***God's Power in our Weakness – Elijah

RV43-02***

We are studying the letter to the church in Philadelphia in Revelation 3:7-13. This is section number 8. We have seen that the Lord Jesus Christ has opened the door for every church-age believer to secure personal spiritual maturity all the way on up to the super-grace level. All that is necessary for that accomplishment has been provided. The intake of doctrine into the human spirit of the believer has been made available through the local church ministry; the completed Bible; the pastor-teacher gift; and the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. This storage of doctrines provides the divine viewpoint from which a spiritual maturity structure is built in the soul of the believer. The spiritual maturity structure is actually a container into which God pours super-abounding blessings – blessings of a temporal nature, and blessings of an eternal nature. Many Christians deny themselves not only blessings in eternity, but blessings in time simply because they do not have the container which God may fill, so that, with the Psalmist we can say, "My cup runneth over."

So, the spiritual maturity structure is one of the open doors that the Lord has made that He's referring to here in the revelations to the church in Philadelphia – an open door for spiritual development. This super grace status is actually the objective of the Christian life. The Holy Spirit uses the spiritual maturity structure to guide the believer into godly living that results in experiential sanctification. The Holy Spirit uses this spiritual maturity structure to guide the believer into Christian service which then results in rewards in heaven.

So, the Lord Jesus Christ wants of you and me one thing supremely first of all. He does not want us to be running around witnessing for Him. He does not want us to be running around performing all kinds of Christian service. He does not want us to be running around investing our money. He does not want us to be running around getting excited over Christian activities and fellowship; or, one thing and another. He wants us, first of all, and preeminently, to become something spiritually. That is the first thing in the Christian life. Having entered the new birth, the first thing God wants you to do is to become something spiritually.

The classic example of that in Scripture, of course, is the apostle Paul himself. There was a man who knew a great deal about the Bible in terms of the Old Testament Scriptures. Yet, when he was born again, the first thing he did was go into isolation for about three years out in the Arabian Desert so that he was not tempted to be standing up and giving his testimony, and being called upon by all the various Christian groups so they could promote their fund-raising campaigns by having some hotshot famous personality who has become a Christian (and he was a hotshot famous personality among the Pharisees) to give his testimony so that they could prove that Christianity really works.

When you become a more mature Christian, you have an internal revulsion toward the practice of trying to prove that Christianity is true because of the fact that some famous movie star, or some entertainment personality, or some sports personality has suddenly had the brains to become a Christian. I've got a bunch of junior age kids around here that have had more brains that that. They had enough brains to become Christians when they were little kids. If you were dumb enough to have to wait until you're an adult to become a Christian, I don't think I'm too interested in what you have to say. I don't think you're too much of a proof about the evidence of the reality of Christianity or of the Bible. It doesn't take that to prove Scripture. It only takes Scripture to prove Scripture.

So, the quality that the Lord looks for in a person, first of all, is for you to develop some spiritual maturity. In the Bible, that's called edification. The word "edification" in the Bible means to build something. In fact, the word "edification" is used in three different ways. One of the ways is to create a structure in the soul. That's where we get the idea of building a spiritual maturity structure within your soul. When that is built, then you are in a position for God to use you, and start creating ministries for you to perform, and to have you become an effective voice for the Lord.

That doesn't mean that you lean back and don't do anything. Even a brand new baby Christian can be given an opportunity to explain what has happened to him that the Lord will use. A baby Christian cannot store many treasures in heaven. He has very, very minimal capacity for that. If he does not try to go beyond his spiritual maturity, he won't get into a lot of trouble. But once we have developed that, then we're off and running. That is the prime of our spiritual life – to come to the spiritual maturity structure fully developed within the soul.

So, this takes time. It takes persistence. That's why we gather in church services: in order to advance this structure in your soul. Without your attendance at church services, where the Word of God is explained, you will not go very far. But once you have caught hold of this, then you're on your way to the prime time of your spiritual life. It will be the time of maximum production of divine good service. It's a time of maximum success in daily living. It's a time of maximum reception of God's blessings. It's just the best of all times for you.

The Philadelphia congregation was apparently made up largely of the spiritual maturity structure type of believers. Consequently, they were not the prestige people of the city. They were not an influential force in the world in which they moved. So, we read about them – that they were a people of little power. That's the word that the Lord is actually using about them. He says, "You have little power." The Philadelphia believers were big with Jesus Christ, but they were not very much with the world around them. These believers were biblical fundamentalists who were the stabilizing and preserving salt of the society in which they moved. The society through which they moved was not worthy of them. But whether that society knew it or not, it was because of people like the Philadelphia Christians that God's hand was being restrained in judgment upon them. That is always true.

However, when the time comes, when God's opportunity has been rejected long enough, or where a society who has had a basis of orientation to the Word of God (such as like the United States), when the overwhelming number of the people in a society move away from that, and move against their biblical heritage, then the preserving salt comes to the point where it is so minimal that God no longer preserves that nation, and He brings destruction.

So, the Philadelphia believers were a very valuable commodity to have within that city, even though they were of little influence; of little power; and, of little prestige, and they were not held in very high esteem. The Lord Jesus recognizes that these people were weak in influence. Therefore, He provided for them an open door of testimony in spite of the contempt for which they were held. This is the way it is with God. Human weakness moves the believer to depend on God, which results in great spiritual strength and divine good service.

We've been looking at some physical examples of this. We looked at the example of Gideon facing the Midianites with 300 men – a position of weakness that resulted in great victory. We looked at the example of King Hezekiah facing Sennacherib and his Assyrians. They had a great weakness that provided God with a great opportunity of victory. We looked at the example of David facing Goliath – a position of weakness resulting in God's great strength and achieving a great victory.

Fundamentalist Christians are treated with indifference by the world, and they are weak until God intervenes and makes them fantastically victorious.

**Elijah**

I'd like to direct your attention to one more great example that the Old Testament has of weakness that, in many ways, we can relate to, perhaps more than these others that we've looked at. This is the great prophet Elijah and his confrontation with Ahab and his famous wife, Jezebel. Please turn to 1 Kings 17, where we have the historical record of this incident. Elijah has faced Ahab, the king of the northern kingdom (the ruler of the northern kingdom), Israel. He has come to this ruler who was a very evil ruler, and he has informed him that God was bringing a severe drought and famine on the northern kingdom in judgment for the evil that Ahab and his wife Jezebel have been guilty of. Jezebel, you remember, brought the Baal worship into Israel and made it a prominent state religion. And Ahab went along with her.

1 Kings 17:1: "And Elijah, the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, 'As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years but according to My Word.'"

Then 1 Kings 18:1-2: "And it came to pass, after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year saying, 'Go show yourself unto Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth. And Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab, and there was a severe famine in Samaria." So, Ahab is confronted by Elijah. Elijah says, "Because of what you've been doing, God is pronouncing a judgment upon you and the nation you lead – a severe drought is going to come upon Israel; it will precipitate a famine; and there's going to be great suffering." Three years later, indeed, this condition has developed: no rain; and, great famine. Now Elijah is sent again to Ahab and says, "God is now ready to send rain. But there's going to be a confrontation between the religious forces of the sex worship represented by Baal and the worship of the Jehovah God that you have treated with such utter contempt.

So, three years later, the issue is being brought to a head. Elijah specifies the particular problem in 1 Kings 18:17-18: "And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah (this is after three years of famine and drought), that Ahab said unto him, 'Are you the one who troubles Israel?'" Now, isn't that the way with people? Here's a poor preacher telling them what God has said, and informing them of what God is willing to do and not willing to do, and giving them all the facts, and then when they go negative and get the consequences of what he said, they blame the preacher for it. It's the old story that they don't mind the preacher being inspirational and presenting a challenge, but when he starts touching evil in their lives, then they consider that he has started meddling.

So, Ahab says to Elijah, are you the guy who has been meddling around here and causing all this trouble?" The truth of the matter is that it is Ahab himself who has been the meddler; who has caused all the trouble; and, who has brought all the grief to the nation. Verse 18: "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 Baal."

You notice that the core of the problem was negative violation to Bible doctrine. Why are they in this state? "Because you and your forefathers have been negative to the Word of God. You have rejected the commandments of God, and God has brought judgment upon you solely because of that." Elijah himself as a fully dedicated godly man, and he was obedient to the words that God gave him to deliver.

Ahab's wife, Jezebel, had murdered a large number of God's prophets. Elijah had escaped her hand, and yet he had the courage to stand before Ahab, and to bring God's message of condemnation to him. That is a person we admire, and that is a person who indeed is ready to serve the Lord very selflessly. There could be no question about the fact that Elijah is ready to invest his life in the Lord's cause.

That's going to be part of the problem. It's a very similar problem that those of you, who can also relate yourself to Elijah at this point, can understand what it is to invest your life selflessly in the Lord's service, and the demands that that makes on you, and what that takes out of you. That's the starting point. That's the kind of person that Elijah was, and maybe that's where you are now.

But this brought some serious consequences down the line, as we shall see. Elijah was, in effect, challenging Jezebel's prophets which served the god Baal. I will not go into the details of what was involved in Baal worship. You know that the heart of it was, of course, illicit sex, and it was a very degrading practice.

What Elijah did was that he called for a confrontation on Mount Carmel with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah who were supported by the state treasury under Jezebel's care. 1 Kings 18:19: "Now therefore, send and gather unto me all Israel unto Mount Carmel and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of the idols of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table." So, Elijah directed the Jews to make a choice between the worship of Baal and the worship of Jehovah.

Verse 20: "So, Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto Mount Carmel. Elijah came unto all the people and said, 'How long will you hesitate between two opinions?'" He says, "How long are you going to waver?" The people of Israel really took this Baal worship seriously, and they were very serious about the worship. It had a lot of appeal to the sin nature because of the degrading nature of this worship. Now, Elijah is facing the people and saying, "How long are you going to waver between a false God and the true God? If the LORD is God," and notice that this is LORD in all capitals – Yahweh, the sacred four-letter word for God, the most sacred name of God: "If Jehovah be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. They were not sure. The people didn't say, "Oh, well listen, there's no question about it that Jehovah is God, and Baal isn't." They were actually not sure. So, you must put yourself in the position of realizing that these people thought that there was something to the god Baal.

"Then said Elijah unto the people, 'I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord. But Baal's prophets are 450 men." So, Elijah proposes a test between Baal and Jehovah in the form of a sacrifice which would be ignited supernaturally.

Verse 23: "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 it. I will prepare the other bullock and lay it on wood and put no fire under it. And call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, let him be God. All the people answered and said, 'It is well spoken.'"

So, Elijah finally gets to the people by saying, "Let's just have a test. I'll build an altar. Let the Baal prophets build an altar. There are 450 of them to do it. They have plenty of help. Let them put a young bull on the altar, and I'll put one on mine. Then let's pray that our God will light the fire supernaturally." The people say, "Oh, that's a good idea. We'll go along with that. That certainly should indicate as to who is the God who has real power or not."

Well, the Baal prophets, were in for a sad, sad afternoon. 1 Kings 18:25: "Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, 'Choose one bullock for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many.'" Elijah says, "It's going to take me a little while to get my altar together and get my sacrifice prepared because I'm doing it all alone. But there are 450 of you, so why don't you people go first? Then we won't hold up the program:" "And call on the name of your gods, and put no fire under it. They took the bullock which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon." That's a lot of calling. That's a long time: "O Baal, will you ignite this dumb bull now? O, Baal, we worship and honor thee. Please ignite this bull. Hey, are you listening up there, O Baal?" And they used all the secret formulas, and all the special words, and everything they could. And then of course, they weren't satisfied with that. They did a little bit of dancing around: "'Oh, do you hear us?' But there was no answer, and they leaped upon the altar which was made." And so they went around and they did that. Finally, the guys who are more athletic would jump over the whole altar, and just do everything they could, but nothing happened.

Meanwhile, Elijah is over here puttering around; putting his altar together; stacking the wood; looking over at those clowns over there; shaking his head; and, he's going about his business. Finally, he can't contain himself. He walks over there. He decides to give them a little advice because he thinks maybe they need a little help. He never was in seminary, so he never knew not to use sarcasm. Therefore, he just proceeds to shove it to these guys.

Verse 27: "And it came to pass at noon that Elijah mocked him and said, 'Cry aloud, for he is a god, either he is talking (he's having conversation with somebody, and you've got to get his attention) or he is pursuing." Elijah says, "Maybe he is moving around." The Hebrew says, "He has stepped aside." And I have a little sneaking suspicion that there is more to it than what Elijah says, and than appears in your English text, because in Hebrew it says, "He has stepped aside," which is the expression that's used to go to the toilet. And you wonder about this guy – the gall that he has. He says, "You know, he may be talking to somebody, so he's busy, or he may be sitting on the pot? You don't know." I mean, that's what it says, folks, in the Hebrew. I have a suspicion that that's kind of what was in the mind of our friend Elijah here. Then he says, "Or he's on a journey. He's wandering. He's off on a trip, and you're talking to the wrong place. You've got to get the connection to him. Or perhaps he's asleep and he must be awakened." You can just see Elijah having a great and wonderful time.

Well, this makes the prophets of Baal really mad, and they proceed to yell all the louder: "And they cried aloud." And then they proceeded to do what Satan always ultimately leads his followers to do; that is, to resort to blood sacrifices: "They cried aloud, and they cut themselves after their manner with swords and lances till the blood gushed out from them." That was such a clear sign that this was a demonic operation that they were watching.

"And it came to pass, when midday was passed, that they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. And there was neither voice nor any answer nor any that regarded." There was no response. This lasted all day long. They even went to making prophetic declarations. They kept carrying on with the praying; with the dancing; and, with mutilating their bodies, trying to appeal to their gods. Man, it became a really gross, revolting sight before the day was over: watching these 450 prophets of Baal trying to get that fire lit. Then of course, Elijah is sitting there watching carefully so that one of these sneaky guys doesn't strike a match and light the thing when he's not looking. He's standing there on his guard watching this whole thing, but so are the people of God. And things are beginning to come together in the minds of the people of Israel who could be so stupid. Things are beginning to come together, and they're beginning to get a little suspicious.

Well, finally, the prophets of Baal give up. Elijah has given them all day long. So we read in verse 30 that, "Elijah (this dedicated man of God) said unto all the people, 'Come near unto me,' and all the people came near onto him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was broken down. And Elijah took 12 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 by your name.' And with the stones, he built an altar in the name of the Lord. 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 it on the wood, and said, 'Fill four barrels with water,' and poured it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." Elijah is going to make even a more impressive demonstration of the power of a true God. So, he soaks his sacrifice in water: "And he said, 'Do it a second time.' And they did it the second time. And he said, 'Do it a third time.' And they did it the third time. The water ran around about the altar, and he filled the trench also with water.

"And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came there and said, 'Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of 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 that You have turned their heart back again.' 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. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and they said, 'The Lord, He is God. The Lord, He is God.' Elijah said to 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."

What a climactic close to the day! God answers the prayer of Elijah. His water-soaked sacrifice is ignited, and the water itself catches on fire. And these people, the people of Israel, who should have known better if they had been positive to the Word of God, finally say, "Yes, Baal is a false God. Jehovah is the true God." The result was that they were ready to now rally behind Elijah, and at his command, they rounded up the 450 prophets of Baal, and Elijah put them to the sword and wiped out the whole group of them.

Elijah is in this position. He is a man who has served God faithfully. He is a man upon whom God has given the stamp of approval. He is a man that God has very clearly identified as His man, and has given him a fantastically great victory this day. He has achieved a testimony that he has been waiting a long time to perform before the people of Israel. Elijah then turns to Ahab, with the touch of grace, and says, "Now, Ahab, you have seen this, too. God is ready to remove the drought that has caused so much pain. God is ready to bring rain, and He's going to do that upon this people." It is almost as if he were saying to Ahab, "This is your opportunity to get straightened out. This is your opportunity to turn around; to straighten out your wife Jezebel; and, to start moving back in the direction of the Word of God and of other Scriptures that you know so well."

So, 1 Kings 18:41 says, "And Elijah said unto Ahab, 'Get up; eat; and, drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain." Verse 45: "And it came to pass, in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain, and Ahab rode and went to Jezreel." Ahab went home, and there was a great, fantastic rain.

When you come to chapter 19, you suddenly come face-to-face with the unbelievable weakness of Elijah. This is a man who has achieved so much, as you have achieved so much in your areas of ministry. Elijah has the encouragement of such a dramatic degree in his experiences, as you have experienced on occasion in your ministry, and suddenly weakness, out of the clear blue: be prepared to find it there.

1 Kings 19 opens with telling us that Jezebel has gotten the word as to what Elijah did. She has heard what has happened to her 450 prophets of Baal, and she is mad. Jezebel wasn't the sweetest woman in the world, and was not a girl that you wanted to be on the outs with. Her immediate inclination was to murder: "And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, 'So let the gods do to me and more also if I make not your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.'" Can you believe that? After what her husband tells her happens, she turns around and says, "I'm going to make you as dead as my prophets by tomorrow. If not, may the gods do it to me. So help me god." Do you wonder where that expression came from: "So help me God?" I would be careful about using that. It's a little expression that Jezebel invented. The result is that Ahab, the weakling, instead of pulling her back in line and forbidding her to threaten God's man, does nothing.

What is Elijah's reaction in verse 3? "And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belonged Judah, and left his servant there." In fear, Elijah runs.

Now, how do you feel? You can see that in spite of this great victory, his life is threatened. What should he have done? Well, we would have expected that Elijah would have said, "Hang it on your nose, Jezebel. I've taken care of 450 prophets, and you're not going to scare me. The same God that cut them down is going to take care of you, girlfriend. So, don't be threatening me." Instead, he is scared stiff, and he takes off.

**Depression**

Two basic things cause depression. When you are depressed, most of the time you will want to say to yourself, "No, this isn't the reason." However, two things cause depression. One is anger, and the other is self-pity. Anger and self-pity are always at the core of every sense and every feeling of depression. If you trace it back, you'll find that you're mad about something. Your rights have been denied. Something has been frustrated. You are angry about something that causes you to be depressed, or you have great self-pity for yourself because you haven't been honored or you haven't been recognized. There's something else that causes you to feel sorry for yourself, and you're depressed.

Well, I think in this case, Elijah felt the self-pity for himself. He should have been honored by the king. He's had a tremendous victory. Instead, his life is threatened, and he is in a depressed condition. Enter, stage center – the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Kings 9:4: "He himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came sat down under a juniper tree, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, 'It is enough. Now, O Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers.'" I don't know if there is a statement of self-pity better than that. That sure has got it all. That's it. He sits down: "I don't want any more. Now, O Lord, take my life. I'm not any better than my fathers. They died. I can die. That's it. Let's go." And he's had it. There's a little tinge of anger there, too. He expected the Lord to give him the Medal of Honor. Instead, He has given him a double whammy from Jezebel.

"As he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, an angel touched him and said to him, 'Arise and eat.' And he looked, and behold, there was a cake baked on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink and lay down again." That's kind of interesting. One thing you should do when you're depressed is eat something and get some rest. So, the Lord knows all this stuff. ... So, the first thing that He does is that He feeds him, and then has him take a little nap. Then he wakes up, and the Angel of the Lord (the reincarnate Christ) came again the second time; touched him; and, said, 'Arise and eat a little more ... for the journey is too great for you.'" He says, "You're just exhausted. You're down in the mouth because you've worn yourself out.

"So, indeed, he arose and did eat and drink and went in the strength of that food 40 days and 40 nights until Horeb, the mount of God." He ate some very nourishing ... food. It was tremendously nourishing. It was 40 days and 40 nights that he went on the strength of that food. Of course, it was a supernatural event in itself.

Elijah is obviously here suffering the weakness of receiving and resenting ill treatment from the nation that he tried to serve so faithfully, and that he tried to save with God's divine viewpoint. So, in 1 Kings 19:9, we read, "And he came there unto a cave, and lodged there. And behold, the Word of the Lord came to him, and he said unto him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He's still sitting there pouting. He's still sitting there feeling sorry for himself. He puts it into words now. He has just been itching and waiting for somebody to come and ask him, "What's the trouble, Elijah? Do you have some problem, Elijah?" And he thinks, "Oh, boy, do I have some problem?" Now the Lord asked him, so he says, "I'll tell you what my problem is. I'm, glad that you asked." He said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant; thrown down Your altars; and, slain Your prophets with the sword. And I, even I only, am left. And they seek my life to take it away." He said, "I am the only one left. I've been faithful. I've done my job. And what do they do? They want to kill me for it." That was his weakness.

Verse 11: "And He said, 'Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord.'" The expression of his self-pity then is followed by a demonstration by the pre-incarnate Christ of where real power lies. What, in effect, Elijah is saying is that he would like to have seen them all cut down. He would like to have seen God's vengeance cut Jezebel down; cut Ahab down; and, just cut all these people down that had failed to be standing by him.

So, God can do that. He can wreck that kind of vengeance on people. But in verses 11 and 12, the pre-incarnate Christ reveals to Elijah where real power lies: "And He said, 'Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord.' And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains." As Elijah is standing there on this mount, probably out in the mouth of the cave, a tremendous windstorm goes raging through the forest, tearing things up. And Elijah said, "That's it, boy. That's the kind of power I'm talking about." God says, "Oh, I've got power, Let me show you what I can do to this forest," and He rips it to shreds. Elijah says, "That's what I'm talking about, Lord: "And He broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake." Things began shaking, and things began falling, and rocks were coming down, and Elijah says, "That's it, Lord. That's the kind of stuff I'm talking about. Open it up and drop them in. That's what I'd like to see You do." "But the Lord was not in the earthquake," meaning God's power isn't something like an earthquake: "After the earthquake, a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire." The Lord ignites a part of the forest, and it rages like an inferno.

When a fire really gets going, it creates what is known as a fire storm. During World War II, when some of the Japanese cities like Tokyo were heavily bombed, and the conditions of the wind were just right so that all of those little bamboo and paper houses caught on fire, and the wind was blowing through it, it created a life of its own. So, all the surrounding area was just being literally sucked in. If you walked within a certain distance (which often was surprising how far away you could be), you would be caught and literally sucked into that fire. When they bombed Dresden (the horrendous, terrible bombing of the city of Dresden in Germany), the same thing happened. The people had never experienced a firestorm. They were horrified to find people just suddenly snatched up right off the streets and the sidewalks, and just literally carried through the air, and fed into those fires.

Well, something like that is what Elijah is standing there watching. That is a demonstration of frightening power. But that isn't God. That's not the power of God. At the end of verse 12 is where the power of God lies: "After the fire, a still small voice," – the Word of God speaking. "And it was so, 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 to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" God is saying, "Now, what do you think, Elijah? This is My still small voice of truth." The Word of God and the doctrines of Scripture are more powerful than a firestorm; than an earthquake; than the wind that you have seen; and, than any of these things. That is the thing that turns the world upside down. That is the thing that turns a human being from destruction to self-preservation in the arms of God.

Well, Elijah's weakness is so deep that he repeats the same thing that he has said before in verse 14, about how he has been abused and mistreated, and how they're out to take his life. Then the Lord graciously says, "Here's what I'm going to do." Verse 15: "The Lord said unto him, 'Go return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when you come, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: and Jehu, the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shall you anoint to be prophet in your stead. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapes the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.'"

And then the Lord says, "I want to tell you something else, Elijah. While you're so down in the mouth, and so blue, and you think you're the only one." And how often do we think that after we have served the Lord well, and people have not appreciated us, and people have not responded with a sense of esteem for what we have done, and we have also felt that nobody else is doing anything around here – just you. Verse 18: "And the Lord says, 'Yet I have left Me 7,000 in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him.'" He said, "There are 7,000 faithful servants of the Lord besides you, Elijah." That pretty well put Elijah in his place. God has no end of believers who are His servants. He doesn't need you. He doesn't need me. We are privileged when we are given a capacity to serve him. That capacity gives us the opportunity to store treasures in heaven, and it is nothing but benefit to us.

Concerning the rest of the judgment, God said, "Elijah, I'm going to take care of these people." Here he set up the new authorities. Jehu would be responsible for bringing Jezebel to her death. And the results of the ill-advised campaign of Ahab would be that, in battle, an arrow hits him between the chink of his armor. And you know how both of them ended up. They took Ahab home and he died. They took his chariot; washed the blood off; and, the dogs came up and licked it up. So, part of Ahab was eaten by a dog. You know what happened to Jezebel. She was trampled by Jehu's chariot, and the dogs came out and ate everything except her hands, her head, and her feet.

You don't fully appreciate the fact that they became dog food unless you understand (and you may have to go back and review) the doctrine of dogs that we've already been through once. The dogs are not the cute little puppies that are going to greet you when you come home today. Dogs in the ancient world were viewed with loathsome contempt. They were wild, voracious beasts that traveled as wolf packs. A dog was the most contemptuous thing that you could call a person. To call a person "the son of a dog" was a very contemptuous thing, and it has descended through languages. Even in our language, that's a contemptible thing to call a person. But God here demonstrated his ultimate judgment upon Jezebel and Ahab, in that they ended up being humiliated by being eaten by dogs.

Did Elijah learn his lesson? I'm happy to report to you that he did. He got over his self-pity. He saw what had happened to Ahab and Jezebel. He saw what happened to the false prophets; he saw what happened to the people who followed them; and, he saw a new era beginning for Israel under the leadership of Jehu.

So in 2 Kings 1:1-18, you have the record of Elijah dealing with King Ahaziah who followed Ahab. Ahaziah was in the upper chamber of his house, and he fell through an opening to the lower floor, and was seriously injured. Ahaziah followed in the steps of his mother and father, Ahab and Jezebel. Instead of turning to Elijah for advice as to his condition and what to do and what the future held for him, he turns right back to the family style of worshiping the Baal gods. So, he sends a messenger to inquire of Beelzebub, the god of Ekron, whether he would recover from his injury. And in verse 3, the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ appears to Elijah, and tells him to meet the messengers and ask them, "Is there not a God in Israel for you to ask about the future such that you have to go to a demonic god to find the future?" And Elijah says, "You don't have to go any further. The Lord has told me what's going to happen to Ahaziah. He's going to die. He will not recover.

This indicates to us that Elijah is back on track. He recognizes his weakness. He recognizes, where he would like to see people get what they've got coming, that God does not work in the powerful strength that He has that He can demonstrate in these natural events in nature that Elijah saw. Rather, God's power is in obedience to the Word of God. That's where power lies. That's what takes your weakness and transforms it into unbelievable strength. That is the person who is tied into the Word of God – the person who is steeped in his soul in doctrine.

The preacher who does not want to spend his time studying; learning the Word of God; and, cranking out all the truth that God the Holy Spirit is ready to deliver to that congregation if he will put the effort to prepare, will often tell you that you can get too much doctrine so that you'll get indigestion. Did you ever hear a preacher tell you that if you get too much doctrine, it will give you indigestion? Baloney. The thing you get indigestion from is not from good food, but from bad food. And for most of those preachers, I can believe that their congregations go home with a lot of indigestion from Sunday to Sunday. They're reaching for the Rolaids every Sunday after they get through, with the kind of food that they're fed from service to service. I can see why they would have spiritual indigestion. You do not get spiritual indigestion from good foods. You get it from bad food. And you won't get it from saturating your soul upon the Word of God. That is what's going to make you strong. That's what's going to take our human weaknesses and override them.

That was the great thing here to learn about Elijah. He was a man who was strong, and a man who was courageous. Yet, when he was rejected, he could get so blue and despondent. Yet, God gently brings him back, and shows him that it is the Word of God that Elijah possessed that was his position of power. Elijah says, "That's it. Why am I worrying about seeing people get what they have coming to them? That's with God. Vengeance is His. My job is to stand on the Word of God; to be faithful to it; and, to sound it forth. That's exactly what he proceeded to do. So, when he had to face Ahab's son, Ahaziah, he had no hesitancy in saying, "You're through. You are going to die. That is the end of the line."

Well, Ahaziah is not entirely satisfied with that. He orders a group of soldiers to go out and get Elijah and to bring him in. You can read about this in 2 Kings 1 when a group of 50 come up with their officers, and Elijah is really feeling his muscles now. He has learned how to handle this fire from heaven stuff really good. So, verse 10 says, "Elijah answered and said to the captain of 50, 'If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your 50.' And there came down fire from heaven and consumed him and his 50.'" And Elijah said, "Hot dog, the Lord is operating again, and He's just waiting for the next 50. The next 50 came, and He did it to them again. He says, "I'm a man of God. Is that what you call me, to tell me that I should come to the king, if I'm a man of God? Let fire come down from heaven and consume you." And they were consumed.

What did Elijah know? He had the Word of God. He said, "If I'm a man of God, then I know certain doctrines, and I know that I can call upon God to exercise miraculous powers in order to execute His will. I'm going to show you that I can do it." And he used the Word of God in an orderly way, and he executed His power. And Elijah learned that he was a weak man. However, because he had the Word of God to function and to operate on, he became a lion (an unbeatable tiger) that no one would dare to try to stand up against. He was God's man in God's most dramatic hour, and God prospered him so that this man was not even permitted, as you know, to die physically.

Finally, God said, "Elijah, your job is through. Ahaziah has died. He's out of the picture. My judgments have been executed. You have bounced back from your weakness and permitted my strength, through the Word of God, to override it and to create indeed a great victory for the name of the living God. I'm going to honor you by taking you alive into heaven." Then he sent that swirling group of angels, and that's what it was. It was a swirling group of angels that looked like a chariot, and just came up; picked him up; and, took him alive to heaven.

Then the mantle of his authority (twofold) fell upon his protégé, Elisha. Upon whom will your mental fall when the Lord moves you on, who will be twice blessed; twice prospered; and, twice affected because you've been around to demonstrate the power and the authority of the Word of God, as Elisha could look back to Elijah and say, "That's the way to do it. Sticking with doctrine – that's where it's all at. That made Elijah, and it's going to make me."

That is the testimony that should override our weakness with the people with whom we deal: to your children; to your family; to your church members; and, to the society through whom you move.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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