



1 Kings 17-18

Tape #7109
I Kings 17-18
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn in our Bibles to I Kings, chapter seventeen. In the previous chapter, we read that Ahab became the king over Israel, over the northern province, or northern kingdom. He did evil that, before the Lord, more than any of the other kings before him. He was the worst. But not only that, he added to his evil by marrying this gal Jezebel, "Who was the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of Zidon, and they began to serve Baal, and to worship him. And he raised up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria". So right there in Samaria he built this pagan altar, and inaugurated this pagan god Baal. "He also instituted the worship of Ashtoreth, and he did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger, then all of the kings of Israel before him." He ranked worst.

Suddenly in the midst of this spiritual decline. The kingdom has come to its lowest point. Suddenly on the scene, there appears this man, Elijah, the Tishbite. Now Elijah was a man of rugged countenance. He was clothed with a girdle of leather about his loins. He was a hairy man. He looked like some kind of a thing out of the movies or something. Hairy guy, leather clothes, suddenly he appears on the scene, and he declares...

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 (17:1).

He must have been an awesome kind of a looking person. He announces, "As Jehovah God of Israel lives", now he acknowledges that Jehovah is the true God of Israel. Baal is not the god of Israel, Baal is the god of the pagans. "As Jehovah the God of Israel, who lives", in contrast to Baal who was just a false god, not a living god at all. Just a form of religion or worship. And he said, "Before whom I stand". The servant always stood before his Lord in that culture, and so he is declaring that he is a servant of Jehovah. "I stand before him", that is to serve Him. "There shall not be dew or rain, except by my word".

Going back to Deuteronomy, chapter eleven, the Lord said that if they, when they came into the land, would begin to turn to other gods, and worship them, then God would shut up the heaven, that it would not rain. Also, in Deuteronomy, thirty three, God spoke of the same manner of judgement. The judgement that would come upon them for their turning to other gods would be a drought, and the heavens would be shut up. So, Elijah comes now, and announces that this drought is going to take place, it is not going to rain, except by his word.

In the new testament, James tells us that Elijah was a man of like passions, just like us. Yet he prayed, and it did not rain for a space of three and a half years. He prayed again, and it rained. So, Elijah was evidently praying for the nation. He saw the moral and spiritual decline, and he was praying, "God, turn the nation back to you. God, get hold of these people. God, if necessary, bring judgement, shut up the heavens, that it not rain". And the Lord evidently spoke to him, and said, "Okay, the time of drought is come. Go announce it Elijah". So he comes on the scene, appears before Ahab, announces there's going to be a drought, "It's not going to rain, except by my word". Then, Elijah disappeared.

The word of the Lord came unto his saying, Get thee from here, and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan (17:2-3).

So he was to go down to the area of the Jordan river, where the Cherith, the stream of Cherith came into Jordan, and there he was to hide himself from king Ahab.

And it shall be [The Lord said.] that you are to drink the water from the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. So he went and did according to the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook (17:4-6).

Naturally, people have trouble with this story, because they have trouble believing in God. Whenever you come to the miraculous aspects of the Bible, it is interesting how that these critics start scrambling to try

to say, “Well that’s not really what the Bible says”, or “That really didn’t happen. This is a part of the legend that was built around this magnetic personality of Elijah, and some of the stories that began to be circulated”, and they try to discount the miraculous out of the bible. I personally have no difficulty with this at all. I believe that God could lay it upon the brain of a raven to take bread and meat to this prophet, that is there by the brook of Cherith.

I have no problem with this. I believe that it happened, just like that. And, I believe we’ll find out that it did, when we get to heaven. When all of these guys that have been so critical, will prove to be false, again. I believe God can do things like that. I believe that God can work in supernatural ways to take care of His people.

Keith tells the story of a man in China, a Christian man, who was placed by the communists over this particular province in the rationing of the food. How this man being a Christian, and seeing the needs of the people, and the family, gave out all of the food, and didn’t have enough for himself. Being a very godly, Christian man, he sat down at his table. He prayed, “Lord, you know I need food, and I’ve given it all away to the people, and I don’t have any, so, I ask you Lord, to provide me with some food”. And he heard some noise on the floor, and a rat was pushing a yam through a hole in the floor. It’s written up in a book actually. Keith, you know, sometimes has a way of telling stories that get pretty exciting, and yet this, this same story has been written up in a book of this man. You say, “Ah, I have a hard time...”, well, they said that everyday the rat would poke a yam through the hole. You have a hard time with that one? It said that he was expecting guests one day, and he said, “Lord, you know I need extra food”, and he poked two yams through the hole! If God could use ravens to feed His prophet Elijah, I believe He could use a rat to feed one of His prophets in China. A man who loved Him, feared the Lord.

I think that it’s tragic, that we place such restrictions upon God, in our own minds. We sort of limit God. We limit the way God can do things, or should do things. I think that, that’s sad. It’s a sad indictment against our lack of faith, and trust in God. Whenever we read stories, like Elijah, and we begin to question, it shows a sad lack of faith, a lack of knowledge of the true, and the living God, who created the universe, and is surely able to control the universe that He created. And, to control the life forms, within the universe. So, I have no problem, with Elijah being taken care of, by the brook Cherith.

But it came to pass after awhile, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land (17:7).

Now, surely God who fed him with the ravens, the bread and the flesh, could have also supplied water. You remember when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, and Moses struck the rock, and water came out. God could’ve provided water out of a rock. He could’ve opened up a little spring there in the brook. But God did not see fit to, but instead moved him on.

Now this to me is an interesting thing about God, and about the way God deals with us, that is He doesn’t always confine Himself to one method, or to one way. That’s where I think we, often make a mistake. Because God does it this way one time, we think He’s always gonna do it that way. Because God works in a miraculous way once, we think that He should always work in miraculous ways. But rather than continuing there at the brook Cherith, now that the brook is dried up, the Lord says, “Move on Elijah”. And he was to go over to an area between Tyre, and Zidon, the coastal area of Lebanon, to a city of Zarephath.

And so the word of the Lord came unto him saying, Arise, get thee to Zerephath, which belongs to Zidon, and dwell there: for behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain you. So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was gathering sticks: and he called to her, and he said, Fetch me a little water to drink in a vessel. And as she was going to get the water, he called her and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread also in your hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I do not have a cake, all I have is a handful of flour in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and for my son, that we may eat it, and die (17:8-12).

So he meets this widow woman, he asks for a drink of water, and water is something that is never refused in that area. It’s part of the culture, you ask a person for a drink of water, they’ll never refuse you a drink. He saw the woman, he asked for a drink of water. Now, the drought was not as severe in Sidon, in

Lebanon, as it was in Israel. As she was going to get him a drink of water, he said, "And also, bring me a biscuit if you could", you know a little cake. She said, "Ah, that I can't do. I've only got a little flour, and a little oil. I came out and gathered these sticks that I might build a fire, gonna make up some little cakes, and that's it. We're gonna eat that, and then we're gonna die. That's all we have left".

And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as you have said; but make me a little cake first, and then bring it unto me, and after that make one for you and your son. For thus saith the Lord God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sends rain upon the earth (17:13-14).

Basically, the prophet is saying, "Put God first, and God will take care of you. Have faith in God, trust in God. Put God first, and God will take care of you". This is almost a basic principle. In fact Jesus expressed it as a basic spiritual principle. He said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you". If you will put God first, in your life, God will take care of the secondary things. Jesus said that in the context of people worrying about what they're gonna eat. "Where I'm gonna get food for tomorrow, where I'm gonna get clothes. What am I gonna eat, what am I gonna drink, what am I gonna wear." Jesus said, "These are the things that the heathen worry about, but you, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things", food and so forth, "will be taken care of".

It is interesting that when God gave the law of tithing, they were to bring the first fruits unto God. There are so many people who have the policy of giving God the leftovers. "If I have enough left over, then I'll give God His share". But, it's interesting those people never seem to have anything left over. However, those who give God His share first, always find that there's sufficient for them afterwards. "Bake me first a cake and bring it unto me, and then bake it for you and your son. For by the Lord God of Israel", he declares that, "the meal shall not fail, nor the oil dry up, until God sends rain again upon the earth. God will take care of you. If you put God first."

And so she went in and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat for many days. [Probably for at least two and a half years.] And the barrel of flour wasted not, and neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah (17:15-16).

God's word came to pass. Another miracle. Again, I have no problem with it. I believe that God can do it. God is able. God has resources that we don't know anything about. That's our problem. We're always wondering, "Well how is God gonna do that?", and we're trying to figure out the ways by which God might supply, or the ways God might take care of us. "Lord, if you'll just help them to pull my number in the Reader's Digest Sweepstakes! It would be great Lord!". And I've got it all figured out how God's gonna take care of my bills. We're always figuring how God might be able to do it, but God has resources we don't know anything about. When there is no visible, physical way, by which it could possibly come to pass, we should not despair. Because God has resources that you haven't even thought about!

So, the little book of Habakkuk. The prophet of God who was so upset because of the evil that was happening in the national life of Israel. It seemed like the forces of evil were prevailing. The ACLU was winning every case. It seemed like the doors of evil, the flood gates were open, and the government was corrupt. Habakkuk finally said, "Lord, I can't take it. Please don't let me know anything else! Because everything is going down the tubes, and Lord you're not doing a thing about it! So, I'd rather not know. Please don't show me. I'd rather be ignorant of the whole thing, rather than to see these things, and you're not working".

I sometimes feel that way, when I read the Reader's Digest articles. Some of the problems you know of government and so forth, I think, "Oh God, please. I'd rather not know". You feel frustrated, what can you do?

God said, "Habakkuk, I am doing a work, in your days, and if I told you what I was doing, your ears would tingle". He said, "What are you doing Lord?", He said, "I'm going to bring the Babylonians against Israel, and they are gonna defeat Israel, and they will be, or Judah, they will be my instrument of judgement against my people". And Habakkuk said, "Lord that isn't fair! We're bad, but they're worse! How come you would use a nation that is worse than us to defeat us?". So Habakkuk said, "I'm just gonna go in my tower, and I'm just gonna sit, and wait, and watch, to see what you're gonna do". He went up into his tower, to wait

and to watch. And the word of the Lord came to him there in the tower, and said, “Habakkuk, the just shall live by faith. Hey things are gonna get tough, they’re gonna get tougher. It’s gonna take faith to be sustained in the days that are coming”. So Habakkuk prayed unto the Lord again, he said, “Lord I cried unto you by reason of my distress. You answered me and told me that you were working. Lord, I don’t understand what you’re doing, but keep doing it”. That’s faith! When you commit yourself, and your situation. “Lord, I don’t understand Lord, what you’re doing. First I think you’re making a mistake, but keep doing it!” You know, “You keep doing your thing Lord!” For he said, “Revive thy work”, which means keep alive your work, “and in the midst of your years, remember mercy. Don’t forget to be merciful Lord”.

The final chapter, the final verses, Habakkuk there speaks about, “Though there is no grain in the fields. There’s no ox in the stall. There are no sheep in the herds. There’s no figs on the tree. There’s no grapes on the vine”. Though there is no physical, visible means of supply, I look around and everything is empty, the silo is empty, the barn is empty. The fig trees don’t have any figs on them. The grape vines are without grapes. There’s no visible means of help or supply, “Yet, I will rejoice in the God of my salvation”. He learned the lesson, “The just shall live by faith”. I rejoice in the Lord, not in circumstances. I rejoice in the Lord, in the God of my salvation. Here, Elijah is provided for in a miraculous way, again. As God takes care of the prophet, and I have no problem with that. Though some people may.

It came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so grievous, that he quit breathing. And she said to Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? are you come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? [“Hey what have I done wrong to you? You’ve been living around the house, you’ve heard me yelling, and you’ve seen me lose my temper, and all, and now have you reported me to God, that God should punish me this way?” Basically that was what she was saying when, “You’ve brought my sins in remembrance. Have you brought them in remembrance to God? Are you telling God what a mean personality I have, that God would slay my son?”] And he said unto her, Give me your son. And he took him out of her bosom, and he carried him up into a loft, where he stayed, and he laid him on his own bed. And he cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, have you brought also evil upon the widow with whom I am sojourning, by slaying her son? And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and he cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child’s soul come again into him (17:17-21).

The child had died. No breath. But he’s praying that God would resurrect the child. “Let his soul come into him again.” Now it is interesting to me that he prayed three times. God didn’t answer the first time he prayed. God didn’t answer the second time he prayed. God did answer the third time he prayed. God doesn’t always answer the first time we call, though many times He is planning to answer.

Why God waits, I don’t know. Surely it is a time of the testing of our faith. I would always like it, that if God would just come through immediately, because I don’t like my faith to be tested. I don’t appreciate it when God waits, when I’m in trouble. “I want quick deliverance Lord, help now.” Don’t know why the Lord waited till the third time. We don’t understand the ways of God. God said we wouldn’t. He said, “My ways are not your ways. My ways are beyond your finding out”. It is interesting that Jesus prayed three times, that the cup might pass from Him. Though He prayed three times, the prayer was not answered. But He went ahead and drank the cup, for the third time he prayed, “However, if the cup cannot pass from me, thy will be done”. And He submitted to the will of the Father, but He prayed three times.

It is interesting that Paul prayed three times, concerning his thorn in the flesh. Again, after praying three times, the thorn in the flesh was still there, but he got a different answer than what he was asking. He got an answer of the all sufficiency of the grace of God. For God said unto him, “My grace is sufficient for you. My strength will be made perfect in your weakness”. Paul took a whole different attitude towards the thorn in the flesh. He looked at it now in a whole different light! He now began to glory in the weakness of his flesh, in order that the power of God might be revealed in him.

God does not always answer the first time we pray, He does not always answer the third time we pray, as we have prayed, many times, God, instead of doing what we’ve asked, will give us really the strength, the endurance, the capacity, the faith, to live with a situation, seeing the hand of God in it, and the work of God within it.

I cannot accept this teaching, that God has to heal you if you'll follow a certain formula. God sometimes has purposes that we do not know. Purposes for our weakness, or for our failures. We need that faith that can mount above the weakness, and glory that God's power might be manifested through the weakness of our own flesh.

The Lord heard the voice of Elijah; the soul [or the consciousness] of the child came into him again, and he revived. [Speaks of the consciousness having left him, returning in him again. Those who have experienced that out of body experience, are aware so many times, of their spirit leaving their body. Looking back at the room, and seeing their body lying there. They're aware, their spirit coming back into their body. This little child went through that experience.] And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, gave him to his mother: and Elijah said, Look, your son lives. And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and the word of the Lord is in your mouth in truth (17:22-24).

Chapter 18

So it came to pass after many days, [After about three years, well three and a half years from the beginning. Three years in the third year, that was going on now into the third year. It was three and a half.] that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year saying, [Third year probably when he was with this widow in Zerephath. Notice now, that the Lord said,] Go, show yourself to Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth (18:1).

God spoke to Elijah, and said, "Okay, time has come. Go show yourself to Ahab, because I'm going to send rain upon the earth". He has the promise of God that rain is gonna be sent. This particular incident is interesting to us, in that it shows to us, that there is the listening side of prayer. Prayer is more than just talking to God, it's more than just laying out my need, or my request before the Lord. Prayer often involves God talking to me. There is that listening side of prayer.

Elijah heard the voice of the Lord, and the promise of God, that He was going to send rain. For we find the next time, that Elijah is praying for rain, he prayed three times for the woman's son, he prayed seven times for the rain. But he persisted in prayer, because he had the promise of God, that God would send the rain. Thus that persistence in the prayer, because of the assurance of God's word that the rain was going to come. "Go show yourself to Ahab, and I'm going to send the rain."

So Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab. And there was a great famine in Samaria. And Ahab had called Obadiah, who was the governor of his house. [He was a chief steward over in the house of Ahab.] (And Obadiah feared the Lord greatly: And it was so, when Jezebel had cut off the prophets of the Lord, that Obadiah took a hundred of the prophets, and he hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.) And Ahab said to Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all of the fountains of water, and to all of the springs and all of the brooks, and peradventure we might find some grass that we might save our horses and mules alive, that we do not lose all of our animals. [Things were really getting serious. The animals are now beginning to starve to death. So, "See if we can find some green grass around the springs, someplace. Anywhere in the land. Maybe there's a pool of water, with some green grass around it".] So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: and Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went the other way by himself. And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew Elijah, and he fell on his face, and he said, Are you my Lord Elijah? And he answered him, I am: go, and tell your Lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And he said, What have I done, what have I sinned that you would deliver your servant into the hand of Ahab to kill me (18:2-9)?

"Man, don't you know about me?"

As the Lord thy God lives, there is no nation or kingdom, where my Lord has not sent to seek you: and when they said, He is not here; he took an oath of the kingdom and the nation, that they found thee not. And now you say, Go, tell thy Lord, Behold, Elijah is here. ["Are you kidding man?"] It shall come to pass, as soon as I'm gone from thee, that the spirit of the Lord will carry you whither I don't know; and so when I came and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he's gonna kill me: but I thy servant fear the Lord from my

youth (18:10-12).

“Look, I’ve been a good kid and all, all the way, since I was a kid I’ve been good! Why would you want to kill me man? Why would you want to put my life in jeopardy like this, telling me to go tell Ahab you’re here? That guy’s been after you for a long time, and soon as I go tell him, the spirit of the Lord catch you away someplace, I come, you’re not here, and then he’s gonna kill me. Hey! I fear the Lord, and from the time I was a youth. And didn’t they tell you what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the Lord? How I hid a hundred of them in the caves, by fifty, and I fed them with bread and water? And now you say, ‘Go tell thy Lord, behold Elijah is here.’, he’s gonna kill me man!”

And Elijah said, As the Lord of hosts lives, before whom I stand, [There it is again, “I’m His servant, I stand before God, as His servant”.] I will surely show myself unto him today. 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, Are you the one that troubles Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but you, and your father’s house, in that you have forsaken the commandments of Jehovah, and you have followed after Baalim (18:15-18).

The plural of Baal. The Baalim, or the plurality, for there were different uh, Baal worship. There was Beelzebub, and various gods. The word Baal literally means, Lord.

Now therefore send, and gather to me all of Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, [The groves near Ashtoreth, which is the worship of Ash, uh, Ashtoreth, the pagan goddess of fertility. The Astorim of the Babylonians, the Diana of the Ephesians. “Those four hundred prophets”,] which eat at Jezebel’s table. So Ahab sent unto all of the children of Israel, he gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel (18:19-20).

Interesting that Elijah’s sort of calling the shots now. He says, “I want to meet you and gather the people at mount Carmel. All those prophets”. So Ahab sent, and gathered the people.

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if Jehovah is God, then follow him: if Baal is god then follow him. The people didn’t answer. [There was silence.] Then Elijah said unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of Jehovah; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men. So let them therefore give us two bullocks; they can choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, lay it on wood, and put no fire under it: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under it: And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call upon the name of Jehovah: and the God that answers by fire, let him be God. And all the people said, Well spoken (18:21-24).

So he’s challenging now, to a contest. Elijah alone, against the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. “We’ll build altars, we’ll place the sacrifices on them, but we will not light a fire to them, but we will pray to our Gods, to kindle the fire, and let the God who answers by fire, be the God, that we worship”. The people said, “Good enough”.

So Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose one of the bullocks for yourself, and dress it first; for you are many; call upon the name of your gods, but put no fire under it. And so they took the bullock which was given to them, and they dressed it, and they called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped on the altar that they had made. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, [“Hey, you should”,] Cry louder: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he’s relieving himself, or he’s on a journey, or peradventure he’s asleep, and must be awakened (18:25-27).

“Ah, sad that you have a god that sleeps.” We read that, “The Lord of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps”. Elijah is sort of cheering them on.

And they cried louder, they cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood was gushing out upon them (18:28).

Dancing, swaying, chanting, praying, going through their incantations, their rites, building up into a real frenzy, until they’re screaming, and yelling. All kinds of emotionalism! But, no power, no fire. People can be very religious without ever touching God. “The gods of the heathen”, David said, “are vain. For they are really the works of men’s hands”. They are created by man. “They have eyes, but they cannot see. Ears, but

they cannot hear. Mouths, but they cannot speak.” Then David observes, “They that have made them, have become like the gods that they have made.”

That’s a interesting observation, it’s a true observation. A man becomes like his god. If your god is false, you’re false. You become like your god. You become a phony. The Bible says, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, it doth not yet appear what we shall be. We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him”. Why? Because a man becomes like his god. If you are serving Jesus Christ, then you are becoming like Jesus Christ. The work of the Holy Spirit, within your life is conforming you into the image of Jesus Christ. Because, a man becomes like his god. If your god is insensate, you’re becoming insensate. You’re becoming blind, no longer see the beauty and the handiwork of God. You’re becoming deaf. You no longer hear the word of God, or the voice of God, as He would speak to us.

So the sad spectacle of these prophets of Baal, as they’re imploring in vain, their god to help them in the showdown, in this contest. Though there’s all kinds of activity and fervor, and crying, and cutting of themselves, and swaying and dancing, it’s all to no avail. Because the god they serve is a false god. Every man has a god in his life. Some of you are worshiping Baalims. You’re not worshiping and serving the true, and living God. There’s other things that hold first priority in your life. Things of the flesh, as the worship of Baal, was very sensual, and pleasing to the flesh, as was the worship Ashtoreth. There are people today who are living after the flesh, and they have forsaken Jehovah, the true and the living God. But the god that you worship and serve, cannot hear, cannot touch, cannot help.

So it came to pass, when midday was past, they prophesied [And they started prophesying, you know, “Fire’s gonna come”, and all this.] So the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, but there was neither a voice, nor any to answer, nor any to regard. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: And with the stones he built an altar in the name of Jehovah: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and he cut the bullock in pieces, and he laid him on the wood, and he said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. He said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. He said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and filled the trench with water. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Jehovah God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, [“Baal is not god, but you are God.”] And that I am your servant, and that I have done all of these things at thy word (18:29-36).

One commentator suggested that there perhaps was a pause here, as he waited for the fire, and nothing happened. I don’t know that the commentator is correct. But, he said this first stanza of the prayer is really asking for vindication for himself. The I’s are in it. “Send the fire that they may know that I am your prophet, and that I have been sent by you”, and all, and asking for a sign that would vindicate him. “That I have done all of these things at your word.” And he suggested that maybe there was a pause, and nothing happened, and so Elijah then continued to pray. I mean there’s no, you know, that’s just a suggestion, and there’s no, nothing to support it. It’s just a thought. But, he said...

Hear me, O Jehovah, hear me, that these people may know that you are Jehovah God, and that you have turned their hearts back again. And then the fire of Jehovah fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. [God’s fire.] And when all of the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, Jehovah is God; Jehovah, he is God. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; don’t let any of them escape. And he took them down to the brook Kishon, and there he slew them. And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get up, eat and drink; for there’s a sound of an abundance of rain. 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 he said to his servant, God up now, and look toward the sea. And he went up, and he looked, and he said, There’s nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, about the size of a fist. And he said, Go up, and say to Ahab, Prepare your chariot, and get

down, that the rain does not hinder you. And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel (18:37-46).

This guy was pretty hearty. From mount Carmel, to Jezreel, is about fifteen miles. “Now girded up his loins”, it means he pulled up his skirt, and tied them, so that he could run. He outran the chariot. Got to Jezreel before king Ahab. Began to rain. Tremendous victory over the prophets of Baal. Tremendous confirmation by God in the sight of all the people. It would appear that there was a tremendous spiritual revival, as all of the people were saying, “Jehovah is God!”. But it was only surface. It didn’t go down into the heart and the fiber of the nation. It was just a surface movement that did not really effect the nation, as such.

Those times when God has worked in our lives in a supernatural way, are always exciting, glorious times. It’s always exciting to see God work, to see God move. To see people acknowledge the work of God, and the excitement that, that surrounds such an event. But, watch out! Because right after every great spiritual experience, you can be sure that Satan is waiting to cut you down to size. Here’s Elijah, coming from this tremendous spiritual victory, over the prophets of Baal. Wiping out all four hundred and fifty! Taking them down to the brook Kishon, and just hacking them to pieces. Great victory!

But next week, we’re gonna see this great man of faith, this man who brought down fire from heaven, this man that brought back life to the child, this man that was fed by the ravens, we’re gonna see him running, and hiding from a woman. Ha, ha! No ordinary woman, to be sure. But we’re gonna see him now, going into a place of despair, and defeat, right after great victory.

So many times when we arrive at some spiritual plateau, we think, “Alright I’ve got it made! No more problems man! I’ve got the thing wired you know, from here on! Going to be great! You know, nothing but victory!”. Look out! Satan is waiting around the next corner to cut you down. Elijah experienced it. And we, all of us experience it. There is the testing of our faith. You know, it’s interesting to me how so many times, it’s the little foxes, that spoil the vines. You may have victory in some great major thing, and then trip up in the smallest thing. It’s amazing! You can come out of some dynamic spiritual victory, and spiritual high. You think, “Aha!”, you know. Then some foolish little thing will just suddenly rob your joy, and your blessing, and bring you down. Just boom, to the depths.

Alexander the Great came to Diogenes, the philosopher. Diogenes was a character. He, he, he sat in just a bucket, a pail. And he was very contented just to sit in that pail. Alexander the Great had conquered the world, and was not contented. He wept because there was nothing else to conquer. He was fascinated by this guy who was content just sitting in this pail. He came to him, and he says, “Diogenes! I am going to be your disciple. I will follow thee because I want the same contentment you have, and I am going to be your disciple and follow you forever!”. Diogenes gave him three fish, and he said, “Carry these around in your pocket for two weeks, and you can become my disciple”. And Alexander said, “Carry those stinky, smelly fish, are you kidding?”, and he walked away in anger, and Diogenes said, “Such great devotion dissipated over three smelly fish”. I’m amazed though, at what little things can dissipate our great joy in the Lord!

Awhile back I was in the market. I’d had a wedding, they gave me a nice honorarium, and so I decided to buy a big, thick steak, and barbecue it for dinner. I was so happy just going around the market, I picked out this great steak, and, you know from the gourmet section. I mean it was just, kind of go for it. You know, just say, “Lord you’re so good! Lord I love you! Oh my, Lord, you know I just love you so much! Oh, it’s so good Lord, just to walk with you!”, and I was just, I was just really bubbling over with the joy and the love of the Lord in my heart. I pulled up to the check stand, with my cart, waiting there, and some little pip squeak of a guy, pushy little guy you know, came and pushed his cart right in front of mine in line. But not only that, he was smoking a cigar. I got so angry, I thought, “I’m gonna shove that cigar down his throat!”. Can’t he see there’s a line of people waiting to check out? Who does he think he is, stepping in front of me?! I started to get all steamy inside, and the Lord spoke to me and said, “Such love, and such devotion all dissipated over a smelly cigar”. I decided just to take another swing through the store. I wasn’t gonna let that guy rob me of my joy in the Lord, I figured, “Well, I’ll get some ice cream, or something to go with it. But boy, I almost lost it, I really did! You would’ve seen in the paper, “Minister decks a little man”, you know!

Oh what Satan will do to rob you of your joy. Sometimes just the littlest things, can take away the joy, the excitement, the thrill, of God's victory in your life. We have to be careful. Elijah was a man just like us. He experienced great power with God, but he also experienced great despair, discouragement. We'll see him in his discouragement next week, as we continue on, our study through Kings.

Now Father, we thank You for the victories that we experience in Jesus Christ. We thank You Lord, that we stand before You as your servants. We thank You Father, for the joy and the blessing, of seeing your work. Help us Lord, continue in that victory in Christ Jesus. To continue to walk in faith. To hold onto Your word, and to Your promise. Father, help us we pray, not to be among that halting crowd, who is indecisive, uncommitted. But may we commit ourselves, totally, fully to serving the Lord, in Jesus' name, Amen.