

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 33

Elijah

(Guest Speaker: Dr. Stephen Trammell, Executive Pastor)

On a crystal clear morning the sunbeams were cascading through the branches and needles of the Pine trees that beautified the campus of Louisiana College in Pineville, Louisiana. Students and parents had gathered just outside Guinn Auditorium after the graduating class of 1992 had just walked across the stage to receive the much-anticipated diploma of completion. This day marked a spiritual marker in my life personally as I stood with cap and gown next to my young bride, Tonya, and together we posed for pictures with family members. Joy and celebration permeated the patio steps and echoed off of the massive adjacent buildings.

One of my preacher buddies approached me in that moment to inquire of my next move. This young preacher boy was one of the finest communicators on our campus and poised with the most promise for future ministry success. His communication skills far surpassed the rest of us who labored in the religion department for all those years preceding graduation. I shared with him that Tonya and I felt God calling us to move to the New Orleans area so that I could attend New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Then he quickly injected a loaded question by inquiring, “Do you have a church to pastor in that area?”

My response did not sync up with his understanding of God’s will. I shared with my preacher buddy that I did not have a church lined up, but that God had confirmed our decision and that we were trusting God to provide everything we needed to make ends meet to enable me to obtain my seminary education. Tonya and I were moving to the New Orleans area without a teaching job for her and without a pastorate for me. We were absolutely convinced of God’s direction and resting in God’s faithfulness to provide.

As you can imagine, I felt inclined to inquire about my friend’s plans. He was pastoring a church locally at the time of our interchange. When I asked him if he had plans to go to seminary, he abruptly responded by saying, “I will go to seminary when God provides me a church to pastor near the seminary.”

Soon thereafter, Tonya and I moved into a townhouse in Slidell, Louisiana, just twenty minutes from the campus of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. On the day we got phone service installed and plugged our phone into the phone jack, *(this was in the olden days prior to the simplicity of cell phones)*, a pastor search committee member from First Baptist Church of Folsom, Louisiana, called

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to say that they had received my resume and wanted to interview me as a candidate to become their next pastor. Tonya and I looked up First Baptist Church of Folsom's address and drove for about forty-five minutes to go tour the town and see if we could find the church. As only God could orchestrate, I interviewed with the search committee and before I officially became their pastor, Tonya landed a teaching job at Folsom Elementary School. We had the most amazing six years of ministry in Folsom, witnessed countless lives transformed, and experienced God in a way we will never forget.¹

After fulfilling God's assignment at First Baptist Church of Folsom, Tonya and I had the joy and privilege of moving back near our hometown so that I could pastor Alpine First Baptist Church just ten minutes from the Louisiana College Campus. While pastoring there, I received a phone call from a representative of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary asking if I would consider being an adjunct professor at their extension campus hosted by the Louisiana College Religion Department. As you can imagine, I came alive to the idea of pastoring fulltime and investing in the next generation of pastors by teaching at the seminary's extension.

The first seminary class I taught for New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary on the campus of Louisiana College was expository preaching. Can you guess who was taking his very first seminary class? That's right! My preacher buddy, who talked to me on the steps of Guinn Auditorium and let me know that he was not moving to seminary until God provided a church for him to pastor, was taking his first seminary class...six years later.

What if Elijah had placed conditions on God? Would we have the wonderful testimony of God's faithfulness as exhibited by Elijah's fresh encounters with God? I am so thankful that Elijah was willing to take God at His word and to trust God's impeccable timing. Let's explore Elijah's life and ministry and be reminded of God's faithfulness to accomplish His plan.

PRIVATE INVITATION: I KINGS 17

We don't know much about Elijah's family or past. He is introduced to us in scripture as the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead. Elijah's name means, "my God is the Lord." The biblical account of Elijah runs from I Kings 17 to II Kings 2. He lived during the reigns of kings Ahab (874-853 B.C.) and Ahaziah (853-852 B.C.) of Israel.

¹ By the way, just five miles down the road was a young preacher named, David Fleming, who became pastor of New Zion Baptist Church. He and I grew into best friends and commuted to seminary together four days a week and obtained our Masters and Doctorates together. God was molding us and shaping us for the bright future He had in store for us, namely, serving together at Champion Forest Baptist Church some fifteen years later starting in 2007.

Elijah was called by God at a critical period in Israel's life. Economically and politically the northern kingdom was in its strongest position since its separation from the southern kingdom. Omri (885–874 B.C.) had initiated a policy of trade and friendly relations with the Phoenicians. To show his good faith, Omri gave his son Ahab in marriage to Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre. She brought Baal worship with her to Israel, a false religion whose rapid spread soon threatened the kingdom's very existence. Elijah was sent to turn the nation and its leaders back to the Lord through his prophetic message and miracles.²

Elijah Announces the Impending Drought

¹Now Elijah the Tishbite, of Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word" (I Kings 17:1 ESV).

King Ahab was the recipient of a definitive word from God through the prophet Elijah. Idolatry permeated the landscape of Israel and God was sending Elijah to announce the drought that would arrest their attention and impact their livelihood. "Droughts were by no means unknown in Canaan but this was one of such length and severity that its supernatural origin would be obvious to all."³ God's supernatural provision was a clear demonstration of His power and authority.

Elijah Obtains Nourishment from God

³"Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. ⁴You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there" (I Kings 17:3-4 ESV).

God cares for His own. The abundant resources from God made available to Elijah included water from the brook, bread and meat in the morning, as well as bread and meat in the evening. When the brook dried up due to drought. God instructed Elijah to relocate to Zarephath where God had commanded a widow to supply him with food. The miracle of God's nourishment continued as He filled the widow's jar with flour and her jug with oil. "For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "The jar of flour shall not be spent, and the jug of oil shall not be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth" (I Kings 17:14 ESV).

² Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J., *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 689.

³ Robinson, J., *The Cambridge Bible Commentary: The First Book of Kings* (New York, NY: Cambridge at the University Press, 1972), 199.

The Widow's Son Is Raised from the Dead

²¹Then he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again." ²²And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah. And the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. ²³And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper chamber into the house and delivered him to his mother. And Elijah said, "See, your son lives." ²⁴And the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth" (I Kings 17:21-24 ESV).

Elijah receives consistent affirmation of God's activity. These spiritual markers being established will remind Elijah of God's faithfulness and position him for the future challenges God has prepared. The resurrection of the widow's son demonstrates the power of prayer and Elijah's vibrant faith in God.

PUBLIC CONFRONTATION: I KINGS 18

The prophet will transition from the private and secluded ministry to the visible and public confrontation with Ahab and the prophets of Baal and Asherah. This radical shift launches with Elijah's announcement of coming rain.

Elijah Presents Himself to Ahab

¹After many days the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth" (I Kings 18:1 ESV).

Obadiah assisted in connecting Ahab and Elijah. Obadiah was a devout believer in the Lord and had hidden a hundred prophets to protect them from Jezebel, since she was killing off the Lord's prophets.

Here again Elijah's great courage stands out. He was talking to no one less than the king, and risking severe punishment; but he knew this rebuke was necessary if relief for the land was to be brought about. It was his task to impart it, and so he did, no matter the peril.⁴

Elijah Challenges the Prophets of Baal and Asherah

²⁰So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel. ²¹And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And the people did not answer him a word (I Kings 18:20-21 ESV).

⁴ Wood, Leon J., *Elijah: Prophet of God* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 73.

When you think of a contest, you usually do not envision one individual against 850. That seems to be somewhat out of balance and clearly an unfair matchup. God had orchestrated a major confrontation on Mt. Carmel to display His power and to unveil His plan to eliminate the pervasive idolatry. “Baal claims to be god of storm and fertility, present in the dew and rain, but Yahweh directly challenges him.”⁵

Israel was “limping” as a nation and incapable of healthy progress. They needed to be united, to throw off their fear of the queen, and to decide who was the true God.⁶ After wavering between two opinions (I Kings 18:21), it was time to draw the line in the sand and identify the One True God. Elijah challenged the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah to prepare the sacrifice on the wood and to call on the name of their god. The god who answers by fire would be affirmed as God!

Elijah was entertained as the prophets called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. Elijah began to taunt them. They continued their frantic prophesying until the evening sacrifice (I Kings 18:29), but no one answered.

Elijah Prays Down Fire from Heaven

After Elijah repaired the altar and included additional features including the twelve stones representing the twelve tribes descended from Jacob, he had water strategically placed to drench the sacrifice. The water ran down the altar and filled the trench. Elijah prays and the fire of the Lord fell.

³⁶And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. ³⁷Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back." ³⁸Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. ³⁹And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God" (I Kings 18:36-39 ESV).

⁵ DeVries, Simon J., *Word Biblical Commentary: 1 Kings* (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1985), 216.

⁶ Wood at 81.

The LORD Sends Rain

God honored His word and sent rain. “And in a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel” (I Kings 18:45 ESV).

His patience and persistence are demonstrated as he sends his young servant seven times to look toward the sea. Seven is, of course, the number of completion and perfection. The servant reports a tiny cloud rising from the horizon; so certain is Elijah that this is Yahweh’s answer that he tells his servant to urge Ahab to make haste in order to escape the coming downpour.⁷

Elijah Encounters God’s Power

After the fire of the Lord fell in power, Elijah experienced the providence of God in a personal fashion as God empowered him to run. “And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he gathered up his garment and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel” (I Kings 18:46 ESV).

See the humility of Elijah, and admire his wisdom before the pride, insanity and foolishness of Ahab. I certainly call mad and senseless the one who, after seeing the wind, the water, the fire and the weather subjected to the power of Elijah, and hearing the entire people proclaim his power similar to that of God, did not recognize the excellence of his dignity, did not admire his action or honor his person, but in the excess of his pride, let him march before him many times over. Indeed, the king should have let the prophet climb up and sit with him on his chariot.⁸

PERSONAL DEPRESSION: I KINGS 19

When you consider the fact that Elijah confronted, defeated, and destroyed the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah on Mt. Carmel, why is he running from one woman, Jezebel? He takes on 850 men with courage and boldness, yet is gripped with terror when pursued by Jezebel.

Elijah Descends from the Mountain of Miracles to the Desert of Defeat

Elijah runs for his life and hits his lowest point after a supernatural display of God’s power on Mt. Carmel. As you read the story, it generates two extreme portraits. In chapter 18, we find that Elijah experiences a mountain of miracles. Then in chapter 19, Elijah descends into the desert of defeat and depression. He

⁷ DeVries at 218.

⁸ Conti, Marco, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 114.

experienced what many football players in the National Football League experience after winning the Superbowl, namely, P.A.D.—Post Adrenaline Depression.

We are most susceptible to sin after a major spiritual victory. There are some other factors that impact our susceptibility to sin. Let's consider using the acrostic HALT. We are prone to sin when we are Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired. Elijah was emotionally spent and physically exhausted. He lost perspective and shifted to an inward focus that incubated depression.

Fear has a way of catapulting a person into depression. “Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there” (I Kings 19:3 ESV). Fear causes us to react rather than respond. Elijah suspended his faith in God and was apprehended by fear of Jezebel.

Frustration can push you down the slide into depression. “And he asked that he might die, saying, ‘It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers’” (I Kings 19:4 ESV). Elijah truly hit rock bottom. He was frustrated by his circumstances and his oppressive feelings of hopelessness spiraled him to the place of wanting to die.

It should, however, be pointed out that there is a radical difference between desiring to be delivered from a world of disappointment and sorrow and a longing to be delivered from this body of death in order that we may be present with the Lord.⁹

Sometimes the perceived pain of living can supersede the perceived pain of dying. Elijah was longing for relief and was willing to ask for desperate measures to alleviate him of his desperate situation.

Fatigue has a way of infusing the aftertaste of depression into your life. Elijah was weary. When you are fatigued, there is a tendency to overestimate the severity of your circumstances and to underestimate the comfort God provides. When you are tired, butterflies can appear as helicopters. Fatigue causes us to lose perspective. Elijah's fatigue germinated into despair.

Financial pressure has enough toxins to infect a person with the flu of depression. This may not have been Elijah's issue, but in our contemporary context, financial pressure has the gravitational capacity to pull a person into gloom and dejection. As Dr. Adrian Rogers use to say from the pulpit of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, “We buy things we don't need with money we don't have to

⁹ Pink at 212.

impress people we don't like. And just about the time we catch up with the Joneses, they refinance."

Elijah Receives God's Provisions

God allowed Elijah to experience some challenging circumstances through his ministry to reassure him of his total dependency upon God. Elijah's ministry landscape was decorated with a garden variety of miracles and affirmation. "There is a clear parallel between the way Elijah was cared for and the way the Israelites were cared for when they passed through the same area on their way from Egypt to Canaan."¹⁰ Let's explore God's response to Elijah's depression and make application to our daily needs.

Refreshment was offered by God. Elijah was malnourish by this point. He was totally spent. He had nothing left to give and his energy level had evaporated. At just the right moment, God came through with what I like to call the first mention of "Angel Food Cake."

⁵And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." ⁶And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. ⁷And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." ⁸And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God (I Kings 19:5-9 ESV).

Eat properly and exercise diligently. Have you ever noticed how your stress level goes down as your diligence in exercise goes up? God created our bodies to move. When we place our bodies in motion, God rewards the body with physical refreshment and energy. Fuel your body with food that add value to your wellbeing. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 by saying, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4 ESV).

Rest was another provision from God to Elijah. "And he ate and drank and lay down again" (I Kings 19:6b ESV). God has designed the human body to recalibrate through daily rest. It is possible to sleep and not rest. Have you ever had that experience? The rest God provides is accompanied with His abiding peace. Sometimes the most spiritual activity you can engage in is taking a nap.

Intentionally getting out of the fast lane of life and coming down pit road can engender tremendous rest and renewal. Practice a daily Sabbath by disengaging from the rat race of life and enjoy a few moments of solitude. Be intentional about

¹⁰ Robinson at 218.

getting a good night's rest, too. Invest in a good mattress since you will spend up to one-third of your life sleeping. Consider making your bedroom darker and placing your alarm clock further away from your pillow. Keep a notepad and pen close by in case your mind is racing and preventing you from going to sleep. Write down the items that are perplexing you and gently make a list of things you need to take care of so that you can ease your mind at bedtime.

Revelation was a deep need God met in Elijah. God revealed Himself to Elijah in a personal way to remind Elijah of the value of maintaining this vertical relationship. The tendency is to get so distracted by the encounter of Earth, Wind, and Fire and bypass the echo of God's whisper. God was about to teach Elijah a valuable lesson on finding God in the ordinary.

¹¹And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹²And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper (I Kings 19:11-12 ESV).

God is a God of revelation. God makes Himself known. As Henry Blackaby shared in his journal, *Experiencing God*, "God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways."¹¹ Daily intake of God's Word is essential for the child of God to build spiritual muscles and to become a fully devoted follower of Christ.

Relationship is vital in God's economy. Elijah left his servant in Beersheba (I Kings 19:3) and drifted into isolation. There is a vast difference between solitude and isolation. When you practice solitude, you are being intentional about removing distractions in order to tune in to the voice of God. Isolation is a tool of the enemy to get you to withdraw into yourself and avoid life-giving relationships with others and ultimately with God. Notice the clear directives God gave Elijah in order to empower others and to fertilize a meaningful friendship.

¹⁵And the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. ¹⁶And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. ¹⁷And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. ¹⁸Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the

¹¹ Blackaby, Henry T. and Claude V. King, *Experiencing God* (Nashville, TN: Lifeway Press, 1990), 225.

knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him" (I Kings 19:15-18 ESV).

Can you recall the first “not good” in the Bible? Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Genesis 2:18 ESV). To have a friend you must first be a friend. God designed us for relationship and for companionship. We do better together. We are not created by God to be robotic. God created us to be relational. We need Him and we need each other.

PROVIDENTIAL TRANSITION: II KINGS 2

On Mt. Carmel, Elijah encounters God’s power and in the darkest moment of his life, he encounters God’s abiding presence. Elijah’s mission has been fulfilled and his ministry has been completed. He would have been able to identify with Paul’s final words to Timothy, “⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (II Timothy 4:6-8 ESV). It was now time for the mantle of leadership to be transferred to Elisha.

Elijah Transfers His Cloak of Leadership

⁹When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me." ¹⁰And he said, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it shall be so for you, but if you do not see me, it shall not be so" (II Kings 2:9-10 ESV).

Elisha had the privilege of shadowing Elijah and witnessing the mighty acts of God and the faithfulness of Elijah. Graciously, Elijah asked what he could do for Elisha just before departing. Elisha had a singular request for a double of his spirit.

The phrase a “double share” is found elsewhere in Deut 21:17 and indicates that Elisha is asking for the status as rightful heir to the prophetic leader’s role. The phrase indicates twice as much as any other heir, not double the amount Elijah had.¹²

The mantle of leadership had been transferred. “The idea of the cloak as a symbol of succession is first seen in I Kings 19:19 in connection with the two men.”¹³ Elisha was now positioned for yet another blessing, namely, being an eyewitness of Elijah’s ascension.

¹² Hobbs, T.R., *Word Biblical Commentary: 2 Kings* (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1985), 21.

¹³ Hobbs at 22.

Elijah Transitions to Heaven by a Whirlwind

¹¹And as they still went on and talked, behold, chariots of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. ¹²And Elisha saw it and he cried, "My father, my father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" And he saw him no more (II Kings 2:11-12 ESV).

Can you imagine the sights and sounds of such a miraculous event? Elisha's faith was richly informed by the divine encounter of God's majestic display. "Elijah, like our Lord, rose bodily from the earth into the upper region of the air, and was there lost to sight."¹⁴ This abrupt ascension would be fixated in Elisha's mind.

The warrior God, the captain of the armies of heaven, had come to retrieve his servant and catch him up into his war chariot. Elijah fought the good fight, and now his commander would take him out of the fray and into his heavenly reward.¹⁵

God came for Elijah with a glorious demonstration of His glory. Elijah was instantly transferred from this life confined by time and space into the life God has prepared in eternity past for those who know Him personally and intimately.

Elijah's transition from earth to heaven is a positive approval of his whole life. Elisha's transition is an inheritance of the first son's share. His ability to see the ascension and to use the mantle is his warrant for authoritative ministry. The community of believers, the sons of the prophets, discover a continuity of office which arches over the discontinuity of the passion of a generation.¹⁶

Snapshots of Elijah in the New Testament

After Moses (80 times), Abraham (73 times), and David (59 times) Elijah is the most frequently mentioned Old Testament figure in the New Testament (30 times). Here are a couple of instances in Matthew and James to ponder.

³And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.
⁴And Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I

¹⁴ Spence, H.D.M. and Joseph S. Exell, eds., *The Pulpit Commentary: I & II Kings* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 21.

¹⁵ Dillard, Raymond B., *Faith in the Face of Apostasy* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1999), 84.

¹⁶ Nelson, Richard, *Interpretation: First and Second Kings* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1987), 163.

will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah” (Matthew 17:3-4 ESV).

“Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth” (James 5:17 ESV).

CONCLUSION

Where Satan puts a period, God puts a comma. God always has the final say. His plan will prevail and His purposes will be accomplished. Elijah demonstrated a life of obedience and placed his trust in God’s daily provision. He encountered the mountain top experiences that become major spiritual markers in life. Elijah then came to know God at a much deeper level through the discomfort of the lowest point in his life. Just when Elijah had enough and wanted to die, God showed up and extended a bouquet of compassion through personal touch ministry.

God knows where you are and where you are heading. God knows your personal fears and your prominent frustrations. He is passionate about you and deeply loves you beyond measure. Whatever you are going through right now, remember that if God brings you to it, He will bring you through it. Nothing catches God by surprise. Has it occurred to you that nothing ever occurs to God? Entrust your life to His care and watch God shine His radiant light through your life.

POINTS FOR HOME

1. *“So he went and did according to the word of the LORD”* (I Kings 17:5).

God blesses obedience. If you are soaring for success and significance, choose to do life God’s way and measure your life by God’s standards. God’s definition of success and significance can be found in one word, obedience.

Obey what you know. Sometimes God will withhold unveiling His next assignment for your life until you obey what He has already revealed to you. Walk in the light God gives you. As you obey, He will show you the way!

Sing with me, “Trust and obey, for there’s no other way, to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.”¹⁷

¹⁷ “Trust and Obey” Lyrics by John H. Sammis (1846-1919)

2. *“How long will you go limping between two different opinions”* (1 Kings 18:21).

As a Christian, you can live in such obscurity and isolation by concealing your identity in Christ and appear to be a practical atheist. Your conversation and conduct can project the image of living as though God doesn't exist. Don't vacillate. Don't waiver. Embrace the passion of Joshua:

¹⁵And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD (Joshua 24:15 ESV).

No need to be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Solidify your love relationship with God through the saving relationship made possible through the atoning work of Jesus on the cross. You are designed by God and for God's glory. You are a child of the King, you have been adopted into God's forever family, and your name has been written in the Lamb's Book of Life. In Christ, you have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light. You are forgiven, redeemed, and sealed by the Holy Spirit. In Christ, you have a life-altering testimony to proclaim, a life-giving message to share, and a life-transforming ministry to extend.

3. *“And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”* (2 Kings 2:11).

Enoch and Elijah bypassed the doorway of death. They were translated from a lower key into a higher key. Both experienced the supernatural intervention of God and were personally ushered into His presence.

Everyone will spend forever somewhere. Where will you spend eternity? God has provided the plan called salvation, the place called heaven, and the person named Jesus to secure your forever!

¹¹And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:11-12 ESV).

Once you come to know Jesus personally, commit to making Jesus known intentionally. If you have become a follower of Jesus Christ, then say so! There is life on the other side of the grave. Let's take as many people to heaven as possible. May the whirlwind of God's redemptive activity envelope us and take us places we have never been in our love relationship with Him and in our compassion for others.