

1 Kings 18 “A Father’s Day Challenge: God’s Kind of Man”^{**2}

Main Idea: There’s a crying need today for God’s kind of man. What kind of man is that? God’s Word shows us in living color in 1 Kings 18, in the person of Elijah.

I. The Setting

- A. There was spiritual decay in Israel (12:28-33).
- B. There was political decay in Israel (16:29-33).
- C. There was famine in Israel (17:1).

II. The Showdown (chapter 18)

- A. The Lord sent Elijah to Ahab (1).
 - 1. It’s an evidence of God’s holiness.
 - 2. It’s an evidence of God’s mercy.
- B. The Lord used Elijah to get His people’s attention (2-40).
 - 1. Elijah confronted Ahab (2-19).
 - 2. Elijah confronted the people (20-24).
 - 3. Elijah demonstrated the folly of Baal (25-29).
 - 4. Elijah demonstrated the greatness of the Lord (30-39).
 - 5. Elijah demonstrated the seriousness of sin (40).
- C. The Lord answered Elijah’s prayer and sent rain (41-46).

III. The Significance

- A. We learn about God.
 - 1. He is the Supreme One.
 - 2. He deserves and desires our allegiance.
- B. We learn about God’s kind of man.
 - 1. He takes God seriously.
 - 2. He takes sin and atonement seriously.
 - 3. He inspires people around him to do the same.
- C. We learn about our need for the Savior.

The Challenge: We need men today like Elijah.

We’re doing a series in the sermon on the mount, but this morning, for Father’s Day, I want to read next week’s text, and then look today at an example of what Jesus calls for in this text.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:8; 1 Kings 18:37

The blessed person, says Jesus, has a heart that is unadulterated, uncontaminated, unswerving in its focus. Pure. Blessed are the *pure in heart*. This morning, for Father’s Day, we’re going to see an example of a man who was pure in heart, and what God did through that man to turn the hearts of a nation back to Him.

We need men today who will be God’s kind of men, and these kind of men need models who can lead us out of the haze of mediocrity into the light of God-intended living. Here’s an example of what I’m talking about.

Years ago the Prussian king Frederick the Great was widely known as an agnostic. General Von Zealand, by contrast, one of his most trusted officers, was a devout Christian. Thus it was that during a festive gathering the king began making crude jokes about Christ until everyone was rocking with laughter--all but Von Zealand, that is. Finally, he arose and addressed the king: "Sire, you know I have not feared death. I have fought and won 38 battles for you. I am an old man; I shall soon have to go into the presence of One greater than you, the mighty God who saved me from my sin, the Lord

^{**}Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

² For a previous look at this passage, see the message preached at WBC on 6/19/05.

Jesus Christ whom you are blaspheming. I salute you, sire, as an old man who loves his Savior, on the edge of eternity." The place went silent, and with a trembling voice the king replied, "General Von Zealand--I beg your pardon! I beg your pardon!" And with that the party quietly ended.³

When your heart is pure, you're not afraid to stand alone. There's a crying need today for this kind of man.

We turn our attention to Elijah in 1 Kings 18 this morning. 1 Kings 18 is a draw-a-line-in-the-sand kind of story. In 1 Kings 18 we see what God can do through just one man who's totally surrendered to Him. To be accurate 1 Kings 18 isn't really so much about Elijah as about the God of Elijah. Yet 1 Kings 18 can teach us how to be God's kind of man—and we desperately need those kind of men today in our homes, in our church, in our workplaces, in our community, and in our nation.

Let's examine God's Word looking for three things.

I. The Setting

When you study any passage in God's Word it's vital to give attention to the context. In 1 Kings 18 a showdown took place, but that showdown didn't just happen. Three factors led up to it.

A. There was spiritual decay in Israel (12:28-33). At the beginning of 1 Kings, David died and his son, Solomon, took the throne. Under Solomon the country expanded its borders. It also imported some very ungodly influences connected with the foreign women the king loved (700 wives and 300 concubines). Consequently, God judged Israel and the nation split in the days of Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

In chapter 12 we meet a man named Jeroboam. He was the first king of the apostate northern ten tribes. One of his first acts as king was to set up two golden calves, one at Bethel and the other in Dan, with this explanation (1 Kings 12:28), "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt."

Right down the line Jeroboam set up a rival religion up north. He built shrines, changed the standards of the priesthood to accept non-Levites, instituted festivals intended to rival the legitimate ones in Jerusalem, all without God's authorization.

And the people followed suit. The story of 1 Kings 12-17 is a dismal one telling the tragic account of Israel's willful turning from the Lord to idolatrous substitutes.

B. There was political decay in Israel (16:29-33). The slippery slope of sin always leads down. Jeroboam was a bad king, but 35 years after his death we meet another king that made Jeroboam look like a choir boy in comparison.

1 Kings 16:30-33 records: "Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him. He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him. He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him."

You read 1 Kings and discover there was great political instability in the northern kingdom. You don't find one good king in the whole lot, and repeatedly you see power struggles and assassination plots. For when a nation (especially God's chosen nation) turns from God, political decay is just a matter of time.

³ *Today In The Word*, August, 1989, p. 7.

In the Torah God plainly predicted that if His people turned from Him, He would send disasters their way, including plagues, diseases, drought, blight, mildew, and famine (see Deut 28:15ff.). And so He did.

C. There was famine in Israel (17:1). The intent? These curses were designed to get their attention and turn their hearts back to their Redeemer and Master.

God keeps His Word, and what He said He would do He did in Israel. He sent a man with a message to Ahab who stated in 1 Kings 17:1, “As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.” The man who delivered that message was our man, Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead.

We’ve seen the setting, now it’s time for the showdown...

II. The Showdown (chapter 18)

I must reiterate that the real hero in this story is the Lord Himself and in this chapter we see the Lord working. Granted, He worked through Elijah. Elijah was His instrument, His representative, the tool in His mighty hand, and consequently we can learn from Elijah how to be someone usable for God’s purposes. But never forget, Elijah was just a man like us, that what made him great was his great God who is the subject of three activities in this chapter.

A. The Lord sent Elijah to Ahab (1). “After a long time, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: ‘Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.’”

No rain for a month is bad—your grass starts looking brown. No rain for a whole year is worse—your crops don’t produce. But no rain for three years creates emergency conditions, and that’s what King Ahab had on his hands, an emergency. No rain, not even any dew for over 36 months (in fact, James 5:17 says it didn’t rain for three and one-half years).

It was then that the Lord Himself told Elijah to go and deliver a message to his king. This instruction highlights two attributes of our God.

1. *It’s an evidence of God’s holiness.* There’s only one true God. He is the One who formed the universe and formed the nation of Israel to be His instrument of bringing hope to the world. He is the Lord, *Yahweh*. Tragically, His own people forsook Him choosing to follow a pagan deity, Baal, the so-called fertility god (more about him in a moment). For three years now God made it perfectly clear how impotent this fertility god really was. He didn’t produce one ounce of rain.

The Lord could have simply made it start raining again, but He knows His fickle people would miss the point and wrongfully assume that Baal had recovered. No. Baal needed to be discredited, indeed *humiliated* once and for all. That’s why He sent Elijah to Ahab.

But it’s not just His holiness that He’s putting on display.

2. *It’s an evidence of God’s mercy.* Please note that God’s people had not yet repented. Granted, they were tired of no rain, but they still clung to Baal. Yet the Lord reached out to them. He would send them rain, not because they deserved it but because He is merciful. Indeed, He was going to give them more than rain. He was offering them *Himself*, again not because they were seeking Him or deserved Him, but because of His mercy. Oh, how indebted each of us are to His mercy, if we have eyes to see it.

Holy, yes. There’s no one holy like Him. But merciful too, willing to save, working to save the lost sinner.

The bulk of the chapter focuses on the Lord’s second activity...

B. The Lord used Elijah to get His people's attention (2-40). Elijah did five things to turn the hearts of his people back to God. Men, let's learn from him.

1. Elijah confronted Ahab (2-19).

Verse 2—"So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab." As the Lord commanded, so Elijah did. He went to Ahab. But at that point the narrative takes a twist and introduces us to Ahab's palace administrator, a man named Obadiah.

Listen to the account (verses 2b-6): "Now the famine was severe in Samaria, and Ahab had summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of his palace [note: this is not the prophet Obadiah; it's a common OT name meaning "servant of the LORD"]. (Obadiah was a devout believer in the LORD. While Jezebel was killing off the LORD's prophets, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves, fifty in each, and had supplied them with food and water.) Ahab had said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs and valleys. Maybe we can find some grass to keep the horses and mules alive so we will not have to kill any of our animals." So they divided the land they were to cover, Ahab going in one direction and Obadiah in another."

Why are we told about Obadiah? Notice the contrast between Ahab and Obadiah. Ahab is interested in saving horses and mules. Obadiah saves prophets. Commentator Dale Davis observes, "This is typical of kings and governments: the economy is everything."⁴ Obadiah is a believer in the Lord, and consequently he risks his life to protect God's servants from wicked Jezebel. It took guts to do what Obadiah did. And what Obadiah did illustrates just how bad it was in Israel. The leader of Israel is worried about his mules while his wife is killing off the Lord's prophets.

Elijah met Obadiah and told him to pass on a message to his boss. Verse 8—"Go tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'" It's time for a showdown. Obadiah's fearful that Elijah may not show and that Ahab will take it out on him, but Elijah emphasizes in verse 15, "As the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, I will surely present myself to Ahab today."

Obadiah passed on the message and the meeting took place later in the day. Listen to the exchange between Ahab and Elijah in verses 17-19:

Verse 17—"When he [Ahab] saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?" How wicked a man was Ahab? First, he does everything in his power to solve the water shortage except the right thing, that is, repent. And here he blame-shifts and places Israel's troubles on the one who is Israel's hope. But Elijah isn't intimidated.

Verse 18—"I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the LORD's commands and have followed the Baals." Now there's an act of courage, to confront to his face the king of your country about his sin.

We live in an age where people love to cite Jesus' words, "Judge not or you too will be judged (Matt 7:1). So it's none of my business what other people are doing. Jesus said not to judge." But that's ripping Jesus' words out of context. He also said that after we get the log out of our eye we will see clearly to remove the speck from our brother's eye. Being hypocritical is wrong, for sure, but so is ignoring sin in your brother's life when you can do something about it.

It didn't matter that Ahab was the king of the country. Elijah was doing business for the King of the universe and confronted Ahab head on. "You have violated the Lord's commands. You have followed the Baals. You are the leading cause of the mess our country's in."

⁴ Dale Ralph Davis, *The Wisdom and the Folly: 1 Kings*, p. 231.

But Elijah was just getting warmed up. Verse 19—“Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”

The time for the showdown had come. Elijah picked the place, *Mount Carmel*. He also picked the guest list, *all the Israelite people* and especially *the prophets* that had been leading God’s people astray.

If you look carefully you’ll see that Elijah is stacking the deck *against* the Lord. He chooses Mount Carmel. Why? Carmel is located nearly modern Haifa near the Mediterranean Sea. An ancient Egyptian record calls Mount Carmel “Holy Head,” suggesting it was a sanctuary. In the annals of the Assyrian King Shalmaneser III (841 BC), Mount Carmel appears as “the mountain of Baal of the promontory.” As Davis observes, “One might simply say, ‘Baal’s Bluff.’ Carmel may well have been ground sacred to Baal, and Elijah may have chosen it for that very reason.”⁵

In other words, Elijah was giving Baal and his prophets “home court advantage.” Most teams play better at home—the crowd is louder, the surroundings familiar, the incentive for victory higher. Elijah deliberately chooses Mount Carmel knowing that if Yahweh whips Baal on his own turf, just maybe his people will see their folly in following him.

Even the numbers make it look bad for Yahweh. Elijah makes sure Baal’s team has a full roster—450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah. On Yahweh’s team there’s just one player—Elijah doesn’t call for the 100 prophets Obadiah’s hiding in the caves. The odds don’t look good—850 to 1—not to a world that thinks numbers are the key to success. “But,” as Davis rightly says, “Yahweh’s power has never depended on how many cheerleaders he has.”⁶

A worldly-minded person might think that Elijah is ruining Yahweh’s chances of success. In a moment he will make it even harder for Yahweh when he drenches his sacrifice with water, not once but three times, before asking the Lord to burn up the sacrifice with fire. Wet stuff doesn’t burn, everybody knows that. What is Elijah doing, stacking the deck against the Lord?! But Elijah isn’t playing the odds. He knows what we often forget. When the Lord is on your side, home field advantage isn’t an issue. Nor is the size of your army. Nor are the human odds. In the words of the apostle Paul, “If God is for us who can be against us (Rom 8:31)?”

2. *Elijah confronted the people (20-24).*

Verses 20-21—“So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing.”

Elijah picked an interesting word here. *Waver*. It’s the same Hebrew word translated “danced” in verse 26. It portrays instability and indecision. How long will God’s people keep changing their dance partner? Who is it going to be, *Yahweh* or *Baal*? Make up your mind. Elijah isn’t insinuating both are legitimate options, for there’s only one true God—all others are illegitimate rivals.

You may be wondering, “Why did the Israelites go after Baal in the first place? What was so appealing that they left the true God for this pagan deity?”

⁵ Davis, p. 237.

⁶ Davis, p. 237.

That's a good question, for the fact is, Israel struggled with the lure of Baal for centuries. And why? For the same basic reasons people today waver between the Lord and cheap substitutes. Commentator Dale Davis suggests the following factors...⁷

For starters, the king and queen promoted it. Queen Jezebel was a devoted advocate of Baal and his female cohort Asherah. Davis observes, "Power tends to be persuasive. Israelites who wanted to 'get on' were well-advised to align themselves with the religious preferences of the power elite." Is it any different today?

Secondly, there was the appeal of tradition. When Israel first entered the promised land she confronted Baal. That was over 500 years before Elijah. Baal worship was no recent, untried fad, but a centuries' old belief system and way of life.

Third, Baal worship offered an *appeal of relevance*, again to use Davis' words. Baal was the fertility god, the one who blessed man and soil with fruitfulness. He can meet your felt needs, so the Baal evangelists said. Baal makes your crops grow, causes your wife to give birth to healthy children, and protects your home from dangerous storms. What could be more relevant to any farmer living in the land of Canaan than a deity that offers fruitfulness?

Finally, Baalism offered an appeal to sensuality. Davis explains, "Sexual rites were built into the liturgy. Baal allowed you to serve him with all your glands. What did it matter if one's marriage was rotten, one's wife uninteresting, one's life generally dull? There was always a 'holy' whore to be had at the Baal shrine."⁸ Yes, for these and other reasons Baal had the ability to fascinate and charm, a god tailor made for the wicked hearts of wayward Israelites.

But that misses the point, doesn't it? The issue isn't whether you like a certain kind of god. The issue is whether the god you worship really exists. The crux of the matter, as Elijah put it, is whether the real God is Baal or Yahweh.

Consequently, Elijah proposed an experiment to find out which "God" deserves our allegiance/ Verses 23-24—"Get two bulls for us. Let them [the prophets of Baal] choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire—he is God." Then all the people said, "What you say is good."

Finally, the people speak! Elijah's suggestion makes sense, doesn't it? Why would you follow a "God" who doesn't have the power to protect his reputation?

3. *Elijah demonstrated the folly of Baal (25-29).*

Verse 25—"Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire." Again, watch how Elijah continues to stack the deck against the Lord. He lets the people get the bull for him—this will be no trick bull. If the Lord doesn't act Elijah will look a fool. He also lets the prophets of Baal win the coin toss—"you go first," he says.

Verse 26—"So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. "O Baal, answer us!" they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made."

For hour after hour the prophets pleaded with their deity, "Hear us, O great Baal! Hear us!" But nothing happened. I chuckle at what Elijah did next. Apparently, he had a sense of humor.

⁷ Dale Ralph Davis, *The Wisdom and the Folly: 1 Kings*, pp. 234-5.

⁸ Davis, p. 235.

Verse 27—“At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” That’s the problem when man creates a god. He ends up with a god just like himself, one that gets tired, or distracted, or busy doing something else and you have to wait in line to get his help.

Verses 28-29—“So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.”

You say, “I can’t imagine anyone being so foolish as to believe that you can bother and badger God to get his attention.”

Really? Some of us aren’t that different from the prophets of Baal. Oh, we’re more refined. We don’t gash ourselves, but we hold to the same assumption on which the Baal prophets operated: *God will do things for us if we passionately do religious things for Him.* Davis hits the nail on the head:

“Do we not have our own ‘evangelical Baalism’? Christians and churches in the west seem to believe that God will surely work if only we...spend longer in personal devotions and more time in private prayer; belong to a home Bible study group or form a peer accountability group; get more people involved in our visitation evangelism program; attend week-end marriage enrichment seminars or hold a singles’ retreat; start neighborhood clubs for kids or early morning men’s prayer breakfasts or provide mothers’ morning out; hold more missions conferences and increase ‘faith promise’ giving; or add a spring Bible conference; solicit someone to direct the 5th and 6th grade choir; become involved in a parachurch ministry on a local college campus or go on a short term mission trip to Jamaica or take the youth on a ski trip to Colorado; get a church bus ministry off the ground and spearhead the start of a Christian school...while spending quality time with spouses and families. All this Christian busyness is as exhausting as Baal worship, even minus the gashes. Most of these are not illegitimate activities (I am not opposing, e.g., most time spent in Bible study or missions trips), but might an illegitimate rationale drive them? Are these means of grace or gimmicks designed to manipulate, impress, or stir up God? You may not be a prophet of Baal, but you may think like one. If only we..., then God will...”⁹

Isn’t that what Jesus warned against in Matthew 6:7-9? He said that pagans think that God hears them because they impress him. But they misunderstand the truth about God. He already knows what we need, and He’ll meet our needs if we’ll come to Him in simple, childlike faith. Like Elijah did in the next scene...

4. *Elijah demonstrated the greatness of the Lord (30-39).* Note the first thing Elijah did to correct his people’s thinking about God. Verse 30—“Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” They came to him, and he *repaired the altar* of the LORD, which was in ruins.” Elijah knew what his people had forgotten. There’s only one way to approach the living God. It’s through a blood sacrifice. It’s by means of the altar.

That’s why Jesus came, my friend. You can’t reach the true God on your own merit. You need to have your sins covered before you can enter God’s presence. That’s why Jesus died on the cross, to provide an atonement for sinners. You must come to the altar—which is Christ.

⁹ Davis, pp. 239-40.

Verse 31—“Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, “Your name shall be Israel.” How many stones? Twelve. In Elijah’s day the twelve tribes were split into two nations, but God saw them as one. They were still His people, one people.

After repairing the altar, Elijah dug a trench around it. Then he cut the bull into pieces, placed it on the altar, positioned the wood, and gave instructions to do the unthinkable.

“Pour water on it,” he said, and they did. “Do it again,” he said. “And again.” The sacrifice was saturated and the trench overflowing. Then, in contrast with the verbosity of the Baal prophets, Elijah called on God with a simple, straightforward request.

Verses 36-37—“O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”

Elijah couldn’t change his people. Only God can change the human heart, and that’s what Elijah asked the Lord to do. *Answer me, Lord, so everyone will know You are turning Your people’s hearts back to Yourself.*

Verse 38—“Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.” In athletic terminology, the Lord “ran up the score.” He not only burned up the offered bull, but consumed the stones, the dirt, and even the water! There was no question who won the contest.

Verse 39—“When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, ‘The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!’”

It wasn’t the first time Israel had seen fire like this. At the very first service in the tabernacle (Lev 9:24), “Fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the fat portions on the altar...” Likewise at the first service in Solomon’s temple (2 Chron 7:1), “Fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices...” In both of those instances the fire was God’s way of saying, “I’m listening. I’ve accepted your sacrifice. You can come to Me, for I am God and there is none other.”

That was His message in Elijah’s day. As in ours. He is God. Worship Him alone. But Elijah wasn’t done, not yet...

5. *Elijah demonstrated the seriousness of sin (40).*

Verse 40—“Then Elijah commanded them, “Seize the prophets of Baal. Don’t let anyone get away!” They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there.”

You say, “Okay, Elijah proved his point, but this is being a little vindictive, isn’t it?”

No, this has nothing to do with personal revenge, but obedience. God’s Law was clear. The penalty for wooing the people of God to worship other gods in Israel was the death sentence (Deut 7:2-6; 13:13-15; 17:2-5). Elijah is simply carrying out a law that had been on the books for centuries. If we have trouble with Elijah’s actions, the problem isn’t Elijah. It’s us. We just don’t get it.

Davis illustrates, “Red army troops were overrunning Berlin in the spring of 1945. Some of these troops were Russian peasants unfamiliar with amenities of modern life. Bathroom plumbing mystified them. They sometimes used toilets to wash and peel potatoes. Since they didn’t know what bathrooms were for and couldn’t locate

outhouses, they left excrement and urine everywhere. A Red soldier might stare at a German toilet, but he just didn't get it."¹⁰

Then Davis concludes, "That is the way Christians too often look at verse 40. We read it and go into moral hysterics. We simply don't get it. The problem is not with Elijah or the Old Testament but with us. We react the way we do because, in our subliminal view, apostasy is not that big a deal. We simply don't understand Yahweh's violence against rebellion in his people. He uses surgery not breath mints on cancer. The problem is not God's lack of refinement but our lack of sanctification. If our thinking were holy we would understand such texts."¹¹

God performs one final activity in the story which, for the sake of time, I'll merely mention before considering some application.

C. The Lord answered Elijah's prayer and sent rain (41-46). Elijah prayed, and prayed, and prayed. Seven fervent prayers, followed by one magnificent rainstorm.

You say, "Fascinating story, but what does it have to do with us?" Plenty.

III. The Significance

The story teaches us about three vital subjects.

A. We learn about God. Two unmistakable realities...

1. *He is the Supreme One.* Baal is no match for Him. Nor is any other so called deity in that day or ours. There is only one God who is the Creator and Redeemer.

2. *He deserves and desires our allegiance.* The Lord is not pleased when people who say they believe in Him refuse to put Him first in their lives. There is none like Him and there should be none like Him in our lives.

Hear Elijah's ultimatum once again, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him."

B. We learn about God's kind of man. On this Father's Day, let's take heed to Elijah's example. Men, families are in trouble today. Churches are in trouble. Our nation is in trouble. What's needed? Men like Elijah. Today we've seen the difference one man can make, just *one man*, if that man is God's kind of man.

You say, "What's involved in being God's kind of man? Give it to me straight."

Okay, three commitments...

1. *He takes God seriously.* The God who withheld rain for three years and the God who consumed an altar with fire from heaven IS NOT interested in a token hour a week from our lives. He wants it all, and indeed, His kind of man gives Him his all.

2. *He takes sin and atonement seriously.* Sin is our biggest problem, atonement our biggest need. "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

God doesn't use perfect men, for there are none. But He does call us to be men (and women) who take sin seriously by taking seriously the atonement He provided at the cross.

Are you taking our sin seriously? God's kind of man doesn't minimize it. He admits it. He repents. He comes to the cross of Christ for cleansing. He receives forgiveness, and leaves his sin behind, and begins to live the righteous life that makes much of God.

3. *He inspires people around him to do the same.* God used Elijah to get a nation's attention. God's kind of man has that kind of effect on people.

¹⁰ Davis, p. 244.

¹¹ Davis, p. 244.

Dale Davis tells the story about a husband and wife that went to see their pastor, William Grimshaw, in the 18th century. “A married couple in the village of Haworth had made high claims to holiness but their pastor harbored doubts about the genuineness of their professions, especially since rumors reached him of the couple’s tight-fistedness and hard-heartedness. Grimshaw borrowed a beat-up weaver’s jacket and cap and, disguised as a destitute beggar, arrived at his parishioners’ house pleading for a night’s lodging. The man refused. The ‘beggar’ pressed his case, citing his need and destitution. The man was unyielding—no help would be extended. With that Grimshaw whipped off his disguise and lectured the fellow about covetousness and callousness. Why such extreme pastoral measures? Because sometimes only extreme measures can flush out the whole truth.”¹²

It’s easy to say you believe in God, but a man of God *does*. He takes God seriously. He takes sin and atonement seriously. And He inspires those around him to do the same. Hear Elijah, “No more wavering. If the Lord is God, then *follow Him!*”

The truth is, we cannot be God’s kind of man on our own. Nor woman, nor child. There’s one more subject in this story, as in every Old Testament story.

C. We learn about our need for the Savior. This story says, “We need a Savior,” and the New Testament says, “He has come. His name is Jesus.”

The Challenge: We need men today like Elijah.

I close with Elijah’s prayer: “Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”

¹² Davis, p. 229.