

Turning Point

I Kings 18

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: *Jay Strack tells the story of an article in a 1970's edition of Ring Magazine. One of their writers wrote a feature story about a young boxer named Billy growing up in the Mid-West and coming up the what was then called the Golden Glove Circuit. Apparently this kid was a huge fan of Marvelous Marvin Hagler. Haggler was the Lenex Lewis of his day. He won the belt in 4 different weight divisions. Well Billy idolized Haggler and emulated him in every way. Billy ate what Haggler ate, Billy trained like Haggler trained, hoping to be able to fight like Hagler fought.*

Well it was time for Billy's first really big golden gloves bout. He had followed Haggler's training regimen religiously. When he stepped into the ring he thought to himself, "what would haggler do now?" Well he remembered that Haggler would always hit himself and talk to himself. So there you have Billy, very excited, adrenaline pumping through his body... he walks to the center of the ring and says, "Billy – that man want's to hurt you" Then he hit himself as hard as he could – breaking his own now. But he didn't feel any pain, he was in the zone! So a second time he said, "Billy – that man wants to take all your money" and he hit himself again – giving himself a hairline fracture to the jaw. But Billy was cool he felt no pain. One more time he said, "Billy that man wants to utterly destroy you – he rared back and hit himself, knocking himself out in the center of the ring."

Now I don't know if that it true, but when I heard the story I thought to myself, more often than not when I see a believer KO'd in the ring of life, it's not the world or the devil, but they themselves are the problem.

PERSONAL CONTEXT: When I was first saved, gloriously and immediately I was free from many of the sins the plagued my life. But there seemed to be a few that hung on.

ILLUSTRATION: Like the small cords that hold the hot air balloons on the earth at Point Mallard. I had two or three besetting sins that kept me from reaching my personal potential.

Solomon warned it is the little foxes that spoil the vine.

ILLUSTRATION: Like a great locomotive that needs tracks to run on to have any power at all. The Christian MUST maintain certain disciplines to keep his or her life, unencumbered.

Then one day in a quiet time God showed me the truth that I am going to teach you this morning. It's not extremely profound but if applied it can be extremely powerful. I named my first son ELIJAH Cole after the prophet in this passage today.

CONTEXT: The Nation of Israel was going from bad to worse-

1 Kings 16:25 (NASB95)

²⁵Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, and acted more wickedly than all who were before him.

1 Kings 16:30-31 (NASB95)

³⁰Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him. ³¹It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him. — Omri had sown the wind and in his legacy he was reaping the hurricane.

IDOLATRY - was the chief sin of Israel. Worshipping created things rather than the CREATOR.

The most often repeated command in the Bible is – “You shall have no other gods before me”. That mean’s before my presence, it is not speaking of a line of succession or priority.

Now keep in mind the people of Israel had not completely abandoned Jehovah God. They were simply sharing their affections with another.

It’s like Elvis Presley many years ago would wear a necklace with:

- A Star of David – to represent Judaism
- An Islamic Crescent – to represent Islam
- A Buddah – to represent Buddaism
- And a Cross – to represent Christianity

A reporter asked him one day, “Mr. Presley why so many symbols?” He replied, “It’s better to be safe than to be sorry”

Well friend that doesn’t work with God, HE is either Lord of all or He is not Lord at all.

But that is exactly where the Israelites were at. They had one foot in the Kingdom of God and one foot in Baal’s temple. Perhaps some of you today are the same way you have enough of God in you that you are miserable in the world and enough of the world in you that you are miserable in Church.

God had had enough. He was going to judge His people. He raised up Elijah the Prophet, sent him to Ahab and told him that it would not rain in Israel for 3 years.

1 Kings 17:1 (NASB95)

¹Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.”

Then after the 3 years had ended, God was about to lift the drought, but before he did he wanted to make sure that the people knew it was Jehovah God sending the rain and not Baal. Can’t you see it, a large cloud comes up and some guys says, “Yes! I prayed to Baal for rain just this morning”.

MT. CARMEL - Elijah calls the nation of Israel to Mt. Carmel. Mt. Carmel had a large plateau on top of it creating the perfect stage for what was about to transpire.

1 Kings 18:21 (NASB95)

²¹Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long *will* you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people did not answer him a word.

You know the story don’t you – Elijah said to the Prophets of Baal you build an alter to your god and I’ll rebuild the alters of Jehovah God. You pray and I’ll pray which ever answers by fire, that will be the true and living God.

BAAL’S PROPHETS – The Prophets of Baal erected an alter, made a sacrifice and began to pray.

1 Kings 18:26 (NASB95)

²⁶Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, “O Baal, answer us.” But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made.

ELIJAH’S MOCKERY –

1 Kings 18:27 (NASB95)

²⁷It came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, “Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened.”

***Can you imagine going up to a radical Muslim and mocking alah? That is exactly what Elijah is doing.**

1 Kings 18:28-29 (NASB95)

²⁸So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them. ²⁹When midday was past, they raved until the time of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention.

ELIJAH’S TURN –

1 Kings 18:30-38 (NASB95)

³⁰Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come near to me.” So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD which had been torn down. ³¹Elijah took twelve stones according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, “Israel shall be your name.” ³²So with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he made a trench around the altar, large enough to hold two measures of seed. ³³Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid *it* on the wood. ³⁴And he said, “Fill four pitchers with water and pour *it* on the burnt offering and on the wood.” And he said, “Do it a

second time,” and they did it a second time. And he said, “Do it a third time,” and they did it a third time. ³⁵The water flowed around the altar and he also filled the trench with water. ³⁶At the time of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came near and said, “O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at Your word. ³⁷“Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are God, and *that* You have turned their heart back again.” ³⁸Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.

THE NEXT TWO VERSES SUMMARIZE A TURNING POINT FOR THE NATION OF ISRAEL. A MIGHTY SWEEPING REVIVAL, PROBABLY THE GREATEST IN HISTORY IN 2 VERSES.

If you are going to experience a personal turning point....these elements must be in your life.

They encapsulate true repentance. You will find these truths all throughout God’s word, but they are very clear here....Let’s look at them together -

1) Decide

Remember back in verse 21?

“How long *will* you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” But the people did not answer him a word.

Vrs. 39

Now when all the people saw it they fell on their faces

They were getting off the fence. They were choosing sides.

There is great power in a once and for all personal decision.

You see, many times we walk an aisle or mark a card, but the decision is not made from our inmost parts, from the very essence of who we are and it is short lived.

But there is a kind of decision that once you make it, there’s no turning back.

In every individuals life there are two categories...

- *On one hand there are things you have made your mind up about...*
- *On the other hand there are things that are still up for debate....*

***You have the capacity to choose about those things.
Don’t believe Satan that tells you that you have no choice.
YOU Dad was that way, or your Mom was that way. .***

You choose who you will serve either God or Mammon. You choose this day if you will obey God or not.

ILLUSTRATION: I preached this one day and a teenager came up to me telling me how he couldn't help his lust. He began to explain to me, "Bro. Zach there are these things called hormones and guys like me have a lot of 'em and old guys like you don't even remember them". He said, "I can't help if things between me and my girlfriend go a little too far". I said, "That's where you are wrong". **YOU HAVE THE CAPACITY TO STOP YOU JUST DON'T HAVE THE DESIRE TO STOP.** "No he argued." I said, "Imagine this, you are there with your girl friend watching a movie and things get a little carried away – you are in the strong hold of lust. Just then her dad walks in... can you get control at that point? YES he said.

ILLUSTRATION: A elderly woman approached her Pastor. And said, "Pastor I can't control my tongue, I cuss like a sailor. She went on for about 45 Mins. and eventually the Pastor stopped her and said lady, "I'll tell you what your problem is, you don't want to stop." You have talked to me for about an hour and haven't cussed the first time. She said, "You don't expect me to cuss in front of a preacher do you?"

That goes to show you are not a victim of anything except you own will.
If you walk out of here today chained to a besetting sin, it's your fault.

The first word is Decide...

2) Declare

Vrs 39b

and they said, "The Lord He is God, The Lord He is God"

Jesus said in Matthew 12:34 (NASB95)

³⁴"For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.

Whatever is in the well comes up in the bucket.

*When you have made a once and for all decision in your heart,
it will inevitable come out your mouth.*

There is an unusual power in a public declaration in the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

- DECIDING HAS POWER OF YOURSELF
- DECLARING HAS POWER OVER OTHERS

ILLUSTRATION: GIRL CUSSING IN CLASS. When I had just started preaching I was a student at the University of North Alabama.

ILLUSTRATION: PRETTY GIRL AFTER MY SPEECH...

There is Power in publicly confessing Jesus is Lord.

You Decide...

You Declare...

3) Delete

vrs 40

And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!" So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them their."

Because you have decided and declared Jesus is Lord you must delete some things from your life.

Do you realize it would be better that you never told a soul you were a Christian than to do so and allow a stumbling block to remain in your life.

Jesus said it this way - Mat. 5:29

If your eye causes you to sin pluck it out and cast it from you. If your right hand causes you to sin cut it off and cast it from you.

Heb. 12:1

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily ensnares us

Rom. 13:14

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof

ILLUSTRATION: REDNECK IN CHURCH - SKOAL ILLUSTRATION

INVITATION:

In New England there are two very distinct housing markets.

Above the Snake line- *Where the altitude is so high that snakes can't live*

Below the Snake live- *Where the altitude is low enough to support snakes*

Some of you need to relocate your life above the snakelike tonight.