

Today we're beginning a new series. I decided last Sabbath's would be the end of that particular series even though I didn't say it at the time because I wasn't really certain. But it pretty much finished where it needed to finish as far as what we were covering in the book of James.

Anyway, this particular one is a bit of a spinoff of what we covered in that last series when we were discussing things about Elijah. So, we'll begin today with verses that led up to looking more fully at the story of Elijah, why we did that, in the book of James.

This new series is entitled *Elijah, Elisha, and More, Part 1*.

So, let's pick that up back there in James 5 as a review and that'll help us to understand what we're going to be doing as we go through this story of Elijah and Elisha.

James 5:16 where it says, **Confess trespasses to one another**. So, we discussed that, that this is not like confession, and it's not about going to everyone and telling about our faults, our weaknesses, our sins, and so forth. This has to do when there's been a conflict, in context here, in relationship and how to make things right.

We're told to be peacemakers. We're told to resolve differences, and candidly, to love one another, and that takes work. It takes effort. It's not our normal human nature to follow through those things. So, this is a matter of applying what God says we're supposed to do.

So again, own up to your mistakes, own up to the wrong things you've said, look at yourself – that's what it's about; we discussed that already – **and pray**. Because the reality is to handle something like that properly you can't do it on your own because of our human nature. It has to be a matter of God's help, God's blessings, of His spirit working with you to help you to handle things right. Just understanding the truth, understanding God's way of life, continuing in it, living it requires God's spirit. The motivation and the strength and the help to do those things in a right way requires a relationship with God.

So again here, over and over again, and especially in the book of James here, it's a matter of a relationship that's built upon prayer, conversing with God. Here it says, in this case, **pray for one another**.

It shows an attitude and desire toward one another rather than judging and condemning and finding fault with one another as we see so much of in the world around us. God says we're not to do that, especially within a fellowship. We're to be concerned for one another.

So again here, it's a matter of asking for help from God to be able to do those things properly. But it is a matter of prayer and a relationship with God that we build in that way, in that manner. We're supposed to do it on a regular basis.

Then it goes on to say, **The effective...** and as we mentioned here, it's better in the translation here, **The actively working...** what the Greek word has to do with here. **The actively working prayer.** So, that just tells us right there, in essence, what we're told all along. Our lives are to be actively involved in prayer, and it takes work. It takes effort. It takes planning. It doesn't just happen; you've got to think about it, and you've got to plan it, plan to do it every day.

So again here, **The effective** or **The actively working prayer of a righteous one avails much** or **is powerful**, as the word means. It's strong. The reason for that is because it's a matter of having built a relationship with God and being continuous in that process, of continually going before God, seeking help. God will give us help.

And then, because we believe what God says and strive to apply it, which is what faith is—faith is a matter of living what you believe, what God has given you to believe that is true—and if we strive to apply those things in our life then that's what's accounted to us for righteous because it makes it very clear in scripture, as we've discussed so many times, that none of us are. It requires that which God gives to us, grants to us because of what we live.

And so, as the example with Abraham that's given in scripture and it talks about because he believed God and did what God said that was imputed to him as righteousness, though no human being is righteous of and by themselves. We have sins in our life. As long as we're in this physical body there will be sin. That's why we have to continue to repent and go before God and be thankful for our Passover that we're able to do that.

It went on to say that **Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.** So, there is this which is given to help us to think about such things as this, and this is important as we go through these stories now about Elijah even more thoroughly, and Elisha, that all people who have been called by God go through trials and hardships. We all have the same nature, so we all have the same battles.

It's using that as the comparison and as that which is there to help us to understand in a deeper way what we're to do and how we're to do it and be encouraged by that as well, not to be conquered in the sense of giving up or becoming too wearied to a point where we don't keep battling and fighting for God's way of life.

Elijah 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. So again, we know the story. But that didn't go without some battles. There are things we can pray about and feel assured

of in our mind when God gives us a truth, but that doesn't mean that human doubt, or because especially when you go through something for a longer period of time, and nothing has happened yet...

In this particular case here, he sent his servant out seven times. But he believed that this was going to take place, that God was going to send rain. Nevertheless, he didn't have that encouragement yet. Again, he's like we are, and we have doubts that can enter into our mind and then we have to battle those things and remind ourselves of God's promises or other things that will stir us up and help us.

This is one of those occasions. I love that as an example because it wasn't until the seventh time that the servant came back and said, "There is something like a hand coming up out of the sea." So, it was just a small, little cloud, but it gave him encouragement to a point that now he said, in essence, "The rain is coming," and it came quickly behind that. So, we have already gone through that story.

Again here, just to be reminded again that—and that's what we're going through Elijah and Elisha about—that we all have the same nature, we all have the same battles, we have struggles, and the greatest of struggles are in the mind. It's not something that's physical as we're going to touch base on in a moment. It's not the physical things as much as it is that which takes place in the mind, in the battles in the mind because this is where our primary battle is. That's where it takes place.

So again, all whom God has called have had the same nature, and in the midst of striving to conquer and overcome, which is what we do, we want to become something different, we want to become what God says we can become, what Christ said we can become and are to become, we go through suffering and hardship. This way of life is not easy; it's hard, and it was designed to be so.

Again, what an awesome thing that we understand that process, that God designed it to be that way, that we have selfish, human nature, that He gave us a nature that when the time comes we can finally, when God shows us His truth, His way of life, begin to make a right choice or a true choice in the sense of the contrast between our nature, the nature of mankind and the mind, being, and way of God, if you will, and to make that choice, which one do we want. Do we want to stay the way we are or do we believe what God says, that we can actually have our minds, as it says in Romans, to be transformed, to become something new, different?

So again, these things affect us mightily from time to time as we go through various hardships and difficulties because of the battles we have. The world doesn't embrace what we embrace, and it can't until God draws them and helps them to understand. But again, we live that process day by day, whether it be relatives and friends or on the job or whatever it might

be, and they learn about what you believe and then you can begin having battles in relationships and what you're doing.

In the previous verse, it states in **James 5:15, And the prayer of faith shall save...** As we touched upon, it's not about "sick," being sick. Because that's what's happened in the past where these ideas of being healed and so forth, that God's going to raise you up, and if you aren't raised up that something is wrong with you, your faith, or there is sin in your life. That's not the case at all.

That's why words like this mean so much because it means **the wearied**. Those who are wearied. So, that's what happens during battles and so it uses a physical example to teach us something spiritual. First of all, that we're to call on that which God has ordained within the Church, the elders, to be anointed when we're sick. And you know, physical suffering is one thing - and that's the whole point of this - but spiritual is another one far more important.

That's what God wants us to grasp and comprehend, that there are those things we're supposed to do just on a physical plane in life in the sense of hurt, suffering, something we're sick with or whatever, and we pray about it, and we go to the elders and we're looking to God. We're to do that that much more when it comes to our spiritual lives, our spiritual well-being because that's a far greater battle. A physical thing is one thing and one day we're going to be out of these bodies. It's what takes in the mind that's important, that's going to last forever. The change in the mind. God can give us a different life, a different body, which is what He says He's going to do.

So again, it says here, **And the prayer of faith shall save the wearied and the Lord shall raise them up.** So again, it's looking to God. It's not a matter about something just physical. That's a physical analogy. If God heals us, He heals us. If He chooses not to at a particular time because it's better for us that we go through something, to learn from it. Sometimes just by age itself, by getting older we learn that it's not fun getting older. We learn that our bodies begin to change, and we begin to suffer in a different way, and we have aches and pains. People who are older get together and discuss those. But we learn from that. We learn from that.

A young person, twenty and thirty and forty cannot learn about certain things of life and the limitations of life and the reality of what's going to happen and what's going to take place because it's not as real to you until you're closer to it. And then, candidly, there are things you can learn from that through the experience.

God can't give us experience. We have to have it, we have to live it, to grow in various things that can then help things to be molded and fashioned in our being, in our minds. That's an awesome thing to understand.

So, it says here, "And the prayer of faith." So in our lives when we look to God and we're going through hardships and suffering God is the one who gives us strength. He wants us to go through various trials and hardships successfully. He doesn't want us to become defeated by those things. He doesn't want us, as James talked about, to become wearied and begin to let down and don't continue to fight.

I've known of far too many people who have been called - and for the last two thousand years, what an awesome thing, the scripture makes it clear - that the vast majority of those who were ever called to God's truth and way of life left it, gave up. It was too hard, too difficult because they couldn't grasp what God was offering. They lost sight of those things. That's a horrible thing. All a matter of choices, choices, choices, choices.

Again here, "And the Lord shall raise them up." So, if we keep at the fight, we seek to conquer and overcome, we stay close to God, we obey the way that God says we're to have a strong relationship with Him, and He'll bless us, He'll lift us up, He'll help us to go through the hardships and the suffering. He does. Sometimes not immediately because there is more we can learn, and we're tried in various things. It's incredible how God works with us and works with the mind. It's a beautiful thing the more we come to understand it.

So, let's turn over to 1 Kings, go back there. We already looked at some of what Elijah lived as a prophet and we're going to pick up that story with more of a sharpened focus, if you will, upon what we can learn or what can be learned with a similar contrast of what we did then and what James did in the matter of physical healing contrasted with what we're able to see on a spiritual plane that's far greater, far more important.

So, with that context of learning by contrasting what is physical with what is spiritual, we'll pick up this story now in 1 Kings 19:1. Now, this is an incredible story because this is just after Ahab, king Ahab listened to Elijah and called all the false prophets. There were four hundred in one group and four hundred and fifty in another group. He brought them all together, told them to build this altar, offer an offering upon it, and whoever answered and received the offering, said, declared that they would be God.

All the people of Israel gathered together, the leaders who were gathered together because Ahab, king Ahab brought them all together in this place and Elijah was talking to them and they all agreed to this: "That sounds good." Then here is Elijah over here waiting. Not even starting the work of trying to give his offering and offer it up.

Here they are and all these priests and so forth, and Elijah is, candidly, making fun of them, talking about, "Well, you better holler louder, make more of an earnest commotion," if you will, "to your god to hear you because he may be on a long journey." This kind of thing, just kind of goading them along and nothing ever happened.

And then, all of a sudden toward the evening sacrifice, what would be normally the evening sacrifice toward the evening there, he gets together, and he offers this, puts it on the altar and God took everything. Even there, what an amazing thing. Poured all that water all over the wood and everything else, and so lapped up the stones, it says, lapped up the offering, lapped up the dust of the earth where it was. That moved the people and they declared then because of what they saw, "The Eternal, He is God!"

Now, this was on a physical plane. They didn't believe the truth. They didn't believe what we see and understand. They didn't believe what Elijah believed. But for that moment in time on a physical plane, they were moved enough to say, "This is obvious. Baal isn't God. The Eternal is God. This proves it." But that didn't last long. What an amazing thing how fickle people are and how quick to go back and do something else that they'd been doing before. That's exactly what happened with Israel. So, here Elijah has gone through all this, and Ahab gets back, and he tells Jezebel.

1 Kings 19:1—And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he executed all the prophets with the sword. So, we know the story. He had them all killed. The Israelites gathered them all together, all these prophets, eight hundred fifty total, had them put to death.

Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow at this time. So, at that very moment in time, after everything that had been done, Elijah felt down. Because it wasn't lasting. The people were willing now to go, at least different ones listened to her because she had a lot of sway over Ahab, a lot of power, as we've seen before, and people were sent out to find him to put him to death. That's what their job was.

Then when he saw it, he rose and ran for his life. He was afraid. Normal human nature. You're going to get out of there because if you stay there, you're a dead man.

And he went to Beersheba. So, if we know where he was up in Israel, in that particular area of Samaria, he went all the way down to Beersheba, that's way south into Judah. So, he was going to get away from her and away from any influence that others might have in coming after him in that particular area, Israelites coming down there to look for him. It says, **which belongs to Judah, Beersheba does, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness.** So, it wasn't enough to go there. And if you get down into some of those areas you're getting right next to the Negev Desert and it's barren. It's barren as barren can be.

We've driven through it. I remember driving just south of that little area, that town, and as you drive down through there you see, maybe I guess we'd call nomad or whatever, and they're out there herding some goats and sheep, and just a few together in little areas.

There's not much there but that's why they have to herd them, to find grass, and they're out there.

This is where he was. He's going to get away from everyone. He doesn't want to be found. **But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree.** It's like a kind of a Juniper. **Then he prayed that he might die.** "Enough is enough." He'd felt like he'd fought a long enough battle now and that's what his attitude, that's his thinking.

And he said, It is enough! Now, Eternal, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers! So, it was a matter of being wearied, being tired. It was a battle in the mind. It wasn't some physical thing; it was in the mind, in the thinking.

And so, we go through different trials, and you have battles in your mind, in your thinking, and sometimes because it's associated with what you believe, obviously, especially when it is, that can even be more difficult as far as the trial and determination and whether you're going to keep fighting and to what degree. Because remember, do these things happen? Absolutely. To God's people? Absolutely. I think of how many have given up through time, just have given up, became wearied and quit fighting the fight. He was moving toward that direction. Not that far but he was having a battle. He was having a struggle in the mind.

Verse 5—Then as he lay down and slept under a juniper, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, Arise and eat. Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again. Now, maybe hard to understand some of this or try to feel some of this as an older man that he was, but he was worn out. He was so discouraged because the Israelites didn't turn back to God. They said on that day, "He is God!" but then they went right back to the same old way. It didn't take very long.

This was so exceedingly discouraging to him because his whole purpose of all his life was a desire to turn them back to God, away from Baal. After that incredible event of what took place and then seeing their attitude, it was incredibly discouraging to him. It's like, "My whole life I've done this..."

That's why I've always been so thankful that Herbert Armstrong did not have to see what happened in Laodicea that led up to the Apostasy and the destruction of the Church. Thank God, as far as I'm concerned, as an old man he didn't have to experience that and see that. All that work and all that effort, working to build the Church and having a message going out into all the world about what was going to come upon this world, and the world not believing it.

That's why I marvel at some of those things, wrote about in the last book here. You think about some of that, of what he said about Europe and what was going to happen, that they were going to come together eventually as ten nations that would be unified militarily, how that they were going to have a union of nations and they started out with the Common Market. That wasn't until seven years after he started talking about some of these things. They were going to have a common currency. The currency of the Euro didn't come out until well after he died, in 1999, and yet they came to pass in time.

What an incredible thing and what an awesome thing that he didn't have to see then what happened to the Church, the scattering and people who just left in droves, ministers that he knew for so long, that he'd worked with in his life, evangelists, to go off and do some of the things they did because of a prophesied apostasy that would take place, of someone who would come along, the man of sin, the son of perdition who would seek to change everything about God's laws. Never happening in any kind of religion before where someone came along and changed everything diametrically the opposite of the way it was. Incredible!

And so, here he is feeling these things, and he's down. Because when the angel touched him and told him to eat this was a feeling of such discouragement that he was weak, he was weak from it. He had no motivation, no strength to continue on, and when he got up and ate and drank what did he do? Went to lie back down again.

I don't know if you've ever felt like that in your life, to where you just feel drained, emptied because of the battles you've gone through. This was probably many times above and beyond what we normally would feel in some of our battles that we've had. But I understand this. I hope we understand it, the state he was in right now because he was exceedingly discouraged and down after everything he'd seen.

Verse 7—Then the angel of the Eternal came back the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you. What do you mean, journey? Didn't quite register with him yet. Journey? He was out of strength; He wasn't planning on going anywhere. He was going to stay right there.

So he arose and ate and drank. Then he went—notice—Then he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God. He went a long distance. He went down to the area of Mount Sinai. It's what's believed to be Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. He went on down there, desired to be closer to God, in that respect, knowing of their history and so forth. I can understand that.

And yet, so he did take a journey down there, but it doesn't say that's where God wanted him to go yet, because it isn't. "The journey is too great for you." He didn't know what was in store for him yet, he really didn't. But because of what had been said here he felt a

motivation now to start moving forward again. Where to? Mount Horeb in this particular case. A sense of a closeness to God, being closer to God.

You know, there are things that you can visit... I think of blessings of being able to have visited different parts of the world where different ones have been. I think of being in Ephesus and thinking about Paul's journey's, and there is a sense because you've read those stories and you think about them being there, it adds something to it, a closeness to the relationship if that makes sense, places in Israel and so forth. They come alive. Being in Corinth, thinking about that and thinking about Paul, again, having been there and the things he preached while he was there. Being on Mars Hill there in Athens; it makes those things come alive and you just feel encouraged by it.

This is what was encouraging him. It was to go back or go down to Mount Horeb, to Mount Sinai where God had given Israel all the commandments and had that relationship with them for that forty years while they were in the wilderness. He's going back to that in his thinking because he wants to be encouraged, he wants to continue on, but doesn't know exactly what to do yet.

There he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the Eternal came to him, and He said to him, What are you doing here, Elijah? "Why are you here?" Well, God knows. He knows our minds. He knows our thinking. What an incredible thing to know that God knows our thinking. Not just our words. We don't have to express words because of that spirit essence that's in every human being in the mind. Awesome.

So, he replied, I have been very zealous for the Eternal God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant... So, they didn't return. They'd forsaken. They'd gone to Baal. It didn't take them long after what he did they went right back to Baal.

...torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left—after all this work I'm the only one left, all the rest have been killed—and they seek to take my life.

Then He said, God said, Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Eternal. And behold, the Eternal passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the Eternal, but the Eternal was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Eternal was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Eternal was not in the fire. And after that... So here is the point being is that God is not there. He's not talking to him anymore at this point. All these things are happening that he knows are extraordinary. They're not normal. Yet God's not there with him.

...and after the fire a still, and the word means "calm; quiet" small voice. It's almost like a whisper, but he hears it. **So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his**

mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and He said, What are you doing here, Elijah?

So he said, I have been very zealous for the Eternal God of hosts. Because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword I alone am left... So he was feeling down, down as down can be. Incredible. ...and they seek to take my life.

Then the Eternal said to him, Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus. So, he was not only to go back past Beersheba but he's going to go far, far north of there into the area of Damascus, this area, region called Damascus in this case.

...and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. He's to go find this man and anoint him king over Syria.

Then verse 16—You shall also anoint Jehu, the son of Nimshi, as king over Israel. So, he wasn't yet king, but he was to do this at some point along this trip, along this journey, God letting him know you have work to do yet. That's what He's letting him know. "You have work ahead of you. You need to go back to these regions, and these are the things that you're to do when you're there, when you've arrived in these different places." Which means here in this case that there's someone going to come along that's going to be replacing Ahab soon.

And Elisha, the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah, you shall anoint as prophet in your place. Awesome! He's saying, "Here is a man. You're not the only one. Here is one who is going to be taking your place." It's not immediate. It's not like that. He said, "He is the one that's going to be taking your place as prophet."

It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and who escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. So, what is this all about? Well, it's about the sins of Israel and what they were doing in the area of Samaria there and how they were following the way of Baal, and God's going to address it. God is going to take care of it, and He's saying here that there are certain ones that are going to come in and they're going to be destroying.

Then He says, God tells him, Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him. So, you know how they do to the statues and how we've talked about that one in Rome where it's supposed to be Peter and the big toe, the toe is almost totally gone. I saw that and you think, "How many kisses does it take to wear down the big toe?" It looks weird. How many lips were on there?! But this is the custom of what they used to do.

He's saying, He's telling Elijah, "You're not the only one. There are seven thousand. You're discouraged because of what's taken place but yet there are seven thousand in the nation of Israel who have not turned to Baal. They've not bowed down to him. They have not kissed

him, and they're reserved." Awesome! "There's Elisha that you're going to be anointing to take your place as prophet."

He's striving here, in that respect, to raise him up. "The Eternal will raise you up." This is a part of what God was doing and God was beginning to show him those things and show him that there is more to this. There is more work to be done. There is more that God is doing with the nation of Israel. God was allowing Israel to continue on, to not yet be destroyed because they were going to be conquered later on and taken into captivity into the north, as far as those ten nations in Samaria. That was to take place later on.

I couldn't help when I was going through this how that God has preserved facets of Israel at different times to continue on as a nation just as He has this one and how He has given certain blessings in the midst of disobedience, in the midst of people living the way they live, to continue on to fulfill various things that need to be fulfilled. We live in the midst of something like that right now that's quite incredible to understand where we are in time.

He's striving to encourage him once again and help him to understand, "There is more work to be done; you have more work to do. It's not over with yet. And yes, there are people who have not turned away in the sense of their feeling and attitude toward Me." It wasn't like what it was for us in the sense of the truth or was for Elijah, being worked with like he was by God.

But going on, **verse 19, So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing, twelve yoke of oxen before him.** It reminds me of being out on the combine when I was young, a teenager, and we'd go into a wheat field, and if you were with a big crew that maybe had six combines, to me there is no more beautiful sight than to watch wheat being harvested and you have these six combines in a row and they're going around these fields and cutting massive amounts each time going back and forth.

This is what it was. Here are twelve yolk of oxen and they're all doing work, following one behind another in the work that they were doing, plowing or whatever it was. He says that Elisha is the twelfth one here that is doing this as far as the yolk of oxen is concerned.

So, it says, **and he found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who was plowing, twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and cast his mantle on him.** So, here is Elijah, he casts his mantle on him, in essence, in showing here that there is that which is taking place in a very unique thing that Elijah was doing toward Elisha.

Then he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said... So, the whole point being was he's letting him know, "You have a job to do." Elijah was telling Elisha, "You have a job to do. You're going to have a work to do, and this mantle is going to be yours," is basically what was being said.

Elisha is responding, and he understands here that Elijah is calling him to follow him, to be with him, to be trained by him to be able to work with him. So again, we have this capsule of a story here and we don't have everything that's recorded and written but this was the thing communicated.

And so, **he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, Please let me kiss my father and mother, and I will follow you.** So, it's just a matter of wanting to say goodbye to them, to want to say these things properly because he didn't know how long he was going to be gone.

So he says, Go back. Elijah is telling him, **Go back, for what have I done to you?** Now, this is not translated properly in most scriptures because it's like a question mark, "For what Have I done to you?" That's not what he's saying at all. He's not asking a question, "What have I to do with you?" or anything of that nature. What's taking place here is Elijah knows what he is, in essence, telling Elisha. He knows what he's placed on him. His life is going to be going through the things that he went through and it's not like he's offering something that's really great here to take hold of because he knows what's going to happen, **By all means, go and say your goodbyes to them because what's in front of you,** in essence, Elijah knew full well what it was going to be.

I think of different things people in the Church. I've made comments like this before, whether it be different things brethren go through at different times or whether it be within the ministry at different times, because we've been down that road. We know exactly what's going to happen to you at different times under different circumstances.

Sometimes when you get into something we know what's going to take place. We know the battle that's in front of you. This is a bit of what Elijah was doing toward Elisha. He's telling him, "Yeah..." So, anyway, Elisha is responding here. **He goes back and he takes a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh,** cooked their flesh, if you will, **using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate.**

What an incredible thing here as he's taking what's on hand right there and starting to go through this process here of offering this and inviting others around to partake of it because he's leaving. That's what it's all about.

Then he arose and followed Elijah and became his servant. He had much to learn. So, this didn't happen immediately. He didn't take his place immediately. God prepared him. How? Through Elijah working with him and teaching him in various things that were going to take place now.

So again here, Elijah knew the job, the task that was going to be placed on Elisha and it wasn't going to be an easy one. He knew full well what it was like all his life and the leadership, the leaders, the people being against you as they were on a constant basis.

Reminds me of a couple of scriptures that reflect the same sort of thing. For us it's like when we're called. And you think, here Elisha is being drawn into something where he's going to be cut off in a way he's never been cut off. First of all, he's being cut off from family. Not because of them feeling bad toward him but because he's going to be away from them learning something else. But he's going to be going through things where he's going to feel a separation like Elijah did in time. He's going to understand what it means to go to people who are totally unconverted.

Again, we use those terms in different ways because we understand that, but a very carnal people that wanted to serve Baal rather than God. And so, he's going to experience the same thing and it's not going to be a good thing in that respect, as far as what goes on up here, the struggles and the battles of the mind. So, Elijah is going to help him to prepare for those things.

I think of Revelation 20. Let's just turn over there and read that again just to remind ourselves the things we go through, what it's like. Because that's the whole point of these things is they went through various physical things, and just like James gave him an example of something physical here, to learn something spiritual.

The same thing is true here as we look at their lives and realize what they were like, we're like that. We go through struggles. We go through hardships. We go through times that it's hard. Why mince words? Sometimes it can be excruciating in the mind. That's a far greater battle than something physical happening to a person. It's what takes place in the mind and the battles that take place up there. And candidly, that's what God works with. It's the mind.

Revelation 20:1—And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. So, a place of restraint. And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent which is called the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years. What an incredible picture here. And you think, what does the world do with these things? Traditional Christianity when they read something like this? "Bound him a thousand years." Something that's going to come to pass, this being that is going to be put away where he can't bother mankind for a thousand years.

...and cast him into the abyss, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more until the thousand years be fulfilled. I so look forward to the time when truth is over the entirety of the earth and no longer are people held captive to various kinds of beliefs that keep them in darkness, in different kinds of religions and even with what people believe to be true that they're going to learn is not true. To be freed from those kinds of things and to understand how it all began, to understand what transpired and what took place.

And so, he's talking about a time here, a thousand years until things are fulfilled to the manner of God's plan and purpose for what the Millennium is going to do. **And then after that he has to be let loose, it says, a little season.** We know the story.

What an awesome thing that you understand that, because you look back at the early apostles, they didn't know these things. They didn't understand all this. They didn't have the book of Revelation. It wasn't written yet. Only John toward the end, the last one, who was on the Isle of Patmos and was able to write what he saw, what he heard. He recorded it and he didn't fully understand all these things either. Incredible.

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them, of the lives of those who were... They don't know God's plan. They don't understand what it means so they say, "**beheaded.**" You think, well, how many people have you ever known beheaded that were a part of God's Church in history going back in time? The disciples? We know that the Greek word here means "cut off" and what this means then.

...of the lives of those who were cut off for the witness of Joshua. What does that mean, "the witness of Joshua?" Well, it's Joshua the Christ. That witness is a matter of what we live. It reveals where Christ is. It reveals where God is. If one is able to live by what is true, you know, have the weekly Sabbath, have the annual Holy Days, lives by those things and the other truths that God gives to us to comprehend and understand, that's what it's about. That's a witness then of the life of Joshua that's in the Church. That's what proves it.

...and for the word of God. The truth, whatever that truth is, "and for the word of God." Witness of those things. Why? Because you live it. You've chosen to live what you've been given to know is true.

...and who had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received the mark upon their foreheads. So again here, what a blessing to be able to understand these things. The world gets so confused by them and they don't understand what these things are. Just like signs or the mark of what makes God's Church different. It's the Sabbath. Sunday is a different sign. And on and on it goes, the Holy Days, different from the holidays. Different signs.

Just like those two places of altar, two different signs, where is God? Where is Christ?

"The foreheads," having to do with how we think, not a literal mark as some people talk about this mark and the numbers are going to be etched into your skin and things put into you. Not that man can't do it to know where somebody is and puts it in there because people have done stupid things like that. But to think that's the mark of the beast? Anyway, what a blessing to be freed from that kind of thing where we understand what it's really about.

...and on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. So, the point being about the 144,000 that are coming with Christ, every one of them has had to go through hardship and suffering. It wasn't easy. As to whether they would hold on to God's way of life, whether they would continue in a relationship with God, whether they would build upon that relationship through prayer, desiring to obey God and live by what God has given to them, and that's what this is about.

Again, that's everyone that's going to be a part of the 144,000, and it's everyone who continues on in the Millennium, there are things we have to go through. There are hardships and suffering. It's all in the mind, the choices people make and why we make them. They weren't meant to be easy because this determines who you are. It's your choice if you want God, as to whether you cry out for God on a continuing basis. And by these things, we're proven to whether that's true or not, and if we keep fighting and keep crying out to God for help because we know we can't do it on our own, we have to have His help.

All people through time have had to do this. They've had to go before God and cry out to Him for help. That's the history of God's people through time in six thousand years.

Then Romans 8:33. We understand Revelation 20 is about those 144,000 resurrected when Christ returns, at the time Satan is put away.

Romans 8:33—Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? And so, that is used in the sense of those who are called by God, those whom God is giving the opportunity to change, to conquer, to overcome, to fight the battle, to make choices as to whether or not this is really what they want. And if a person is living that? God's elect. Because God called us to succeed, to be selected, to have a selection that's special and unique - some to go on into the Millennium at Christ's return, others to be a part of that 144,000 here at the end.

It is God who justifies. Who is it that condemns? If we understand God's way of life, God's truth, who cares what others condemn and find fault with. Who cares what Jezebel thinks. Who cares what Ahab thinks. Who cares what the vast majority think. It doesn't matter. It's a matter of what God thinks. It's a matter of what God has given us the opportunity of and whether we hold on to that, latch on to it with all of our being.

It is Christ who died. So, it goes on to explain this process. **It is Christ who died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.** Beautiful picture. Not only our Passover but our High Priest, became our High Priest after the Wave Sheaf, when He received that, when God received him to fulfill those things. Beautiful things in scripture like that, that he can live in us, as it talks about in John 14.

What a marvel to understand that the Father until that time was all that lived in and dwelt in and helped those who were up to that point in time, the previous four thousand years, and

then after this period of time Christ as well, but in a larger scale working with the Church, not individually like God did in the first four thousand years.

It is Christ who died, yes rather, that's risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the agape, the love? It's God's love. That's why I love that word because it shows this is God's love. It's not human love. Nobody has this love except that God give it through the power of His holy spirit as we want it, as we desire it, as we seek to live by it, and cry out to God for help to have it in us because it's not natural. We don't have that naturally in our life. Even though baptized, it's not natural within us. You have to ask for it and you have to cry out for it, to have that kind of a mind, that kind of thinking, that kind of desire toward others, an unselfish sacrificing kind of love because all human life and love is selfish.

The best mention of in scripture is called "philia," Philadelphia. That's just a fraternal love, a brotherly love. People belong to the same organization, whatever it might be, and they love or have to a certain level, whatever that might be, care and concern for one another within that group. Very likely that they are very much against others in different fraternal organizations.

Just like in the world, fraternities, sororities, even on a physical plane in college and universities. Just like police, and firemen, different ones, they have their feelings toward each other. Just like what was it, the Army and Navy game coming up? A fraternal love there amongst themselves but man, they're ready for war against each other. You know that that's in human fun sort of thing. But again, that's the way human beings are, and candidly, that's all we're capable of.

Or within families because it's your family. You don't love other families the same way as you love your family. You don't love other people and individuals. That's why I love the example Herbert Armstrong gave of God's love, that the best of human love he could give as an example, he says, is a mother's love for her child. But it's still selfish because she doesn't love other children the same way because she can't because she's human, has a human mind.

What an awesome thing when God gives of His spirit, and we can begin to think differently towards others. I think of the Church and relationships that are bound, strengthened by God's spirit and that thinking toward others that so surpasses that on a physical plane even in physical family. Incredible.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Can tribulation, or distress? The answer in all this is nothing unless you let it. Nothing unless you make the wrong choices to let it. That depends on each individual then.

Can tribulation? It can if you make the wrong choice. ...**distress or persecution, famine, famine of God's word, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Your sake we are killed all the day long.**

So, we carry something different, unique, and we understand that process, of things that come our way that don't come to others. It doesn't mean that people in the world don't suffer, but they're not suffering for the right reasons. When God calls you and you make choices because you're seeking to obey God and live God's way of life and you're doing it for the right reasons, that's a different kind of suffering. That's a matter of a relationship then with God and with Christ which is unique then to us. Awesome to have that.

As it is written, For Your sake we are killed all the day long. We're going to suffer. We have to put self to death all day long. Even self, even in a battle against our own carnal nature, it's a battle. It's not easy. Those are choices on a constant basis as to whether we obey God or not.

We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. We've been called to something unique. That's our calling. Sometimes people don't like that anymore. They get to a point where they don't want to live that way, they don't want to have to be that way.

Verse 37—But in all things, not the word "know," **But in all things, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.** God gives us help. He gives us the strength of His spirit. He raises us up to fight the fight we need to fight. Not on our own because you can't. That's why you pray and cry out to God for help.

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life... So, Paul was, and every person who reads this, has to ask themselves the same questions or answer the same thing. "Am I?" ...**death, life, angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, neither height nor depth nor anything else, as the word is, created (that's the Greek word), in creation that's created will be able to separate us from the love/the agape of God.** So, God is faithful. But to continue to receive that from God depends on our choices, as to whether we're going to fight whatever battle comes along and know that we're in God's hands and we're going to obey Him no matter what happens. Even as for many in times past it's come down to death. It's come down to their literal lives. Is that going to separate someone? That's a choice.

...nothing else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Joshua the Christ our Lord. I love it, the way it says there, "and Joshua the Christ," because the reality is why does it states things like this? "That's in Joshua the Christ?" Well, it's from God, but it's in Joshua because first of all, it starts with Passover. He's our Passover. We can repent.

We have the ability to go before God on a continual basis and repent of sin and know that we're forgiven. Why? Because of our choice to be baptized, to become a new person. As it says, coming up out of that water we're to put the old person to death and now walk in newness of life, to completely seek to change our lives in the way we live. Then we have hands laid upon us by the ministry and the impregnation of God's holy spirit within us that will continue in us and God will continue in us and Christ as our High Priest as long as that's what we want and that's what we choose. Awesome!

So again, encouraging scriptures, things that Elijah didn't have back then. He had a personal relationship with God and God had to deal with him on a personal plane. That's what's unique about the Old Testament. Everyone out of the Old Testament God worked with individually, personally. That's why we have different accounts of even God manifesting Himself in different ways to Abraham. We know those stories there. You think of some of the different ones with whom He worked. I think of Job. It's one on one. He worked with him to mold and fashion something unique within him. And why? For something unique that God was preparing them for later on in His Kingdom. To rule. To reign.

So, whether we start out with Abel, the first, Cain and Abel, and his brother killed him, he was the first preacher of righteousness, it says, and go down through time, come to Noah and the things he lived through. He is the only human being at that time with whom God could work who would listen to Him, who would follow through and do what God gave him to do.

If we think that there were other people out there at that particular time that God could have worked with and had build that ark then we don't understand what was taking place at that particular period in time. Mankind had become so evil, so vile, people who could live for hundreds of years were expert in deception, in carnality.

Can you imagine people who lived three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine hundred years and what their minds had to be like by that time because of what they were choosing? They weren't choosing God. A few did through that period of time, but very few. Then we get to Noah and even his own family after they saw everything they saw, everything destroyed on earth as far as animal life and as far as human life, and his own sons, whole family, none of them chose God afterward. Noah was the only one, and he lived another three hundred fifty years until finally Abraham came along.

Incredible, some of the stories in the Bible. I mean, God worked with them all in a unique way to prepare them for something in the future, and they all struggled. They all struggled with hardship. Every one of them that went through what they did was not easy. Persecuted. Mocked. Made fun of. Scorned. Beaten. All the examples it gives in the New Testament that happened to people, their life taken. Incredible.

And so, we're just like them, just God's working with us in a different way within the organization of the Body of Christ, the Church of God. It's a beautiful thing.

Let's go back to the story concerning Elijah and Elisha. The story in 1 Kings continues with that of how Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, went up to war against Samaria, and it was during this period that it states "a prophet of God was sent to Ahab, the king of Israel," with a message.

Now, it doesn't say who it was, but I'm pretty certain it was Elisha. Elijah was training him, telling him things he needed to do. He needed to begin to learn what this job was going to be like. That's why it doesn't specifically say who it was.

And so again, Elijah worked with him for several years here of things that were going on, and in this particular case here, the story in **1 Kings 20:13—Then behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab, king of Israel, saying, Thus says the Eternal.** He was to learn what it's like to say, "This is what God is telling you."

Now, Ahab was never happy with anyone coming and telling him this. He was never happy with Elijah. He basically referred to him in many ways basically, as the enemy, "The one who is coming to tell me these things, unpleasant things, bad things. You're always telling me bad things." That's what most of them told the prophets, the kings did. Well, why? Because of all their sins. They didn't want those things pointed out and what punishment might be coming upon them because of what they were doing.

And so here it is, somebody is learning something here. **Thus says the Eternal, Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand this day.** Now, in this particular case here, what an awesome thing. Here he's going with a positive message. Here is Ben-Hadad coming up against them to destroy and to kill, and all these armies that he could see. He knew of it. Ahab knew that they were out there coming toward him. And so, this is what this prophet is telling him.

He said, **This day I will deliver them out of your hand, and you shall know that I am the Eternal.** Now, he was already given opportunity for that, wasn't he? All those prophets of Baal, and now all of a sudden just Elijah and one little offering here and at that point there he was shown there who was God. But he didn't hold on to it. Now again someone is going to him and telling him, "Deliver them totally out of your hand today. And you shall know that I am the Eternal because of this happening."

So Ahab said, **By whom?** And he said, **Thus says the Eternal, Even by the young men of the princes of the province. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? Then he said, You.** It's like, "Duh." So, basically here, "This is your opportunity and God will do this for you to show that He is the Eternal." Not that Ahab is going to be converted or respond to this. God already knew what kind of a mind he had. But what was this all about? It was about Elisha. It was

about what Elisha was to learn. We go through a lot of things, and we don't know so often what God is teaching us, what He's molding and fashioning in us. But we're to yield ourselves to whatever situation we are in life, in whatever battles we come to, and look to God for help and He will mold and fashion things within us. He will take everything that happens to us in life and make it positive in the sense of what we can learn and how we can be molded and fashioned. It doesn't matter what it is.

Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and there were two hundred and thirty-two; and after them, he numbered all the people of the children of Israel—seven thousand. Now, what does that mean? Was that all there were in Israel? No. But that's the ones he could number that were ready for battle. Those princes and seven thousand. That wasn't real encouraging if you look at that on a physical plane because you're talking about tens of thousands coming up against them.

And so here it is, seven thousand, and the prophet is telling you God is saying that He's going to prove to you He is the Eternal because He's going to let you win this battle and you're going to be the one who is the forefront of this.

Verse 16—They went out at noon. But Ben-Hadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings and thirty-two kings who helped him. So, kings at this time were over various regions and they'd come together to go up against, to be with him then as king over them to fight against Israel. The example here then, understanding why he's drinking and what's happened in times past as we read in some other stories, oftentimes those who were overconfident and felt that there was nothing to fear and that they were going to clean house. That's the attitude they had, arrogant, haughty, and had no doubt, that there wasn't any worry, that they could do this and they're going to clean house tomorrow when they go up into Israel. They're going to kill and destroy.

So, the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first. And Ben-Hadad sent out... Basically, here it's talking about in the context of for information, where are they, what are any movements taking place of the Israelites. **And they told him, saying, There are men coming from Samaria!** In other words, the Israelites are coming up. There are men coming.

And so he said, Whether they are coming up for peace, take them alive; or whether they are coming up for war, take them alive.

So, the young men of the princes of the province... Because, again here, he knew it was a small number. They came back and told him. They can look over a region and tell the difference between what they had as an army and what was there, so he said just go and take them alive and he's going to deal with them later basically.

So, the young men of the princes of the province went out of the city, and the army which followed them. They slew every one his man. What does that mean? It's a terminology using everyone they came up against they slew them. Everyone they came up to they killed.

And the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them. Ben-Hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with the horsemen. So, the king of Israel went out and struck down the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter.

The whole story in this part here is this was such an incredible army compared to what they had doing this and yet these individuals were given the help and the favor to do the conquering and the others took off in fear. They just followed and pursued and destroyed more of them.

Then the prophet came to the king of Israel and said to him, Go, strengthen yourself, and consider well what you must do. In other words, what you need to plan for now. Because they've been conquered, now you need to start doing some planning. **For at the return of the year the king of Assyria will come up against you again.** So, he's telling him now here, "You need to prepare for the next wave because a year from now he's coming back.

And the servants of the king of Syria said to him, speaking to the king because it's about the king of Assyria, Their gods are gods of the hills. Therefore, they were stronger than we are. But let us fight against them in the plain and surely we will be stronger than them. So, in essence here, "They beat us because they came out of the hills. They had the favor and their God is the God of the hills, but if we go out on the plains there we're going to be able to destroy them because they'll be no match for us."

Verse 24—So do this thing, Take the kings away, everyone out of their standing place, and put governors/captains in their place. Number an army like the army that you have lost, horse for horse, chariot for chariot. So again, muster up again just as large an army as you had before. **We will fight against them in the plain and surely we will be stronger than them. So, he listened to their voice and did so.**

Then it came to pass at the return of the year that Ben-Hadad numbered the Syrians. That just means who are going to war, just like Israel did when they had the seven thousand. That's the number and the counting of how many are actually going into the battle. **...and went over to Aphek to war against Israel.** So, this is an area farther toward the Mediterranean Sea that is basically flat and not in the hilly country where they had fought before.

Then it says in **verse 27—The children of Israel were numbered and were all present and went out against them. The children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids.** So, like little goats, two little flocks of goats, but the Syrians filled the country. So, I

love the expression here. Here they are, two little flocks of goats, not very big, pretty puny, and then here are all the Assyrians covering the entirety of the valley.

Verse 28—Then there came a man of God and spoke unto the king, and said... So again here, experience. You can't give experience. He's learning it. He's going to learn through this entire process. There are things being molded and fashioned in him preparing him for his future job.

Thus says the Eternal, Because the Assyrians have said, The Eternal is God of the hill country, and He is not the God of the valleys, therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the Eternal. So they arrayed themselves for battle one over against the other for seven days. Then it was that on the seventh day, the battle came together. So, finally, after seven days here they're coming together in the battle.

And the children of Israel slew of the Assyrians one hundred thousand footmen in one day. So, that was the same kind of army they had before because he said get soldier for soldier, chariot for chariot, and we're going after the Israelites again. So, a huge army.

But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and there a wall fell upon twenty-seven thousand of the men that were left. I don't know what kind of walls they had but it must have been quite a fortification because it says twenty-seven thousand more men were killed.

Ben-Hadad fled and came into the city, into the inner chamber. So, he's going deeper into the city trying to hide, trying to get away, and the story continues on as some along with Ben-Hadad put on sackcloth and rope around their heads to go out before Ahab to seek mercy. He granted them mercy; he let them live.

So, the story continues, **verse 35—Then a certain man, son of the prophets, said to his neighbor, By the word of the Eternal, Strike me down, I pray you.** So, what is this all about? It's the same prophet going through the same things, being told what he's supposed to do. He's going and telling, it says, his neighbor.

We don't know who his neighbor is because this is a unique word that's used oftentimes in scripture anyway, but it's a word like it can be a companion. It could have been some of the other, we don't know, prophets who were being trained, taught, we don't know. Because at different times different ones were being worked with. So whether it was them, someone close by, don't know, but they knew who he was. They knew what he was saying he represented.

So anyway, he says, "Take a sword," basically, is what he's telling them, "and strike me down, by the word of the Eternal." In other words, "God's charging you to strike me down."

Strike me down, I pray you. But the man refused to strike him. Then he said to him, Because you have not obeyed the voice of the Eternal... This is not a small thing. Again, he's learning and we're learning, and everyone who ever reads a story like this is to learn if God says something, you'd better do it. If the Great Creator God tells us to do something we'd better obey. If we're to live a certain way, we'd better live it. That's a choice as to whether we do or don't.

This man had a choice. Are you going to do what comes from the word of God? Here God's prophet is telling you that you're to take and strike him down and this is coming from the Eternal. You have a choice to make. Now, it's pretty tough.

Because you have not obeyed the voice of the Eternal, behold, as soon as you have departed from me, a lion will kill you. Driving home the point that when God says to do something we're to do it, and so much of the Bible has been like that anyway as far as salvation continues on and living God's way of life. In the New Testament things were taught.

We've gone through this during the Feast and all the stories of things that we've known of so many who have not continued on in God's way of life, who have not fought for God's way of life, who have gone in different directions and made different choices along the way.

God says in the end there are two things that are going to happen to human beings. You will either be in the God Family, resurrected to eternal life in spirit bodies to live forever in everlasting life from that point forward (age-lasting life may be a better way of expressing that), or death. We know what happens at the end of that hundred years.

We have been learning more and more that there are going to be a lot, as it even talks about in scripture, billions and billions, the vast numbers of people who will not after they know, after they've known of the Messiah that's on the earth and the 144,000, and even more by that time in God's Family who are governing on the earth for a hundred years.

Yet there are people who are going to be resurrected at that time who have lived during the previous six thousand years, and you think of the different minds that are out there and how people think and there are going to be so many who do not want God's way of life. That's not their choice. They prefer to die. Not necessarily that they believe it but a lot of them by that time are going to believe what's coming their way just as Satan and the demonic world knows what's coming. They're going to be destroyed at that time, at the end. It's hard to understand a mind like that. It's hard to understand minds that do some of the things they do.

I think of some of the minds of things, of atrocities we've seen recently that have been talked about on TV. What can change a mind like that? To know the truth? Will they embrace it? See, there are minds that can go so far.

That's why in the time of Noah minds had gone so far that God said the best thing to do was to destroy and start again. Now, that was all preplanned anyway, but He let it as an example of what would happen if mankind lived that long as they were.

Now we have technology that speeded up the process. We have technology that's made us worse faster because people so misuse technology, that the mind and the deception and the evil of the mind is much faster to take place, to where we are at that same point and past it of what took place before the flood. The earth has gotten that bad. Mankind has become that bad. That's a horrible thing to learn, to understand. But to understand choices, choices that human beings have to make.

Then he said to him, Because you have not obeyed the voice of the Eternal, behold, as soon as you have departed from me, a lion will kill you. Then as soon as he had departed from him, a lion found him and killed him. Then he found another man, and said, Strike me down, I pray you. Then the man struck him so that in striking him he was wounded. So, he did strike at him, and he was wounded because of it, but he obeyed.

Then the prophet departed. He was wounded. He departed and he waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes on his face. Why did he do that? Because otherwise the king would recognize who he was. He'd already come to him a few times before now.

Then as the king passed by he cried to the king and he said, Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and behold, so he's talking about a soldier here in this particular case, and behold a man, or another soldier it's talking about, turned aside and brought a man, again, when it says "a man" each time here it's talking about another soldier, **and brought a soldier,** by the one who fought against them.

So, in other words, it's just taking here one soldier went and got, captured, a different soldier from the other side, brought him to a soldier on his side and this is the instruction he gave to him.

He said, **Guard this man, keep him.** So, this happens in war and battles and so some are kept to a side and people who have been captured are kept together, and that's basically the story that's going on here. **If by any means he goes missing, then shall your life shall be for his life, or else you will pay a talent of silver.**

So, it's going on here telling, "You've got a responsibility here. You're to guard him. Nothing is to happen to him, and if you do then you're going to owe this amount of money." So, anyway, it's a story, kind of like a parable.

Then verse 40—Then as your servant was busy here and there, he was gone, the one who was supposed to be guarded, to guard. Then the king of Israel said to him, So your judgment will be as yourself has stated.

So, in all this it's showing here, if we can understand what's taking place, he's telling the king what he had already done. You had him and you let him go, and you were supposed to destroy. You were supposed to kill them. But some of the leaders, some of the princes, and the king in that attack had escaped into the center of the city and when they came out with the rope around their head and ashes on them, were pleading for mercy from king Ahab, he let them go. He showed them that mercy.

But he was told by God, in essence, by the prophet before, to go out and to destroy, to kill, to fight against the army that was there. He's telling him, "Look what you've done now."

So, by what he lived, his example, this is the example being shown here of what was to be learned from this, what was to be given then as a result of this.

So the king said to him, So your judgment will be as yourself has stated. So, he quickly took the ashes from his face. Then the king of Israel... So, he told him the story, the prophet did, and so he's telling him then this judgment is what it will be. And then the king, it says, of Israel recognized that he was of the prophets. Then he said to him, Thus says the Eternal, Because you have let go out of your hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.

That was the point of the story of the soldiers and guarding him and that he let him go. He said, "You didn't obey God." They didn't, so same thing is true here. Especially after he showed, "I am the Eternal, all these were destroyed from before you. I gave you the ability and you didn't obey."

So again, driving the point home that people have choices to make in life. How much more when it comes to what is true to God's way of life?

That's why I love what God gave us at the Feast this last year, of coming to understand a greater responsibility embedded in our minds of what it means concerning knowing His way of life and how God wants us to see that and understand it, not to take it lightly. Because so many seem like they have. When they've gone by the wayside they've gone off in a different direction, even as some think, maybe in the Great White Throne. Well, how far does your mind go in the meantime or has it gone too far even by that decision in itself?

And so on and on it goes, the games that the human mind can make and not realize when we have the chance and opportunity continuing in prayer, constant prayer, whatever the expression was, a continually working prayer, it's a matter of a relationship with God and you

can never let down on it. You can never let go of it. You have to fight. You have to continue on. Understand that all the help, God will give you help. He'll raise you up.

Whatever troubles, whatever trials, whatever hardship, especially in your thinking, and you just cry out to God. Sometimes to fast and to humble yourself from God and ask for deliverance through whatever suffering or hardship you're going through up here. God will raise you up. That's God's promise. That's an awesome thing.

So, these examples here, we've gone through this because sometimes it's good to recognize we go through things, we experience things, and whether we stand up for God's way of life determines when we have those opportunities and we suffer through it and yet we do the right thing, that it's a part of what we're being measured in.

It's a part of what Elisha was being measured in, in the sense of being molded and fashioned for things ahead of him. You don't always know what that is. Sometimes we look at our life and think it's ordinary, mundane, and it's so far from that.

You probably get tired of the example, but I remember the first time in Spokesman's Club when we used to have clubs and we had the speaking club so people could have the experience of speaking before a group, and they'd be thirty max in size. A few here that that opportunity.

I go in there and I think of the first one. It's called the Ice Breaker. Seven minutes. Of course, you could maybe get through five and a half minutes and still pass but it basically is supposed to be a max of seven minutes, or you get the buzzer. You had actual buzzers there. You'd have a red light come on and it's like you've got thirty seconds to finish.

I didn't have that problem. I was through quite early. I'll never forget it. My tongue had no moisture. My mouth had no moisture. I was scared spitless on a carnal, physical plane. In front of all these men and here I'm a young guy and new in the group and it was like, "I don't know anybody." I knew the one guy who invited me, and I was wondering about that relationship for a while. No, I'm just kidding.

We go through different things like that, we experience different things, and it's an amazing process of what God takes us through from the very beginning all the way through, but by the choices we make continues how we go forward.

So anyway, again, what an incredible thing the kind of trials and hardships and things we go through, but to know that God's always there, He'll help us. It's about getting rid of self. Just like what I had to get rid of. I had to start getting rid of self.

Selfish, filled with haughtiness, and pride. That's what we're like as human beings, filled with haughtiness and pride until you're put in a situation where you realize "I'm not so great.

Can't even speak. My tongue is sticking to my mouth," and you get humbled by different things in life.

And so, we go through a lot of things that that's just the beginning. When God begins to draw us and call us we go through a lot of things in the mind, and I know a lot of you and I know a lot of the different circumstances and people in different church areas, and some of the battles sometimes are excruciating in the mind. It's not meant to be easy. But if we continue to look to God, if we continue to put God first and fight the fight God's always there to raise us up.

That's why I love these scriptures that we're going through right now because it's His promise. He wants us to succeed.

So, with that I'm going to stop there today, and we'll continue on next Sabbath with *Part 2*.