



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Elijah the Prophet

“Prayer for the Dead,” 1 Kings 17:17-24 – TRANSCRIPT

The Scripture reading for today is found in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1 Kings again. We are studying, for those of you who are here for the first time today, the life of the Prophet Elijah. We have studied the word that he spoke to Ahab, as he began his ministry, and how then God led him out to the brook Cherith, in order that he might be fed there.

And then God called Elijah to leave Cherith, east of the River Jordan, and to go west to the land of the village of Zarephath, which was in the land of Sidon. And there he met a widow who was responsible for his daily food, under the hand of God. The barrel of meal and cruse of oil were the means for the feeding of the widow, her young son, and the prophet for some time.

Now we pick up the story in verse 17 of 1 Kings with the words,

“And it came to pass after the sum of these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick. And his sickness was so severe, that there was no breath left in him.”

Now, that word for breath is the word for “breath,” not the word for “soul.” It is the Hebrew word *nsbamab*, which means “breath,” just as you might [makes breathing sound] —that’s *nsbamab*—was no longer in him.

“And she said unto Elijah, ‘What have I to do unto thee? O thou man of God, art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?’”

It’s just possible that this son was the product of some sin. We cannot be sure of this. In fact, I hesitate to even support that it’s true. But, it’s a possibility.

“And he said unto her, ‘Give me thy son.’ And he took him from her bosom, and carried him up into a loft.”

Now this Hebrew word, “loft,” *aliyah*, it does not mean what the English word “loft” means today. It would have been better rendered, “an upper room.” In fact, this was the best room in the house. And the reason I mention this is it seems obvious from this that the woman who is entertaining the prophet, has given him the best room in the house. Go thou and do likewise, in case I should come to visit you [laughter].

“And he took her from her bosom and carried up into an upper room where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. And he cried unto the LORD saying, ‘O LORD, my God, hast Thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I have sojourned by slaying her son?’ And he stretched himself upon the child three times and cried out three times, ‘O LORD, my God, I pray Thee, let this child’s soul come into him again.’”

Now the word for soul is the word *nephesh*, it is not the word *nshamah* which means “breath.” The breath left him, and he was dead. And now he asks that his *nephesh*, his soul, might come into him again.

“And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived (or, and he lived). And Elijah took the child and brought him down out of the chamber into the house and delivered him unto his mother. And Elijah said, ‘See, thy son liveth.’” And the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now by this, I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD by thy mouth is truth.’”

May God bless this reading from his word. Let’s bow together in prayer.

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we are grateful that we have the opportunity to come together on the Lord’s day, and open the Scriptures, and sift by Thy will through them.

We thank Thee for the great men of faith, men such as Elijah, men whose hearts had been touched by the Spirit of God. And who responded, and learned [indistinct] obedience to the word that Thou didst speak to them, and who have given us these great experiences, which reflect, ultimately, the experiences of all who know Thee through Jesus Christ.

And we thank Thee for the faith of women such as the woman of Zarephath, who amidst the uncertainty, and the midst of the trouble that came into her home, yet by faith, she received her son from the dead again.

We thank Thee that the word of God presents life as it is, in its perplexities, in its contradictions. And yet through it, we are able to discern the golden string of the truth, and so we pray that as we study together today the life of this man, as it touched the woman and the son, that the great principles and the great lessons that are contained within it may be come patent and clear to us.

And in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with so many opportunities and so many challenges about us, enable us, O God, to adjust to this age and to communicate to it the glorious good news of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We thank Thee that Thou has given us, in the word of God, that which does meet our needs, and which enables us to live in this century. We also want to pray Thy blessing on those who are unable to be here, and we think of some, particularly, as we pray O God, Thy blessing upon them. As Thou didst in ancient days lay Thy hand upon this young boy, we pray God, that Thou wilt lay Thy hand upon those who are sick. We know that Thy touch still has its ancient power. So, O God, we look to Thee, and ask Thy blessing upon those who are ill, and disturbed, and depressed, and we pray that the ministry of the word be strengthened and built up.

We thank Thee for this church, and we ask, O God, Thy blessing upon it. And the decisions that lie ahead of it, and the opportunities that are before it, may, O God, the headship of Jesus Christ in a practical way, be known and realized. May we understand that we do not need the church, but Thou dost. And enable us, O God, to look to our Lord Jesus Christ and in reality pray to him. Lead on, O King eternal.

And may, Lord, the use that Thou dost make of us glorify Thee through Jesus Christ. And so we commit ourselves to Thee, and we commit this ministry to Thee, the singing of the hymns of praise to Thee, with thanksgiving through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

[Message] This is the third in our series of studies in the life of the Prophet Elijah. And the subject for today is “Prayer for the Dead.” Elijah was God’s answer to Baal. And now he is dwelling contentedly under the roof of the widow of Zarephath. He is learning, by experience, and no doubt communicating to the members of that household that the mercies of God are new every morning and fresh every night.

I wonder how Elijah spent his time. It is possible that each morning, after his time meditating in the Scriptures, he went out to take a walk. He looked off to the north and

to the east, and he saw the eternal snows on Mt. Hermon. Or perhaps he looked to the south, and he saw the woods on top of Mt. Tabor, which was not far away. Perhaps he looked off to the west, and saw the great and wide sea, the Mediterranean, for he was not far from that sea.

I’m sure that he spent a great deal of his time teaching the truth of Scripture to the widow and her son. I’m quite sure that if I know this prophet properly, that he went back to the beginning of the history of Israel and explained to this Gentile woman and her son the significance of the call of Abraham, the significance of the promises given to him, the significance of the great work of God in brining Israel out of the land of Egypt and into the Promised Land. He told her the stories of the Exodus and of the Passover. And then no doubt he moved on into the great days that were beyond that, the days of Joshua and of the conquest of the land. Then he told of the glories of reigns of David and Solomon.

And I think also, if I know Elijah and if I know the word of God, and if I know the condition of this woman, he probably centered his attention on certain passages of Scripture which stressed the fact that the Gentiles also should have a part in Messianic salvation. He may even have referred to tradition, which is found in the word of God, such as “And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat Thy favor.” And other passages which suggest that not only are the promises for Israel, but Israel was given the promises as a means to an end: worldwide blessing. And so he spoke of that.

In fact, I think that probably it is not far from accurate – I’m not sure it’s completely accurate – but at least not far from accurate that Elijah was one of the first missionaries to the Gentile people. And in that, his ministry is somewhat significant.

Through this experience, Elijah, the prophet, and the woman, the widow, are going to learn some new lessons. Elijah will learn the lesson of patience. And the widow is going to learn the lesson of faith. It’s something that we all need to learn. When things

are going well, we all tend to think that there is nothing that can disturb us. That we very well have the world by the tail, and everything is going to go our way, and occasionally the experiences of life come to us in order to show us that is not true.

The Psalmist says, “And in my prosperity I said, ‘I shall never be moved.’ LORD, by Thy favor Thou hast made my mountain to stand strong. Thou didst hide Thy face, and I was troubled.” Yes, it’s true that sometimes our mountain seems to stand so strong that it cannot be troubled, or it cannot be disturbed or moved. But it is often at that point that God begins to speak. And so when the meal was there in the morning and in the evening, and the cruse of oil did not fail, day by day, Elijah, the widow, and her son lapsed into contentment, and began to think that everything from now on was going to be alright.

Now there, so far as the Bible is concerned, there had never been a record of a restoration to life at this time. So the miracle that is going to occur, is going to be a great miracle, one that is remarkable. In fact, it is singled out in the New Testament. And I started to read this in the Scripture reading this morning, but to tell you the honest truth, I didn’t put it in my notes and when I finished the reading, I couldn’t think what passage it was that I wanted to read. And so I said, may God bless the reading of the previous Scripture, wondering what that extra one was that I had in mind. But it occurred to me then. Now that is documentary evidence to the fact that I am getting old. [Laughter]

Now, in verse 34, or 33 of Hebrews chapter 11, we read, “Who (speaking of the ancients of Old Testament times) through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in fight, turned in flight the armies of the aliens, women (and I think we must understand, through faith) received their dead raised to life again.”

Now there is no question but that this widow, at Zarephath, and the Shumanite woman, whose story is told in the next book of the Bible, are in mind at this point, and

so, we are going to learn through the experience today of the faith of the widow of Zarephath. It doesn’t appear too obviously upon the surface, but apparently Elijah at least had brought her to the place where she would have some confidence in what God was going to do through him. And even though their faith was weak, and even contradictory, as we shall see, still it was faith, and God honored that faith.

Well now, this morning, let’s look at this story. And when we conclude, I want to draw a number of lessons from it. It’s an interesting story, and it begins with the lifeless son. And I would like to read the sixteenth verse, in conjunction with the seventeenth, so that we can notice that the ways of God are mysterious and seem to be contradictory. We read in verse 16 of 1 Kings chapter 17, “And the barrel of meal was not used up, neither did the cruse of oil fail according to the word of LORD which he spoke by Elijah. And it came to pass after the sum of these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick. And his sickness was so severe, that there was no breath left in him.”

And here in the immediate context we have one text which tells of the faithfulness of God, and then we read in the next text that after feeding this woman and her son for a long period of time, we read that the son died. Now the ways of God are very mysterious. I am sure that this woman would have had a very great reason and occasion to say why. After going to all of the trouble of feeding me day by day, and my son, day by day, now, Lord, you have taken my son from me. It just doesn’t make sense. The ways of God are very mysterious.

But sometimes we need to pass the prosperity test. And this is the test that faces the woman and the son and Eljiah. And so in the midst of things that seem to be going the way of us, they are called upon to advance spiritually, and they must advance spiritually through the test of life. You can be sure as a Christian that if you never have any tests, you’re not going to advance very far in life. Now there are some who think that if you can get together in a Bible class, and have a Bible class through the year, that you are going to grow. And that’s all there is to this Christian life is to be converted and to

have a few Bible classes in the home. Now since I am very, very sympathetic with the study of the word of God, I cannot say anything against the Bible class, and I don’t want to, because I think the Bible classes are a wonderful means to the discovery of God’s word and his word for me.

But let me assure you of this. If God does not step down into your life and give you a good shake, with a problem, with a trial, with a disturbance, you can be sure you’re not going to make very fast progress in the Christian life. And you read the word of God, and this is the pattern over and over again, it is in the trials and struggles of life that we learn as well as we do when we are in the study of the word of God and being fed wonderfully day by day. Do not think for one moment in the New Testament that prosperity is a sign of the blessing of God. Adversity in the New Testament is just as often the sign of the blessing of God.

And so here we have the mysterious ways of God, and the woman is called upon now to pass the prosperity test. And it’s a tremendous calamity that comes, for she was a widow, she had already lost her husband. And now the only son, just a little lad apparently, because he was so small that he could be upon her bosom. One day, the sickness came upon him. It apparently came very suddenly. I’m interpreting the Hebrew text at this point; it seems to me that it came very suddenly, and in a matter of hours, so to speak, the little boy was dead. Suddenly, the light of this home, the star of her firmament is gone. And so what does she do?

Well, she does what you and I so often do. She turned to Elijah. She wants to blame someone else. The prophet has come into her home. Her son was already at the point of death a year before this, and she was very resigned to the fact. She said she was going out to cook that little bit of meal and oil, and she and her son were going to eat their last meal, and they were going to die. Well now, you see, her hopes have been raised to a tremendous height and they’ve been dashed, and so she turns to Elijah and she says, “What am I to do with thee, O thou man of God?” It is perhaps that she was

convicted by the piety of Elijah? “Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance and to slay my son?” And she says this, I’m sure, right in the presence of the jar of meal and the jug of oil which God has supplied day by day for one more year.

So making no reference to the barrel, making no reference to the cruse of oil, she reverts upon the character of Elijah, and insinuates against Elijah’s God: “Have you, with your God, come here to curse my home?” Now, I think this was a believer’s reaction, in spite of its lack of faith. The reason I do is because it seems to me that unbelievers, when something like this happens, they just cannot understand at all. They do not respond with, what have I done wrong?, as this woman did. Amidst all her unbelief, she did have the kernel of faith. If perhaps something that I’ve done – she acknowledged the fact that there is a God in heaven, and that he does judge – and though it’s contradictory, this faith and unfaith mixed up together, it seems to me it’s the response of a believer who is out of fellowship with God, and not the response of an unbeliever.

Now Elijah’s response is the one I want you to notice. He didn’t say, I’d like to take the pulpit now and have five minutes in defense of myself. What do you think that you would have done? Well, you know what I think that I would have done? I think that I wouldn’t have had the mind of the prophet Elijah. I think I probably would have said, why you old witch! [Laughter] You haven’t got the brains of a bat! I’ve been here for one whole year, and it is because of me that you have lived to this point. But Elijah doesn’t do that. He follows in the footsteps of the Great Prophet, who when he was reviled, reviled not again.

And so when the woman spoke to him this way, he was moved, as good prophets should be. And he said to the woman, give me your son. And he took the little boy from the bosom of the woman, and he carried him up into the upper room where he abode, and he laid him upon his own bed. And he so he lovingly takes that cold marble of the dead child, carries it up to the prophet’s chamber. Lays it very gently upon the couch, and now he turns to God. And we read in the twentieth verse, he said that, and the text

says that he cried out unto the Lord, “O LORD, my God, hast Thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I have sojourned by slaying her son?” Evil in the Old Testament also has the sense of calamity. And that is the calamity meaning of the word here. “O LORD, my God, hast Thou also brought calamity upon the widow with whom I have sojourned by slaying her son?” He brings this problem to the only one who can solve it, and that is God.

Notice what he does. And with this, the Hebrew text says he “measures himself upon the child.” Now I can just imagine that prophet, that hairy prophet, with his mantle about his shoulder, his leather-type garments, and the little boy upon that bed, and I can just imagine Elijah getting upon that bed – this is not mouth-to-mouth respiration – but he lies down upon the top of the child. He stretches himself out upon the top of the child. And then, as he is stretched out over the top of the child, he calls out to God and says, “O LORD my God, I pray Thee, let this child’s soul come into him again!”

Then he gets up, and he paces around the room a little. And the Spirit of God takes hold of him again, and he goes over with that prophet again, and he lies upon the child, on the bed, and he cries out, O LORD God, I pray Thee, let this child’s soul come into him again! And he’s in very much anguish over this, because a great deal seems to depend upon it. For him, the woman downstairs is very distraught and disturbed, and obviously in the throes of unbelief, out of fellowship with God, and so he cries out again, and he looks at the child and nothing happens, and he paces around the room a little more, and for the third time, the Spirit of God has burdened him deeply now, and so he goes over, and he lies down upon the child, and for the third time he cries out, O LORD my God, I pray Thee, let this child’s soul come into him again!

And he steps off, and he looks off. And the limbs move. And the eyes flicker and begin to dilate. The pulse begins to beat and the soul returns, and the prophet of fire has rekindled the dead ashes of the life of this son. And don’t you know there was a thrill in his heart as he picked up that little boy again, and walked down the steps and into the

room where the mother was staying, in the midst of the mourning and bereavement, and he says, “Look! Your son’s alive.”

And he hands the boy to the amazed woman, and I think the prophet must have been amazed, too. He said, this is a new course in my theology course that I’m going to teach the sons of the prophets on the doctrine of resurrection, or restoration. [Laughter] And we read that the woman looked at the child, and she looked at Elijah, and she said, “Now, by this, I know that thou art a man of God”—she has already called him a man of God once before. But now, you see, she really knows that he is a man of God and that the word of the Lord in his mouth in truth.

Now let me stop for the remainder of our time and try to point out some lessons that come from this incident. I read in a commentary on the life of Elijah, that the widow learned grace by the supply of her needs through the barrel of meal and cruse of oil, but in the restoration of the son, she learned truth. Now I’m not sure that that is all that is involved here, but I think there is something in it. She did learn the mercy and the grace of God in that daily provision. But she learned something about the greatness of God and his power to raise the dead when her son was restored.

And we never have come to understand the God of our Lord Jesus Christ until we have realized that he is the God of the resurrection. Now that is tremendously important. All through the Old Testament, the message, the Old Testament tries to get over to us is that God is the person who calls the things that be not as though they were. That he is the one who speaks to the dead. And he quickens the dead, and he brings them to life. And in the New Testament, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ is the God who raised him from the dead.

And also, in the lives of the Christian, the one truth that he wants to get over is the fact that when we have come to put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have living within us, God himself. We are new creatures in Christ. And not only are we new creatures in him, but he is living in us. And that’s the vitality of New Testament

Christianity. That’s why legalism is such a sorry counterfeit of the faith of the New Testament. That’s why the only possible life is the Christian life. No one can live it except Jesus Christ.

Now I think that the first thing I want to point out is the relationship of this incident to the theme of sanctification. And first of all, the practical lesson is the mystery of God’s Providence. If you had lived in Sidon, in Zarephath, and you had looked all over that community, and you had wanted to pick out a home in which a calamity from God should come, I think of all the homes in the region this would have been the last one that you would have picked. Because, you see, the prophet of God is there.

Now this is the same prophet who has told Ahab the King of Israel, it shall not rain, nor shall dew come for three years. And it’s been a long time. Many months have gone by, every month that goes by proves that this prophet is a prophet of God. And now he has come into this home, and there is famine in the land. And in that home they are supplied day by day. Not only are they supplied because the prophet is there, but they are supplied in miraculous fashion.

Look at the woman, she just as healthy as an ox. And look at that boy, and those pink cheeks, isn’t he healthy? What do they have over there? If you go in and you look around, you’ll see that their provisions are a jar of meal and little jug of oil. That’s all. And furthermore, those jars and jugs are right down near the bottom, too. And yet, they’re healthy, they’re happy, they’re praising God. Of all the homes in the community, this is the last place you would have expected calamity to come. And yet, it comes.

I read in the New Testament, that the ways of God are past finding out. I’ve long ago stopped trying to understand. Three years ago, we had a young man come into the auditorium. In fact, he came into this auditorium more than once. He would often come to me at the seminary and say, Dr. Johnson, my heart is at Believer’s Chapel. If I didn’t have this regular job, I would be out there, because what you’re doing is what I would like to do.

This young boy graduated from seminary about two and a half years ago. No doubt some of you will remember him. Wonderful person. He had been wonderfully won to the Lord, and he had a tremendous burden for his parents, especially his father. In fact, his father was not a Christian. And when his father came through – he was a prominent businessman on the West Coast – he tried to get me into contact with him because his father played golf, and so did I. And then when he graduated, I remember that his mother and father came out to our home, and Bill was so anxious that his father might come to know Christ as Savior. When I preached on the coast, he would bring his father to the meeting, and we would go out afterwards and have something to eat together. A wonderful man, but he did not know God.

About a week ago, we received word that Bill [indist.] was killed in an automobile accident. Just two years out of seminary. A promising life. I think he had been married six months, or approximately that. How can you explain it? I cannot explain it. I think of all the deaths that occurred in that community, that was the least explainable. That death is the most mysterious death that I’ve heard of in a long time. I can understand how God might reach down and take some old man like me. But when I look at a long life, so full of promise, so full of dedication, so desirous of serving Jesus Christ, it’s difficult for me to understand. You know it just might be this: that it’s the only thing that can bring Mr. [indist.] to faith in Jesus Christ. I don’t know. He may already be a Christian by now. In that case, it’s even more difficult for me to explain.

But I know that the providences of God are very mysterious. And I think one of the joys of heaven is going to be, we’re going to get there, and we’re going to have lots of lectures about why things happen. And I don’t want to get sentimental and emotional again, but I’m sure that when I get to heaven, I’m going to have one constant experience of being touched over and over again when I see the hand of God in the apparently inexplicable affairs of humanity. So I learn that, first of all, and, of course, it’s a lesson that we need to learn.

The second thing I learn is that bereavement is not necessarily a judgment for sin. Now this woman has said to Elijah, art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance and to slay my son? And we might immediately say, oh, the woman is probably right. She is suffering now because of her sin. But actually, the account doesn’t say anything about that, and when we turn to the New Testament we find that this woman is singled out as an example of faith. And furthermore, when the account closes, we read that this woman gives a tremendous testimony to the glory of God through the prophet Elijah. And so I’m inclined to think that the purpose of this testing is not a judgment at all, but a deepening of her faith.

And in the New Testament – and I have friend in Houston who tells me there are eleven reasons why believers suffer – well, I don’t know those eleven; I must confess my ignorance. But I do know some of the reasons why believers suffer. And I know one of them is that the glory of God might be seen. I know that Lazarus was allowed by our Lord Jesus to die in order that they might see the glory of God. It wasn’t that he did not love Lazarus. He actually loved him so much that he let Lazarus die. If he had gone down and raised Lazarus from a death-like sickness to life, some unbelieving, stupid person would say, “There, you see, he was going to recover anyway.” And so, our Lord allowed him to die in order that they might see the glory of God.

When they looked at the blind man, the disciples said who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? They look at it as a theological problem. Our Lord looked at this man and said that this man has been born blind that the work of God might be manifested in him. And so he gave him sight again, and men glorified God because of what had happened. And so I learn from this that bereavement is not necessarily a judgment for sin. And we should stop, if we have this thought, that when tragedy occurs it is because of some sin. It might be. But after all, if there are eleven reasons, that’s only one-eleventh of the possibilities.

In the Book of Hebrews, in the twelfth chapter, when the writer speaks about discipline in the life of believers, he talks about an “afterwards.” He speaks about the chastisement that comes and he says, “nevertheless, afterwards”—let me read the text: “Now no chastening seems for the present to be joyous but grievous. Nevertheless, afterwards, it yieldeth a peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised by it.” And so it is that “nevertheless, afterwards” that we must remember.

Now the third thing I think I learn is the imagery and power of prayer. Often, when James chapter 5 is expound—and I must confess that I have sinned in this regard, too, like my friend and colleagues in the ministry—often when we expound the fact that Elijah was a man of like passions with us, and that the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, we think of the fact that Elijah went into the presence of Ahab and he said, Ahab, as the LORD God liveth, there shall be no rain nor dew these years but according to my word. And God answered that prayer. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, and James makes that application to the text. And so it’s certainly in his mind.

But just a few verses before that, James has also spoken about the fact that if there is sin, the prayer of faith shall save the sick. And when he talks about the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man and links this with Elijah, it seems to me that the Book of James must also have in mind that great effectual, fervent prayer that Elijah prayed in that loft, that prophet’s upper chamber, over that child.

Now Elijah prayed fervently a number of times. He prayed fervently on Mt. Carmel with the prophets of Baal round about. He prayed fervently when he was praying for the rain to come. But I don’t know that there is any prayer that Elijah prayed that is more fervent and more effectual than this prayer that he prayed upon his own couch above that little boy who had died. And so the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. I can just see him pacing up and down that room, crying out at times,

until finally, as he sees that child move, he realizes that he’s plucked the iron crown from the king of terrors, and death itself has been conquered through prayer.

One of the great commentators on the life of Elijah is a man by the name of F.W. Krummacher. Many years ago, when I first gave a series of messages on Elijah, I read Mr. Krummacher’s commentary. I haven’t been reading it this time, but in my notes, I have reference to an incident that happened in the life of Luther which Mr. Krummacher describes in his book.

He says that Luther had a friend by the name of Miconius, and he received word that Miconius was at the point of death, and that there was no hope. And Luther read the letter, and he immediately fell on his knees, and he began to pray. And he prayed, “O Lord, my God, no! Thou must not yet take our brother Miconius to Thyself. Thy cause will not prosper without him! Amen.” Amen. And after praying thus, he rose up and wrote a letter to Miconius saying, “There’s no cause for fear dear Miconius, the Lord will not let me hear that thou art dead. You shall not, and you must not die! Amen.”

Now these words made a powerful impression on Miconius, Krummacher said, and aroused in him – and I’m going to quote Mr. Krummacher, because I don’t understand the medical terminology, and since we have physicians and surgeons in this room, perhaps they could explain, if they were given an opportunity [laughter] – and Mr. Krummacher said that these words aroused him in such a manner that the ulcer in his lungs discharged itself and he recovered. And he wrote Mr. Luther and said to him that he had recovered. Luther wrote back and said, “I wrote to you that it would be so.”

And then he goes on to tell of another incident right in Mr. Krummacher’s home town. He said the mother of a little girl only four years of age had been for some time most dangerously ill. The physicians finally gave her up. The little girl went into an adjoining room when she heard about it and she knelt down and she said, “Dear Lord Jesus, O make my mother well again!” And when she finished praying, as though she were answering her own prayer in a very deep voice, she said, “Yes, my dear child, I will

do it gladly.” And she went in and told her mother. And she said, “Mother, you’re going to get well. I prayed, and God answered the prayer.” Well, needless to say, that woman did get well.

Now, I’m not recommending you pray like this. You’ll be disappointed at times, because God will pluck that life away. But I know that there are times when God answers prayer. I know that there are times when he reaches down and touches a life in which, humanly speaking, there exists no hope, because he is the God who heals. The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. That’s why I want to pray when someone is sick, because God might perform a miracle. There are times, of course, when it’s his will and his way, that his life be taken.

Now one last word in the realm of sanctification. Will you look at that 24<sup>th</sup> verse? Here is the triumph and testimony of faith. I’m going to leave you this as I found it in the Hebrew text. There’s one little word in it which makes this much more emphatic than it is found in the English translation. “And the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now I know beyond all doubt that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.’” I know beyond all doubt that thou art a man of God.

Now, in the Bible, when you read about a man in Christ, you will read about a man who is, so to speak, he has put his faith and trust in Christ, he is in Christ, and therefore, he is a Christian. Every Christian is a man in Christ, even the women. You’ve always wanted to be a man, you women, well, when you put your faith in Jesus Christ, you can become a man in Christ – a man in Christ; that’s your position. You’re a believer in the Lord. Now that term, is a term that applies to everyone that has believed in Christ: man in Christ. That’s our position. Man of God. That’s a term of experience.

Don’t use that loosely. Don’t come up and say to me that you’re a man of God just because you think I’m a clergyman. That term is very much misused. In the Bible, “man of God” means a man who is characterized by a living faith in God. So it is very important that we remember that “man of God” is a testimony of experience.

So the woman looks, and she looks at Elijah. She sees that mantle about him. That’s the sign he’s a prophet. And she’s called him man of God before, but now she calls him really, a man of God, and she does it in this emphatic way.

Well now, I want to, as we close this morning, say just a word about a truth of salvation that is found in this context. Now when we talk about salvation from this incident, I don’t want to be too confusing. So I hope that I am plain and clear and simple. I remember that there was a very learned Methodist bishop who spoke at a camp meeting one day. And his message was quite different from the other messages at the camp meeting. He gave such a learned discourse that everybody was either asleep or at sea. And finally, as the hours dragged on and on, and old man got up with a cane in his hand, and he began to walk down towards the front.

And he began to walk down towards the front, and I want to give you his words. These are the words that he said, as he hit his cane on the ground: “I’m on my way to hell; bang. I’m on my way to hell; bang. I’m on my way to hell; bang. I’m on my way to hell; bang!” Finally, he reached, he came down to the front in front of the bishop, and he said, “Halt! About face! Forward march! I’m on my way to heaven. I’m on my way to heaven. I’m on my way to heaven. Folks, that’s conversion. Let’s go home!” [Laughter]

So, I don’t want to be too complicated here. I think if we had time, I could point out that there is a lesson bound up in this incident that touches our redemption, that touches our resurrection, that touches our reunion, which we shall ultimately have.

I want to point you just to the simple fact, that when the events that the prophet lives out occur in the Old Testament, they are adumbrations, they are foreshadowings of the actions of the Great Prophet who shall come. The prophets of the Old Testament, in their ministry, speak of the ministry of the Prophet; the kings of Old Testament speak of the ministry of the King; the priests of the Old Testament speak of the ministry of the Priest. And if that’s true, then the Prophet Elijah who was moved by the same Spirit who

moved our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prophet Elijah, in his ministry, is a reflection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He illustrates him.

Why did he stretch himself upon the body of that little child? To identify himself with that little child. In that child’s sickness and death, especially his death. And in the identification of himself with that child in his death, he suggests to me the fact that finally there came a man who was hanging upon Calvary’s cross as the man, and that man cries out, “O my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” And there he was hanging as the sin offering.

He hath redeemed me from the curse of the law, being made a curse for me. He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that I might become the righteousness of God in him. And the Lord Jesus Christ, who was hanging upon Calvary’s cross, had stretched himself out over all of humanity in its death, and then he on the third day heard those wonderful words which meant his resurrection, and he came forth from the grave in bodily form as the resurrected Savior.

And just as that child came to life, and just as our Lord came to life, so too we shall come to life some day if we have put our trust in him. And Elijah has the wonderful joy of taking that child down and returning that child to its mother, because you see there is to be a reunion, too, of all who have put their faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

May I take just one moment of your time? There was a man of God who died last September. He was a man whom I knew. He was a colleague in the ministry of the word of God. He had a gift which many people knew. His name was Alf Ginns. A loveable character. A fine preacher and teacher, especially with the kids. He had a ministry, not only in this country, but really all over the world to kids. He was 77 or 6 years of age, and he was driving in Canada in September, and someone said that his car was coming down the road and suddenly it just swerved off with nothing in sight, and he was killed. And I read an account of the funeral service. And what a difference between a Christian funeral, and a non-Christian funeral.

In this service, near the end of the service, preached by Mr. August Van Ryan, he stopped. The casket was there in front of the pulpit. He stopped and he said, “Dear brother, we know that you’re not in that casket, and while we have had a funeral procession today, the procession that escorted you, not to burial, but into heaven, was that of angels. Whereas David said, a great man has fallen this day, we can say of you, Alfred, a great man has risen to be with the Lord.”

He turned to the audience, he exhorted them, and finally the funeral was closed with a prayer and a singing of a stanza of “Some Golden Daybreak.” It makes all the difference in the world when a Christian dies, because you see there is a wonderful reunion with other Christians.

Well, Elijah was great, and Emmanuel is greater. Elijah was a man of God, but Emmanuel is the God of man. If Elijah the Prophet can restore the dead physically to life, our Lord Jesus can resurrect the dead spiritually.

Have you put your trust in him? Have you believed in this great God of Elijah? Do you know that Christ died for your sins, stretched himself out over all of humanity, identified himself with us in sin, and has made it possible for us to have life? Have you put your trust in him? Wouldn’t you want to be saved? Wouldn’t you want to have the assurance of life?

Why don’t you, right in your heart say, I thank Thee O God for Jesus Christ, now I take him as my personal Savior. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we are so thankful for the privilege and opportunity to listen to the word of God. We know, Lord, the great messenger, the Prophet Elijah, that Thou art greater. And so, O Father, we pray that through Jesus Christ, Thou wilt speak to the hearts of all who are here. And if there should be one without Christ, give them no rest or peace until they rest in him.

And as we part, may the Spirit of Elijah, that same Spirit that indwells us, enable us to glorify him this day.

For his name’s sake. Amen.