**Elijah Committed ° Courageous ° Common Week 5**

*21 Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him."*

Of the 46 verses in chapter 18 this one perhaps speaks the loudest. Considering the content of this chapter, that says a lot. Think back a mere 5 weeks ago when we were introduced to Elijah for the first time. Here was a man coming out of nowhere to pronounce judgement on the nation in order that they might turn back to the one true God. Now here he is, roughly 3 and a half years later standing before all the nation who would come. Having been brought through trial, tragedy and triumph, the Lord had prepared him for this very moment when he would appeal to the hearts of men. And what was the appeal? **Make up your minds!**

A favorite past time for Mandy and I is being indecisive. One of us will, on a whim, make a suggestion that we go somewhere or do something. As the suggestion sinks in the other person will consider it and then begin to hash through the why’s or why nots. Once we have our own thoughts figured out, then we have to consider the needs of the boys. Will this affect their daily routine? Will it subject us to hours of screaming, whining, and complaining or will it lead to an outing we will look back fondly on for years to come? More times than not, we’ll talk back and forth about the details until hours have passed and then we’ll finally look at a clock and say “well, by now it’s too late to even try.” Imagine that…all the time and opportunity we wasted, hesitating between two opinions.

It sounds petty when I talk about it, but on a spiritual level it is anything but that. And it’s quite common among believers. Perhaps the problem is that it’s been acceptable in many circles for so long now, it has become the norm. This mentality that you follow the LORD when it works out for you and you follow someone or something else when something is required of you that isn’t appealing. The glory of Heaven sounds great, but many people get hung up on putting sin to death, living the life of a servant, and obeying the commands of God. In other words, we’ve sacrificed commitment for convenience.

What about the things that we want? What about the things that make us happy and comfortable in our lives? Well, oftentimes the pursuit of those things that make us “happy and comfortable” are the very things that Elijah would have confronted us with in his appeal. Those things that in our modern day and age we put on the throne instead of God. God had made Himself plenty clear when He spoke to the Israelites about idolatry, false prophets and intermingling with pagan nations. Deuteronomy 11:10-17; Deuteronomy 28:15-26; Exodus 20:2-6; Exodus 34:11-17; Deuteronomy 7:1-5.

Have you ever considered how many of our favorite accounts in the scriptures would have looked had the men or women involved been as fickle as those that Elijah was appealing to? Would we have had the testimonies declaring God’s faithfulness in the furnace or the lion’s den? What if Moses had arrived at the Red Sea and suddenly said “you know, we might have made a wrong turn…” What if Isaac’s asking “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" had rattled Abraham to the point of second guessing his purpose and calling?

The point is, these accounts read like they do because these people (and many others in the scriptures) knew who their God was and what their faith in Him meant. Their actions showed their commitment to God meant more than their momentary circumstances or afflictions. Those commitments allowed them to respond in ways that seem so bold to us – consider these statements: *“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up"* - *"God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son"* - *“My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths and they have not harmed me.”- “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”*

Those statements came from people who didn’t shy away from their call to obedience and certainly didn’t waiver back and forth as ones confused as to whom they served.

The same appeal from Elijah to the people of Israel on Mt. Carmel is very much applicable to us today. I don’t have a mountain top to stand on but I do have a pulpit and a piece of paper and so I’ll use those to make a similar appeal – how long will we keep going trying to serve God and our flesh? How long will we struggle to serve two masters? How long will we feed sin in our lives and keep it alive?

It might have seemed harsh when you read verse 40 for all the prophets of Baal to be gathered up and slaughtered, but I hope that gives you insight into how serious God is about being rid of the things that not only keep us from fellowship with Him but actively promote things that are not pleasing to Him. I love Spurgeon’s take on this verse and the application that goes with it:

*“When the prophet Elijah had received the answer to his prayer, and the fire from heaven had consumed the sacrifice in the presence of all the people, he called upon the assembled Israelites to take the priests of Baal, and sternly cried, “Let not one of them escape.” He took them all down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. So must it be with our sins-they are all doomed, not one must be preserved. Our darling sin must die. Spare it not for its much crying. Strike, though it be as dear as an Isaac. Strike, for God struck at sin when it was laid upon his own Son. With stern unflinching purpose must you condemn to death that sin which was once the idol of your heart.”* C.H. Spurgeon

Friends, if we want to see revival sweep this land then we as believers must take **our** sin seriously – if not, how should we expect unbelievers to do so? We must also take seriously our commitment to the WHOLE COUNSEL of God – not just the parts that suit us.

I realize I’ve taken a whole lot of material and pinpointed one part of it to magnify – as you’ve heard the sermon and read the text, what has the Holy Spirit shown you?

Memory Verse: *“Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that You, O Lord, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again."* 1 Kings 18:37