

**Introduction:** We continue with our focus on Elijah, in awe as he bursts on the scene in 1 Kings 18 to confront the godless nation of Israel, just as he did at the beginning of 1 Kings 17. The word of command goes forth from the LORD, and Elijah unhesitatingly obeys, fearless in obedience to God’s commission to again confront the evil Israelite king Ahab in 1 Kings 18:1.

**Monday: read 1 Kings 18:1-2.** It must have been difficult for Elijah, who found such a warm welcome for ministry in the village of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-24), to then leave and stand in judgment once again before the wicked king of Israel. He had stayed for a long time (1 Kings 18:1a), teaching the Word of God to the widow of Zarephath and like-minded followers of the LORD in the most unlikely of refuges – in the environs of Sidon. But now, after this long, quiet spell of fruitfulness and retirement, the LORD calls him to go to the wicked king of Israel in 1 Kings 18:1b.

Lesson: Times of refreshment and prayerful retirement are essential preparation before times of action. As one Puritan put it, “You can do many things for God after you have prayed; but you can’t do anything of spiritual value until you have prayed.” The time will come for Elijah to exert great faith against the prophets of Baal and in earnest supplication for rain to return to the land of Israel. *But first*, like his archetype John the Baptist whom he foreshadows, Elijah needs time outside of the public sphere of ministry - so that the LORD can assert *His own* will and erect *His own* program in which all Elijah must do is follow in God’s footsteps.

Meditate and Pray: Sing about such a waiting attitude using this great hymn by Henry Lyte, (based on Psalm 65). Ask God to enable you to wait upon Him at every turn.

1. Praise for Thee, Lord, in Zion waits;  
Prayer shall besiege Thy temple gates;  
All flesh shall to Thy throne repair,  
And find through Christ salvation there.

3. How blest Thy saints! how safely led!  
How surely kept! how richly fed!  
Savior of all in earth and sea,  
How happy they who rest in Thee.

5. The year is with Thy goodness crowned;  
Thy clouds drop wealth the world around;  
Through Thee the deserts laugh and sing,  
And nature smiles and owns her King.

2. Our spirits faint; our sins prevail;  
Leave not our trembling hearts to fail:  
O Thou that hearest prayer, descend,  
And still be found the sinner’s friend.

4. Thy hand sets fast the mighty hills,  
Thy voice the troubled ocean stills;  
Evening and morning hymn Thy praise,  
And earthly Thou bounty wide displays.

6. Lord, on our souls Thy Spirit pour;  
The moral waste within restore;  
O let Thy love our springtide be,  
And make us all bear fruit to Thee.

**Tuesday: read 1 Kings 17:23-18:2 & Isaiah 26:1-8.** We don’t know much of Elijah’s daily existence after the raising of the widow’s son in 1 Kings 17:23, leading up to the contest against Baal in 1 Kings 18. But of one key reality we can be sure. The LORD is always busy in times of quiet, preparing us for the rigors of future acts of faith - as we wait upon Him. Waiting on the LORD is a fundamental aspect of real faith. For example, look at the quiet spirit of trust in the LORD which holds true for those who are truly God’s people – so that they are kept in perfect peace (Isa. 26:3) and are grounded in the ways of the LORD (Isa. 26:7) as they “wait” on the LORD in Isa 26:8. Such waiting on God is especially tied to our trust in His forgiving grace – as we wait on Him “more than watchmen wait for the morning” (Psalm 130:6-8).

It is as we wait on Him that we are reminded of God's peace objectively over our lives (even when we don't experience it perfectly due to our sin) *because it is a blood-bought peace*. We cannot add to God's favor by our own efforts or frenetic activity. The blood of the Lamb means it is never wrong to wait on God to take the first step! Believers of older generations would speak of their decisions, goals and life's callings being "washed in the blood." Just as that blood delivers us from sin's condemnation, it also washes our footsteps in this world in the wisdom and sanctification which Christ's saving work has become in our lives (1 Corinthians 1:30).

Meditate and Pray: Lord, we so want *you* to take the initiative in all our purposes, goals and hopes. Please do not allow us to run ahead of *you*. Please reserve for your own purposes all our initiatives and permit only the goals which will accomplish *your* ends. We live in a world that is so obsessed with trumpeting forth man's own great plans. Silence us, so that we learn to wait upon you. Make us afraid of taking one step outside of your boundaries and ways. Amen.

**Wednesday: read 1 Kings 17:23-18:2; Psalm 62:1 & Habakkuk 2:20.** There are more benefits from times of retirement and being set aside – benefits which Elijah, that great prophet of action, must have known as he prepared to confront idolatry in his homeland of Israel in 1 Kings 18. For example, such a waiting on the LORD, as Elijah learned to do in the wilderness (waiting on the raven's divinely-wrought timetable to bring him bread 1 Kings 17:5-6, and abiding outside the promised land until called to confront Ahab in 1 Kings 18) – all such waiting produces a silence before God. There are deadlines God sets, and periods of seeming inactivity, when God is actually the busiest for our good – when we don't think He is working at all.

Meditate: Here are some verses about such silent periods:

Psalm 62:1: For God alone my soul waits in *silence*; from him comes my salvation.

Habakkuk 2:20: But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep *silence* before him.

And here is a hymn about how busy God is in these seemingly silent periods in our lives:

1 Workman of God, O lose not heart,  
But learn what God is like;  
And in the darkest battle-field  
Thou shalt know where to strike.

3 Then learn to scorn the praise of man,  
And learn to lose with God;  
For Jesus won the world through shame,  
And beckons thee His road.

2 Thrice blest is he to whom is given  
The instinct that can tell  
That God is on the field when He  
Is most invisible.

4 For right is right, since God is God,  
And right the day must win;  
To doubt would be disloyalty,  
To falter would be sin.

(F.W. Faber)

Prayer of Confession: *LORD, you are the God who never sleeps and the God who ceaselessly works for our good in Christ Jesus. Forgive us that we have lost the ability to sit still before you. In our day, there are constant distractions from traffic; lawn maintenance, personal electronic devices – as well as the voice in our heads and hearts which complains against and doubts your good character. We would agree with John Owen, that in our times with you, when we have the privilege of having the ear and heart of the Almighty, we can be distracted by a fly in the room and by random and trivial thoughts. Forgive us that we forget the awesome reality of being able to stand before the LORD, clothed in Christ's righteousness. Give us again the conviction and awe of living before your face. Amen.*

**Thursday: read 1 Kings 18:1; 1 Kings 19:9-10; 19:13-14; 19:18 & 2 Kings 4:38-44.** Lastly, such waiting, resulting in quiet silence before the LORD, was not something Elijah was expected to do all alone. We are not arguing in this week's notes for a life of monastic retreat, but for the posture of waiting on the LORD *along with the people of God!* Fellowship is crucial in an evil day.

For example, we know Elijah was not alone in his faith because, wherever the prophets like Elijah or, before him, Samuel, went, they gathered hungry hearts to hear the Word of the LORD. *Someone* taught the widow of Zarephath that the LORD God of Israel was the living God – see 1 Kings 17:12. We see such “schools of the prophets” set up in the days of Samuel (1 Samuel 19:18-24) and then later in the days of Elisha – who feeds the one hundred prophets (2 Kings 4:43-44) and miraculously purifies the stew to set before the prophets at Gilgal in 2 Kings 4:38ff.

Why, even when the Shunamite widow urgently prepares to go and find Elisha to raise her dead son (2 Kings 4:22-23) her husband wonders why she is going to the house of the man of God *when it isn't a day of religious worship*. So we see that believers were gathering all through this period at the feet of the prophets, such as Elijah, since worship at the famous holy places like Shiloh and Bethel had been corrupted by idolatry. Now believers gathered wherever the prophets took refuge – to hear the Word of the LORD from their lips.

Mediate and Pray: *LORD, thank you that, though Elijah in his dejection thought that he was all alone – you reserved for yourself many that did not bow their knees to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). Thank you that we are not to lose heart when our witness for the LORD seems to be in vain. Help us to value times of worship and fellowship with your people, and to avail ourselves of every opportunity for mutual fellowship and encouragement among the people of God. Amen.*

**Friday: read 1 Kings 18:2-16.** As Elijah heeds God's summons and goes to meet Ahab, he bumps into Obadiah on the way. Obadiah, as part of his duty to king Ahab, seeks grass for the royal livestock and horses during time of famine. It must have been a sad and difficult job for this godly civil servant. For, unbeknownst to the king, Obadiah provided shelter and food to one hundred prophets, hidden in caves, protecting these men from Queen Jezebel's murderous campaign against them. In contrast to cruel Ahab, who cared more for his horses than for the souls of his subjects, the LORD raised up Obadiah to help in such a time of terrible suffering. Later in 1 Kings 18, we will see the *agents of Jezebel's murderous campaign*, executed at the hands of repentant Israel. Compare 1 Kings 18:4,13 with 1 Kings 18:19, 40 - to see how closely allied Baal's prophets were to Jezebel in her murderous zeal to make the worship of Baal the national religion! The lesson is clear: God knows how to keep His own from the machinations of godless governments and evil rulers.

Do you begin your prayers for the persecuted church by thanking God for His amazing power to protect His own, and to bless His people *even in the midst of persecution*? No wonder, when Obadiah expresses fear that Elijah will disappear (1 Kings 18:12), Elijah takes an oath in the name of “the LORD Almighty,” (1 Kings 18:15) that is, in the name of the LORD of hosts, who commands the armies of Heaven. Elijah reminds Obadiah that the only reason he is able to protect God's prophets at all is because the LORD Himself, with His angelic hosts, restrains the wicked and blinds the henchman who are hunting for Elijah and all those who follow Elijah's God.

Meditate and Pray: *LORD, we believe that you are a God who restrains wickedness every day. Though we don't understand the eruptions of evil that you permit, we know that, in the end, your allowing evil to exist at all – will be for your glory. Please help us to believe the truth of Psalm 76:10: “Even the wrath of man shall praise thee.” Amen.*

**Sat/Sun: read 1 Kings 18:16-21.** Obadiah, ennobled by Elijah's promise that he will not vanish, but will stand before Ahab that day, goes and finds the king and brings him to meet Elijah. Elijah sets the record straight – pointing out that it is always the idolatry of men which produces troublesome, evil and deadly times of suffering for kingdoms and nations on earth. It is never God's fault when nations inherit the violent results of their national choice to pursue idols instead of the one true God! Perhaps it is good here to learn how idolatry worked in the ancient world.

Baal was the widespread idol of agricultural lands around Israel - the god of the storm. To worship him meant to believe in his fertility as he mated each spring with his consort, symbolized by the Asherah pole. Interestingly, if you look at 1 Kings 18, it was the prophets of Baal's consort who ate regularly at Jezebel's table (1 Kings 18:19).

*Meditate and Pray: LORD, whenever idols threaten our commitment to and our joy in your ways, please tear those idols away, and renew us in your ways. Amen.*

Sing about the LORD's power to break the hold of idolatry in our lives, using hymn # 534:

1 O for a closer walk with God,  
A calm and heavenly frame,  
A light to shine upon the road  
That leads me to the Lamb!

2 Return, O holy Dove, return,  
Sweet messenger of rest!  
I hate the sins that made Thee mourn  
And drove Thee from my breast.

3 The dearest idol I have known,  
Whate'er that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Thy throne,  
And worship only Thee.

4 So shall my walk be close with God,  
Calm and serene my frame;  
So purer light shall mark the road  
That leads me to the Lamb.