

GOD'S GENTLE POWER NO. 3498

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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“And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake, a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice. And so it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What are you doing here, Elijah?”
1 Kings 19:11-13.

ELIJAH was a man of like passions with ourselves. We all know that when we have passed through any great excitement of high joy, there almost always comes following, a corresponding reaction and depression. Elijah had gone to the top of Carmel and had pleaded his cause and the rain floods had come in answer to his prayer. He had taken the prophets of Baal, and had slain them, and gained a glorious victory for his God—and so full of excitement was he that he girded his loins as though he had been a young man and ran before the chariot of Ahab, like the royal footmen! It was almost inevitable that after an excitement so high, and strong, that he should be desponding and depressed in spirits, and we find that he was so depressed. If the like should ever happen to any of you, my Brothers and Sisters, count it no strange thing, nor suppose that some extraordinary trial has happened unto you! It is but a physical result from physical causes. The mind has operated upon the body. It has strung the bow too tightly and now, unless the string is relaxed, there is a danger of its breaking altogether. Now as Elijah was a man of like passions with us, we may conclude that the way in which God dealt with him is very much the way in which He would deal with us. With a similar case, and the same physician, we may look for the same treatment! As, therefore, the Lord spoke to Elijah not by earthquake, nor wind, nor fire, but by the still small voice, so in all probability will He speak to us.

It may be—it is just possible it may be—that here, tonight, there is some worker for God very much in the same condition as Elijah. You, my dear Brother, have been working for God in a neighborhood where you have met with little but opposition and disappointment—and you have almost resolved that you will go away from the place. “The soil is hard,” you say, “and breaks the plowshare. Shall oxen plow upon a rock? It is in vain for me to continue my labor there,” you think, and you have come here, tonight, with this thought uppermost—that you have labored in vain and spent your strength for nothing! Hear you the Word of the Lord this night! He speaks not to you by any earthquake of judgment with which He means to visit you, neither by any fiery words of severe rebuke, but, perhaps, through me. This evening He may speak with a still small voice that shall just meet your case and send you back to your labor! Brother, will you play the Jonah? Will you refuse to go to the great city—to Nineveh? Remember there are worse places than Nineveh! He that goes out of the path that God marks for him may yet come to be at the bottom of the sea with Jonah, with the weeds wrapped about his head! You go at your own cost, remember, if you go away from the post of duty, however arduous. Don't attempt the risk! But thus says the Lord to you, “It may be you have not labored in vain as you have supposed.” Elijah knew nothing of the seven thousand men that God had in reserve. You don't know what converts God has given you. They are scattered up and down the world—perhaps some precious ones who owe their salvation instrumentally to you—and could they all stand before you—you would blush with shame at the thought of leaving a harvest field that has really been so prolific, though not in your sight! Go back to your work, for the Lord has blessed you! Play not the fool by deserting the post where He will yet give you honor!

But then the voice told Elijah also that God would punish the people who had treated him so badly—that He would send Hazeel with his sharp sword and Jehu, to mow the ground a second time. And oh, you true servant of God, the Lord will not allow you to be rejected! If they have rejected you, they have rejected your God, also. If you have been faithful to

His Truth, leave the matter to Him—go back to your work! And one other word there was to Elijah. He was to go back to anoint his successor. If Elijah flees and if Elijah, at length, is taken up to Heaven, yet Elisha shall succeed him! Perhaps there may be a Brother here who is in the state I have described who does not know what God has in store for him. You are to call into the Christian ministry a Brother who shall do greater than you have—you shall light a greater candle than your own! Oh, what joy Elijah must have had when he felt there would be someone to take up his work! You have not, my dear Brother, yet called out for your Master the man the Lord means to call. What a happy man he must have been who was the means of the conversion of Whitefield or Jonathan Edwards, or some great missionary of the Cross. You may be that, in that little village—in that back slum. Go back, then! What are you doing here, Elijah? What are you doing here? With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? The Master's voice speaks to you! Go to your closet and get fresh strength from on high, and then go back to your difficulties—go back to your self-denials, go back to all your service with a good and true heart. “Fear not you worm, Jacob, I will help you, says the Lord.” Arise, you worm, and thresh the mountain, for, “I will make you a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth.” I have delivered the message. It is to somebody—I know not to whom in this place—but I have delivered it.

But now the drift, the great aim of the sermon at this time is to speak to the unconverted. With them I dealt also this morning. [See Sermon #1010, Volume 17—LIGHT FOR THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS—read/download over 3500 CHS sermons free of charge at www.spurgeongems.org] I feel persuaded God will bless it. Now, this evening, let us have another word with them. We will read the text again. “Behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.” Our first observation is that—

I. POWERFUL MEANS MAY ALTOGETHER FAIL TO IMPRESS SOME MINDS.

Let us think a while. *Terrible judgments appear as if they must convert sinners*, yet there may be those here, and there certainly are those in many places who have passed through a whole series of judgments and are rather hardened than softened by them! You may have been, dear Friend, in a storm of sin. You may have been just barely washed upon a rock and escaped as with the skin of your teeth. You have also passed through a time of cholera. You have been in a city smitten with the plague. You have lived in a house where others have sickened and died—and at those times you did pause a little and you made some good resolutions—but they all ended in smoke. And here you are, still a proof that God is not in the earthquake, nor yet in the wind, nor yet in the fire! It may be you have suffered a great deal of personal sickness. Do I not know some here present who have been laid very low with fever—who have been the subjects of very frightful accidents and brought to the borders of the grave? These things were loud voices to you, but you did not hear them! They were God's terrors sent to fetch you to Himself, but they failed to do it. You remained just where you were, perhaps worse instead of better—for when the sun shines on wax, it melts it, but if it shines on clay, it hardens it—and so God's judgments have had just that affect on you. You are hardened, instead of softened by them! Men are not converted by judgments. They may submit themselves in a false way, but power and displays of terror do not win the heart.

Again, *we naturally expect that men will be converted during the times of earnest religious excitement*. Some are brought in, but there are certain persons who do not seem to be affected by revivals. When others bow like the corn that waves in the wind, they stand stiff and firm and are altogether untouched. It is a solemn thing when a season of Divine Grace is not a season of Grace to us. When we lie, like Gideon's fleece, all dry, while all around us is wet with the dew of Heaven, yet with some it is just so—gracious excitements and spiritual revivals do not touch them! The Lord is not in the wind, and the Lord is not in the earthquake, and the Lord is not in the fire—at least to them. *The same is the case with powerful sermons*. I do not mean by this, “eloquent sermons,” so called. “Eloquent sermons” usually seem to me to be the least eloquent things in the world, for eloquence means speaking from the heart—and I cannot believe that the fine periods we sometimes hear read ever spring anywhere but from the head! But I mean when a sermon is full of Gospel Truth, when it is pertinently put, when it is pathetically urged, when the heart of the preacher is warmed and his eyes overflow with tears. When you see a congregation melted, you say to yourself, “Surely that must touch So-and-So's heart.” And then there comes a passage in the sermon that seems so touching that the very rocks might weep and the stones might break, but oh, when it is all over, it is all over and it is forgotten, too! And to many a hearer the Lord is not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire. And so it is also *in the dealing out of the judgments of God in the ministry*. It is the duty of the Christian pastor, if he would make full proof of his ministry, to warn men of the results of sin—to tell them that there is a judgment—that for every idle word they speak they will have to account. We ought continually to declare that for every transgression there shall be a recompense of reward. But ah, dear Hearer, though we have

read books and heard sermons that were full of the terrors of the Lord, which we thought surely would move men, yet there are men who care nothing whatever about the wrath to come, nor the fire that is kindled for the wicked, nor the dreadful terrors of Divine Justice! The Lord is not in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, as far as they are concerned. The means that appear to be powerful are powerless to them—and when you think they will surely turn and repent—they harden their necks and go on in their sin! This, abundant facts could prove.

But the next observation shall be that *sometimes a much gentler force effects what could not otherwise have been achieved*. Many have been converted to God by the still small voice whom no wind, though it rose to a hurricane, no earthquake, though it tore the world to its center, and no fire, though it licked up the forests, could ever move! A gentle word has done it. Sometimes that still small voice has come to us by apparently very, very inadequate means. It is astonishing what little things God will use when He pleases to do so. He wanted to soften the heart of that rough Prophet Jonah, and He sent a worm and a gourd, and they did it! He would bring Peter to repentance and He bade a rooster to crow. It was a strange preacher, but it was as good as a dean of a cathedral to the Apostle! Means may seem to be absolutely ridiculous, yet God makes use of the things that are not, as though they were! I remember to have heard the story of a man, a blasphemer, profane, an atheist, who was converted singularly by a sinful action of his. He had written on a piece of paper, "God is nowhere," and bade his child read it, for he would make his child an atheist, too! And the child spelt it, "God is n-o-w h-e-r-e- God is *now here*." It was a truth, instead of a lie, and the arrow pierced the man's own heart! I remember one who had lived a life of gross iniquity who stepped into Exeter Hall and found Christ there. It was not my sermon, however, that God blessed—it was only this—I read the hymn, "Jesus, lover of my soul." Just those words touched his heart. "Jesus, lover of my soul," he said to himself. "Did Jesus love my soul? Then how is it that I could have lived as I have done?" And that Truth of God broke him down! God works great results by little things. A little hymn learned at the Sunday School is sung at home by a little prattler, and the heart of the father is softened by it. One little sentence uttered by a friendly visitor reaches a mother's conscience and impresses her heart. Yes, and God can use the quiet of the evening, or the stillness of the night, or a flash of lightning, or a peal of thunder, or a dewdrop, or a little flower—He can use anything He wills to bring His banished home! Often does the Spirit speak thus with a still small voice.

But, beloved Brothers and Sisters, *the Holy Spirit also speaks to men* without any means at all. With no outward agency whatever, the still small voice will come. Oh, how I wish it would come tonight to some sitting here listening to the preacher! I wish you could forget—forget the congregation and forget everything except yourself and your God. We have known persons who have been walking in the fields, thoughtless and careless. All around has been still and they have suddenly *thought*—and thought is often the avenue to prayer! We have known some passing through a country churchyard, and though no text upon the tomb has touched them, yet the very sight of those green hillocks has been a sermon to them! Yes, and men have walked through orchards and the leaves have said to them, "We all fade as a leaf." Or sitting in their chamber, or lying on their bed, wide awake, and the old times have come over again. The man that lives to be an old sinner recollects the little prayer he said at his mother's knee. The soldier that has been at battle recollects the teaching of the Sunday school, though he has passed now his 50th year—and he says, "I wish I could blot out all that which lies between my mother's kiss and this hour. It has been a dark, dark season." Only the *thought* has done it. God's Spirit did but touch the secret spring and the soul was moved aright. The still small voice has done it! Oh, how satisfied I would be if the Lord would not give me a single soul in this place by my preaching, but if He would but do it Himself! What does it matter as long as they are saved? He does put honor upon His preached Word and He brings in the most of men thereby—but as long as they are brought in and He gets glory—what will it matter as to the means He uses? May He still speak to you by His still small voice! I commend to Him in my earnest prayer some of you who are very familiar with my voice and to whom it is as useless as familiar! You will never be brought to Christ by me! I fear God will never give me your souls! For these many years I have labored for them, and they have not been given me. Well, good Master, call them by some other means, only bring them and grant that this very night their conscience may be awakened by thoughts which You, Yourself, shall suggest, and they may come to You.

You see, then, the first two points, that the most powerful means will often fail, and that the least means may be successful. Yes, and the Holy Spirit may work without means altogether! And now once again—

II. WHEN GOD SPEAKS TO MEN, HIS VOICE IS ALWAYS LINKED WITH PERSONAL ADDRESS.

Look at the text. What says the still small voice? "What are you doing here, *Elijah!*" There was the man named. It was no general statement about Prophets who proved faithless, or about Believers who grew doubtful, or about men of

courage that played the coward. Oh, no, it was, “What are *you* doing here, Elijah?” It is a mark of God’s Spirit that when He speaks to men *He speaks to them personally*. Just take a case or two. You remember Jesus Christ going through Jericho, preaching as He went. He meant to call that rich publican who had climbed the tree. In what way did the effectual voice of Grace do it? He said, “Zaccheus.” It was not a general observation about people up in trees that were to come down—but “Zaccheus”—that is the man! “Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide in your house.” The personal call did it! And Mary, when she did not know her Master, and was in the garden, and thought He was the gardener—what was it that opened her eyes to know her Lord, and made her say, “Rabboni”? It was no word except that He said to her, “Mary.” The tone in which He said it, and the name—the old familiar name, Mary—that did the work! And when the Savior meant to break Simon Peter’s heart, and yet to assure him that he was forgiven, how did He speak to him? Three times He said to him, “Simon, son of Jonas. Simon, son of Jonas, Do you love Me?” This is how God speaks to men. And when out of the open heavens Jesus spoke to the maddened persecutor who was on the road to Damascus, but whom He meant to make His elect Apostle to the Gentiles, how did He speak but thus? “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.”

Now here I cannot speak except to the crowd and the congregation, and though one labors hard to make a description apt and plain, and to fit the cap to all wearers’ heads, yet men slip through in the crowd! They will not take it to themselves, nor can we make them. But when the Holy Spirit speaks with the still small voice, it is always, “*You* are the man. *You* are the man. *You* are the sinner condemned. You are the sinner invited to mercy. You are the sinner that shall be received by Grace.” Believe, and you shall be saved, for He loves you and gave Himself for you. May the Lord send us such personal work as this! I know every Christian here, if he could state his experience, would tell you that the Word of God never came with power to his soul until it came right to him as though he were the only sinner, and the Gospel were meant for him above all others. Oh, for an arrow from the great Archer’s bow to go right into you, that, like a stag that is smitten by the archer, you might retire into the glades of the forest, to weep alone and die alone, unless the hand that sent in the dart shall gently draw it out and heal the wound that it has made! Oh, for this personal conviction!—conviction of sin, of righteousness and of judgment laid home to each man’s heart! It must be so, or you cannot be saved. But now another Truth of God is suggested by the text. It is this, that—

III. WHEN GOD’S STILL SMALL VOICE SPEAKS TO MEN, PERSONALLY, THE SUBJECT IS THEMSELVES AND THEIR ACTIONS.

“What are you doing here, Elijah?” This was the voice of God. May the same voice come tonight to some here about their actions. Let me take the text and use it to you. What are you doing? What are you doing? What have you been doing? You are getting on in life. What have you done? Mischief I fear. What good have you done? You were made to glorify God—that was the end for which you were created. Have you glorified Him? You have been fed by Him, clothed by Him. Have you made Him any return? What have you done? No good—much evil. What are you doing now? Sitting here and listening. Yes, but how are you treating the Word of God? Are you receiving it? Do you hear the voice of mercy, and do you reject it, or will you accept it? What are you going to do? What are you going to do tonight when you get out of this place? How will the last hours of the precious Sabbath be spent? And tomorrow, and the next day—what are you planning? Is there anything holy in it, anything noble in it, anything that will be glorifying to God? Do you never take stock? Spiritual trader, do you never take stock? Mariner upon the sea of life, do you never consult your chart? Do you never heave the lead, or take your bearings? Are you so mad as to sail on in the fog and not care what becomes of so goodly a vessel as your soul? Oh, pause. What have you done? What are you doing? What will you do? Especially what will you do in the swellings of Jordan? Unsaved, what will you do when the death-sweat stands upon your brow—when the cold beaded drops are there and the marrow is frozen, and the strong man gathers up his feet in the bed for the last dread struggle—what will you do without a Savior? What will you do when the trumpet rings through Heaven and earth, and sea, and men live again, and you, with them, stand before the Judgment Seat, and amidst the rolling thunder the Book is opened and your sins stand there unforgiven? What will you do? What will you do? Oh, that you may never be brought to this, but be brought to Christ, tonight! Do you notice how the word was put? It was not, “What are you doing?” only, but, “What are you doing—Elijah?” And there are some special persons whose sins receive an aggravation by the very fact that they are what they are. I know him—what he was of old. What a sweet child. How his mother loved him and loved to hear him sing, and pray, too, in his way. What happiness he was to his parents! Ah, they fell asleep and died, and ‘tis a mercy they did, else perhaps your course would have brought them to the grave with grief! What are you

doing, child of many prayers and many tears? What are you doing? Are you still an enemy to your mother's God? Do you still blaspheme the name your father loved? You have been hearers of the Gospel, some of you, almost ever since you can remember! Your mother carried you in her arms to God's House, and sometimes conscience has pricked you, and the Word has gone through, and through, and through—but you have resisted it. What has led you, I pray, to remain still what you are? What infernal power has helped you to steel your heart? In what fire has your soul been annealed to make it hard as adamant stone? O Soul, Soul, sinful Soul, delaying, procrastinating Soul! What are you doing in such a state after so much love and mercy?

And I might speak to some who promised fair many times and who have been almost persuaded to be Christians—and yet are still out of God, and out of Christ—and on the borders of destruction! What are you doing here? Perhaps there is someone who has come to London lately, that in the country was an observer of religion, apparently sincere, but oh, this wicked London! You have given up those good habits. You have got into bad company and oh, I shall not tell what you have done, but I hope you will confess it to God in your own secrecy. But how dare you do it? How could you do it? Oh, how could you do it? How could you be a prodigal?—you, your father's dearly beloved, taught so well, with so much light, with such a tender conscience—how could you sin? Why the very tramps of the street might be ashamed of you, for they never knew much better! Those that go into foulest sin might condemn you, for with their bad street training, educated perhaps in the kennel—who wonders that they are what they are? But for you, it is a wonder! The angel, Lucifer, Son of the Morning, fell down to the deeps of Hell. You have fallen into sin from the side of the pulpit, fallen from a Christian parent's side and almost from inside the Church of God! Perhaps I speak to some who have belied their Baptism, have given up the profession that they made when they there were buried with Christ, who have belied the sacramental Table where they once sat and professed to eat His bread and drink of His cup and to be partakers of His body and of His blood. You have crucified the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame! “What are you doing here, Elijah?” My, and you used to preach, too! You used to preach to others, and now what are you? You were once, as it were, a priest at the altar of God, and now you are a priest at the altars of Baal! God have mercy upon you and may His still small voice now speak in your soul!

There was one point in the question which was asked, which was this—“What are you doing *here?*” Each man, when he is called to search himself by the Spirit of God, must remember his surroundings. I thank God, my Brothers and Sisters, that you are Hearers—not to commend you that you may be Pharisees, because you happen to go to a place of worship I do—nevertheless, praise God that you are here. When the sick lay around the Pool of Bethesda, there was some hope of their being healed. You are favored in being where Christ is preached, but what are *you doing here?* Did you come to find a jest? Did you come to hear one who was much talked of in your hearing? Did you come from curiosity? Did you come from a worse motive? Well, never mind, but what are you doing *now?* Are you willing to listen to God's voice? Will you now yield? He who is around you now, as with the bands of a man, would cast the bands of His love, who was given for you, and to His altar bind you fast. 'Tis but to yield and surely it must be hard to resist when it is Divine Mercy that plies you, and Eternal Love that persuades you. “Come unto Me,” says Jesus! “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Will you not come? “Whoever will, let him come and take the Water of Life freely.” Will you not come? Oh, that your answer to the question, “What are you doing here?” might be, tonight, “I am doing *this* here—I am laying my sins on Jesus. I am confessing the past. I am asking Grace for the future. I am looking to the wounds of Him who was cleft as a rock is cleft that I may shelter in Him! I am saying, ‘God be merciful to me, a sinner.’” May God be praised if such is the case! But I must close with the last observation, and that is that—

IV. WHERE THE LORD DOES SPEAK WITH A STILL SMALL VOICE TO MEN PERSONALLY ABOUT THEIR CONDUCT AND THEIR SIN, IT IS ALWAYS EFFECTUAL.

You notice what Elijah did. He first wrapped his mantle about his face—he became subdued and awe-stricken—full of reverence. Oh, it is a great thing when a sinner is willing to wrap his face when he is confounded, and say, “I cannot defend my course. I am guilty.” We know that if at our judgment seat a man pleads guilty, he is punished. But at the Judgment Seat of the Gospel, whoever pleads guilty is forgiven! Wrap your face! Oh, but you thought that you were better than most—you went to church and you went to the meeting house, the chapel, regularly—and were you not better than others? Ah, wrap your face! Your church attendance and your chapel attendance have only increased your responsibilities if you have rejected the Savior! Take the mantle of self-humiliation and wrap it about your face now! Say, with the leper, “Unclean! Unclean!” Where you are in the Tabernacle, where you are, never mind where you stand or sit, I

commend to you the publican's prayer. Say it now, and God help you, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Did you say it from your heart? Go home. You shall go home to your house justified, for he that humbles himself shall be exalted!

But you must notice that while Elijah thus wrapped his face in reverence, he stood still and listened. It was a still small voice and the Prophet was attending. No other sound was heard but this, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" But he stood. I doubt not that that man of iron stood and wept, and seemed to say in his soul, "Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears." "He that has ears to hear, let him hear." Oh, be very attentive to the voice of God's Spirit! If you have only a half of a good thought, take care of it. It may be the beginning of another one. Oh, if you have only just a little leaning, thank God for it. Remember Christ does not quench the smoking flax—don't quench it, yourself. "Quench not the Spirit." Oh, I have known times when I would have given my whole life to have had one tear of repentance. Can you repent now? Can you long after God now? Oh, cherish that longing! Yield to the Spirit of God. Don't be like iron to the fire that needs to have the blast furnace on it before it will melt, but oh, be like wax to the flame, like cork on the water that moves up and down with every influence! God make you so. It needs a strong wind to shake the oak, but the fern that grows under it waves its branches at every breath of the zephyr. May you be just as sensitive as that! Bow before the Spirit's influence. The Lord make you to do it for His name's sake.

And then, best of all and last of all, the Prophet was not only reverent, humble and attentive, but he was obedient. God told him to go and do this and that. He never questioned, but away he went and executed the Divine Commission, and until the time when he was taken up in the chariot of fire, Elijah never quailed again. The still small voice had made him twice a man and steeled him once again to bear all that he had to endure in his checkered life. He was obedient to the heavenly vision. Will you be obedient tonight? "If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land." May God make you to be obedient. But you say, "What is His command, then? What is the work of God—this great work that God commands?" This is the one Gospel precept, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Or take it in the shape in which the Master put it, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved." To believe is to trust. To be baptized is to be immersed into Christ—immersed in water upon profession of faith, for so it is put—and I dare not give you half the Gospel. So it is put, "He that with his heart believes, and with his mouth makes confession of Him, shall be saved." Don't leave out any part of the Divine Command! Be obedient to the whole of it. "Believe and be baptized," or as the Apostle put it, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you." May God grant that you may be obedient to this. The great command is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." Trust in Him—in His Substitutionary work for sinners. He bore their guilt and was punished in their place, and whoever trusts in what He did—in a word, *trusts in Him*—is saved. God grant you to do it. I leave it to His still small voice to work this blessed result. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:

1 KINGS 18:17-40.

We shall read at this time the story of Elijah's challenge to the priests of Baal. Remember that there had been three years without dew or rain. The whole country was dried up till it seemed to be a desert and all were famished for lack of water.

Verses 17, 18. *And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Are you he 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 the LORD, and you have followed Baalim.* It is the way of men to cast the blame of their trouble not upon their sin and upon themselves, but upon those who have warned them! Mark Elijah's holy boldness. "I have not troubled Israel, but you."

19. *Now therefore send and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.* He knew how many there were of them. The man's heart was so engaged in this battle for God against idols, that he had counted all his adversaries.

20, 21. *So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt you between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.* So undecided were they—perhaps so cowed by the presence of that brave man who feared none, but only feared God.

22-24. *Then said Elijah unto the people, I even I only, remain a Prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves. And cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: And call you on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God that answers by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken.* And the Baal priests could not refuse the challenge. For they worshipped the sun-god—the god of fire—and if he could not answer the sun worshippers, he must be no God at all.

25, 26. *And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for you are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning, even until noon.* Which was Baal's own high time, for then the sun would be at its zenith—"from morning, even until noon."

26. *Saying, O Baal, hear us!* Repeating their cry again and again. For this is the way of all false worship—to use vain repetitions, as the heathens do, which is forbidden to us.

26. *But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made.* Which was their superstition. They were going through the whole performance of the genuflections of some kind or another. They leaped upon the altar which was made.

27-31. *And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud! For he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he sleeps, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud. And cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto 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 your name.* For he meant this day to prove that God was God of the twelve tribes—not of himself and his tribe, but of all the families of Israel.

32-37. *And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: 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 cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar, and he filled a trench also 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, 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. Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that you are the LORD God, and You have turned their heart back again.* There was the prayer. How different altogether from this repetition of words—this leaping—this cutting with knives. He states his wish. He pleads his cause. He brings forward his arguments. And this is his prayer.

38-40. *Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and they said, The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God! And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.* And thus did he prove that he was the Prophet of God, and that God was the God of Israel.

—Adapted from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.**