

# 1 Kings 18

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] with the Lord's help I will direct your attention to the first book of Kings the 18th chapter verse 43 the first book of Kings the 18th chapter verse 4 3 and said to his servant go up now look toward the sea and he went up and looked and said there is nothing and he said go again seven times and he said to his servant go up now and look toward the sea and he went up and looked and said there is nothing and he said go again seven times in this chapter we have an outstanding example of true and false religion true and false religion is something up against which we are continually coming and the pattern has pertained all through the ages false religion has its many followers whilst true religion the followers of with a true religion are few indeed and here we find

Elijah the sole prophet of the Lord and yet there were 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the grove this is an interesting account this is an interesting account to read but be assured it was a very painful and trying experience to Elijah to pass through so many of the accounts in the scripture can be looked at just like that but it is only when perhaps in our own personal experiences we get some similar painful realization of what what Elijah passed through in his deep exercises before God when he prayed as he did one thing is clear and that is what he did what he said the manner in which he prayed was all according to the work of God in his soul and so we find him confessing that I have done all these things at thy word because of that it would mean the crucifixion of the flesh and how much would he need his faith strengthened to believe that

God would indeed answer Baal was reckoned to be the God of fire and those worshippers must have felt that they had an untold advantage which enabled them to say it is well spoken when God when Elijah suggested that the God that answered by fire should be should be the God I must have felt that they were assured of Baal being established as their God because he was the one that they expected to answer by fire he was the God of fire and when we come to consider present day religion there are many that would say yes our God is the God that answers by fire and we shall find much of this in the

Pentecostal movement but the fire is false fire and false fire is imaginary fire and if it should ever get underway we must ever bear in mind that there is a solemn outcome to that matter in the tenth chapter of Leviticus we read of the solemn occasion when Nadab and Abihu the sons of Aaron took either of him his censer and put fire therein and put incense thereon and offered strange fire before the Lord which he commanded them not and this was solemnly dealt with and there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them and they died before the

Lord is it not a solemn consideration that people may have of a strange fire and be filled with false fire in their religion and then God suddenly comes and cuts them down and they die before the Lord they do not go to heaven when they die then Moses said unto Aaron this is it that the Lord spake saying I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me before all the people I will be glorified and Aaron held his peace now this is an important word it is a solemn word because it affects us all whenever we come to worship

[ 7 : 40 ]     God I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me what grace then we need to pray for this inward sanctification of God when we come near to worship Elijah was anxious about this and this is seen in his prayer for he said Lord God of Abraham Isaac and of Israel let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel and that I am thy servant and that I have done all these things at thy word hear me oh Lord hear me that this people may know that thou art the

Lord God how many of our prayers I trust they are presented in this way seeking that the Lord's name may be established in the earth whatever opposition may come forth from false worshippers we should notice that Elijah destroyed them yet nevertheless God himself is to be worshipped in such a way as to seek his glory alone our lives must consist in just this the Lord's glory being revealed and if our hearts are sanctified then our desires will be to this end whether it is prosperity then let the glory of the Lord be revealed whether it is adversity let us say the will of the

Lord be done let us be aware of what Job said the Lord gave the Lord hath taken away blessed be the name of the Lord his wife said to him that he should curse God and die because of the calamities that had come upon him and Job replies thou speakest as one of the foolish women shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and shall we not receive evil now we present that point in this way whatever God gives us in the time of our prosperity will be proved by the days of adversity if

God says I will surely do thee good as he did to Jacob it was not long before he heard about Esau coming towards him with 400 men and is this a way in which God will bring about good out of evil yes Jacob was to behold the wonderful works of God and Esau which he never would have done had there not been this adverse circumstance of his brother coming towards him and his sins coming to his remembrance and he being extremely fearful that this was the end of all things didst thou not say

I will surely do the good and God would say yes I did say it and the circumstances that are now presented themselves does not alter what I have said I am still doing thee good Job therefore was able to say shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and shall we not receive evil all God's ways are right you may say yes it's ever so easy to say so in theory but God makes it easy to say so in practice when grace is given and you're able to say it is the Lord enthroned in light whose claims are all divine who has an undisputed right to govern me and mine should I distrust or contradict his will who cannot do but what is just but must be righteous still sanctification of

[ 13 : 16 ]     God in the hearts how is that done it can only be accomplished if Christ dwells in our hearts by faith God can never be sanctified in the carnal mind in the deceitful hearts but if God has caused you to be born again then God will indwell you and that will be your sanctification and that will enable you to say that God doeth all things well Elijah lived a life of tribulation we've only to read his account to discover that he was empty from vessel to vessel continually and maybe never more so than just at the moment in this part of

God's word that we have read but we come down to the immediate context of the text itself and this shows to us the profound difference between false religion false professor and a true person Elijah said unto Ahab get thee up eat and drink for there is a sound of abundance of rain so Ahab went up to eat and drink and that's as far as he was concerned Elijah told him that there was a sound of abundance of rain and he went back to his own vanities there was no confession of his sin no consideration that the rain had been held with held for three and a half years because of the sins are his sins and his people's sins no he was unaffected by

God's judgments how true it is judgments and mercies ne'er can sway their roving feet to Zion's way so Ahab went up to eat and drink and Elijah went up too but he went up to something quite different he went up to the top of Carmel and what did he do there he cast himself down upon the earth and put his face between his knees now in these words there's a great deal of instruction it shows to us the secrets of Christian experience some may hear that there is a sound of abundance of rain and they go and say yes

God will supply but not so with this man of God there was still much for faith to do there was still much for prayer to do there was still much for humility to do and he did not stand up as the victor on Mount Carmel and say I am the prophet of God the only one no God worked in him the spirit of humility he felt evidently his own sin and his sinful propensities and therefore he cast himself down have we cast ourselves down even in the prospect of a blessing perhaps we can take this point into consideration he cast himself down with a deep sense of unworthiness because

God had condescended to hear his cry and had sent down fire from heaven and demonstrated that he was God oh what an effect a savoury effect a humbling effect might the appearance of God have had when the fire came down upon the sacrifice on Mount Carmel God had done wondrously it had little effect upon Ahab and so it is there will be many things that might take place nationally that will have little effect upon those that fear not God but those that fear

[ 19 : 00 ] God will know something of Elijah's experience and he cast himself down upon the earth we recall what we read in the new testament we are of the earth earthly earth to earth dust to dust dashes to ashes so he became dead to everything but hoping in God and he put his face between his knees and cannot we read into this some secret wrestling with God or God wrestling with him and this was his attitude now we would think upon that attitude as the background to the words that we have read to you this evening and said to his servant go up now and look toward the sea and he went up and he looked and said there is nothing now

God's people have this experience sometimes you see the false prophets would get their answer straight away but the prophets of the Lord they come to this point at times they look talked and if we might spiritualize this sea and say this was the love of God yes but the servant went up and looked and he said there is nothing well why wasn't there anything to see the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth though it be tried by fire now you'll see there's been a demonstration of the fire lapping up the sacrifice and now his faith had to be tried by fire what for that it might come forth as gold in the day of Jesus Christ when the Lord appeared then the faith of Elijah would truly be seen as the work of God remember the word of God tells us we are purified by faith now what about the working of these things out in our lives as I've already said we may not see the literal circumstances certainly we might also almost say we shall not but we shall certainly know something about the spiritual circumstances about the circumstances which try the faith of the people of God when having heard a whisper that the Lord is going to appear there is a sign of abundance of rain a sound of abundance of rain and yet no sign no sign no sign he said to his servant go up now look toward the sea and he went up he went up and he looked and he said there is nothing do you think sometimes that you need a little encouragement you say well surely God will give me some encouragement if we're looking for encouragement to strengthen the natural faith we may then understand why it is that the servant comes back and says there's nothing but if we should hear the servant say there is nothing and then hear these words resounding in the soul the trial of your faith be much more precious and of gold that perish it though it be tried by fire and God has whispered in our ear what he is doing let patience have her perfect work that you may be perfect and entire or wanting nothing wanting nothing here he got nothing but when patience has had her had her perfect work then he would want nothing but he went up and looked well it may be hours to have to engage in a dual

role here and cast ourselves down upon the earth and put our faith between our knees and a deep exercise before god and at the same time be looking and looking day by day maybe hour by hour and having the same and having the same answer and remember that Elijah had the same answer six times now natural religion might brook nothing for the first time but but it would have to do something before it got to the sixth time we do not read that Elijah's attitude changed all this while there he was humbled before god not necessarily is it always the case that what we read about here is physical there is such a thing as a spiritual casting ourselves down upon the earth and putting our face between our knees which will shut out everything else from our eyes are we absorbed sometimes in a deep concern perhaps about eternity because that will bring us face to face with god more than anything a knowledge that we must die and where should I spend eternity we want a sign we want some assurance from heaven and there have been god's people who have said yes

I go and there's nothing well that which is written the fourth time is written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope and if it should be the case with any this evening that they have indeed prostrated their selves before god in a deep exercise of faith desiring to know and to see his glory manifested in that which he will perform and has promised to do and they go and they say there's nothing oh there is nothing and you know you cannot create anything that which is of god can never be substituted by anything of your creation if there is nothing then it's a solemn truth there is nothing zedekiah asked jemiah is there any word from the lord jemiah said there is there is now the same thing applies here though the present part present situation in the experience is there is nothing and maybe if it should be your concern this evening is there any word from the lord we're bound to say there is but we need to wait we need to wait upon god the prophet abacac you know he says this the vision is yet for an appointed time in the end it shall speak it will not tarry though it tarry wait for it that may mean going again and again and again and you know this is not to be regarded in the light of fanciful experience another example we may draw from the scriptures is the 130th psalm where the psalmist speaks out of the depths have I cried unto thee

O Lord and then he comes to this I wait for the Lord my soul doth wait and in his word do I hope my soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning I say more than they that watch for the morning there is clear indication in the word of God that the people of God have to wait and there's this clear indication too which we can read of from the prophet Isaiah the Lord waiteth that he may be gracious unto you by the teaching of the spirit and the power of the spirit Elijah was able to continue to wait with this truth whether he was aware of it or not embedded in his soul the

[ 30 : 44 ] Lord waiteth that he may be gracious unto you you see the natural mind is to have things immediately Satan will encourage you or discourage you that you must have things now and we find the people of Israel on one occasion saying where is the word of the Lord let it come now and that is the spirit of the flesh the spirit of false worshippers let it come now but the spirit and teaching of God is just this the Lord waiteth and furthermore he waiteth that he may be gracious unto you now that is a point that you will do well with the help of

God to weigh up maybe some of you have waited for a certain thing something in regard to your soul because this is the most important thing we sometimes have to wait for God's providential blessings and they are certainly not to be despised but we do have to wait sometimes for God's spiritual blessings so then let us remember that the word of God says before us this truth that if we wait and God waits then he is waiting to be gracious there is a waiting God and a waiting people what for for

God's time for there is a time and a purpose to everything unto heaven and this is why this crucifying of the flesh experience had to be passed through by the prophet when his servant came again and again and said there is nothing well what is this to prove what is this to prove it is to prove whether your faith is the faith of Jesus Christ or whether it is a natural faith I dare say you've heard of people who have professed to plead with God for a certain text perhaps to be mentioned by the minister in a sermon the minister hasn't mentioned it what's happened to them they've forgotten all about what they prayed about some years ago now

I fell into that trap it was in connection with going forth to preach and I had been exercised for some years and we had one of God's servants come to preach for us and he came to our place to dinner and in the course of his conversation he spoke about his going forth to preach and he mentioned about making a vow to the Lord and I listened very carefully when he spoke about this and then he went on to say how the Lord answered him in that and for him it may very well have been true but this set my mind working and I thought well perhaps I could make a vow to the Lord and then we could get things moving and so

I was living in London then and it was sometimes my custom to go up to Gow Street Chapel on the Tuesday evening and it seemed to me that this was a good opportunity the minister that was preaching he didn't know me at all so it would be so wonderful if I could get this get God to make this minister say what I wanted him to say and to this end I prayed that the Lord would cause him to mention a certain word of scripture then I should know I could make a move and start preaching and all went well until about four o'clock on that Tuesday afternoon and I was at the office in business and suddenly there was this whisper supposing he doesn't say it supposing he doesn't say it what then and that filled my soul with anguish

[ 36 : 32 ] I don't think I've ever experienced to the same degree before or since supposing he doesn't say it and he completely brought me to this point Lord speak whatever it is and all my vows have been forgotten and all the words that I wanted him to speak have been forgotten because I wanted God to speak not for me to put something into God's mouth to speak through the servant of the Lord so that I could say now we can proceed and we went through the reading and the prayer and then God's servant he got up and he gave it out his text and I knew God had spoken is there a word from the Lord there is and this was the word humble yourself unto the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time now then

I knew God had spoken and he had spoken mercifully to me and he delivered me from all the suggestions of false religion where people say well I pray to the Lord for this and he's answered me the servant of the Lord said so and so now I'll be careful here friends I don't want to discourage any one of you because I know there are genuine exercises sometimes and God's people have been encouraged because the Lord's servants have been used to bring into a person's experience certain passages that have helped them to go on but the point I want to make is this that we have to be careful it is what God speaks it's not what you told God to say to you now you see that produces a very deep exercise and he said to his servant go up now look toward the sea and he went up and looked and said there is nothing but then you see there was a going again seven times seven in the scripture is generally reckoned to be a perfect number and refers to what we might call perfection or maturity go again seven times by that time the work of the furnace will be sufficiently hot to have burned away all the things of the flesh so that

Elijah would rely absolutely and entirely upon God and his sovereign work to perform that which he had spoken and hence James tells us my brethren count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience but let patience have her perfect work that ye may be perfect and entire wanting nothing that's why Elijah had to go seven times and is this why you may have to follow in Elijah's footsteps in regard to that which is so important to you because you want to know where you stand for eternity and this is the prime question how many people's religion revolves round that eternity well if yours does there will be certainly times when you'll want some assurances and after the servant had gone seven times it came to pass at the seventh time that he said behold there arises a little cloud out of the sea like a man's hand now natural religion will despise that say we want something big but that religion which is of God will understand this a little if it come from thee will be of great avail to me hence you see we have this great truth a little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked going seven times you expect big things real religion will look and prize even the smallest thing now perhaps we can look at the visits of the

Lord more frequent let thy visits be or let them longer last and so they prize just a fleeting moment when the spirit of God comes upon their spirit and humbles their spirit and they feel to have the spirit of Christ and they rejoice in Christ Jesus and give thanks unto the God of heaven for just that moment or two when their soul was drawn near to God and maybe they had been asking for a blessing of that kind for such a long time he went again yea the servant was told to go again seven times how wonderful is God's persevering grace you see how easily we can give up maybe you've been tempted to give up so it's no use

I keep going and there's no answer there's no sign well the word of God here is go again go again it may be that when you go again it's the seventh time and being the seventh time it is the time when God has perfected your faith thy whole dependence on me fix nor entertain a thought thy worthless schemes with mine to mix but venture to be not and that's just the place that Elijah had to come to you see how easy it is for our nature to try to mix something with God's work God won't have it and it brought Elijah to his knees it didn't bring

[ 44 : 44 ] Ahab and it won't bring the false professor to his knees either but the people of God being involved by the spirit of God this will bring them to their knees in humility and they will hide their face because of a desire to shut themselves up as it were to God and not be distracted by anything that might come before their eyes he said to his servant go up now look toward the sea oh what a place to look I would think that this was probably looking to worthy the west oh look toward that wherein there is the settlement of all God's decrees where the sun has now set where Christ has died upon Calvary where you've heard that word it is finished it is finished and all is well look toward the sea and he went up and looked and said there is nothing have you looked toward the cross of

Christ sometimes and hoping that you might hear that word resounding in your own soul it is finished and hear the blessed spirit say all this is done for you then is the situation this evening there is nothing well what is the word of the scripture he said go again seven times the vision is yet for an appointed time but in the end it shall speak and let me just repeat this the Lord waiteth that he may be gracious unto you Amen