

1 Kings 18:20-46

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[0 : 00] Good evening guys, it is good to be gathered together with you and thankful for the day. Take out your Bibles, go to 1 Kings, 1 Kings chapter 18.

We'll be finishing up the 18th chapter this evening. It's taken us longer than I anticipated to make our way through this 18th chapter.

But in 1 Kings 18, we're going to read verse 20 again, but we'll go to the end of the chapter which gets us down to verse 46.

So I trust that you've had a good day, trust that all has went well. Let's open up with a word of prayer and then we'll get into the text. Starting in verse 20. Ready? Here we go, let's pray.

God, thank you so much for this day. I thank you God for just the opportunity we've had to come and gather together as a church this morning and come back together this evening.

[0 : 56] Lord, the privilege it is to open up the word of God. So we pray that you continue to speak to us through your word. We pray that the truth of it would capture our hearts and minds and Lord, that our lives would be conformed to that truth.

We ask, oh God, that you would reveal more of who you are, who we are, and that you be glorified and honored through it. We do continue to pray for the many matters around us.

Continue to pray, Lord, that you help us to be a light in the community and God, that you be glorified and honored. We ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. All right. 1 Kings 18, starting in verse 20, going down to verse 46.

So it's quite a number of verses, but it really would do us disservice to break them apart. So the word of God says, So Ahab sent a message among all the sons of Israel and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel.

If you remember, this is what Elijah had asked for. And Elijah came near to all the people and said, How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him.

[2 : 05] But if Baal, follow him. But the people did not answer him a word. Then Elijah said to the people, I alone am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men.

Now let them give us two oxen, and let them choose one ox for themselves, and cut it up and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it. And I will prepare the other ox and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire under it.

Then you call on the name of your God, and I will call on the name of the Lord, the God who answers by fire. He is God. And all the people said, That is a good idea.

So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, Choose one ox for yourselves and prepare it first, for you are many, and call on the name of your God, but put no fire under it. Then they took the ox which was given them, and they prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, O Baal, answer us.

But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made, and it came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, Call out with a loud voice, for he is a God.

[3 : 11] Either he is occupied, or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep, and needs to be awakened. So they crowd with a loud voice, and cut themselves according to their custom, with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out on them.

When midday was past, they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention. Then Elijah said to all the people, Come near to me.

So all the people came near to him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord, which had been torn down. Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, Israel shall be your name.

So with the stones, he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he made a trench around the altar, large enough to hold two measures of seed. Then he arranged the wood, and cut the ox in pieces, and laid it on the wood.

And he said, Fill four pitchers with water, and pour it on the burnt offering, and on the wood. And he said, Do it a second time. And they did it a second time. And he said, Do it a third time.

[4 : 17] And they did it a third time. The water flowed around the altar, and he had also, the altar, and he also filled the trench with water. At the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, O Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel.

Today let it be known that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their heart back again.

Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt offering, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces, and they said, The Lord, He is God.

The Lord, He is God. Then Elijah said to them, Seize the prophets of Baal. Do not let one of them escape. So they seized them, and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

Now Elijah said to Ahab, Go up, eat, and drink, for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower. So Ahab went up to eat and drink, but Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel, and he crouched down on the earth, and put his face between his knees.

[5 : 36] He said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. So he went up and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go back seven times. It came about at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea.

And he said, Go up, say to Ahab, prepare your chariot, and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you. And in a little while, the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower, and Ahab rode and went to Jezreel.

Then the hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins, and out ran Ahab to Jezreel. 1 Kings 18, 20 through 46.

I want you to see, we finally have got there, the fire on Mount Carmel. So, it's taken a little while to get there. We've taken our time, as we've come into this text, and we have understood, that Elijah is confronting the problem.

The confrontation of the problem, is not a confrontation with the people, but rather is a confrontation with the problem. The problem is not, that it has not rained. The problem is not, that they're in a severe drought. The problem is not, that the livestock and the crops are failing.

[6 : 42] The problem is, a spiritual problem. We looked at that Wednesday evening, that the grand problem, was that they were replacing, the worship of God, with the worship of Baal.

They have taken, what was rightfully God's, and given it to another. Elijah has declared, boldly the word of God, because God had said, that one of the consequences, for unfaithfulness, would be a lack of rain, and famine, and this would serve, he tells them in the book of Deuteronomy, as a judgment tool of God, to discipline his people.

So Elijah is bringing, that problem to a head, has to be dealt with, has to be confronted, and has to be handled immediately. It cannot be left alone, it cannot be left idle, but it must find, its confrontation.

And we finally see that now, when everyone is present. We're speaking of all of Israel, you remember, it's just the ten northern tribes. Elijah has given the word, for all of Israel, to be gathered to him, for the prophets of Baal, and the prophets that are of the Asherah, to be gathered to him, and 850 of them are there.

And here's Elijah, the 450 prophets of Baal, the 400 prophets of the Asherah, who get their sustenance, from the table of Jezebel, and all Israel watching.

[8 : 01] And now we're going to see, this fire on Mount Carmel. There's just three things, I want you to see, that pertains to this. Number one, we notice that this is a fire, with a call.

We see the call, that is there. Elijah, before confronting the problem, turns to face the people.

Because this call, is issued to the people, it's not issued to the prophets.

The false prophets, do not have this call, or this invitation, if you will. For their lot, is already set. The invitation is given, to the people.

And Ahab looks at them, and says, how long will you hesitate, between two opinions? The wording there, is to stagger on, is to limp on two crutches.

It is to go back and forth, and to rock, one way or the other. And the call here, is for a commitment. And we understand, the question that he is asking them, is there is hesitation.

[9 : 02] There is going this way, then that way. And he says, it is between two opinions. So what Elijah is asking, is that they would settle the matter, and no longer look to opinions, but they would look to truths, and facts, and realities.

He is asking, that they would make a decision. He says, if the Lord is God, follow him. But if Baal, follow him. What Elijah is saying, it is not enough, to play the game. The 450 prophets of Baal, and the 400 prophets of the Asherah, at least they have made a commitment.

We would say, in the book of Revelation terminology, they are cold. The rest of them are lukewarm. They don't want to, completely replace, the Lord God, but they want to, join him, with other worship. They want to add, Baal to that worship. But we understand, that the God of scripture, is a God of completeness. That is, he is a jealous God. We are told that, a number of times.

We are told that, emphatically in the book of Deuteronomy, the very same book, that declares that, if they are not, completely committed to the Lord God, that God will bring, these judgments upon them. They have been going, back and forth, trying to worship the Lord, and trying to worship Baal, trying to do this, and trying to do that.

[10 : 14] They've been trying, to live the best, of both worlds. And Elijah says, you can't do that. You have to make a decision. And his call, is a call for decision.

It is a call, to choose, which one will be their God. Because, as Jesus would say, you cannot serve two gods. You have to, make a decision.

And what Elijah, is asking the people to do, is to respond, to this invitation, to rightly, make the decision, based upon the truths, that are presented to them.

Because man, does not always, seek to replace God, but they quite often, seem to go back and forth, between God, and other gods. They want him, for security purposes.

They want him, for stability purposes. But while they may long, for this one, what most Bible scholars, will tell you is, they loved the benefits, of Jehovah, because he gave them the land.

[11 : 13] But they sure did love, the freedoms, of Baal, because they were able, to do things, that God restricted. Elijah says, you can't live that way. You're either all in, or all out.

It is very clear. He says, you cannot waver. You cannot go back and forth. He says, how long will you hesitate? Because a lack of full commitment, is actually a hesitation. It is a reservation.

And too often, people understand this. I love the reality, that when someone comes to Christ, and they're a new believer, they have this desire, and this ambition, and they want to be all in. They have been forgiven much, and they love much.

And I tell them, don't let anyone else, quench that fire. Continue to fan that flame. Get into the word of God, because there is this reality, that sometimes, too often, people come, and try to dampen us, and say, well, we don't have to be, quite so radical.

But what we find in scripture, is the believers are radical. They do respond, to that call. They do make decisions, based upon the truth, of who God is.

[12 : 15] There is no hesitation, nor reservation, nor wavering. There is none of this, and this is exactly what Elijah is doing. He is issuing the call, for the people to make a decision, and commit their lives, to the reality of that decision.

This is the very thing, that we see today, all the way at the end of scripture, Jesus says, that I wish that you were either hot, or cold. He does not like hesitation. By the way, the word hesitate, or waver, or stagger between, is the same word, that is used, to define, how the prophets, danced around, the altar of Baal.

As it says, that they were there, and they cried out, and they cut themselves, before they did that, they were leaping, and doing all this, dancing motion, the same word there. It is dancing, back and forth, between two gods, or dancing back and forth, between truth, and opinion.

The call, is a very clear call. But he is at least, calling it to those, who are there, but notice the people, do not answer him a word. They are not ready. The prophets at least, the false prophets at least, know what they have committed to, and they are willing to do it.

But the people, they are hanging in the balance, and Elijah is giving, a very clear call. And that call, comes with the second thing, that is a conviction. We notice that from beginning, to end, Elijah

deals, in matters of conviction.

[13 : 41] That is, he knows, what is going to happen. The reason, he can issue, such a clear call, is because, he is convicted, of the reality, of the God he serves.

He tells them, he says, that if God is God, follow him. Or if the Lord is God, follow him. But if Baal is, then follow him. And I love what he says, down in verse 24.

He says, then you call on the name, of your God. But then he says, then I will call, on the name, of the Lord, and the God. So there's conviction.

He says, you are going to call, on the name, of your God. But he doesn't say, I will call, on the name, of my God. He says, I will call, on the name, of the Lord, the God.

It is this conviction, that while there may be, false quote unquote, gods, with the lower case g, there is but one. And this conviction, this reality, this settled truth, in the mind, and heart, and life of Elijah, is what dictates, everything that takes place.

[14 : 46] This conviction, allows the prophets of Baal, to choose first, the ox, that they will, slaughter. This conviction, allows the prophets of Baal, to go first, because he didn't want, anyone assuming, that he had chose, a better sacrifice, or he had chose, a better time, or he had chose, a more opportune moment.

He allowed them, to go first, because he knew, that there was no shame, in waiting. It was this conviction, that was settled, that though they may try, they may dance, they may do, all these other things, that in the end, there would be no answer.

No one would answer, scripture says, no, not a word, not a sound. This conviction, would lead him, to mock the prophets of Baal, saying, well maybe he doesn't hear you, maybe you should, dance a little louder, maybe you should call, there's kind of a slight humor, in that, because, even though it's not humorous, the reality is, is that the prophets of Baal, felt as if their god, Baal, was being held captive, in the netherworld, that's why it wasn't raining.

You remember that, right? That there's, all this imagery here, where God is putting himself, on display, Baal was the, fertility god, therefore he was, in charge of rain, and when it didn't rain, according to the prophets of Baal, Baal was being held captive, by death, in the underworld. Well, God is the god, who stops the rain, and he is the god, who's over death, because when the widow, son dies, then God raises him, from the dead, right? So we understand this, that God is both, the god of the living, and the god of the dead.

[16 : 18] He's the god of the heavens, and he's the god, of the underworld. So the prophets of Baal, were literally, trying to call up their god, out of the underworld. They were being loud, on purpose, they were dancing on purpose, trying to release him, so that he could come, and call down fire.

And it's all this stuff, that we kind of scratch our heads, and say, why would they do such things? But at least, they were settled on it. Elijah had a conviction, that he knew it wouldn't happen. Elijah had a conviction, that these things, wouldn't come about.

It was conviction, that brought Elijah, to repair the altar, of the Lord, that had been torn down. More than likely, when the prophets of God, were being soldered, by Jezebel, the altar, someone's private altar, had been torn down.

It was conviction, that led Elijah to take, we are talking about, the ten northern tribes, right? But Elijah took, how many stones? Twelve stones, representing all twelve, of the tribes, understanding that God, was the God of Israel, as a whole, not just the God, of the ten tribes, of the north, or the two tribes, of the south, right?

God was a God, of these people, the twelve tribes. So Elijah, by the way, if you pay attention, after the division, of the kingdoms, God always raises up, individuals, who are uniting them.

[17 : 30] Jeremiah takes, two staffs, and he puts them together, makes one, showing that God, does not see two kingdoms, he sees one. Elijah here, builds with twelve stones, because he is the God, of Israel, not just of a particular people, he is their God, he is calling on that God, notice, over and over, and over again, he is referring to Yahweh, capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D, the covenant name of God, God is in covenant, with one people group, that is Israel, it is with conviction, that he uses twelve stones, it is with conviction, that he builds an altar, to the Lord, and he dedicates it, that means he doesn't, use any tools, he doesn't cut the stones, he lays no hands, it is conviction, conviction, of when he does it, he does it at the right time, it is conviction, that God is a God of fire, that the fire of God, would rain down, did he cause them, to dump twelve barrels, of water, on this prepared oxen, on that rebuilt altar, some say, well if in a drought, where did they get

to water, well Mount Carmel, is right next to the Mediterranean Sea, so you can't drink salt water, but you can sure dump it, on the sacrifice, somebody had to lug, twelve barrels of water, it is amazing, remember all this, if you ever pay attention, just slow down, for just a minute, and look at all the people, who do what Elijah, tells them to do, even though he is probably, not the most popular man, in Israel, right,

Obadiah goes and gets Ahab, Ahab calls all the people, Ahab gets the prophets, Ahab gets everybody up there, somebody is toting, twelve barrels of water, all because Elijah said so, the prophets of Baal, do this whole dancing deal, because Elijah, said so, God has a man of authority, he has a man of position, he has a man of place, but even then, that man will have, a dark moment of the soul, so to say, to quote Charles Spurgeon, as we get into the 19th chapter, he's not a perfect man, but he's a man, with a nature like ours, but it is conviction, it says, even though there's water, going into the trench, God will still answer, by fire, everything, that Elijah does, is rooted in the conviction, of the truth, he possesses, that is, he had a deep-seated conviction, to the core of his being, that God was God, and Baal was not, and that he would answer, by fire, and it settled the matter, see, until conviction, settles the matter, in our own heart, we will not live it out, publicly, among other people, quite often, the reason, there is so little, of a call, coming forth from the church, and even from the believers, is because, there is little conviction, in the heart of the church, or the believers, we feel like, people have a right, to decide for themselves, how they should live, their own life, but in giving them that right, we're allowing people, to go to a Christless eternity, called hell, and we're not really convicted, of the reality of hell, therefore we are silent, in our call to people, but when we come to this conviction, that God is God, and there is no other, than that conviction, will dictate, how we live out our lives, we will live them out, for the glory, and sometimes, it may offend people, but that offense, is not an offense, seeking to hurt people, or harm people, or push them away, but if the truth, offends them, then we will be people, of the truth, and allow that offense, to remain, it is not to be rude, or it is truth, and love, for sure, but it is the greater love, for the individual, and the deep-seated conviction, that God is God, that leads to the people, to give a clear clarion, call, that asks them, to make a decision, quite often, the churches, in our land, do not ask people, to make a decision, and that's, a great detriment, to the society, because we see no fire, on our Mount Carmel, because we're not really, convicted of them, we feel like people, generally are okay, the reality is, is they're not, and so we see, this conviction, conviction must first, be settled, in our own heart, before we can live it out, in our own life, and Elijah, is a man of conviction, but we must move, to this last thing, there's the call, there's the conviction, we'll be through, a little bit early tonight, but we must, undergird the concern, because what was, Elijah's concern, while he was there, if Elijah's concern, was solely, about his own popularity, or his own position, or his own welfare, then much of what, took place on Mount Carmel, would not have happened, what was, Elijah's grand concern, he was concerned, enough, that the altar, was constructed, the right way, he was also, concerned enough, I don't know, if you noticed it, that his worship, was acceptable, because it tells us, that after he did, all this time, in verse 36, at the time, of the offering, of the evening, sacrifice, that is, at the right time, Elijah, was not, haphazard, in his actions, he gave, the false prophets, of Baal, the majority, of the day, but when it was time, that God had declared, the evening sacrifice, would be offered, Elijah stood up, he didn't just, build the altar properly, he didn't just, use the right amount, of stones, he didn't just, ensure, that everything, would seem impossible, he was concerned, enough to do it, the right way, that is, he had paid attention, to what God had said, and he was concerned, enough that it was, at the right time, this is why, we do not see, a long prayer, this is why, we do not see, extended services, because this was, the time of the sacrifice, here we see, a very short, prayer, offered, at the right time, for the right purpose, and the greater concern, of worshiping, at the right time, was united, and worshiping, in the right way, and was united, with a worship, that was aimed, at the right purpose, he says, oh Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, again, this reminder, by the way, the only other time, that title was used, is the burning bush, fire is represented, both times here, he is the God, of these three, Abraham, Isaac and Israel, he is a God of fire, this is no boat, of lightning, that comes down, this is a manifestation, of who God is, that comes down, so he calls, he's concerned enough, to unite again, the nation, but look at what he says, today, let it be known, that you are God, in Israel, and that I am your servant, and I have done, all these things, at your word, what's his concern, let it be known, that you are God, the concern, of Elijah, is rooted, in the reality, of who God is, it is a

concern, that God, would be declared, truthfully, it is a concern, for the glory, and the place, of holy God, among his people, it is not a concern, for Elijah's position, it's not a concern, for Elijah's popularity, as a matter of fact, it gets him, to be one of the most, wanted men, it takes him from being, wanted to greatly, wanted, this is not a concern, for personal welfare, this is not a concern, that everybody, would be popular, with him, even though, when God answers, he asked the people, to step out, and show their belief, that he is God, by capturing, all the prophets, of Baal, the grand concern, of Elijah, is the worthiness, of the worship, of God, that God, would be known, he's asking God, to reveal himself, he says, answer me, oh Lord, answer me, that this people, may know, that you, oh Lord, are God, and that you, have turned their heart, back again, his concern, is wrapped up, in one reality, and it is, that God, would be known, to be known, to be God, he doesn't want, to build a church, he doesn't want, to promote a program, he doesn't want, to do anything, other than, magnify, and glorify, the reality, of who God is, and this concern, is really found, at the heart of God, he says, let it be known, read throughout scripture, when you see people, taking great steps, of faith, doing great, wondrous things, even, in their, repentance, think,

[26 : 40] Psalm 51, think other psalms, the penitent psalms, when the concern, is for the glory, of God, more than it is, for the comfort, of man, God has a way, of doing some, wonderful things, the early church, is gathered together, they are being, beginning to be persecuted, for their faith, they're being put on trial, remember, Peter, James, and John, going into the temple, they're being questioned, they're being beaten, the church gathers together, and they're praying, remember, this is one of the early, prayer services, in the early church, in the book of Acts, and it says, the walls were shaken, in that place, you remember, in their prayer, they didn't ask God, to deliver them, from persecution, they didn't ask God, to deliver them, from the beatings, they didn't ask God, to deliver them, from being taken captive, their request, is that God, would use them, to glorify his name, and it says, and the place, they were gathered together, was shaken, their concern, was the glorification, of Christ, as they declared, the love of the Father, and the work of the Spirit, they were concerned, that God would be glorified, and magnified, among the people, that they were serving,

Elijah here, has this concern, and it says, then the fire of the Lord, fell and consumed, not only the offering, but the stones, and licked up the water, out of the trench, and everybody fell on their face, the concern of Elijah's mess, is the Lord, he is God, the Lord, he is God, Elijah said, that's good to give lip service, now give me some action, right, let me see you, unite action, with your profession, so capture all the prophets, of Baal, they do, they take them down, to the Kishon Valley, they slaughter them there, it's a great slaughter, we can sit here, and go, that doesn't seem, to be very loving, right, but it's holy, and it's righteous, and it's just, God is just, and he does all that, and then he begins to pray, so we see another concern, he is also going to meet a physical need, because Elijah had declared, that it would not rain, until he had said so, so he begins to pray, he begins to pray, and he labors in this prayer, he tells Ahab to go eat, because he's going to pray, he says, okay, whatever, he goes and eats, again, do you notice that, he tells Ahab to do something, he's the king, and he goes and does it, so he goes and eats, and Elijah starts praying, he goes up to the top of the mountain, and he starts praying, and he sends his servant, people went back and forth, on who is this servant of Elijah, some think that it was that son, that was raised from the dead, we don't really know, but he sends them over there, to start looking, he says, go and look out over to the Mediterranean Sea, and he doesn't see anything, and he goes and prays, and he says, look, again, seven times, he sent this young man back, to look,

Elijah's laboring in prayer, think about this, he has just declared, that God would show himself, and he does, and now he's asking God, to meet a need of the people, he is concerned enough, that this need for rain, would be met, because he is both God of fire, and God of the rain, he has answered this prayer, so Elijah's praying, it is astounding, isn't it, he prays longer for the rain, than he had to pray for the fire, and he's laboring in this prayer, and eventually, a small cloud appears, and it begins to build up, he tells Ahab to go, and then he outruns the chariots, and he gets there, it's amazing, girds up his loins, and he takes off running, and it says, he gets to the gates of Jezreel, and he stops, and he waits, because Ahab, has clearly seen, what has happened, God has declared, his prominence, by answering by fire, God has brought rain, everything that Elijah, has said, has taken place, so he goes to the gates of Jezreel, and Elijah stays outside, Jezreel is not the capital, of the northern kingdom, that's Samaria, but it is the location, where Ahab and Jezebel lived, it is where he had moved, most of the ruling powers to, and so he's there, and Ahab goes in, we get into the 19th chapter, Elijah waits outside the gate, maybe he's longing, again

it's amazing, when you see the compassion, and even the desire, if you think that Elijah, was concerned about himself, he could have kept running, but he didn't, he wanted to know, what Ahab was going to do, with this message, he has just seen, lived out in front of him, we know what happens, right, Ahab tells Jezebel, and Jezebel wants to kill Elijah, we're going to get into that, very quickly, into the 19th chapter, Elijah's going to go, into a dark period, he's going to go, into a place of depression, which shouldn't surprise us, too much, because when you're, on the mountaintop, and God is raining fire, down and answering prayers, and the enemy, is always attacking, but yet what we see, is the fire of Mount Carmel, it was a call, to the people, to make a decision, it was based, in the conviction, that there is, but one true God, and it had enough concern, that God would be glorified, and honored, among his people, that it lived it out,

I wonder, why we don't see, so many fires fall, probably because, we're not issuing, that call, that's rooted in conviction, because we're not, concerned enough, I don't know, I wonder, but we know, that God had his man, Elijah during that day, because people, were going back and forth, between two opinions, and he wanted to settle it, and proclaim a fact, may we be people of truth, may we be people of facts, and may we be people, issuing a call, rooted in conviction, because we're concerned, as we see Elijah, is doing it, but a word of caution, the moment, we start doing it, we cannot separate it, from the 19th chapter, because difficult days, will come, they will come, and they will be days, where we must lean upon the Lord, in a greater way than ever, we see that, we see it in 1st Kings 18, 20 through 46, of the fire, of Mount Carmel, before we close tonight,

[32 : 44] I know, I was asked in the deacons meeting, and I know, probably gets asked in here, where the pastor, started the service, a little bit different today, is there something, was there a problem, in the church, was the question I was asked, and I said, well not far as I know, if you know of one, please let me know, so well then, why was we so concerned, about praying, it's because there's not, a problem in the church, and God is blessing us, and using us, and he's putting, the right people in place, he is allowing us, to be encouragers, and supporters, of other churches, and sister churches, and we've been able, to financially give, we're seeing people, go on to the mission field, we've seen God, honor everything we've given, and yet when you look, at our bank statements, God is giving it back to us, God is, you say well, people are giving, graciously right, God is giving it back, but in the midst of that, we have families, who are living, every one of our families, who are living, in a time in our society, where it is difficult, we're having people, where the truth, is being cast out, left and right, we're having people, who are fighting battles, so for all the good, that is going on in church,

I do not want to wait, and respond to problems, I want to be proactively, seeking God, that he would intervene, before the problems come, marriages are put on strain, more than any other time, that I know of, as a path, in my pastoral ministry, I've been 18 years, in a pastoral ministry, and now more than any other time, I see marriages, you say well, we got all these families, with young kids, right, young kids are awesome, for a church, but they are tiresome, for families, we know that, we've been there, they are not always, pleasant days, they bring difficulties, we got people getting married, right, marriages are a wonderful gift, of God, but there are also battles, everyone I do pre-marriage counseling, with I tell them, the warm fuzzies, will wear out someday, and you'll have to fight a battle, so as a church, we ought to be praying, for our young couples, right, we ought to be praying, for the parents that they are, for their mothers, and our fathers, we ought to be, and if we're not, we're just waiting on them, to have a problem, so that hopefully, we can respond, where we ought to be, proactively praying, in spite of what is going to come, because the enemy doesn't stop, we need to be praying, for our marriages, we have people, that are changing jobs, we have people, that are retiring, we have life circumstances, that are changing, as a church, we ought to be proactively praying, because I can assure you, the more we step out, on faith, the more the enemy, will be active,

I've seen it, in my own pulpit ministry, time and time, and time again, so many spiritual battles, but the reality is, that the spiritual battles, don't stop at the pulpit, often they start here, and the moment, your pastor comes out, of a spiritual battle, it begins to spill, into the pews, I know that, I know that, by this point, when I first started ministry, there's so many things, I didn't know, praise God, he's allowed me, to stay in it 18 years, and so I know, these things now, and I like the fact, that I know them, because now, I can ask the church, to be intentionally, I would rather us, pray about it, you might not ever know, of anything, that ever goes on, it may always look, sunshiny and roses, where you're at, but I can assure you, that in a body of believers, of any size whatsoever, someone, is in

the middle, of a spiritual battle, and if we don't acknowledge that, and we don't pray for that, then we're not ever, going to be people, of conviction, and I want to be those people, who pray for our church members,

I want to be those people, who pray for our families, I want to be those people, who pray for our children, I want to be those people, who pray, knowing the reality, that this is not an easy place, to be a believer, that doesn't mean, we have problems in the church, that just means, we're going to be the church, realizing that there are problems, in this life, so that's why, I did that this morning, I will continue to do that, because I believe, it's just a settled conviction, that I've come to, I want to be more proactive, than reactive, I want to be those, who lift up one another, from the pulpit, and the pew, is it different, than we've ever done it, probably, but difference, doesn't mean it's bad, maybe it's just needed, so let's pray, we'll close in a word of prayer, and we'll be dismissed, God we thank you so much, we thank you God, for this church family, we thank you, that we have an opportunity, to come and to be encouraged, Lord we can come, and we can grow, and we can learn, from your word, but Lord I know, that the reality settles in, when we try to live out, these truths that we learn, and God, you're doing a great work,

Lord brothers and sisters, in Christ, are coming to the, understanding of scripture, and they're living it out, Lord you're blessing us, with families and children, you're blessing us, to have the opportunity, to minister to people around us, and God what a grand blessing it is, so Lord we want to be stewards of that, but we also want to be interceders, on behalf of our families, and our individuals, and our churches, of one another, you tell us in scripture, to bear one another's burdens, so God even though, we may not always know, the burdens that people are carrying, we do realize, that in a body of believers, someone is carrying a burden, so God we ask, that you do a grand work, we ask that you would work, powerfully and wonderfully, throughout this church, not so that it would be comfortable, for us, but that you may be glorified, God we know you get, the greater glory, when you do the things, which seem impossible to man, so God we ask, that you would work, in mighty ways, financially, physically, spiritually,

[38 : 20] Lord among, our people, and we ask, so that we would be people, of settled conviction, that we could stand up, and say we know, that you are God, because we've seen you, do this, this, this and this, and that we could, take those convictions, and be people, that issue a call, to those around us, saying don't you want, this God quit going, back and forth, between two opinions, because God our walk, with you is not based, upon opinion, but it's based upon truth, so God when the spiritual, battles come, we ask that you sustain us, in the midst of the battle, we ask that we would be, prepared in advance, that we wouldn't react, to what is going on, but that we would already, have put on the full armor, of God, and having put it on, we would be able, to stand, God make us, people who would stand, in the gap, those who would intercede, on behalf of others, even if we don't know, who they are, but that we would be, people of prayer, we'd be people of concern, and Lord that we would, see you answer them, Lord as we get ready, to leave here tonight, we pray that you would, help us, to walk intentionally, in the mission field, you've put us in, the mission field, of our everyday life, may we be people, of conversation, may we be people, of character, and Lord may we be, people of faithfulness, and we ask it all, in Jesus name, amen, thank you guys, really appreciate your time, and,

Thank you.