

# Living With Power in Dark Times (Part 4)

Sunday, September 26, 2021

In this series we will consider the ways in which the lives of Elijah and Elisha show us how to live with power even in dark times

Both faced the difficulties of a culture that had willfully turned its back on God and joyfully engaged in the hedonistic practices of pagan idol worship.

They dealt with a corrupt and self-serving leadership that branded them as troublemakers and sought to silence their voices

They endured difficult times brought on by the consequences of sin and God's ensuing judgment which was meant to draw the people back to Himself

They experienced drought, famine, warfare, spiritually deaf ears, hard-heartedness, and the growing pervasiveness of blatant immorality.

But in spite of these challenges, they lived as victorious vessels through whom God displayed His power and presence.

We too live in dark times. And just like Elijah and Elisha, we have the opportunity to display the power of God in the midst of that darkness. In fact, that is what we are called to do...

## **Matthew 5:13-16**

**13** “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

**14** “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

## **Acts 1:8**

**8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Living with power in dark days mean...

- TAKING A STAND for TRUTH.
- TRUSTING GOD for PROVISION
- PRAYING with PASSION and PERSISTENCE
- OPERATING with SIGNS and WONDERS

In part 4 we will see that Elijah and Elisha LIVED with POWER in DARK TIMES as...

## They CONFRONTED WICKEDNESS

### **1 Kings 18:16-40**

**16** So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah. **17** When he saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?”

**18** “I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the Lord’s commands and have followed the Baals. **19** Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”

**20** So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. **21** Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”

But the people said nothing.

**22** Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the Lord’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. **23** Get two bulls for us. Let Baal’s prophets choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. **24** 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.”

Then all the people said, “What you say is good.”

**25** Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.” **26** So they took the bull given them and prepared it.

Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.

**27** At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” **28** So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. **29** Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

**30** Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord, which had been torn down. **31** Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, “Your name shall be Israel.” **32** With the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs[a] of seed. **33** He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, “Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.”

**34** “Do it again,” he said, and they did it again.

“Do it a third time,” he ordered, and they did it the third time. **35** The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.

**36** At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. **37** Answer me, Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.”

**38** Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

**39** When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The Lord—he is God! The Lord—he is God!”

**40** Then Elijah commanded them, “Seize the prophets of Baal. Don’t let anyone get away!” They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there.

### **1 Kings 21:17-29**

**17** Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite: **18** “Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He is now in Naboth’s vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it. **19** Say to him, ‘This is what the Lord says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?’ Then say to him, ‘This is what the Lord says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth’s blood, dogs will lick up your blood—yes, yours!’”

**20** Ahab said to Elijah, “So you have found me, my enemy!”

“I have found you,” he answered, “because you have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord. **21** He says, ‘I am going to bring disaster on you. I will wipe out your descendants and cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel—slave or free. **22** I will make your house like that of

Jeroboam son of Nebat and that of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have aroused my anger and have caused Israel to sin.’

**23** “And also concerning Jezebel the Lord says: ‘Dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.’

**24** “Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and the birds will feed on those who die in the country.”

**25** (There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife. **26** He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the Lord drove out before Israel.)

**27** When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly.

**28** Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite: **29** “Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son.”

There are many other instances we could examine in the lives of Elijah and Elisha in which they confronted the wickedness of their day. In the same way, we know that John the Baptist, who was said to operate "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Luke 1:17) confronted the wickedness of his day, confronting both the wickedness of those who thought they were righteous but were not and the wickedness of those in the world who were acting in ungodly ways (King Herod). He called them to repent, change their ways and live righteously by producing fruit in keeping with repentance.

Today wickedness runs rampant both outside and inside the church as we see the words of the Prophet Isaiah fulfilled more each day...

### **Isaiah 5:20**

**20** Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

### **They CONFRONTED WICKEDNESS**

For those who want to write off the actions of Elijah, Elisha and even John the Baptist as Old Testament fire and brimstone type behavior that should be replaced with a New Testament grace-filled, non-judgmental, God is love approach; let me draw your attention to the Word of God

### **Psalm 94:16**

**16** Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will take a stand for me against evildoers?

### **Ephesians 5:6-11**

**6** Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. **7** Therefore do not be partners with them.

**8** For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light **9** (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) **10** and find out what pleases the Lord. **11** Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather **expose them**.

### **2 Timothy 4:2**

**2** Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; **correct, rebuke** and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

### **Titus 1:10-13**

**10** For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception...

**13** ...Therefore **rebuke them sharply**, so that they will be sound in the faith

### **Jude 3**

**3** Dear friends, ...I felt compelled to write and urge you to **contend for the faith** that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people.

So, let's consider what Elijah's confrontation of the Prophet's of Baal teaches us about confronting wickedness in our day

- **DISCERN between good and evil**

**18** "I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the Lord's commands and have followed the Baals.

### **Leviticus 10:10-11**

**10** ...distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, **11** and so you can teach the Israelites all the decrees the Lord has given them through Moses."

### **1 John 4:1**

**4** Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

### **1 Kings 3:9**

**9** So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong...

Charles Spurgeon said, *“Discernment is not a matter of telling the difference between right and wrong; rather, it is telling the difference between right and almost right.”*

- **EXPOSE the lies of the Enemy**

Part of confronting wickedness is exposing the untruths that are being propagated as truth

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**27** At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.” **28** So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. **29** Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

### **2 Timothy 3:1-9**

**3** But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. **2** People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents ungrateful, unholy, **3** without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, **4** treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— **5** having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.

**6** They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, **7** always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. **8** Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. **9** But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.

- Call for CHOICE to be made

**21** Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.”

You can't have it both ways... You can't have one foot in the world and one foot in the faith

1 Corinthians 10:21

**21** You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons.

**James 4:4**

**4** You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

**Joshua 24:15**

**15** ...choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

- LOOK for opportunities to allow the Glory of God to be REVEALED

**30** Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the Lord, which had been torn down. **31** Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, “Your name shall be Israel.” **32** With the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs[a] of seed. **33** He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, “Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.”

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- DEAL harshly with sin

**40** Then Elijah commanded them, “Seize the prophets of Baal. Don’t let anyone get away!” They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there.

What are you saying Pastor? Are we supposed to kill people who aren't living for God? Of course not. But we are supposed to Kill the sin that lives in our own lives and encourage others to do the same.

Matthew 18:7-9

**7** Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to stumble! Such things must come, but woe to the person through whom they come! **8** If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. **9** And if your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell.

Instead of confronting wickedness we have sought to coddle it. We have allowed it to live in our presence fearing that to act harshly against it would cause us to be ostracized from society.