

The Crucible

Pastor James

www.gracetabernaclehyd.org

Father this morning we just thank You Lord, we just thank You, we commit ourselves Lord this morning. Touch our ears, above all touch our ears, for faith comes from hearing. Your Word said in the final Book Lord Your Spirit says, 'blessed are those who read and who hear and keeps the words of this prophecy.' I pray Father there would be a hearing today, even those who have never heard before, today is a new day and Your mercies are new every morning. Today they will receive that mercy of hearing Father. Touch our ears, heal our eyes with that salve, that balm of Gilead that we may see the awesomeness of our God, the beauty of His face, the glory of His Kingdom, that this world will feel like rubbish. As Apostle Paul said, 'I consider it all as rubbish, trash,' open our eyes, touch our heart because there have been many in the past who have heard and saw, and yet didn't believe. Balaam was somebody who heard, who saw into the unseen, yet didn't believe. So, above all touch our hearts that we may believe, because Your Word says, 'If you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be saved,' help us to believe and confess Jesus, Jesus, Jesus in every situation, the Name above every other name, the only Name under the heavens in which Salvation is found, help us to believe and confess 'Jesus, Jesus, Jesus,' the sweetest name of all, Jesus, the most powerful Name of all and the righteous, run and hide in that Name. Thank You Father, thank You Lord, thank You, speak to us, in Jesus's Name we pray. Amen.

So, we continue where we stopped last month, the end of last fifteenth year. Remember, the whole idea is, we are saved by grace, like I told the other church, I will not speak their language to you, you won't understand anything. You were saved by grace, we were all saved by grace. If you are saved, you are saved by the grace of God, it's free, the supernatural grace of God but once you are saved, the grace of God has appeared to all men and teaches us. All teaching is primarily connected to this – your and my appearance before God for judgment. Either you die, you stand before God or He comes and you stand before God. So, it's a preparation for that day, after you are saved, everything is a preparation for that day. Remember, Hebrews 9:27 says, it is appointed unto very man to die once and after that is the judgment.

I mean death is real, just think about last week. It doesn't make any difference to you, it makes a whole lot of difference to me. That train is a train I've been traveling from the time Coromandel express started. As a young kid in class eight, nineteen Chennai mail, get down on this platform, rush to the next one, catch Coromandel express, that is the first superfast, that's the train and the other one, the other train also I had travelled in it and suddenly they are gone. Two thousand passengers, sitting, thinking had no clue that almost three hundred would not see the end of that day, just gone. That's how our lives are, that's what the Bible puts it across. We are like favor gone. If you look into eternity which is not time without end, it is timelessness, our life on earth is like mist, it's there and gone and therefore, none of us know when He is going to come. Top secret in the whole universe nobody knows. It is a secret the Father is holding it. I'm still doubting, does the Son know? I don't know because in the Book of Revelation it is written, the Revelation God gave to his servant, to His Son Jesus, to His servant the angel, to the Apostle John. I don't know, the Father is keeping a top secret, when He is going to send His Son back, it could be before the end of the service, precisely, because, what is the end of it? The end of it is we see the signs right and we see, we understand it better, right?

I told you after AI came in we understand it better, the machine and the demons and the humans all getting together right. Machine and humans coming together. Have you seen AI? Haven't seen, we just saw the offertory. That was the machine and the human coming together. Did you see anybody playing any music? No. It is right before our eyes and it's so natural to us, we don't even take a second glance about these things. It has become so natural and that's the danger of it. All these things have been warned and we become so complacent that is why Jesus didn't say pray, He said, "Watch and pray." He says, "When the fig tree blossoms and the other trees, you are good at reading the weather." He says, "Watch out for the signs, watch out."

That's why we have to be always no fearful, but prepared because we are going to see things that attacks the minds of men, the demonic is not visible but it is experiential. Why do you struggle even to concentrate? Your minds are a battlefield and a minefield. Think, take a look, this is where the battle is taking place and it will be like never before. The

Bible says in *Revelation 12* there is war in Heaven and there was war on earth and those who won on earth, they overcame him by the Blood of The Lamb. We sang about the Blood today in English and in the offertory. We are a strange set of people on earth. That's why we are called a peculiar people. We are the only set of people on earth, the believers who sing about the Blood all the time because we overcome the devil by the Blood of Jesus and we have to learn how to appropriate the Blood of Jesus so that we are absolutely clean and pure and spotless at His coming and the weapon He has given is for that is the Blood, the Blood of His Son. You have to learn, they overcame whom? The accuser of brethren, the accuser of the brother, how did they overcome him, by the Blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony.

If you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth, your word is a weapon. When Jesus comes and destroys, it is written, the sword that came out of His mouth. When you release, when you believe and you speak, it should have power not with man, in the realm that is battling us twenty-four seven. And the third thing, they were fearless, they did not love their lives even unto death. They were fearless, God says, "The battle is here whether you like it or not, there are only two options, overcome or be overcome. So, in *Matthew 24* after giving a whole list of things and what will happen and happening before our eyes.

Matthew 24:13

¹³But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

He who endures, keep that. Endures, he who endures, when? Till the middle, no, till the end, till the end of your life, or till the hour of his coming. You have to endure and in *Luke 21:36*

Luke 21:36

³⁶Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Watch therefore and pray always, that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things. Convergence, all these things were prophesied but when they start happening, all these things happening, suddenly, watch out. Escape all these things that will come to pass and to stand. Endure and stand. Endure, these are important words in Scripture, we should be able to endure and not have fallen but still be found standing against the enemy and standing in the presence of God. Last Sunday we looked at Malachi, one is battling there, battling the powers of darkness. We are fighting, resist, remember the third thing is resist, we are learning to turn to receive the life that God gives us and to resist, endure what is coming and it is happening among us and still stand. When the day of evil comes the Bible says, stand. Then there is another enduring and another standing and that's got nothing to do with the enemy or the world, it's got to do with God. That we saw in *Malachi 3:1*

Malachi 3:1

¹"Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," Says the LORD of hosts. ² "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap.

"Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, who is His temple? We are His temple. The day you got saved, you don't realize, He's suddenly came into that temple. It is only now I look back in retrospect I understand what was happening in my life because that day in the month of October in the year 1983 when I went on my knees and ask Jesus to come, He suddenly came in and after that my life changed completely. I was so upset, I was so mad, I was so angry, never understanding what was happening because He came in suddenly.

Even the Messenger of the Covenant in who You delight, behold He is coming says the Lord of hosts* and then two rhetorical questions. ***Who can endure the day of His coming? He comes in but He won't leave. ***Who can endure the day of His coming? Who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and a launderer's soap.*** We look at this launderer's soap and we are thinking about our soap. Surf excel, why are you laughing at surf excel? Do you know it is**

India's first billion-dollar brand? Did you know that? Surf excel which we are so casual about is India's first billion-dollar brand but that is not what it is talking about. In our old days especially in Kerala where everybody wears white not because they are pristine pure but because it's very hot. When those white was given to the launderer, he uses something like a caustic soda and it was boiled in it, to get all the dirt off. Refiner's fire, launderer's soap and if you look at the parallel passage about husbands and wives and Christ and the Church, He says, He will make us how? By the washing of the water of the Word without spot without wrinkle, what does that soap do? Takes the spot off, what does the iron do? Takes the wrinkles off. So get ready. The work of the ironing has started. He won't leave you alone. You can opt out that's your call but if you don't opt out, who can stand? Who can endure? So, there is two enduring, one is outside, one is allowing Him to do His work in us. Because the times will be terrible, okay, it will be terrible. *Hebrews 12*, this is what God says,

Hebrews 12:26-28

²⁶ *whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven."* ²⁷ *Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.* ²⁸ *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.*

So, that is why many of you feel, "Pastor my life is being shaken," don't worry, everything that is not of the Kingdom will be taken out from everybody's life, otherwise you will be found unworthy for the Kingdom. When you enter into the next realm, whether He comes or you die, nothing of this world will be in you. He will shake everything out that is not of His Kingdom. The Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom. That's what Malachi was talking about, who can endure, who can stand the refiner's fire, if you go to *Malachi 3:3* this is what verse 3 says, I love very three because there are proclamations but there is practical.

Malachi 3:3

³*He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness.*

He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, He will purify the sons of Levi. Who is Levi? The priesthood. What are we in the New Covenant? The priesthood, we are a royal priesthood, the sons of Levi, the daughters of Levi. God says, "You are all part of My priesthood and what will I do? I will refine you," *I will purify you like a silver, purged you as gold and silver that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.* You can be very sure, one we enter into eternity, if you open your mouth and say something or sing something it will be righteous. There will be nothing unclean or unrighteous entering into that City but the work is done here.

So, get that otherwise don't get so much caught up in the world. Go to the world, be a witness, do your work, come back and let God do His work in us because we are preparing for another place and the world will not understand us. Let them call us fools, it doesn't matter. Don't try to be smart in the world, try to be a fool in the world. If you are smart in the world, you will be in trouble in the Kingdom okay; because they will never understand us and don't try to make them understand us. It's no need, it is not possible. Jesus said this, in John 14, when the refiner's fire, the refiner comes.

John 14:15-18

¹⁵*If you love Me, keep My commandments.* ¹⁶ *And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—* ¹⁷ *the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.* ¹⁸ *I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.*

If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that is the Messenger that comes in, not Elijah, the Holy Spirit that comes in *and He may abide with your forever* and what did he say? *The Spirit of Truth whom the world cannot receive.* The world is made in a lie, manufactured in a lie and exporting lies. He says, "They will never be able to receive the Spirit of Truth, My Spirit," *because it neither sees Him nor knows Him but you know Him for He dwells with you and He will be in you*, that is the issue we are facing. Honestly, once He comes in, everything changes. So, the Bible says, *'When the Spirit of Truth comes in, who can endure? Who can stand?*

Because He begins the work of cleaning us, purging us, so that we can be ready for that Kingdom, but the truth of the matter is, as we study, let us be very clear about this. This is not any fancy teaching, this is Scriptural. Not many will make it through, I'm not talking about Salvation. Not many will finish the school of the Holy Spirit.

That's why the question is asked - Who will endure? Who can stand? Not many, He himself said, "The Kingdom is yours little flock. I am the way," multitudes get it when they are hit by the truth, I am the truth, until you'd learn to handle truth, the Spirit of Truth on that side is life in abundance and Jesus says, "Very few will make it through," I don't think He's talking about Salvation because the Bible talks about many come through the fire with Salvation alone, nothing on that side because they did not go through the school. I mean, we that practically in our own systems, right? Now, you enter into LKG, you start with LKG or whatever school, how many schools are there for LKG, plenty. Just LKG and UKG, playschool, plenty are there. Then you go to high school, the number comes down. When you go to whatever you call your plus two inter, the number comes down. When you go to under graduation, the number goes down further. When you go to PG, the number goes down even further. You see as you go up in the academic system, the number of seats available gets lesser and lesser, why doesn't the government increase it? Simply because many will not come through. They will not come through, the government knows it, they will not come through. That's a fact, whether you like it or not it is a fact.

In the same way you look into the Kingdom of God, it is a fact, you have to accept it and that's why I say, 'Elijah is such an important person,' because that spirit that was upon him or that personality is seen in three stages. It is seen through Israel's worse time where they go down into idolatry, sets a stage for their exile into Babylon a few hundred years later, that is Ahab and Jezebel ruling and then you see that same spirit upon John the Baptist who is the forerunner to Jesus Christ, preparing the hearts of the people to receive the Gospel of Salvation, then you see him coming again before later, one of the two witnesses. So you see Elijah coming over there, yet God says they were seven thousand who did not bend their knees to Baal, yet there were hundred prophets who escaped the slaughter of the prophets by Jezebel and her servants, yet God only found one man, why? Because only he could come through and one man ultimately is going to stand there all alone on Mount Carmel and face the secular, if you want to use that, system, and the powers of darkness represented by the prophets of Baal and then he is going to bring fire down and ultimately turn the hearts of the people back to God and the heart of God back to the people, one man.

And we see that parallel, Ahab the weak man Jezebel the aggressive woman and these prophets and when he comes and speaks before Ahab, he has no clue that one day he has to stand on Mount Carmel and face the powers of darkness, that is why the three and a half years is a preparation of that man and we are coming to that time. Again, we see the parallel. John the Baptist comes over there, there is John the Baptist, he comes out of the wilderness just like Elijah preaches and then you have Herod the weak man and Herodias the aggressive woman a little later, John's head is on a platter. Elijah didn't run before Ahab, He ran before Jezebel. Herod did not take John's head off, it was Herodias who was instrumental in taking it and when we come to the end of the age, the Bible talks about the woman who rides the beast and we are coming here. We are coming into that moment in Israel where you will see this. Because we are in India we don't feel so much but it is coming. You go into the western world, men have been silenced, they don't say anything. You go to the west, it's a woman's world. It's an aggressive militant feminism which you are seeing over here and the question is, how do you navigate and come through and remain as the child of God? And when Elijah departs, he's departed taken by the chariots of fire and a whirlwind. It is a picture of rapture. And the anointing that was upon him is split into three ways, one upon an unbeliever a gentile, over Syria Damascus, over Jehu the secular leader the prophet. So we have to see, is God going to do something, that He is going to anoint a set of people who He doesn't know to do His purpose in the last days and a man of God, a secular man of God whom He is going to anoint to do His purpose and the prophetic who will ultimately anoint them all. And if it is so, where do you want to be?

This is not time to play games, this is the time to say, 'Lord, I am available, do your work in me.' That's why Daniel says, they who know the Lord shall do great exploits while the others have been swayed the flattery of the anti-Christ, there is a set of people who know God and they do mighty exploits. Put your heart on God because the Bible says in a twinkling of an eye before you know everything will be over. That's what the Bible says, even Elijah needed to be prepared. Who can endure? Who can stand? Elijah, the mysterious character. That's why we work on for years, we have over and over come back to 1 Kings 17 and 18 these two chapters of how this man, because a Elijah is if not the most important prophet in the Bible because he keeps coming back over and over again, Elijah, Elijah, Elijah Jesus Himself talks about

Him. So, get this clear. When He comes in *1 Kings 17:1*, Elijah the Tishbite, we know this verse right? We heard it of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to 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."

1 Kings 17:1

¹And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to 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."

Elijah suddenly appears. We don't know anything about him, we don't know his background, he has no resume. There will be lot of people in the last days who will suddenly pop out, they had no resume, they had no background but they had a backbone. The question is not whether you have a background, the question is, do you have a backbone to stand against the powers of darkness and not flinch. Elijah did not have a background but if you look he had a backbone, he stood because he stood before God, he could stand before any man. I think it is that lady who started that Orphanage near Pune, what was her name. I forgot her name, if you've been to her huge Orphanage, she's a Christian lady, it is written over there, 'Any man who has bent his knee before God has to fear no man.' Elijah, what do we know about Elijah? We know a few thousands of years later from Apostle James, in *James 5:17*,

James 5:17

¹⁷Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.

Elijah was a man with a nature just like us. He was just like any one of us and that is where we are all the same. After that it is different, he prayed. That's what we don't do. He prayed. How did he pray? Earnestly. He prayed but when you read *1 Kings 16, 15, 14, 13* do you see Elijah praying? You don't see Elijah, this is exactly what Jesus said in *Matthew 6:6*, but you when you pray go into your room and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. For weeks and months and years, there is a man called Elijah from the hill country of Gilead, a Tishbite. He's praying, praying, praying, upset by what is happening, God sees him in secret, He sees his heart, He sees his burden, so God is able to put His burden and His Word into His heart and suddenly he is revealed. You in secret, He will reward you openly. Before you know, you realize that he's standing in front of the king. You need to realize, there are lot of things which God looks for. Do you have a secret life with God? A life which only God knows, nobody has to know, everybody has been caught by the spirit of the world, everybody wants to go public, public figure, public life with no secret life. This is a man who had a secret life and God alone saw him and then God just picked him up, put him in front of the king and said, "Speak to him, you are My mouth piece for this generation," and he spoke. This is how Jesus said we should pray in *verse 9, 10*.

Matthew 6:9-10

⁹In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What was Elijah's prayer? Your Name, Your Kingdom, Your will. Nothing else. A man sold over to the Name, to the Kingdom and to the Will of God in his generation, are you one? I don't want to mention, there is a young girl, she looks Jamaican, I don't want to mention her name or anything, I think she is in New York city, she is an unbelievably godly, righteous woman but if you hear her prophecies, your spine will chill. She is absolutely clear, she says, 'This is what the Lord says' and if she's a random kind of a person, I will ignore them but she says it very clear, 'before 2024, President Trump will be assassinated, Biden will abdicate, Kamala will become president and that's the end.' Absolutely, the beginning of the end has come and they say the same thing in India, before 2024 Rahul Gandhi will be assassinated. You know there are prophecies? Which leader do we put our hope in for a change? Which leader do they put a hope for a change? But do you know what prophecies are?

Now, these are prophecies, are they warnings, are they set. So, when I speak about it to people in other places, I say, 'I don't know, she says that judgment is set God is not going to change His mind, like He told Jeremiah, you are going to Babylon, don't even try to change My mind, it's over, it's finished.' And when I hear that honestly, ask Pastor Vijay, even yesterday morning, I said, 'Pastor Vijay I fear for my church, I fear for my children.' I said, 'Who in the world do you meet

any day who is prepared for what is coming? Who is ready? Who is prepared?' I'm talking about that day from Jesus's own mouth. He says, 'If the Lord hadn't shortened those days even the very elect wouldn't be saved.' Those who were predestined wouldn't be saved if He didn't shorten the days. He says, 'Like those days never in the history of mankind has days like that ever come,' and what are we thinking about? Ask what are the thoughts in your mind? Who is preparing? The Bible is a very open Book. God says as it is, He says, "These things will come but," He says, "you do not fear." When the hearts of men are failing because of fear, you do not fear, lift up your heads, your redemption is near, for these are not easy things to preach because it is the truth and that is why I love many of the prayer request, it is always for the salvation of unsaved loved ones. That should be at the top of your list, 'Lord, salvation of unsaved loved ones, Lord, it doesn't matter how hurting it is, how burning it is, launderer's soap, refiner's fire, Lord do Your work in me, I will endure. Do Your work in me, it doesn't matter what it cost, do Your work in me.'

That is Elijah, out of the blue, out of nowhere he is suddenly revealed. He stands before the king, he makes a proclamation and God and the man has become one. What he says over there in 17:1 is that there will be no dew or rain, one, until the Word of the Lord comes from my mouth. "Except at my word," God and the man has become one. He's saying the destiny of this nation has been locked up in my mouth. When I speak next, at God's command, it will rain; no dew, no rain. What a man! Where did he come from? And we thought if you and I were in that position and made a prophecy like that we would think we have arrived and God tells him, you have just started, you are not even ready for the actual work I have for you. You have to be prepared. He tells him, turn eastward. Then the word of the Lord verse 2 will says.

1 Kings 17:2

²Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ³“Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan.

Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, Get away from here. Get away from these places of power, places of influence, this glittering, glassy world, get away from this place. We are so caught up with this glamor of this world, right? Remember David who was chosen by King Saul to be one of his armor bearers and used to place this harp and the demonic spirit use to leave but what does the Word of God say? *David went from the palace to the wilderness.* He didn't stay in the palace, in the glamor, when the king did not need him, he immediately took off to the wilderness. Therefore, when he comes from the wilderness and he sees Goliath challenging Israel, his words are different, because he has been framed in the wilderness, not by the glitter and glamor of this world.

He says, "Turn, go into the wilderness of Cherith and hide there, go and hide there." You have to learn, the minute you leave your work place, your offices, you have to learn to leave, don't stay one more second longer than needed, get out, go back home, go back into the presence of God, stay there. And where is He taking him? "Go to Cherith, and hide there." What does Cherith mean? We saw last week, Elijah, there is so much to be cut away from your life before I can really use you. You think you just made a prophecy, that's nothing, that's just the beginning. He has no clue one day he is going to stand alone on Mount Carmel, face the king, his army, the people and the prophets of Baal. You have no clue what we are facing and going to face because Satan has come with great wrath because he knows his time is near. Satan was found no place his heaven because he lost the war in the second heaven and he's cast down to earth. Now he's no longer in the second heavens, a time is coming, his dwelling place will be earth, how are we going to handle that? So, we learn from Elijah, allow the Spirit of God to cut away from our lives all those unnecessary things. So, he goes into the school of Cherith. If you ever start another school, name it Cherith okay and keep knives over there, say, "This is where we will cut you away. Cutting, chipping away, preparing him.

Question is, does God do this with everyone? Answer, no. Does God want to do this with everyone? Answer, yes. But does God do this with everyone? Answer, no. Like I said last night, in God's Kingdom, there are no conscripts. Conscripts mean whether you like it or not, if you are eighteen-year-old and above, join the army. There are only volunteers. God's Kingdom is an all-volunteer army. That's why *Romans 12:1* says, offer your body, you have to offer, your bodies are not taken, you offer your bodies as a living sacrifice. Offer, every day, you wake up and you say, I offer, I join, I enlist myself, I join Lord, train me.

Elijah is somebody who volunteered, he offered, how did you know? You knew it from his prayer life, in that secret closet, in that secret place, the Father knew this man is a volunteer. In the wilderness, in the secret place, God looked at that young boy and He said, "This is a volunteer," that is what He told through Samuel to King Saul, "I have found a man after My own heart," nobody knew even the prophet did not know. "You don't know, but I know there is a man hidden over there, his heart is for Me," because when you are in the secret place, if you can do something consistently for God in secret, your life will become authentic. If you want your life to be true, then consistently do the things you have to do for God secretly, He will make it public but don't worry about that. The question is that consistency is proving to God you are a volunteer, you have enlisted and that's Elijah. Elijah was a man with a nature like all of us but he prayed but if you read *1 Kings 17*, you don't see him praying. So, who saw him praying? God saw him praying. And then if you come to verses 4 and 5 of 17.

1 Kings 17:4, 5

⁴ And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there."⁵ So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan.

And it will be that you shall drink from the brook and I've commanded the ravens to feed you there and verse 5 will say, turn eastward, go to the Brook Cherith, hide there, I have commanded, the place, the provision, the protection and the preparation of a servant of God. One day he will be revealed in the day of power. There is a place God set, that is where, go to Cherith. Provision, I have commanded, water is there, I have commanded. Protection is there, hide yourself, this is not the time to be seen because there is an X-mark on your back. You are on the crosshairs of the king and his soldiers, there is a notice put out for you, bring him dead or alive, preferable dead, so hide there. And what do I do? You will now, I'm preparing you. One line, verse 5. Children of God, servants of God, their entire sometimes one years, two years, five years, ten years, thirteen years, fifteen years, of their life is one line. What is that? He went and did according to the Word of God. That should be. We want to write essays, biographies, autobiographies, God says, one line is enough. He went and did according to the Word of the Lord. What is written about Enoch, the first human prophet? *He walked with God*, that's all is written about him, one line, three hundred years of man's history, he walked with God. If you want to know how he walked with God, what happened, you come to Heaven I will tell you. For you only one line, *he walked with God*, simple. We don't need all these eulogies from men, eulogy is for dead men, these people who talk about - -, he did what he was told to do, simple. Which flows into the Jordan and verse 6.

1 Kings 17:6

⁶ The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook.

The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, bread and meat in the evening and he drank from the brook. Note very carefully, when certain things are written very specifically, we need to ask ourselves, God is not giving us information, He is teaching us. Information is on google, God is not in google. He is not giving you just information, he is giving you knowledge of what you need to fight this battle, so why is it written the ravens brought him bread and meat, bread and meat, why is it written like that. Bread and meat, morning and evening, bread and meat. He's preparing for something which Elijah doesn't even realize he's been prepared for something. He's been prepared for spiritual warfare and if you are not prepared and ready to fight, let me tell you with the authority of Scriptures, if you are not prepared to fight, you will lose. There are only two options in this life once you are saved. Overcome or be overcome, you cannot escape this. After chapter one, chapter two, chapter three, chapter four, chapter five all preparations and talking about what Christ has done, what He has done for us, how we should walk and how marriages and life and home should be, when it comes to chapter six it says, put on the whole armor of God, stand in the might and in the power of God and when the day of evil comes, stand. Why? Because we wrestle not against flesh and blood but we wrestle against principalities, rulers, powers, powers of wickedness in high places and so many of you are like you can see your minds are sometimes so blinded because you have no idea the battles are being consistently lost here. That's why he's a deceiver.

Get ready because Mount Carmel is going to be the defining moment in Elijah's history, his life, where he single-handedly resisted all the servants of Satan and the host of Satan. One side he locked up heaven, they couldn't do anything, they did all their incantation, rituals, witchcrafts, sorcery, cut themselves, let out blood, jump, dance, scream,

nothing happened. Why didn't nothing happen? This man in the unction of God shut up heaven. He did not shut up just rain and dew, he just locked up the entire powers of darkness that when they call, they couldn't do anything. He locked them up. He brought fire from Heaven. He turned the hearts of the people back to God. Not only he didn't stop there, he brought the blessings back on the land. You need to look at this, that's why we need to look at this person and the Bible gives us this very comforting truth, Elijah was a man different from all of us, No. **He was a man just like all of us**, that's comforting. God is saying, 'If I could do it with Elijah, I can do it with anybody' and Elijah did not even go to English medium school, he was not government educated but he shut up heavens and he opened heavens. So, there is something written here, he ate, not that this was his choice, this is God's choice for him; bread and meat morning, bread and meat evening. Starting with the fall where in Genesis 3 Satan enters into the Garden after that the fall is so swift, by the time you come to tenth generation, the demonic and human have so completely intermingled that every thought and inclination of man is evil and God has to destroy everyone and preserve just one family. That's how wicked the world became in ten generations and when this family comes out of the ark, God gives them literally a new commandment which you don't see in the other chapter. You see in Genesis 9, every moving thing that lives shall be food for you.

Genesis 9:3-4

³ Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you. I have given you all things, even as the green herbs. ⁴ But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood.

I have given you all things even as the green herbs. Earlier He had only given plants for man to eat, now He says, "You can eat meat, but you shall not eat flesh with its life that is its blood." He says, "Eat meat, but clean the blood out." We know what it is, what it means because the life of the creature is in the blood. So, take it out, because if you partake of the blood, all the demonic and the things in the animal nature will get into you, so wash it off but eat meat. Why did God change man's diet after Noah's flood, when the demonic had reached its height, why, why did He change his diet? Go to the New Covenant, *1 Timothy 4:1*

1 Timothy 4:1, 3-5

¹Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

³ forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. ⁴ For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; ⁵ for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons. And then what are the doctrines? Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. Now when you're talking about the food, it qualifies in the next verse, For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; **⁵ for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.** So, it did not go to the vegetables or fruits, it is talking about creatures because it says in the last days when demonic will reach its height there will be a movement in the world to take meat off your plate, if you look all around the world, the movement is to take the meat off your plate.

Now, those who are body builders over here, who go to the gym, young people, they know their diet changes, they need to have protein shake, egg white and more lean meat because they need for strength and building of muscles, what do you need? Protein. The most exhausting exercise in the world is spiritual warfare, you need strength. Elijah is being physically, spiritually being prepared to face the host of Satan on Mount Carmel with a specialized diet, eat bread and meat, eat bread and meat, and the demonic is taking over the agenda to prepare a set of people who have no prayer life nor have the stamina to withstand this battle. The Spirit expressly says in the last days.

God is preparing His servants, if you go back to that portion, you know what God is doing? God is preparing this man. Bread and meat in the morning, bread and meat in the evening, so preparing his body with a high protein diet to pray, to wrestle the powers of darkness and also see that he inculcates the habit of fasting one meal because in the Kingdom of God, fasting is a spiritual weapon. A servant is being prepared thousands of years ago so that we will learn of him how to

fight when these days come upon us. He says, "Learn to fight, learn to pray, learn to wrestle. Learn because," He says, "you cannot escape this, if there is no way you can escape, whether you like it or not you are into this and if you don't learn to fight, you will lose, they will just run over you and before you know it, the day will come and you will be caught." He says, "The day should not come on you by surprise because you are sons of light."

So, God is preparing His servant and God says, "Today understand it differently, learn to pray, be a person like Elijah." Be a man, a woman, a child of prayer, learn to eat a diet that gives your stamina so that by the time you have finished your prayer, come out of the prayer closet, you don't collapse, you have strength, also you learn how to fast, fast as a discipline because we are fighting against last days agenda, otherwise the Bible says, you will be just swept away. You won't even know, you will just be swept away because what the Devil is after are our minds. Our minds are gone, we are gone, we don't even know and the day will come to us like a trap and we look up the church is gone, what am I going to do? Verse 7

1 Kings 17:7

⁷And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

The Brook dried up, the natural reason is given, why? It is because there was no rain in the land. See, every servant of God, every prophet of God, everyone has to go through what the people are going through, otherwise, you will have neither sympathy or empathy. We have a High Priest, what kind of high priest? The One who sympathizes with us, because He was tempted at all points yet did not sin. He knows us because He went through it. So, think about it, people are walking miles for water, Elijah is simply sitting and drinking, bubbling brook, bread in the morning, meat in the morning, bread in the evening, I mean, what kind of a prophet do you become? Do you know what the people are going through?

Second reason, see, the problem is all of us who are parents and who have children, not sadly grown up in the cities but if we or our children were in the country side when our children were small, there is this wonder of the country side, today children have seen the wonder of man's invention, that is why they are always into gaming. I'm not talking about that. The little one, every plant, every flower, every bumble bee, everything, the wonder of it. The sad thing is that, we don't realize everyday of our life is actually a wonder, but we have lost the wonder of it, the wonder of God's mercy, His mercies are new. Let me honestly tell you, how many of you were ready to die last night, anybody please show your hand, I shall honor you with a crown now. So, the wonder of His mercy of a new day, the wonder of His provision. You see, we have taken it all for granted. It can happen even to the greatest of men. Go to *Numbers 11:4-6*

Numbers 11:4-6

⁴Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? ⁵ We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; ⁶ but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!"

Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; and that is not the point. Look at *verse 6* and now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes! The manna was a wonder. You are in the middle of nowhere, there is no food to eat, there's nothing all around you, look, it's a wilderness and every morning the wonder drops before them, enough for every home, every person, enough every day. It's a wonder and on the sixth day enough for two days, they are wonder and they say, 'We are tired of God's signs and wonders and His provision.' The danger, the miracle becoming familiar, the holy being common place. The sense of wonder and gratitude just disappears. It can happen even to the prophet because after sometime, he was the first one who sang the Sunday school song it's bubbling, because the Brook is always bubbling, he doesn't have to worry about water. It's coming, it's coming, the Ravens are always coming, after sometime he stops looking for the Raven because you have taken it for granted, the Ravens will come, the water will flow, even the miracle becomes common and the Brook dried.

Learn these lessons. Everyday wake up to the wonder of life. Lord that's what the Psalmist says, 'Let everything that has breathe praise the Lord, who will praise You in the grave.' Those who have breathe. He says, 'The wonder of life, have you lost it? If you haven't praised Him today, you have lost it and it is better for you to be in the grave because what happens, your place will be taken up by the trees and the rocks and they say, tell them to shut up. He says that if they shut up, the rocks and the trees, you will suddenly hear on that day, they too had voices, only we didn't hear or understand them. Let all of creation give Him glory but we were the ones who were made in His image, we were the ones created to give Him glory and we shut our mouth, it's become common place, the miracle has become common and we become ungrateful, so the Brook dried, now he's been moved to the next level, training. Verses 8 and 9. Then the Word of the Lord came to him.

1 Kings 17:8-9

⁸ Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ⁹ "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."

There's something drying in your life, what was constant from God in your life has dried up, listen carefully. He's got something to tell me. He's got something to tell me, either there's something new to teach me or He's going to re-orient re-calibrate me for something else. Let us not say higher or bigger leave that all, those are human calculation but he has something tougher or something new for me to learn. Don't panic when Brooks dry don't panic, only perk your ears, listen carefully. Brook dried, oh no. No, listen carefully because I know I'm in the right place, I know I heard well. Months back he said turn eastward, go to the Brook Cherith and hide and that's exactly what I'm doing and if the Brook has dried, it is not because I am in the wrong place, it is because He is changing something in my life. Arise and go to Zarephath which belongs to Sidon and dwell there. He says, this was temporary, I want to change your location, you are going to dwell somewhere else. Zarephath. Cherith means, cutting away, chipping away. Zarephath means crucible, smelting pot, where metal is refined. You are moving from the frying pan to the fire Mr. Prophet. Is that how some of you feel? Lord, why these troubles. 2021, 2022 I was expecting that trouble will be over, when we entered the New Year and we heard all these promises, instead trouble has increased, welcome to Zarephath, you are on the right road child because you are thinking about your problems in the light of this world, you are not looking at your problems in the light of the world that is coming and if you are able to see that, you will be able to say like Apostle Paul, *"The things that we see are temporary, the things which we do not see are eternal, therefore these afflictions are light and momentary but it is working within us an incredible weight of glory."*

The problem is not your problem, the problem is your vision. You are living for this world and not for the world that is coming, therefore, you are not able to understand. You are asking, Lord why is this coming, He says, remember that evening, in that meeting when they're all saying, I surrender all, you also said and I took you seriously, because I look at you, you are My child, I don't lie, My child doesn't lie, I receive your surrender, now, let Zarephath work. You are in school, you have moved from high school to inter – Zarephath. You will go to college at Carmel. Carmel college of higher education, there is a day, further away. Arise, go to Zarephath and dwell there, from the frying pan to the fire. From isolation, Cherith is isolation, to the midst of people. Isolation is not a good thing, for seasons it is good but it is not good for life because when you get isolated, you start forgetting others. We are social beings, the first law of marriage in *Genesis 2* God looked at Adam, God looked at all the animals and He looked at Adam, and He said, it is not good for man to be alone.

Genesis 2:18-20

¹⁸And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." ¹⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

The first law is fellowship. So many of you are miserable in your marriage not because you don't have money or you have money, it is because you don't know how to fellowship. Two fellows in two different ships, yet we put you here in one ship, how did you get these two ships, where did you change? If you break the first law of marriage and successful in everything else, you are fruitful, you multiplied, you prospered and all those blessings are there but you forgot the first

law of marriage, it is not good for Adam to be alone. You still will be miserable. That is a built in law of marriage, you were created for fellowship. You have all the doctrine, you are a Ph.D. in divinity from Fuller or Trinity but you forget the second law of the Church; they gathered daily for the Apostles doctrine and fellowship, you will be miserable, because you were created for fellowship. Not for doctrine. The purpose of the doctrine was to prove your fellowship. These are laws. From Cherith, lot of things which I have to chip away in isolation I have chipped away, now go to Zarephath. Now the next stage of your work cannot be done in isolation.

1 Kings 17:9

⁹ "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."

Who understands God's ways? You go and tell God, 'Would You please provide for me in this manner?' God says, "Shut your mouth. Did you surrender?" Yes. "How did you surrender? I heard you say, 'I surrender all.' But I don't think you have surrendered all. I will choose: ravens for Cherith and widow for Zarephath." Do you understand God? He is in Cherith, Zarephath is 100 Kms away. There is a lookout notice in every police station for Elijah. And he is a very stranger figure, he cannot even hide among the crowd because he looks like a sore thumb in every crowd. Dressed differently and he has to walk 100 Kms from Cherith to Zarephath, and everywhere everybody's telescope is there, 'Wanted dead or alive. 5000 dollars, 10,000 dollar.' The rate is going up. God says, "Go!" *Psalm 91:1-2* is Scripture for us, it is not an experience. Is it an experience?

Psalm 91:1-2

¹He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. ²I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust."

You see we read 1 line – 'He arose and he went.' Do you know what he went through? Do you know what he went through in Cherith, all those days, all alone? The only visitors, morning 3-4 ravens come, evening 3-4 ravens come, sitting there alone. You start questioning, 'Did I hear correctly? What am I doing here? Did I hear correctly? The only proof is that the ravens are coming. So I must have heard correctly.' You start questioning everything that you have heard. And the next time you hear God is saying, from here go there.

As I was preparing this morning the Lord was telling me, 'Do you remember donkeys and donkeys of years ago, when I sent you to that underground church? Your day was tough,' and there were times I kept asking, 'Lord, what am I doing over here? I miss my home, I miss my family, I miss my food. Like Elijah every day for 2 years my meal was exactly the same, I made rice, dal and scrambled eggs and of course the Kerala magic powder called Chammanthi podi, that was there. The day begins at 4 in the morning and ends at 11:30. And I ask myself, 'Lord, what am I doing here? Did I hear correctly?' see, these 2 years is in one line. Go from Cherith to Zarephath. Only the bare things are out, every day your suitcase is packed. I had one suitcase and one bag, nothing else. No cot, nothing, I slept on the floor, the landlord gave a table and 2 chairs, that was there. Every day almost everything is packed, because if the government catches you, you have to leave in less than 12 hours. You are packed every day.

So these words in *Psalm 91* are not Scripture, it is an experience which we will all need one day. It is easy to identify with these people because they were alone. I was alone, not among my people, but with the people to whom God had sent me. "Take nothing from them." I said, "Okay Lord." "Make your own food." 'Okay Lord' "Don't eat from outside." 'Okay Lord. Why?' "I don't want you falling sick." 'Okay Lord.' Think.

Now when I think back I realize and think - were those days real? How did I come through all those days? Now when I wake up nothing has changed for me. 3:42 I am up this morning, finished my devotions, made my wife's breakfast, made my son's coffee, fill the water and 6:45 I am out of the house. And when I reach the church I am the first one, still not late. Nothing has changed. There are certain things in life you have to keep doing over and over again because you know that what you heard was true. You don't have to change certain things in your life. It will remain the same till He comes. The discipline of waking up in the morning, the discipline of seeking His face, the discipline of prayer, the discipline of the Word, the discipline of fasting, it will continue until He comes, because you are preparing for war.

Like I said, yesterday I read Oswald Chambers, great man of God. Oswald Chamber was telling another man, 'When I reached the age of seventy I started writing a book every year. My real ministry life began only at 70.' And I look at my age and say, 'Lord, if You tarry to come, I haven't even reached there. There is still hope.' At 60 people retire and buy a rocking chair. In the Kingdom you are not even ready at 60. You are just getting started. The older you get in the Lord, the more you realize that you don't understand His ways. And now you have the Google children today who think they know everything, yet they actually know nothing. They have been Googled. I don't know if any of you can do a PhD., because you do not know how to go to a library and research, because you have been googling and googling and googling. By the time you grow up you will forget what a library looks like. Someone once said, 'Keep your books. Keep your book, because they cannot tamper with your books. They can tamper with everything on the internet. Keep your books.'

Verse 10 says - ¹⁰***So he arose and went to Zarephath.*** What a simple line ¹⁰***So he arose and went to Zarephath.*** No complications right? If life was so simple, how simple our life would be – God said and I went. But most of us are like, 'God said. Then I fasted and then I sought His face...' by that time 1 year is already gone. Elijah just arose and he went. No questions, no grumbling, no complaining. Simple thing – 'Here I am'.

¹⁰***So he arose and went to Zarephath*** which belongs to Sidon.

'Lord, I think I need to give You a small refresher course. I am not sure Lord, whether You spoke correctly.'

1 Kings 16:31

³¹***And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him.***

Where did God ask him to go? Who is the king of Sidon? Ethbaal, Jezebel's daddy. Where did God ask him to go? Go to Sidon, right under the nose of Ethbaal. 'God, I think either I heard wrong or You spoke wrong. I will give You the benefit of doubt, could You speak it again.' No, nothing of that. He just got up and went.

Psalms 23:5

⁵***You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.***

His Word never changes. *The Lord is My Shepherd I shall not want.* I shall not want. How He provides is His job, ravens, widow, I don't know. *The Lord is My Shepherd I shall not want, He leads me beside green pastures, still waters.* Yes Cherith was green, nice water, food was coming, then God said, 'Turn, walk from there, you are going through the valley of the shadow of death,' but I shall not fear of any evil because I have a Word behind me; the word is 'Go to Zarephath,' not 'die on the way.' "Go to Zarephath I have commanded a widow, dwell there." If He has said, go to Zarephath and dwell there, if I am 100 miles away, from here to there I am secure. The only question is – will I obey? I am secure, even though I walk through the valley of shadow of death, you read the next chapter, the king has sent soldiers to every surrounding nation to find out where Elijah is. And he is walking right under his nose in his wife's father's kingdom. But they cannot see him and they cannot catch him. Why? ***Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.*** And God has commanded I widow to feed him. ***He spreads a table for me in the presence of my enemies.***

This is how faith comes. You have the Word of God and you have the experience of men. And you realize that from generation to generation He is the same. He never changes, He is always faithful. The only thing is that we doubt, we panic, we fear. The disciples say, "Lord, the tree You cursed yesterday is dried up from the root." His simple answer is, "Have faith in God." 'Oh, you do not know, this is a special trick,' No. "Just have faith in God. What a simple answer to a complicated question.

'Pastor, I am suffering from this disease for 20 years.' Have faith in God. 'I have never found a job. Every job I try I am rejected.' Have faith in God. 'I have tried this subject for so many years I am failing every time.' Have faith in God. We don't like simple answers, right? 'Lord, are You sure?' No questions. He just got up and he walked. This one line ¹⁰***So he arose and went to Zarephath.*** How simple! 100 mile journey of a prophet, the one every soldier is looking out for, just

one line - ***So he arose and went to Zarephath.*** We all have to step into those shoes in our own ways to experience the power of God. Like today, brother Bhanu stepped into very difficult shoes, Abel's shoes, but he did a good job. Six months ago who would have thought Bhanu could do it? But he decided, 'I am going to learn.' He joined the music class, he is learning and today he did it. It is not an easy shoe to get into. Abel is a master of all instruments. But in the Kingdom of God all God is looking for is – are you available?

1 Kings 17:10

¹⁰ So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink."

What a timing! No GPS, no text – 'I am coming, wait for me near the gate.' Nothing. She just happened to be there. You think it was casual? God had His divine appointment for His servant. God also had the divine appointment for the widow. Please understand this, God is not only at work in your life, but as at work in the lives of others. Will you obey?

30 plus years ago I asked the Lord, "Where do I go next?" I wrote down all options, seven options, and you always put the option that you don't want at the end, the seventh option. And I said very spiritually, we become with spiritual with God. Be very careful because He is the original Spirit. I said, "Lord, every door that is not from You shut it." 1,2,3,4,5,6 doors suddenly shut. 7 is open. Where is 7? Assam. Who wants to go to Assam in the 90s when ULFA is ruling the streets? Army is controlling the streets, ULFA is ruling the streets, and here God says, "Go to Assam." But you heard and you obey. I reach Assam, I am staying in a guest house, every counsel I have got from family, believers, brethren, everybody is this - 'Stay in the civilian area. Don't mix with the soldiers at all, because it is very dangerous for you.' And the problem is that I don't know anybody there. The only one I know is a soldier. And he is not an ordinary soldier, he is a very senior soldier. Senior officer. So I reach in the after and I reach my room, by evening there is a knock on my door, a soldier. I open and door and he salutes, "Sir" 'Yes sir?' "Are you sir James?" "Yes sir." "Colonel sir has sent a jeep. Please come to his house." The vehicle is waiting there, come to his house. The same day that I landed, I reach his house, I said, "Hi uncle." He opened the door and there was a church I did not know was waiting for me to preach. A divine appointment. You thought you did not know where he was going. But your God knew where He was taking you. 5 years I worked among them and till today I am in touch with them every day.

But when you go, God is not only working in your life, but He is also working in others' lives if you are obedient. The only thing He is looking for is – is there anyone obedient, who is willing to listen to the nudge of the leading of My Holy Spirit. That is why Jesus 2000 years later will come and say, "There were many widows in Israel, but the prophet was sent to the widow in Sidon." Because there was only one who would obey. Are you that one who will obey? Will you obey? You have to realize how God works. God is working.

Caesar is sitting on His great throne in his royal robes, with his Laurel Wreath on his head and he makes a command, 'Let all of Rome have a census, let each man go to his ancestral village.' He thinks he is exercising his power and glory, in reality he doesn't know that he is just a sipai for God, an errand boy for God. By the time this edict reaches from Rome to Israel there is a virgin who is 9 months pregnant. And they hear, 'Everyone go to your home,' and her home is 75 miles away. And the journey begins to Bethlehem, because 600 years ago, a practically unknown prophet called Micah had written one line that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. This guy thinks he is Caesar but God says, 'You are My servant. I move people for My divine appointments.' And He is still on the throne, He never abdicated. So why do you worry? Why do you fear to obey Him? There are divine appointments made. And the Bible says, ***And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks.*** No confusion. I am going to check out in Zarephath, how many widows are here? Can you give me a list? Which one is the poorest? Nothing. The widow is waiting for you there. No confusion. No lady is speaking on the phone, 'Re-route, you have taken the wrong turning. Go forward, turn and come back.' Nothing. When God leads you do not need GPS. She is right there.

And what happens? ***And he called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink."*** the first two words I learnt in Telugu and Elijah used it, "Manchi neelu kavali." That is the first words I learnt in IFLUE in Telugu. "Can you please me a little water?" is it not an easy question. The brook dried, there is famine in the land and there is no more water, "Can you give me a little water?" ***And he called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink."*** It is awesome what she does next.

Hebrews 13:2

² Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.

She has not heard the voice of the Lord or anything, but God says that He has commanded the widow. How He did that we do not know. His ways are beyond our understanding. She looks at him, he says, "Can you give me a little water." This is the defining moment of her life. Sometimes people do not know how they have blown up the things of God in their life because they did not extend a small hand of mercy to somebody and that person was put right there by God to help you out. 'Would you give me a little water?' she has so many reasons why she can't give him water and not a single reason why she should give him water. 'Don't you know what my situation is? I am poor, I am a widow, I have nobody, we are ready to die.' Nothing. The prophet is asking for water, she gave him water.

Ziglag is burnt, everything is lost. People have taken stones to throw and stone David and David asked the Lord, 'Lord, shall I pursue? Shall I overtake?' the Word of the Lord comes, 'Pursue, you shall surely overtake and recover all.' He encourages his soldiers, goes on the pursuit, 200 of them fall away, now he has got only 400. No the way, while they are going there is a sick man. You are racing to rescue your wife and children and the children and the families of your soldiers. There is a sick man lying on the road, David stops and he said, 'Bring him to me.' That would change his destiny. He takes care of him and he says, 'If you promise not to give me back to my master, I will tell you where the Amalekites are hidden. I will lead you directly to your enemies who have taken your family.' You know what? He got time and he caught them by surprise and he fought from night to night, rescued everybody and recovered all. You know why he could do that? It is because he extended mercy. Understand the ways of God.

That is why I always tell people, do not be so much caught up by your problems, this woman had more problems than all of us put together. And she is extending mercy to a prophet. Look around. When you walk on the roads look around, when you walk on the streets look around, in your office look around. Joseph was a prisoner and so were all, one day he looked at them and said, 'Why is your face downcast?' that is the beginning of his deliverance. And they say, 'I had a dream,' 'I too had a dream,' he said, "Tell me, perhaps God will give me the interpretation." But why was he able to do that? It is because he saw that somebody's face was downcast. Instead we walk around saying, 'Look at me! I am downcast. Look at me I am downcast.' Pity-party. Understand the ways of God. *You unwittingly entertain God's angels.*

We are the only hands and feet God has on earth. Understand that, that is why the church is called the Body of Christ. The Head is in Heaven and the Body is on earth.

1 Kings 17:11

¹¹ And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand."

As she was going to get a little water. She was picking sticks, she stops and this man says, 'Give me a little water.' She doesn't know, she is not an Israelite. She doesn't know who it is, he looks weird, prophetic kind, Sadhu kind but she doesn't know who it is. She is a Sidonian, she is not an Israelite and when she was about to go, *as she was going*, the second word.

You will receive your second word when you have obeyed the first one. **¹¹ And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand."** God put pressure on our faith because if it is of God faith can take the weight of it. He will make you give until you plead, because if it is of God it can handle it. Because faith is not of man. Faith is of God. Its origin is God – *look unto the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus*. A poor widow, first pressure – 'Bring me water' when she is about to obey second pressure – 'Bring me bread.' And that is when she opens her mouth. She said,

1 Kings 17:12

¹² So she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

So she said, "As the LORD **your** God lives. Not my god. Your God is different, my god is different. Your God different, my god baal. **I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar** this is a common statement of anybody, 'I have nothing, but this.' Why don't we say, 'I have only this thing and nothing else'? no, 'I have nothing.' First statement is negative, 'I have nothing, but this.' Instead of that you should say, 'I have only this Lord, what do You want to do with this?' like the little boy, 'I have only five loaves of bread and some fish. If it is useful take it.' Jesus said, 'Give it to me.' Same issue with the other woman; Elisha's widow, 'I have nothing, except a little oil.' First statement, 'I have nothing.' How long have you been in church? Last five years. What can you do? Nothing. Congratulations. There is a place in Heaven called 'nothing' you will be used there, mightily. What will you be doing for eternity? Nothing. Because that is what you did on earth, nothing. You have been trained.

¹² So she said, "As the LORD your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die."

I told you last night, don't take it lightly. Israel's history, world history see what famine has done to people. God Himself compares the love of the mother as the strongest on earth. He says, "Even if your mother forsakes you (it is very difficult for a mother to forsake her child, suckling child especially) I will not." He compares His love to be greater than a mother. And the Bible talk about when famine came, two mothers got together and said, 'Today we will eat yours and tomorrow we will eat mine.' And they did. And when the king heard it he tore his robes. They did, mothers ate their own children because that is what hunger can do to you. You have no clue. That is why the Bible says that these things have to be decided now, because when that day comes nobody can buy or sell. You need to buy to eat, you need to sell something to buy something to eat. They will come, when the pressure will be so intense, where we say in English – your stomach is touching your backbone you will have no clue what you are capable of doing. And only by faith you will be able to endure and stand.

This mother in *1 Kings 17*, has been storing little by little by little, eating a little and giving a little to her son, and she has come to her last handful. She has come to the last bit, the barrel has reached the bottom, one handful. That is when the prophet comes, "Lord, when is help coming?" He says, "You have still got a little left in the barrel. When it comes to the last mouthful I will come and I will ask you to give it first. I want to know whether you believe I AM that I AM." You want a miracle, right?

"We are planning to make our last two rotis, eat and die." God doesn't come to kill, He comes to give life. The devil comes to steal, to kill and to destroy. But I have come to give you life.

1 Kings 17:13

¹³ And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son."

Do not fear; that is the first thing. Most people don't do most things because they are afraid. Do not fear. Over and over and over God says, 'Do not fear.' Because faith and fear are not travel companions. If faith comes in fear goes out and if fear comes in faith goes out. So when they were afraid and said, "Don't You care?" Jesus woke up, rebuked the wind and spoke to the sea, everything was calm. When everything was clam He asked them two questions – "Why are you afraid? Where is your faith?" the first thing He said is, "Don't fear."

All these terrible things are coming, it will happen, men's hearts will fail of fear, but God says, "You don't fear. You are part of the Kingdom. You know your redemption is near. You know your King is coming, the Kingdom is coming. What are you afraid of?" What are you afraid of? Death? Don't you understand that for us to live or to die is gain? Why do you see death as loss? See it is all in the mind and in the heart. How you believe and what you think. If you think death as loss, you will be afraid. If you think death as gain you won't be afraid of death. *They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony and they did not love their lives even unto death.* Why? because they knew that death for us is gain, not loss. It is gain and not loss.

These things have to be engraved in our hearts, edged in our hearts, that nothing can erase it off. Over and over you need to confess this. For me to live or die is gain. For the things that I see are temporal, the things I do not see are eternal. Even though I am perishing outwardly I am being renewed inwardly. So these afflictions are momentary and it has no comparison to the eternal weight of glory that is coming. My real life is on that other side. This is surreal, this is not real. But when we look at all this and think that this is real, we will make appropriate decisions. When you look at the other side by faith and know that that is real, we will make appropriate decisions according to that.

¹³ **And Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go and do as you have said,** you said something, you said, “I have only got one handful of flour and one handful of oil, we are going to make two rotis, my son and I are going to eat, we are going to lie down and die.” Do as you have said, not the dying part, but the cooking part.

but make me a small cake from it first, if you don't remember anything that you have heard today, remember this, this is where your deliverance lies. “Do as you have said, go cook. **But first,** make me a cake and give it to me.”

But make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterward make some for yourself and your son. If you do that, then the Word of the Lord is this – neither the bin nor the oil will run dry until the famine is over. But you have to do something first. That is our problem. Take a pause there, that is our problem. Seek ye first the Kingdom of God. Seek ye first, that is our problem. We cry out, “Lord!!!” “Did you seek Me first?” there is something called ‘first’ in the Kingdom.

Luke 9:59

⁵⁹ **Then He said to another, “Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.”**

⁶¹ **And another also said, “Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house.”**

And Jesus said to them all, ‘You are getting your ‘first’ all mixed up. It is not what you are doing. The problem is not what you are doing.’ Maybe everything that you are doing in life is right, but the order is wrong. The issue is not what you are doing. The issue is the order. You should eat lady, your son should eat, but first, do you want a breakthrough? If you want a breakthrough, then put God first. “I have to bury my father and then I will follow You.” God said, “Wait a second. You’ve got your order mixed up.” Another also said, “I will follow You, but let me first say bye, bye, daddy and bye, bye, mommy.” He says, “You’ve got it wrong.”

A few months later, a few years later,

1 Kings 19:19-20

¹⁹ **So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him.** He is a recluse, he doesn't even like companionship. That is Elijah, he doesn't even put something properly on this man; he just throws it on him. Maybe he had sat there by the brook at Cherith and played with stones, so his aim was right. ²⁰ **And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, “Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.” And he said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?”**

Scripture never changes, right? He was so excited, ‘I have been called to the prophetic school. I will go and say bye.’ Elijah said, “Go and say bye? What have I got to do with you? First bye? And then follow?” when you go there mommy will cry, “Beta mathjana.” “Please do not go!” and you will change your mind. “Is gjar mein kya kami hain? Sabkuch hain na beta? Kuch chaiye tho mujhse bolo” (what do you lack in this house? If you want anything please tell me) daddy will say, “What? Bible college? Are you crazy? We have invested in you!” you want to go and say bye to them? Or follow me? This is real life.

Like I told you, in Katmandu I still can't forget that. Pastors' humor. One pastor came and said, ‘One father had three sons. The third son is failing in every subject. First one is good in math, second one is good in Biology. So the first one will be doctor, second one will be engineer. And the third one, he is failing, throw him in the Bible college, give him to God.’ Let me ask all you parents sitting over here, your brilliant child, the one who is excellent in studies. Which among you is preparing him/her for God? Let it come home, let the truth come home. Or if you got married and are going to have a child, which among you are already planning, like Hannah, ‘Give me a son and from birth he will be set apart for You.’

God heard her prayer. Nobody does. It is very rare. We are all thinking Princeton, Harvard, graveyard kind of colleges. Where does God come first? Let us be honest at least in the house of God.

Luke 14:28

²⁸ For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—

Did you sit down first? Lot of people I know think that this Kingdom is a joke. It is like a picnic. See, years and years and years ago I made a decision. I made a decision when I heard Job say it and it has been my decision ever time – “Even if You slay me I will still serve You.” I counted the cost and I was always willing to pay the price. Lot of people never counted the cost. There is something called ‘first’. God says, ‘Sit down. Take an evaluation today, the beginning of the sixteenth year.’ If I am going the way I am going, will I finish my race? Sit down! Because the Kingdom is knocking at the gate. The way I am going, will I complete? Sit down! Did you count the cost? Ask yourself. You are building something, it is a structure called your life, you are building something that needs to be put through the fire. What you have built, can it stand the fire of God’s judgment? Sit down first.

Luke 14:31

³¹ Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?

I told you, this is war. Every day the enemy is after you, your marriage, your children, your grand-children. He is after everyone. The question is – with what you have, do you know how to fight? Can you fight? Sit down! The way I am, the way my prayer life is, the way my Word life is, the way my faith-life is, my fasting life, can I fight? Or just stand there and see my household, my church, my people all go down the line? There is a war taking place. God says, “Sit down!” **does not sit down first and consider...**

“Lord I need to make adjustments. Elijah was a man just like us, but he prayed. Lord, You are not a respecter of persons, that mean You hear prayers of ordinary people. Teach me to pray.” That is one thing that the disciples realized, they looked at Jesus, they heard Him preach, they saw Him do miracles, everything, but they knew where the power came from. They knew that it came from somewhere else so they said, “Teach us to pray,” and Jesus said, “Prayer is not the first thing. Attitude is the first thing. Attitude is – Your name, Your Kingdom, Your will. That is what matters first. You look at My prayer life, you look at My power life, you look at all that, but you don’t see My heart. In My heart there are only three objectives - His Name is to be glorified. His Kingdom come and His will be done on earth. And My entire prayer life is focused on this.” It is not about having a vibrant prayer life. The core of your prayer life is about ‘whom’.

Ask serious questions. Like the prophet says, ‘Multitude, multitude in the valley of decision and the Day of the Lord is near.’ Church, understand this.

Matthew 22:37-38

³⁷ Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” ³⁸ This is the first and great commandment

Not – this is the great commandment. **This is the first.** It is the first and the great commandment. When it comes to the same words in the Gospel according to Mark, something else is added which gives more light. That is why you have to just read your Bible through, read your devotions and all. But be a student, because you are searching for something, because your heart should be, ‘Lord, with all my failings and failures and weakness and fallings, I want to please You. I want to please You. I truly want to please You. I look into the Word and I realize that You have used ordinary, illiterate, semi-literate people, therefore I believe that You will use me and I want to please You. So Lord, open up things which will make me more usable to You.’

Mark 12:28-30

²⁸ Then one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, perceiving that He had answered them well, asked Him, “Which is the first commandment of all?” ²⁹ Jesus answered him, “The first of all the

commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one.³⁰ And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.

"The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear,... it begin from there, 'Hear'. I told on Monday and Friday, "Blessed are those who read, hear and do." Just because you listen it doesn't mean that you hear. The widow listened to him, "Do not fear! Go and do just as you have said. But first make a cake for me," she listened, but if she had heard she would have gone, made the cake and brought it for him. The difference between listening and hearing is that in hearing there is obedience. That is why to every church in the book of Revelation God says, "Those who have ears let them hear what the Spirit is saying."

²⁹ Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. The first and the most important thing that you need to realize is that there is only one God. There are many gods but they are not God. There is only one God. Israel, understand this, you went after many gods and prostituted yourself with them, 'Hear O Israel,' the first thing. Because 'love the Lord your God,' anybody from any religion will say, "I love," but you are loving the wrong god. It doesn't make any difference in eternity other than judgment. So first get your God right. This is the first thing, 'Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God is One.' There is only one. There are no two, only one.

Second, **³⁰ And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment.** It is the first commandment. We struggle with the firsts in the Bible. And God is putting before us a Sidonian widow, at the last vestiges of her strength. She looks at her son. You know we see in picture, in real life too, the stomach is big because of malnutrition, and the ribcage is all popping out, he hasn't eat even one proper meal a day, for months and weeks. And the boy is waiting eagerly because mommy went to pick up the firewood, she is going to cook something, I am so hungry. And this old man comes and says, 'Give it to me first.'

Long ago I went to Kerala, I went to a place I had no gone. A pastor had invited me, a pastor that I hardly knew. I went to his house. Simple Pentecostal pastor and he's got a nice little house, his car was parked outside and we are sitting and talking. Their language is different. When they open their mouth their language is godly. The way they talk, it is a completely different language altogether, in home and outside. Then he was telling me, "My life was never like this. My house was never like this. I am one of 5 or 6 sons of a family. We were poor. Our father died early. Our mother was a widow and brought us all up. And what would happen is, she would make Chammanthi, which is a chutney. And she would make kanji (the starch water from the rice) and then when we were about to eat, we are so hungry, by some chance one passing pastor would come and knock the door. And my mother would say, 'Sit down pastor, pray for us.' And then she would go in and take the rice out of the Kanji and large portion of the chutney and feed him. And we children used to be so angry because this used to always happen. Some servant of God would come in and when we are hungry he eats a major portion and goes away. And my mother would always say, 'A servant of God has come to our house, it is our blessing. We need to bless them.' And today," he said, "we have everything. And the Lord told me, 'Do you know why you have everything? It is because your mother gave first to the servant of God, because she saw God in him.'"

It is not because Elijah is hungry. Elijah knows God's work. You have to put God first. This Sidonian widow doesn't know God, but God's servant is there so she put him first. And everything started flowing into her. I told you this last time, I was standing outside military station church in Tezpur, in Solmara I had just finished service for the army jawans. We were all standing out, I was alone, the jawans had all gone, one poor north Indian jawan, a sipoy, a simple man. He said, "Pastor, please pray for me." I pray over him and then he put his hand out and gave me a two-rupee note. You don't see two-rupee notes here. I have 2-rupee, 1-rupee; I have saved all those notes as memories of India. I said, "No, no, brother. I don't need it. It okay, you keep it. It is not needed." I asked him to keep it. And I came home. And the first thing I hear is a rebuke. A clear rebuke in my spirit and the rebuke was, 'You don't need that 2-rupees. But he needed to give it to you. He was not giving it to you, he was giving it to Me.'

Don't get too spiritual, listen to God. Because you may get to spiritual and sympathetic towards the poor lady, 'How can I ask for the first helping? At least I ate two meals every day. This lady is starving, what will she think about me? What will the boy say? He might start screaming and shouting.' No, you just do what God told you to do. "Make is first and give it to me," that is where your breakthrough lies. You cannot change the ways of God, but when you obey there is

always a miracle. There is always a miracle. That is why I said, first fundamentally, deep in your heart the conviction should always be there that 'My God is good and He is always good and when He tells me something to do only good will come out of it. Because He cannot do bad. He is never tempted by evil.' That is what James says. Because if you ever bring an iota of doubt into your heart that God is not always good your faith will start failing. God is good all the time. All the time God is good. And as the Africans say, 'I am His witness.' We are His witness. *You shall be My witness on earth.* Witnesses of what? Of the goodness of God. The goodness of God. God is good.

Do you know why we are alive? It is because God is good. Do you know why we are in the church? It is because God is good. Do you know why you can hear the Word of God and why (I hope) it has not become common? The bread that was brought miraculously by the ravens and given to the prophet has not become common. The Word that has come over and over again, unceasingly, unremittingly has come over you, I hope it has not become common. It should be a wonder. It should be a wonder, 'Why should God feed me?' when Amos prophesied that there will be, in the last days, a famine of the hearing of the Word of God – it is a wonder. Let it not become a common place. Treasure it. Value it. Lord, it is written – You have magnified Your Word above all Your name. Who is worthy? Am I worthy to receive Your Word? Am I worthy to speak His Word? It is a wonder. Don't lose that wonder like the Israelites.

A generation for forty years every morning, like snowflakes, received Manna from Heaven. Think about it, manna is coming down and they called it manna. Which means, 'What is this?' it tasted like wafers, like honey. There was none feeble among them, none ill among them. It is a wonder their clothes did not wear off, their sandals did not wear off, their feet did not swell, yet they are walking forty years. There were no supermarkets, no clothes stores. Nothing. Wonder coming from Heaven, wonder on their bodies, wonder on their legs, wonder everywhere, but they took it as common place. We do not realize that our life is a wonder. All of our lives is a wonder.

All of you young people, think about it. Why are you here? The last one has just finished class 10, why are you here? How did you come here? How did you finish all these years? How did all this happen? It is the wonder of God. Did everybody in your village make it? Did everyone in your household make it? No they did not. It is the wonder of God. Don't lose that wonder. The way we don't lose it is by keeping first things first.

So like I said, if you forgot everything else, don't forget this. Let's pray.

Closing prayer

Father, we just thank You. Lord, we praise You, we worship You, we glorify You, Lord. If nothing else, starting today, teach us to put You first. Show us what it means to put You first. And when we do that everything else will start taking its rightful place in our kingdom. It was the most difficult thing for Elijah to tell the woman, but he told her and she obeyed him. And the miracle unfolded in her life. And You are the God of Elijah, You are the God of that widow, and our God. Let there be a change in the lives of Your people today. Putting God first, so that we too are prepared to stand in the day of evil against the powers of darkness and rulers and principalities and when everything over found standing, either on earth or standing in the presence of God. But standing. That is our prayer, Lord, today. Bless Your Church, bless Your people, keep Your people. Be with us, go with us, go before us and teach us to walk before You and be blameless.

Thank You, thank You Father once again for Your faithfulness. Thank You Lord. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with each one of us. Amen.