're married to Jesus. He's your husband.

Keep money as a servant forever. When you get devoted to money, you have switched husbands. It's like a woman who's fallen in love with the driver of the car and forgotten her husband.

Now, it's very useful to have a driver in a car, but don't get married to him. Keep him as a driver. Keep him as a servant.

Be devoted to your husband, Jesus Christ. So, I'm not teaching that we shouldn't have money or we should get rid of money. I'm not unrealistic.

I'm not saying we should be sannyasis or hermits living in a forest. I'm saying keep the driver as a driver. Keep the servant as a servant.

Keep the gardener as a gardener. Don't marry him. You're married to Christ.

Keep mammon as a servant is a very useful servant. But very, very subtly. You know how you hear stories about some woman who falls in love with someone who's not her husband, who's keeping working in the house.

Somebody works in the house and she falls in love with him and marries him. That's exactly what's happened to a lot of Christians. Slowly, slowly, slowly, slowly the love of mammon comes in and takes over their life.

So, that's why the message of Elijah is so relevant. And how did Elijah stay free from the worship of Baal himself? That's how we can stay free also. That's why how we are supposed to be like Elijah in the world today.

Because we are living in a world where there's this gospel called the prosperity gospel being preached by many Christians. Where they teach people that you've got to have plenty of this. And the people who pursue the prosperity gospel, they're not devoted to Christ.

No. They are using Christ to make money. Their goal is money.

Their goal is not becoming like Jesus Christ. Their goal is to use God to bless them to make more money to live at a higher standard on earth. It's a deception.

It's a great deception. And they quote verses from the Old Testament, which was an earthly gospel, in order to support their cause. So, Elijah, he said, as God lives before whom I stand, that is the way to escape the power of mammon.

I have to live before the face of Jesus Christ all the time, every day. I have to live before His face and hear Him speak to me every day. And He will tell me where money is subtly trying to get a power over my life.

I can get rid of it. And I'll tell you something I've discovered through my life as I've fought the love of money. It's in all of our flesh.

Anybody who says he doesn't have it is a liar. But it's like an onion. You can peel off one skin and you think you're finished with the love of mammon.

No, you haven't. There's another skin underneath. You've got to peel that off.

It's a continuous process and my aim is to thin the onion down to zero. That's my goal. I haven't got there yet, but it's a lot thinner than it was when I started my Christian life.

And I hope that love of mammon is a lot thinner today in your life. I don't believe any of us have got rid of it completely. I'll tell you when you can say you've got rid of it completely.

When you can say that your attitude to material things is exactly the same as the attitude of Jesus Christ to material things, then you can say you've got rid of the onion completely. Otherwise, there's still a layer there you've got to peel off. There is such a tendency in our flesh to worship baal, mammon.

And we've got to fight it. We've got to fight it all the time because we are surrounded by it. And the opportunities to make money which distract us from devotion to Christ.

Be careful. That is the reason why we have so little of prophetic ministry in the church today. I remember years ago when I asked the Lord, I said, Lord, how can I speak as your mouthpiece? When I stand in the pulpit and the Lord said, be careful about two things.

Be careful with the use of your mouth and be careful in the use of money. Jesus said in Luke chapter 16, the same chapter a little earlier, verse 11, if you are not faithful with unrighteous mammon, who will give you the true riches? The true riches are the anointing of God, likeness to Christ, revelation on scripture, the prophetic word when you speak. Where will God give you the true riches if you are unfaithful with unrighteous mammon? So our attitude to money determines the measure of the anointing upon our life.

Our attitude to money determines the measure in which you will get revelation on scripture when you read it. Otherwise when you read scripture, it will be like a storybook. Why is it we don't get revelation from scripture? Consider whether money has become your master.

It blinds your eyes. There is a saying that you can take a one rupee coin and put it close enough to your eyes and you won't even be able to see the sun. Try it.

Put a one rupee coin close enough to your eyes, you won't even be able to see the sun. It will be total darkness. It depends on how close that money is to your eyes.

And we don't see scripture, we can't understand it. The true riches. And so Elijah's solution to that was he lived before God's face.

And because of that, whenever God told him something, he did it. And he said this to the people of Israel who needed to be judged for their disobedience. He said, this is the punishment that comes upon people when they worship Baal, alias Mammon.

There will be no dew, verse 1, and no rain. Your lives will be dry. There will be no freshness.

When you get up to speak my word, you'll bore people to death. Because there is no freshness in your life because you worship Baal, alias Mammon. That's what happens.

No dew, no rain. Dew and rain are a picture of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. And Elijah said, you won't have that in this land because you are worshippers of Baal.

You are trying to balance Baal and Jehovah together. You can't do it. And then the other thing I want you to see here is, he said, except by my word.

Look at the authority of this man. He says, when I say it, then the rain will come. And when I say there's not going to be any rain, there's not going to be any rain either.

Now, what I want to point out there is the tremendous authority that God gives to a man who lives before his face. Oh, my brothers and sisters, I wish you would be gripped by this. You know what India needs to see? Christians who have authority, who have spiritual authority, who know God, who are not afraid of men or of demons, who have authority because they live before God's face.

The secret of authority is to live face to face before God. And I'll tell you this, that's very easy if you keep your conscience clear. If you keep your conscience clear, you can live before God's face.

Talk to Him and hear Him. And when you live like that, you have authority. If you fear God, you will fear nothing else on this earth and you will fear nobody else.

That was the secret of Elijah's fearlessness. And that is the reason why so many believers are full of fear. They do not live before God's face.

Okay, the next thing I want to say is that Elijah, the Lord told him to go and hide and provided for him in that time of famine by sending crows to bring meat. It's the only time in history that a crow brought meat for somebody else. Crows usually grab meat out of your hands.

But this is the opposite. God can do amazing things for His servants when they live before His face. What I want to point out is that if you live before God's face in a time of famine, He will provide for you.

There will never be a spiritual famine for a man who lives before God's face. One way or the other, God will provide for him. And if you seek God's kingdom first and His righteousness, what you eat, what you drink, what you need to dress will all be provided for you.

You don't have to fear. Even when you are retired, God will take care of you. You spent your life devoted to seeking His kingdom and His righteousness.

That's what we need to learn and that's what we need to teach our children. Your children will be well taken care of if they seek God's kingdom and His righteousness first. And so God provided for Elijah.

First it was through crows and a brook. And then we read that the brook dried up. Verse 7. Now God could have kept that brook from drying up.

But God wanted to make His servant not depend on one particular mode of supply. And so He said, Hey, I fear that you are depending too much on the crows now, because the crows would come at eight o'clock in the morning, six o'clock in the evening. And when that happens regularly, you gradually begin to depend more on the crow than on God.

It actually happens. You know, for example, some full time worker, on the fifth of every month, he gets a money order from some particular person. After some time, he doesn't depend on God.

He knows that on the fifth of the month, so and so will send me a money order. And the best thing that God can do for him is to stop the money order so that he learns to depend on God. I don't know how it is in your case.

If you find that somebody who's always ready to help you and you lean on him, I pray that God will remove that prop from your life. That's what He did with Elijah. Even a man like Elijah needed to remove that prop.

It was a crow he was leaning on, a brook. God said, No, I will provide for you. Go to Zarephath, and that's outside the nation of Israel, a foreign country where nobody cares for God's prophets.

So he went to a strange country, and there he did not have any rich businessman to take care of him, a poor helpless widow who was about to die herself. What God was trying to teach His servant is, When you trust in Me, you don't have to fear about your sustenance. I will take care of you.

I will take care of you in any part of the world. You can be in your country or a foreign country. You don't need rich businessman to support you.

I can support you through a crow. I can support you through a poor helpless widow. Trust in Me.

That's what God was teaching Elijah. And that's the lesson all of us need to learn. We live by faith in a living God and a loving Father who cares for our every need.

And when he went to Zarephath, sure enough, he sees this widow in verse 10 who's gathering sticks to have a last meal before she and her child dies. And Elijah says, Don't be afraid. God will take care of you.

We can eat together. Make me a meal for myself. And she honored that servant of God.

And for at least two years, till the end of that famine, she had enough. Jesus said, He who honors a prophet as a prophet will get a prophet's reward. It's true.

God honors those who honor Him and His servants. And that's what we see here. That that widow, many other people died.

Rich businessman died in Sidon, in Zarephath. But that widow did not die because she honored a man of God. Throughout my life, I have always made it a policy to honor genuine men of God.

They are very rare to meet nowadays. But wherever I've met a genuine man of God, I've always honored and respected him. And I want to testify before God today, it has gone exceptionally well with me, like with the widow in Zarephath.

Other men may suffer. God is never a debtor to anyone who honors Him or His servants. And that's what we learn there.

And we read that even when her son died, in verse 17 onwards, God used Elijah to raise that woman's son from the dead. Now we move on to chapter 18, where we see this great great conflict between the prophets of Baal and the prophets of Jehovah. Well, first of all, I want you to see the first part of chapter 18.

There was a man called Obadiah. And it says here about Obadiah, verse 3, that he was the manager of King Ahab's house, palace. But it says in brackets, he feared the Lord.

Now I cannot understand how anybody can be the manager of an idol-worshipping king's palace and not compromise. I believe that Obadiah had to compromise living in that house. You know how Naaman told Elisha, you know Elisha, I know Jehovah is the true God, but you have to forgive me one thing.

When my master bows down to the idol and I'm there, I have to bow down, otherwise I'll lose my job. Well, Obadiah had to do some type of compromise like that too. Ahab and Jezebel, his wife, were wicked people.

They were first class idol-worshippers. They had no place for Jehovah in their life. They had no place for the true God.

Why was Obadiah working in that house? Why was he compromising? I'll tell you why. Because he got a good salary. But if you had asked him, Obadiah had checked out all his doctrines, all his doctrines were right.

But he was a worshipper of Naaman. Along with, he also worshipped Jehovah. He thought he did.

He feared that he would help God's servants. For example, it says here that once he took hundred prophets and hid them by fifties and gave them bread and water, verse 4, and some of these people who are rich businessmen, Christian businessmen who live for money, they take care of God's servants and feed them, give them a meal now and then. But when God wanted to bring fire down from heaven, he could not use Obadiah.

Oh, no. He had to use an Elijah. And there are many Christians who are like Obadiah.

And when God wants to do something, he can do nothing through them. Because they are compromisers. They say they are Christians.

They come and clap in the meetings and sing and all that. But in their daily life, they are willing to compromise certain things in their work spot, tell small lies and do little, little wrong things because otherwise they may lose their job. Are you like that? Then you're not like Elijah.

You're like Obadiah. You may go to heaven, but you'll spend eternity with regret in heaven because you wanted to make a little more money on earth by telling a few lies or compromises. Or doing something wrong.

Do you know the number of people who do that? I remember once I was down in one place in Tamil Nadu and I asked a man, I said, what's your job? He said, this was some years ago. He said, I'm a chartered accountant. I said, are you a Christian? He said, yes.

I said, do you do all your work uprightly without telling lies, without bribing income tax officers and without ever telling a lie, covering up for your company you work for? He said, it's very difficult. What to do? Well, that's the choice Obadiah had. There are many jobs in India today where if you compromise just a wee bit, you can make a little money and nobody will know it.

My wife and I were discussing about the Mark of the Beast the other day and she said to me, do you think the Mark of the Beast is the love of money? I said, I hadn't thought of that but it's quite possible because it

says the Mark of the Beast will be in your right hand and on your forehead and those are the two places where we have money. In our mind and in our right hand. And I can do a lot of things.

You know you can't buy and sell without the Mark of the Beast. You can't buy and sell without money. And that's the area where there's a lot of idolatry and a lot of sin.

And you can do wrong things with your hand, with money and nobody in the church knows about it. You can come to the church and clap with those same hands and praise the Lord. And you've done wrong things with that.

You've put signatures on statements that are false to make a little more money. Your mind, the Mark of the Beast on the forehead, your mind can be thinking about money all the time and for two hours you think about God on Sunday morning. Nobody knows it.

It's the Mark of the Beast. It's very subtle. And these are the days when Jesus said, the Bible says in the last days God will send people with the spirit of Elijah to turn the hearts of people back to him from the worship of Baal, Elias, Mammon.

That's our calling as a church. That's your calling. If you belong to a church that's preaching the whole truth of God as we seek to be, that's your calling.

We're not here to judge others, but we are here to proclaim the truth. I'm not here to decide who among you love money or not. I don't even know because I can't look inside your forehead and I don't know what you do with your right hand, what signatures you sign and what you receive and what you give.

I don't know. Nobody knows. Maybe your wife also doesn't know what all you do.

Our financial area is so secret that even your wife doesn't know what you do. You could do wrong things, make a little more money. Well, Obadiah was like that.

He lived in Ahab's palace compromising, cheating because it was a good paying job. He wanted to be friends with Elijah and friends with Ahab. He wanted to be friends with the man of God and friends with those corrupt people in society.

Chameleons. You know there are lots of Christians like this. God can never use them.

When He wants to get a man on Mount Carmel to turn people to God, it's not Obadiah He's going to call and He's not going to call you. He'll call you if you're like Elijah. Do you want to be like that, brother, sister? Do you want the spirit of prophecy to rest upon you? Live before God's face.

Never mind if you lose something on the earth. Okay. And we read also, I want to tell you that there were not only Obadiah.

We read later on that the Lord told Elijah, there are 7,000 people in 1 Kings chapter 19 and verse 18. There are 7,000 people in Israel who have not bowed the knee to Baal. There were 7,000 people in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

It was a negative testimony. That means, are you living for God? No, but I don't bow the knee to Baal. Many Christians have a negative testimony.

I don't see the cinemas. I don't drink. I don't gamble.

I don't smoke. I don't worship idols. I don't do this.

I don't do this. I don't do the other thing. What about Elijah? His testimony was positive.

I live before the face of God. Not a weak testimony saying, I don't smoke. I don't drink.

I don't gamble. I don't go to the movies. It's pathetic when your testimony is, I don't do this.

I don't do this. I don't wear worldly clothes. I don't have worldly friends.

Negative, negative, negative. What do you do? Do you still live before God's face? We can be like those 7,000. And when God wanted to bring the fire down from heaven, He could not use one of those 7,000 people.

There are 7,000 Christians like that today. God can use none of them. One Elijah is worth more to God than all these 7,000 people whose testimony is negative.

I don't bow the knee to Baal. I don't smoke. I don't drink.

I don't gamble. I don't do this. I don't do this.

What do you do? What do you do for God? Do you live before God's face? That's the question we need to ask ourselves. So when they finally, we read in Elijah told Ahab in verse 19, gather to me all Israel on Mount Carmel. Chapter 18 and verse 19.

With all the 450 prophets and the 400 prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table, bring them all. And listen to this. One man stands for God.

And there are 850 people on the other side. I think the other 400 didn't come. I think it's probably only 450 who turned up.

Some of them are probably scared of Elijah. Because we read finally that Elijah killed only 450 of them. I don't know what happened to the other 400.

But anyway, here was one man and here were all these other compromisers. This is about the proportion you see in Christendom today. For one man who stands up for God like Elijah, you'll find hundreds of other preachers who live for money.

And when I talk, I'm not talking just about full-time workers and preachers. I'm talking about every Christian. For one person who decides to be devoted to Christ alone and who's made money his servant, there'll be hundreds of others who try to serve both.

And finally, he says, okay, let's see who gets the fire. And the fire to me is passionate devotion to Christ. Show me a man who loves money, who's got a passionate devotion to Christ.

You won't find him. The God who answers by fire, that is the true God. I know when the fire is in my life, the fire of passionate devotion to Christ, where Christ means everything.

Fervent love. Fire is a picture of love. You read in the Song of Solomon, in Song of Solomon chapter 8, fire, the love is called the flame of Jehovah.

It's the only place in the Song of Solomon where the word, the flame of the Lord, appears. You read that in the margin of Song of Solomon chapter 8. I think it's verse 6 or 7. Love is like the flame of Jehovah. And it's the love between the bride and the bridegroom.

A passionate devotion to Christ there is called the flame of Jehovah. The God who answers by fire, let him be God. Show me a man anywhere in the world who doesn't have a passionate devotion to Christ, and I'll show you a man who's got a little bit of worship of mammon.

People say, brother, how to be passionately devoted to Christ? I say, give up Baal completely in your life, and you'll be passionately devoted to Christ pretty quickly. That was the great conflict here. And so we see Elijah gets these people together and says, okay, you pray to your God.

And there are people today who think that, yes, I can balance it, and I can somehow also follow Jesus. And Elijah mocks them when they cry and cry and pray and pray and pray and nothing happens. They jump and they scream.

And I'll tell you this, it says here they shouted and yelled and jumped, and I tell you, it was a pretty charismatic meeting they had over there. Jumping and yelling and screaming and shouting, but there was no fire. I'm not impressed by jumping and yelling and screaming and shouting.

I'm impressed by the fire. A fire of a passionate devotion to Christ, whether there's yelling or screaming or no yelling or screaming. All of that can be a facade, something put on the outside to fool people, religious facade, or something that's just to cover up the lack of devotion to Christ inside.

That's what we see here. And Elijah mocks these people, just like Jesus exposed the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, the Bible says. The Pharisees thought, in Jesus' time, the Pharisees, it says very clearly in Luke chapter 16 and verse 15 onwards, that the Pharisees were lovers of money, and they despised Jesus for what He said.

And Jesus spoke strongly to them, and Elijah speaks strongly to them. He says, what type of God is this you have? You're shouting and shouting, and He makes fun of them. He says, perhaps your God's gone on a journey, or perhaps He's meditating on something else, or He's talking to somebody else, or perhaps He's gone to the toilet, He says.

That's how it is in the Living Bible. Or perhaps He's asleep, and you need to wake Him up. He really makes fun of them.

What type of God is this? Do you know in the world, there is a saying, money can do everything. Have you heard that? Do you know what the Bible says? God can do everything. And we are living in the world, with this statement out in the world, and this statement in the Bible, and we are called to demonstrate that money is not the answer to everything.

God wants a people in this land, who will demonstrate that money is not everything. If I have money, it will be my servant, I'll never live for it. He needs preachers who demonstrate they don't care for money, like Jesus, like the apostles.

He needs men and women in secular jobs, who keep money as a servant, never get married to it. Keep it as a servant. Even if they have 25 servants, their salary increases, they are servants.

I will not marry any of them. I'm married to Christ. God wants you to be like that, my brother, sister.

You may earn a hundred thousand rupees a month, and be devoted to Christ, if you keep that as a servant. But if you live for that, you'll destroy yourself pretty soon. And then Elijah prays, and in a very short prayer, he says, God, I like this prayer.

He says, Lord, I have prayed this many times myself. Look at the way he prays, Lord, I'm not seeking anything for myself. I don't want any honor.

Verse 36, O Lord, I want these people to know two things. I want these people to know that you are God, and I want these people to know that I am your servant. I have prayed that many times.

Why do I want people to know that I am a servant of God? Not for honor for myself, oh no, I'm not interested in that at all. But so that they will listen to what I'm saying, as the word of God that will bless them and help them. That's why I want them to know that I am his servant.

I have prayed numerous times, Lord, let it be known that you are God, and let them know that I am your servant. Stand by me and support me, even when people are against me. Let them know that I am your servant.

It's not just for me. You can pray that in your office, where everybody is against you because you're a Christian. Why don't you pray like that? Lord, I'm here in the office, I'm the only disciple of Jesus here.

Everybody's making fun of me and laughing at me. I want them to know that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that I am your servant. Be bold to pray that.

So these people didn't know me. So I went there, and it was pouring rain every day before the meeting started. And the chairman of the meeting said, Lord, we don't know who this act is.

Are you trying to stop us? Telling us this is the wrong man you invited? By sending out this rain, rain, rain, heavy rain such as you've never experienced. And he prayed a prayer. He never told me this until much later.

He prayed a prayer, Lord, if this is really your servant, please stop the rain. And I went there in the morning, it was pouring rain. And the first meeting was in the evening, and the rain stopped.

And the whole week, we had wonderful meetings, not a drop of rain. I left the place the next day, the evening, the rain started again. It's amazing what God does.

I mean, He didn't do that for my benefit, He did it for those fellows' benefit, so that they would listen carefully to what I said. That's all. It's not for any glory to me.

That's the only reason why we need to let people know that we are God's servants, so that they will know that what we are saying is God's Word. You're supposed to be a witness in your office. You're supposed to be a witness for God in your college, in your office, everywhere.

Don't just sit back and say, oh, well, I'm nobody. You're not a nobody. You're a servant of God.

You're a child of God. You're a son of God. You're a daughter of God.

You're supposed to be God's representative over there. Those fellows won't come and listen to me preaching in CFC. But you've heard it, and you can share that with them, and you cannot afford to be timid over there.

You've got to be bold. You've got to pray, Lord, let it be known here that I'm your servant, in the midst of your unconverted relatives. Pray, Lord, let my unconverted relatives know that Jesus Christ is Lord, that I am your son, your daughter.

We need to pray a little more boldly. That's what we read from Elijah's life. I don't have time to go into all the details here, but one more thing to encourage us.

He called on fire from heaven when he prayed. The fire fell, and God proved that Jehovah was God and that Elijah was his servant. And then Elijah said, let's get rid of all these false preachers.

And, you know, the Bible says he was just obeying a commandment of God. It says in Deuteronomy 13 that if there's a man leading you astray to worship other gods, you must kill him. Elijah obeyed that command of God, and he killed all of them.

Then, now we see, this man who killed 450 mighty prophets, one woman called Jezebel sends a little note to him. Elijah, I'm warning you, by tomorrow I'm going to chop off your head. And this man begins to tremble.

You know the power of a woman like Jezebel to make this mighty man of God tremble? I've met elders who are so bold in the elders meeting, and they go home, they tremble before their wives. Don't be like that. But anyway, we read here, Elijah heard this and he ran for his life.

And he ran, I don't know how many miles he ran, and he sits far away under a juniper tree. Oh God, please take away my life before Jezebel comes and chops off my head. He actually prayed that God would take away his life.

But chapter 19 verse 4, what does that show us? What we saw in the case of Moses. God uses weak men. Great men of God have some area of weakness, but that does not hinder God from using them.

You may have some weakness, don't get discouraged. Today we don't have to be discouraged because we are not following Elijah, we are following Jesus. But still we are not perfect.

The encouragement that comes to us from these stories of Moses and Elijah is this. It was weak men whom God used. And I think God allowed this man to see his weakness.

I have had experiences like this where I have done something for the Lord and then in some other situation God has shown me my tremendous weakness to show me that at that particular time, that was not me, that was the power of the Holy Spirit. And that's what Elijah needed to know. When you stood there Elijah and brought fire down from heaven, that wasn't you, that was my power.

We are all in danger of getting puffed up, particularly when we have brought fire down from heaven and we have destroyed the false prophets. That God has to show us how weak we are and what a better way to show Elijah his weakness than by showing him that he trembles at the voice of one woman. I think that really humbled him and that was good because he could cling to God and say, Lord, I'm nothing, I'll

always be nothing.

And I tell you, it's so good of God that he does such things to bring us down and keep our face in the dust so that we know that when God withdraws his power, we collapse like a balloon with the air gone out of it. But when we are filled with the Spirit, we can stand boldly and that teaches us how we need to be dependent on God all the time so that God never allows us to get puffed up and see what God didn't want to take away Elijah's life. He said, Elijah, I've got something better for you.

I'm not going to let you die at all. In my plan for you, I'm going to take you up to heaven with a chariot of fire. See how God honored his servant.

Oh, God is such a wonderful God. You honor him, he honors you. In the presence of others, he took Elijah up in a chariot of fire.

I'm waiting to be taken up when Christ comes again. I hope you are. But before we are taken up, I hope we will be faithful witnesses for God, even if we are weak, faithful witnesses for God like Elijah was in his day.

God needs such witnesses in these last days. He needs people to stand for him with the Spirit of Elijah. Before the great, let me show you this verse in closing.

Malachi chapter 4 and verse 6, verse 5. Malachi 4, 5. Behold, I'm going to send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. They asked John the Baptist, are you Elijah? He said, no. They asked Jesus, was John the Baptist Elijah? He said, if you accept him, if you Jewish people accept what he says, then he is Elijah.

But they did not accept him. So, there is another Elijah coming in the last days. And you know what that is? It's not going to be one person.

It's going to be the church of Jesus Christ. The body of Christ. It's not going to be one person.

This one man ministry is in the old covenant. That's over. Now it is a body ministry.

It's you and me together as a body. We are to be like Elijah. To be a witness for Christ in these last days.

Before the great and terrible day of the Lord. God has sent us and he is going to restore families through our ministry. Verse 6. He is going to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, children to the fathers.

And that's our ministry. To build families. To turn people towards God.

To turn them away from all their idol worship. Will you pray that in your place of work, in your college, with your unconverted relatives, you will no longer be timid, but you will pray, Lord, let it be known that Jesus Christ is Lord. And that I am your son and your daughter.

We have a dignity. Let's pray for that. Let's bow before God.

Heavenly Father, help us, we pray. We have been far too timid in the past. We have allowed the devil to give us the spirit of timidity and fear, which is not from God.

We want the spirit of power in our life. We want the spirit of Elijah to burn in our life the fire of God, of a passionate devotion to Christ that delivers us from all other loves and makes everything on earth our

servant. As you did when you walked on this earth.

Help us, we pray, each one. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/15/SID15080.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/three-radical-prophets-2-elijah/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net