SERMON TRANSCRIPT

A Posture for Revival

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Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

We've all had a rough phone call, right? Maybe a frustrating phone call at some point in our lives. Some of the worst are when you're trying to call a company that you've got some kind of issue with, and you're trying to get the problem resolved.

I've been on the phone with United Airlines for quite a while at one point. A little frustrating. I was on the phone with StubHub one time, trying to get a situation resolved with some A&M tickets. Unfortunately, I think the game was more frustrating than the phone call.

But nothing compares to a phone call with AT&T, right? When you call, you get stuck in this automated loop forever and ever and ever. You think you're going to get out of the loop. What do you say? "Representative," right? We all say it. You say, "Representative," and you think it's going to jump you to a real person. But you say that, and guess what? Nothing. No answer.

So you're like, "Maybe they didn't hear it. Maybe they don't know I'm serious." So you say it a little more forcefully: "Representative." Nothing. No answer comes.

You hang on that call, and you get frustrated, so you start to say it a little louder: "Representative!" Maybe you're yelling a little bit. Maybe that's just in my house. My kids are thinking that I'm crashing out. Chelsea's laughing at me. Then I hang up.

You know why? Because no matter how loud I yell, nobody's going to answer. Nobody's coming on the other end of the line.

If you've got a Bible, open to 1 Kings 18. We're going to see that today. We're going to see hundreds of people yelling, hoping for an answer and getting nothing in return. Then we're going to see one man of God, with a heart that is postured properly before the Lord, pray a prayer that brings revival to the hearts of a nation.

We love hearing about revival. We love hearing about changed lives, changed hearts, changed communities, changed nations. That video earlier - 4,500 people baptized at Champion Forest in just the last five years. It's incredible, right? We love to hear about revival.

But I'm going to tell you up front: We can't make revival happen. We can't do it. I can't. You can't. Revival doesn't come from a formula. Revival comes from God. But what we can do is prepare our hearts for it.

If you're taking notes, that's our title this morning: "A Posture for Revival."

I want to make sure our hearts are processing this concept of revival the right way, because a lot of times,

when we think about revival, we think about revival in the hearts and lives of other people. We think about God doing a work in the hearts of people around us or people in our community.

We need to make sure our prayer for revival starts in our own hearts, that God does a work in us. As God does a work in us, with our hearts postured for revival toward Him, then He can begin to impact many, many more. That's what we're going to see at the end of this, in verse 37.

I'll jump to the end now. When we posture our hearts properly before God, God begins to turn not only our hearts, but the hearts of many, many people toward Him.

Here's a brief context of 1 Kings 18. Ahab had become the king of Israel. In 1 Kings 16:30, the Bible tells us that Ahab did evil in the sight of the Lord, more evil than everybody else who had gone before him. How would you like to be described like that? You're described in the Bible as the guy who has done more evil than anybody else before him. There is trouble coming his way, I'm telling you now.

He was married to trouble as well. The Bible says he married Jezebel. Jezebel was a worshiper of idols. She did not love and worship the one true God. She worshiped Baal. She built an altar for Baal. She built temples for Baal, and she led the hearts of the people away from the one true God, the God who had delivered them, to worshiping Baal and idols.

Now, this is going to matter here in a minute. Baal was looked at by the people as the storm god. They believed that he sent rain, that he grew the harvest, and that he was the one who could send lightning down from heaven.

That's going to matter because, in chapter 17, God says, "Enough is enough." He sends Elijah, who is His prophet, to Ahab and says, "Give Ahab this message: There's not going to be any rain that's going to fall. There's not going to be any dew that comes up from the ground except by my word."

It is a consequence for the sin of the king and the sin of the people. It wasn't Elijah's plan. It was God's plan.

In Deuteronomy 11, as the people are preparing to enter the Promised Land, God tells them - it's right there in His Word - that if His people turn to other gods, the consequence will be that God will shut up the heavens and no rain will fall.

Think about this: If the people of God had been hearing the voice of God through the Word of God, they would have known what was going to happen. But they weren't hearing the voice of God because they weren't in the Word of God.

That's a great reminder for us. We've talked about that the past couple of weeks. If we want to hear the voice of God, we can do it. We've got to open up the Word of God.

Ahab wasn't doing that. The people weren't doing that. So, for three and a half years, they get no rain. They're crying out to this idol that's supposed to be able to bring the rain, the storm god, and there's no rain. The crops are dying. The people are dying. It's a bad deal, and God's working through Elijah to make this happen.

Now, who's Elijah? Elijah was a prophet. He would speak on behalf of the Lord to the people and to the king.

But Elijah was a normal guy.

We've looked at Moses the last couple of weeks. We saw Moses' weaknesses. We saw his past. We saw his sins. We saw his insecurities. Still, God was with him and worked through him. The Bible tells us in the New Testament, in James 5, that Elijah was a man with a nature just like ours, meaning he was a normal guy.

In chapter 18, verse 1, God sends Elijah back to Ahab again. It's been a couple of years. There has been no rain. I want you to notice what God promises Elijah:

> *After many days the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, "Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth."*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:1

Nothing has changed here. Ahab is still worshiping idols. He's still doing evil in the sight of the Lord. The people have not repented, but God has made a promise. Don't forget that God has made a promise. Elijah stands on this for the rest of the chapter.

Skipping ahead a little bit, Elijah confronts Ahab in verse 19 and calls for this showdown. Elijah says to Ahab:

> *Now therefore send and gather all Israel to me at Mount Carmel, and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:19

There's going to be this showdown between Elijah, the one prophet of the Lord in the mix right now, and hundreds of prophets of idols. The people of Israel are going to get to see it happen.

Elijah gives Baal every advantage. Mount Carmel would have been his home-field turf. There's a temple there. There's an altar there. Elijah gives them the advantage with the numbers. All of their prophets are coming against one prophet of the Lord.

In verse 20, Ahab does it. He sends to all the people of Israel. He gathers them up, and then he gathers the prophets, and they meet at Mount Carmel. Elijah comes near to all the people and says, "How long are we going to do this?"

> *How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:21

Look at the answer of the people at the end of verse 21. If your Bible's open, what do they say?

> *And the people did not answer him a word.*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:21

Pick a Side

Here's the first point: If we're going to posture our hearts for revival this morning, we've got to pick a side. We

have to pick a side.

The problem in Israel was not a lack of religion. Hear me. It was not a lack of religion. The problem in Israel was a divided heart. The people hadn't completely abandoned God. They just began to worship Baal too.

Elijah says, "You can't do that." He says, "Enough is enough. How long are you going to go on limping between these two opinions?"

The Hebrew word for "limp" is pasach, and it means to hobble - to hobble back and forth from one to another, never settling, always moving with weakness. He's saying a divided heart is a weakened heart.

What is their response? Not a word.

You and I would do very well to remember that no answer to God is, in itself, an answer.

Maybe this morning you'd say, "You know what? I'm not opposed to God. I'm not anti-God. I'm here." But in your heart of hearts, if you were going to be honest, you'd say, "I've never really answered God. I've never committed my life. I've never gone all in."

Y'all were singing, "You are my everything." Maybe you've never gotten to that point.

If that's you this morning, if you've got this divided heart, I've been praying that, as God calls, you would answer Him this morning.

Don't miss this: In verse 26, we're going to see the word "limp" again. It's talking about the prophets of Baal as they limped around the altar, which is telling us something. If we keep limping between God and the world, eventually we're going to find ourselves limping around the world's altar with everyone else.

They might have called it dancing. God's Word calls it limping.

I just want to ask you this morning, before we move on: Is there an area of your life where you're limping, where you're going back and forth? You say, "Man, I love the Lord. I love the Lord." But you know in your heart that you're holding on to something that doesn't bring honor to Him. You're holding on to this sin in private. You're nursing this behavior that you know is not honoring or pleasing to Him.

It's like you want the Lord, and you want this in your life too, so you're just sort of going back and forth.

Maybe you've allowed other priorities in your home or in your family to creep up and take a place in your life where they just shouldn't be. You'd never say it out loud. You'd never say these things are as important to you as the Lord. You wouldn't use your words for that, but maybe your calendar would say it. Maybe the way you invest your time would say it.

Maybe it's as simple as this: You've got time in the morning for a lot of things. You've got time to work out. You've got time to make your fancy coffee or whatever that is. But you don't have time for the Word. That's an issue.

You've got time to scroll on your phone throughout the day or to binge Netflix at night, but you don't have time

for prayer. You see the limp here, right?

If there's a limp in your world right now, where you feel like you've got this divided heart, I want to encourage you: Don't ignore it. Don't hide it. Don't try to justify it. Just name it and respond to what Elijah is saying. If the Lord is God, follow Him.

If we want to experience revival in our own hearts, in our homes, and in our communities, we have to pick a side. It's what Elijah called the people of Israel to back then.

Then he sets the terms. He builds two altars. He says, "We're going to have two bulls, two altars, and no fire."

> *And you call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, He is God.*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:24

Now the people answer. They say, "Okay, it's well spoken."

Then Elijah says to the prophets of Baal, "Choose for yourselves a bull. You prepare it first. You guys are many. Call upon the name of your god, but put no fire to it."

They took the bull that was given to them, and they prepared it. Then they called upon the name of Baal. Look at this:

> *And they called upon the name of Baal from morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they limped around the altar that they had made.*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:26

I'm thinking, "Representative," right? Nothing's coming back. There's no voice. No one answered. So they limped around the altar they had made.

At noon, Elijah begins to mock them. I sort of like this. He mocks them and says, "Cry louder! He's a god, isn't he? Maybe he's daydreaming. Maybe he's in the bathroom. Maybe he's on a journey. Maybe he's asleep, and you just have to wake your god up."

The prophets of Baal cried louder, and they cut themselves, as was their custom, with swords and lances. They're bleeding now on the altar.

> *And as midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention.*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:29

Drop the Act

Part two of this posture of heart for revival is: Drop the act.

This is the contrast of the whole chapter. The prophets of Baal had this formula. They had this show they put on. Elijah just had a heart postured before God.

Look at everything the prophets of Baal had. They had noise. They had shouting. They had dancing. They had limping. They had bleeding. They had the queen's money, the queen's table, and the queen's backing. They had eight or nine hours of time in the day.

But you know what they didn't have? They didn't have a god who could answer them.

Elijah just sits back and makes fun: "Your god's daydreaming. He's in the bathroom. He's out of town. He's asleep."

Verse 29 tells us: No voice. No answer. No attention.

That's what religious performance gets us: a lot of noise, but no answer.

Jesus said, "Don't do that." In Matthew 6, Jesus says, "Don't heap up empty phrases. Don't make it a show. Don't make it a performance like other people do."

> *For your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.*
> — Matthew 6:8

Once in college, Chelsea was working out at the rec center at Texas A&M. We've got a great rec center and a lousy football team, but a great rec center.

She's on this treadmill, and she would go there often. She said it just felt funny all of a sudden. She couldn't explain it. She said, "It just felt funny in there."

She looked to her right, and there was a guy in a suit with an earpiece standing on a treadmill, and it wasn't moving. He was just standing there. She looked ahead of her, and there was another guy standing there in a suit with an earpiece. He wasn't moving or going anywhere. She's like, "What is going on?"

Then she looked to her left, and George Bush was on the treadmill next to her, just going for a jog and working out.

She told me that story, and I'm like, "That's the one time I would like a treadmill." Any other time? No. But that would be a great conversation. I'd enjoy it. We'd have a great connection time, maybe. Or maybe they - I don't know. But I'd go for it.

Any other time on a treadmill, I'm just not a fan. You work hard, and you sweat a lot. You could run one, five, ten, or one hundred miles. It doesn't matter. When you get off, guess what? You haven't gone anywhere.

That's religion without God: a lot of motion, but no movement.

These people are putting on a show. In the same way, I just want to ask, and let's make sure our hearts are in the right place: Is there an area of your walk with the Lord where you feel like you're performing, where you're putting on a show for the benefit of other people?

Maybe you're here on Sunday morning, going through the motions and doing what you think people want to see you doing. Then, Monday through Saturday, you live completely on your own, apart from any heart

connection with the Lord.

If that's you, let me just lovingly tell you and encourage you: Religious activity without a heart that is focused on Jesus is exhausting. It's frustrating. It is going to burn you. You're running in place.

God doesn't need a show from you. God doesn't want a show from you. God just wants your heart.

Make sure that, in your heart of hearts, that's where it starts: "God, You are my everything." We sang, "God, You are my everything." Let it start there and be all about you and the Lord, not a show for other people.

Ditch the Idols

Point three, as we're preparing our hearts for revival, is: Ditch the idols.

A posture for revival means letting go of the things we've been leaning on. Why were the people limping around this altar, focused on Baal? They thought Baal could give them what they needed. They thought he could give them rain. They thought he could give them food. They thought he could give them crops. They thought, in this case, that he could bring the fire.

But none of that happens.

In fact, God does this in a very specific way to go toe-to-toe with Baal on his specialty so God can say, "Listen, you're not going to be satisfied by anything else. You're only going to be satisfied in Me."

We're probably not in danger of worshiping an idol called Baal today. We don't have carved idols in our homes that we worship. But our hearts still, in certain moments, drift to things we think will satisfy us when, at the end of the day, only God can.

Some of these things our hearts drift to aren't wrong in and of themselves, but they become idols. They become wrong when we elevate them to the wrong position in our hearts.

There are a lot of us who might think, "If I have a certain amount of money, I'm going to have this level of security in my life." We think money will provide that. Well, my bank was down for a couple of days this week. I couldn't log in.

Some people think, "Success. If I climb to a certain spot on the ladder, life's going to be good. I'm going to have what I need." Well, Microsoft was down this week. There were a lot of people who couldn't do what they wanted to do.

A lot of people think, "Pleasure. If I experience these certain pleasures in my life, then I'm going to be happy. I'm going to be satisfied. My soul is going to be complete." The airlines were grounded for a while this week. People seeking those pleasures on some of these flights and vacations were disrupted.

Some people think, "If I get the approval of others, and if these people think this way about me, if they elevate me to this certain position, then I'll be okay. That's all I need. I need these people to approve of me, and things are good."

Listen, people are fickle. They'll love you one day and hate you the next day.

Maybe you heard about that politician in Fort Worth. He lost his election, and his very exclusive country club kicked him out. They said, "We don't need you anymore. You're not elected anymore. We've got nothing for you." They kicked him out.

All of these different things, and many, many more in our lives, promise the rain. They promise what we think we need, but they never actually satisfy.

If none of those illustrations connect with you, and you're thinking, "Okay, I'm good. I've got no idols in my life," maybe this definition will help you. It comes from Pastor Tim Keller. He says, "An idol is anything in your life that is more important to you than God." Anything - listen to this, I love this phrasing - "that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God."

Where does your mind drift when you're alone with your thoughts?

If you're quick to say, "Well, that's not me. I have no idols," Calvin says, "The human heart is a perpetual factory of idols."

Just ask: Where do you go? Where do you run when things in your life begin to feel dry? Because if it isn't the Lord, eventually you're going to find yourself shouting at the sky with no answer: "Representative! Representative!"

There's nothing wrong with money. There's nothing wrong with success. Pleasure is great. They just can't take the place of the Lord in your life. They need to flow through and from your relationship with Jesus.

Look at how the chapter continues. In verse 30, the prophets of Baal have done their thing. The sacrifice is on the altar. They've been dancing all day. There's no voice from heaven and no fire from heaven.

Elijah steps up. Now it's his turn.

> *Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." And all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been thrown down.*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:30

Here's a detail we sometimes miss: He repaired the altar of the Lord that had been torn down. There was already an altar to the Lord on that mountain, where communion with God had happened and where worship of the Lord had happened. But it had long since been torn down and cast aside.

He repaired it. How?

> *Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the Lord came, saying, "Israel shall be your name," and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord. And he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two seahs of seed.*

> *And he put the wood in order and cut the bull in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, "Fill four jars 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. And the water ran around the altar and filled the trench also with water.*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:31-35

Verse 36:

> *And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel, and that I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word."*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:36

Verse 37 - if you underline your Bible, this is the key of the passage. Underline this:

> *Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that You, O Lord, are God, and that You have turned their hearts back.*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:37

Stand on the Promises of God

Posture number four in our hearts is: Stand on the promises of God.

This is really the heart of the posture. It's the heart of the passage.

Elijah doesn't raise his voice here. He doesn't yell. He doesn't go nuts like the prophets of Baal did. Verse 30 says he raised an altar. He repairs the broken altar of the Lord, which reminds me that sometimes, before revival comes, there's repair work that needs to happen in our own hearts.

Scripture says he took 12 stones to rebuild this - 12 stones for the 12 tribes of Israel. With every stone he's putting on this altar, he's preaching a sermon. As he's laying those 12 stones, he's saying, "You are not Baal's people. You are part of the tribes of Israel, the people God delivered, the people of the promise, the descendants of Abraham. You're the people God named."

He's building this altar on the promises of God. It once had life, it was torn down, and now it's going to have life and connection with the Lord again.

Another question, just a heart check this morning: Are there any broken-down altars in your life?

Here's what I mean. Are there places in your life that used to be full of spiritual life and were vibrant, but not anymore?

Maybe you had this daily time in the Word for the longest time. You were reading Scripture. You were in the Word. You were journaling every day. You were hearing the voice of God through the Word of God, and that's just sort of fallen by the wayside.

Maybe the discipline of praying with your family on a regular basis was something that was strong. It was

happening. There was spiritual life in the home. But you got busy, things happened, and it has fallen by the wayside.

Maybe your heart used to find joy, a sense of purpose, life, and meaning in your relationship with Jesus. Recently, you've become distracted. You've got different things going on in your world, and now your heart is just pulled to the shiny little things of this world.

If that's you, I want to encourage you: Begin to rebuild like Elijah does. Rebuild that altar in your life. You might not build the whole thing this week. Don't try to. Just put the stones back in place.

That's what Elijah did. He puts the stones back in place, and then he soaks it. The sacrifice is there, and he soaks it with water.

Water was the most precious thing they had, wasn't it? There had been a drought for three years. He's using all of this water on the fire so that no one could ever say the fire came from anywhere but heaven. God's going to show up in the impossible.

Then he prays. See his prayer: God's time, God's name, God's Word.

I love how short the prayer is. The prophets of Baal prayed for eight or nine hours. Look at Elijah's prayer. It's about 60 words, maybe 30 seconds. He's saying, "God, show everybody who You are, and turn their hearts back."

Prayers that bring revival are prayers that are concerned with the glory of God and the hearts of people.

Elijah wasn't Superman here. I want us to be clear on that. In the very next chapter, he's overwhelmed by the opposition he faces as a result of this moment. He runs away. He hides in a cave, and he says, "God, I just want to die."

The power of what happens on Mount Carmel doesn't come from Elijah. It comes from the God he trusted. He knows he can't turn hearts. He can't change the hearts and minds of Israel. Only God can.

In verse 37, I said that's the crux of the whole passage. His prayer is, "God, I want them to know that You're God and that You have turned their hearts back to You."

God is God. God changes hearts. That's it.

The posture of our hearts matters, but the posture doesn't bring the fire. Only God does that.

That's good news for us. If we've been praying for people to trust God as Savior, if we've been praying for prodigals in our lives, we know we can't turn their hearts. Only God can.

And He does.

Look at verse 38. Elijah prays:

> *Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:38

Look at what it burned: the altar, the offering, the wood, the stones. Stones don't burn. They did that day. The dust. Dust doesn't burn. It did that day. The water that would put a fire out was burned up. It was gone.

God leaves no doubt.

Look at how the people responded:

> *And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God."*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:39

They didn't pick Elijah up on their shoulders like Rudy and carry him off the field or off the mountain. They fell on their faces and said, "The Lord, He is God. The Lord, He is God."

Now, who's saying this? A nation who, just a few moments ago, had hearts that were hardened and far from the Lord.

What are we saying? We're saying a mighty move of God turns hardened hearts back to Him.

The beautiful news for you and me is that God's still doing that today because of His Son, Jesus.

Centuries after this moment on Mount Carmel, there was another sacrifice. It was Jesus. He hung on a cross, and the judgment that we deserved fell on Him.

What does that mean? We don't have to perform. We don't have to shout louder and louder to get God's attention. The only sacrifice that God is answering is the one He provided Himself, and that's Jesus.

This story on Mount Carmel doesn't end with fire. What did God promise in verse 1? God promised the rain. That's what they needed. He kept His promise. The rain came.

This week, my encouragement for you and for me is to make sure our hearts are in the right place, that our hearts are postured for revival, and that we follow the pattern we see here.

We pick a side. We're not going to have a divided heart in our lives anymore.

We're going to drop the act. We're not putting on a show for anybody. This is about our heart and the Lord.

We're going to ditch the idols. Anything we've been looking to for satisfaction, fulfillment, or purpose apart from the Lord, we're going to push those things to the side.

We're going to simply stand on the promises of God, like we see here.

Elijah had that heart postured for revival, and the fire fell. He couldn't turn a heart. We can't turn hearts. But we can posture our hearts for the One who can.

If you're here this morning and you've never trusted in Jesus, I want you to know that the God who answers prayers is listening right now. You don't have to perform. You don't have to put on a show. You just have to trust Jesus and what Jesus has already done on the cross.

If there's this stirring, if there's this movement in your heart this morning, I want to encourage you, based on what we see in these verses, to know that nobody can turn or move in your heart except the Lord. If God's stirring in your heart, if He is turning you to Him, make sure that you answer.

Would you bow with me this morning?

As we bow our heads and close our eyes, I just want to give you a minute to respond to the Lord as He speaks through His Word.

Maybe all of us pray what the people responded in verse 39. We say, "God, You alone are God." Tell Him that this morning: "God, You're God."

If there are areas in your life where you're limping back and forth, I just want to encourage you: Get that right with the Lord.

If you've been performing instead of trusting, get that right with the Lord. Say, "God, capture my heart again."

If there are areas of your life that used to be full of spiritual life and vibrance, like that altar in Scripture that's torn down, I just want to encourage you to begin to rebuild that, piece by piece - that communion and fellowship with our Savior again.

If you're here this morning and you don't know Jesus as Savior, I want to encourage you: In just a minute, we're going to have our pastors and prayer partners down here at the front. We'd love to pray with you about what God's doing in your life.

Maybe you're ready to trust Christ. Maybe you're ready to get baptized. Maybe you've been limping between God and the world, and you want to get that right with the Lord. You just want somebody to pray with you. Or maybe there's something altogether different going on in your life.

Whatever it is, when we stand and sing this last song in just a minute, our people are here, and we'd love to pray with you.

Father, we love You so much. God, we thank You for Your Word and Your voice. God, we thank You for the care You have for us. We sang it at the beginning, and we're singing it at the end: God, You are our everything. You alone are God.

We pray that our hearts are postured before You for revival in us and then, Father, revival through us. It's in Your name we pray. Amen.