

Hello everyone. Hope you are having a great week. It started off well as we had 2 worship services this past Sunday. We went to the Brethren Retirement Community Sunday afternoon and had a nice service there as well as our 9:30 worship at Price's Creek.

May God richly bless you and keep you as you continue to serve Him!!!

Pastor Don

“Duel On Mount Carmel” 1 Kings 18:20-40 June 2, 2013

While studying about Elijah calling fire down from heaven in 1Kings 18, the 5th grade Sunday school teacher asked why Elijah had 12 buckets of water poured over the bull he was sacrificing. Little Sally answered to make the gravy.

The neighborhood was planning a block party for Sat. When Sat. arrived, they realized that they had not invited Sister Bertha to the party. Quickly calling and apologizing they made sure she knew she was invited. Sorry, Sister Bertha replied, but it is simply too late. I can't come; I have already prayed for rain.

A certain Christian lady lived next door to an atheist. Everyday she would pray aloud on the porch so that her neighbor could hear her. Many times he would harass her while she was praying. He would say "Lady, why do you pray all the time? Don't you know there is no God?" But she kept on praying. One day, she ran out of groceries. As usual, she was praying to the Lord explaining her situation and thanking Him for what He was about to do. The atheist heard her prayer. He went to the grocery store & bought some groceries. He put them on her porch, rang the door bell and then hid in the bushes to see what she would do. When she opened the door and saw the groceries, she began to praise and glorify God. Then the atheist jumped out of the bushes and told her, "Lady, God didn't buy you those groceries, I did!" She began praising the Lord even louder and said, "I knew the Lord would provide me with some groceries, but I didn't know he was gonna get the devil pay for them!"

Do we have faith when we pray? Lots of faith? It takes faith to believe that God will hear and answer our prayers; to know that God knows best and will give us what is best for us. Elijah had this great faith. In 1Kings 17:1, Elijah told King Ahab “As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word.” Now after 3 years God had sent Elijah to end the drought. But 1st, God was going to show the people of Israel who the real God is. Have we ever been greatly outnumbered? In today's scripture, Elijah is greatly outnumbered; 450 prophets of Baal, plus they brought along some cheer leaders, 400 prophets of Asherah. So we could say in reality, it was 850 to 1; not very good odds. But Martin Luther said “one with God is a majority.” Do we believe that? Do we stand up for God? Especially when we are out numbered? Do we obey God's laws, or do we go along with our friends when they want us to break them? Do we compromise our faith, give into peer pressure and go along with the crowd? Or do we stand firm, trusting the promise that Jesus made us in Matthew 10:32-33 “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. ³³ But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.” If we want Jesus to acknowledge us before God, we must acknowledge him before

men. If we deny Jesus before men, Jesus will deny us before God. We don't want him to deny us before God do we? Therefore we had better not deny him. Failing to stand up for him is the same as denying him. We need to stand up for Jesus every time we can; especially when we are outnumbered, and when we are the only one. Elijah was greatly outnumbered, but he stood for God. Moses stood for God before Pharaoh; Shadrach, Meshach, & Abednego stood for God before Nebuchadnezzar; Daniel stood for God before King Darius. By standing for God, these men put their lives on the line. Are we willing to take a stand for God? No matter what the consequences? Even if it might be our last? Do we love God enough to die for him, or even harder yet, to live for Him? Are we willing to make a stand for Him? {Pray}

The duel on Mt. Carmel is one of the most spectacular events in the bible. Carmel means "The Garden Land". It is a low range of mountains running south east from the Mediterranean Sea. The false god Baal was supposed to be the god of the sun and of the storm, so sending fire down from heaven did not seem like an unreasonable request. And our God, the God who created the sun and the earth; the moon and the stars, is there anything too hard for our God to do? No, He tells us in Jeremiah 32:37 "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there anything too hard for me?"

God was fed up with his people worshipping other gods. Now he was ready to act. It was time for Israel to decide who would be their God; the one true living God who made them and brought them up out of bondage in Egypt, or a false god Baal who does not exist and therefore can do nothing. Elijah sets the stage with this question; "How long will you falter between 2 opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." Notice the people did not say a word. They had not decided which god they would follow. Some of the people gathered for this contest were flat out idolaters. Others were worshipping the 1, true God, only in secret so that they would not get into trouble. They were afraid to take a stand for God. The majority were probably worshipping both. It was not uncommon at that time for people to except other gods into their daily worship. The idols appealed to their sensual nature while the true living God appealed to their spiritual nature. They were having their cake and eating it too. They were playing both sides of the fence. They were refusing to make a stand. They thought you can not be too careful; it's better to cover all your bases. It's best not to offend anyone. Yet, they were offending God. Their God, the one who made them, loves them and provides for them. A jealous God who said you shall have no other gods before me. The one who said you shall not make any graven images or bow down to them. Hear the words of God from Exodus 20:1-6: "And God spoke all these words, saying: ²"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ³"You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴"You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; ⁵ you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, ⁶ but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments." Do we have any other gods before God in our lives? Do we worship any graven images? Idols still exist today; they are just harder to spot than they were in Elijah's day. They are not just wood, metal or stone statues anymore. Today they come in all shapes and sizes and are made of many different types of material, even flesh and blood. Yes a person can be an idol too. Dwhite L. Moody said anything that gets between me and God is an idol. Anything! That could be our job, our home, our hobby,

even our family or our friends. Is there anything in our lives this morning that is keeping us from worshipping God as we should? Anything that hinders us in our walk with Him? Prevents us from doing our best for Him or taking a stand for Him? Is there anything in our lives this morning that is an idol? If there is, we need to get rid of it. We need to lay it down on the alter and give it to God. Jesus told us in Matthew 6:24 “No man can serve two masters; either he will hate one and love the other; or else he will hold to one and despise the other. You can not serve God and mammon.” Who are we serving today?

Elijah’s question how long will you falter between 2 opinions was meant to get them to stop being double minded. To stop trying to worship both Baal and God and get them to chose to serve God with all their heart, mind, body, and soul. James tells us in James 1:8 “a double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” Are we double minded? Are we serving God with all of our heart, mind, body and soul?

Elijah let the prophets of Baal go first. He cautioned them about making sure they did not put a fire under their sacrifice. False prophets would not be above cheating you know. They prayed all day and nothing happened. How could it, Baal does not exist, therefore he can’t do anything. They prayed in vain. Elijah heckled them a little: vs. 27 “And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Cry aloud, for he *is* a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, *or* perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened.” Since their prayers were not being answered, they cut themselves and jumped on the alter. Deuteronomy 14:1 strictly forbids God’s children to cut themselves. Now why would they jump on the alter? What would happen to you if you jumped on the alter at the same time your god answered and sent down his fire? These false prophets weren’t to smart were they? Double minded people need to clear their minds so they can think properly. Do we think properly? Do we think God thoughts?

Finally at the time of the evening sacrifice, after trying all day to summon fire from heaven, it was Elijah’s turn. Elijah repaired an alter that had been used to worship God many years before when Israel still following the one true living god. He used 12 stones to repair it, 1 for each son of Jacob, whom God had renamed Israel. Then he dug a trench around it. Had 4 water pots each filled 3 times and dumped onto the bullock which he had cut in pieces and laid upon the wood. These 12 buckets of water not only represented each son of Jacob, but thoroughly soaked the sacrifice and filled the trench with water as well. Then Elijah prayed and God answered with fire from heaven. God’s fire not only consumed the bull, but the wood, the water, and the rocks as well.

God won the duel. The people fell on their faces and said “The LORD He is God! The LORD he is God! Do we know that the LORD He is God this morning? Make no mistake my friends, ours is the only true living God. God loves us. He cares for us, he provides for us. Do we love Him? Do we serve Him out of that love?

God’s love leads to life. He sent his only begotten son to die for us. Any one can have eternal life through Jesus Christ. Acts 4:12 says “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Worshipping God leads to life; worshipping idols leads to death. Elijah killed all the false prophets of Baal. Who are we worshipping this morning? Are we bowing at the idol of Baal, or are we kneeling at the alter of God? Do we have idols in our lives that we need to tear down? Is there anything in our lives this morning that is keeping us from worshipping God as we should? Anything that is hindering our walk with Him? Anything that is preventing us from doing our best for Him? Do we have any idols in our lives this morning? If there is, we need to get rid of it. We need to lay it down on the alter and give it to God. We need to say that The LORD He is God.

Another danger of idol worship is that we can easily pass it onto our children. Hear the words of Psalm 115:4-8 “Their idols *are* silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. ⁵ They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; ⁶ They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell; ⁷ They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat. ⁸ Those who make them are like them; *So is everyone who trusts in them.*” Is that what we want to be? An empty shell of a person? Is that what we want our children to become? No! So let’s not worship idols. Let’s teach our children not to worship idols; let’s teach them to take a stand for God.

When we do that, we too are calling fire down from heaven. The Holy Spirit is symbolized by fire. The Holy Spirit baptizes us with fire. We can be filled with the Holy Spirit, and then we won’t be lifeless, speechless idols anymore. Christians have the Holy Spirit living in their hearts. We get him when we ask God to forgive us of our sins and accept Jesus as our personal savior. Are we on fire for God? Are our hearts filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit?

1 John 1:8-2:2 “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. ² My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.”

Propitiation means atoning sacrifice for sin. God is ready to forgive all who seek his forgiveness. Are we seeking it this morning? Do we have it already? If we do then we have something to be truly thankful for don’t we? And if we are truly thankful, we will share that gratitude with others won’t we.

What idols are we facing today? The idol of fear? Yes fear is an idol; it gets between us and God. It stops us from being all and doing all we can for God. It stops us from taking a stand for God. We don’t stand up for him because we feel that we are all alone. Christians are never truly alone. Jesus lives in our hearts. He goes where we go. Hebrews 13:5 reminds us that Jesus said “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So if Christ is with us, why do we fear?

Psalm 27:1 says “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid.” We need to let God calm our fears today. We need to let him take all our idols away. We need to let him fill us with his spirit so that we too

can be all we can be for his glory. Jesus was with the 3 Hebrew children in the fiery furnace; Some believe He was the angel that shut the lion's mouths to protect Daniel; He was with Moses in the presence of Pharaoh and He was with Elijah on Mt. Carmel. He will be with us too when we make a stand for him. All we have to be is willing to make that stand.

Are we willing to stand up for Jesus? Are we willing to spread His love; to fulfill his will for our lives; to worship Him no matter what anybody else says or does.

Are we willing to tell others about him so that they too can join us in worshipping the one true living God?

The LORD He is God!!!! Hallelujah and Amen.