SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Revival Fire

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Holy Fire | November 22, 2026 | Revelation 3:15-16; Deuteronomy 4:24; James 5:17; Deuteronomy 11:16-17; 1 Kings 16:30-33; 1 Kings 18:17-42; Joshua 24:14-15; Psalms 115:2-8

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

Okay, I want to invite you to take God's Word and turn to 1 Kings 18.

Of all the messages that I'm preaching in this Holy Fire series, this is the one that I'm most looking forward to preaching. It's one of my favorite stories in the Old Testament. And when we make our way to the Holy Land, this is one of the favorite settings that we go to. I will preach 1 Kings 18 right from the place that inspired it.

I want to encourage you, if you've never been to the Holy Land, be looking out for announcements of when we're planning to go next. If at all possible, jump in on a trip. You will not regret it.

Oftentimes when we go to the Holy Land, we go to places and our guides will say, "We think this happened here, and it might have happened here." Then there are some places we go where we know it happened, but we can't really get to it because there's been a church built on top of it. Then there are other places we go where we say, "This is X marks the spot." You're standing in the place where we know this happened.

The setting today in 1 Kings 18, Mount Carmel, is one of these X-marks-the-spot places. Here is a picture of what Mount Carmel looks like. It overlooks the Jezreel Valley, also known as the Valley of Armageddon. We will go to the top of this mountain and look over the Jezreel Valley. There is also a statue on this mountain. It is a picture of Elijah holding a sword as he is getting ready to slaughter the false prophets of Baal. It is awesome.

We will gather our groups there, and we will teach this passage right here out of 1 Kings 18.

If you're taking notes, and I encourage you to always, the title of the message is "Revival Fire." We all want to see revival. But what does it take for revival fire to fall, and what happens when it does? This is what we're discussing today.

This story is amazing. If you're not familiar with it, let me give some context and color to what is taking place here, because I think in order to fully appreciate and fully understand what's going on, you need to know what's taking place around it.

These are dark times in the nation of Israel's history. After the death of King Solomon, Israel was divided into two different kingdoms. You had Israel to the north, and you had Judah to the south.

The southern kingdom of Judah would have 20 different kings who would reign during this time period, and less than half of them were any good at all. Most of these kings allowed idolatry in. They didn't serve the Lord with their whole heart. It was just a really bleak time.

The northern kingdom of Israel was way worse than the southern kingdom. They had 19 kings who reigned during this time period. None of them sought the Lord. All of them allowed idolatry to run rampant. They weren't any good at all.

Of the 19 kings, the very worst was a man by the name of King Ahab. He was so bad. I want to show you this text. It'll be on the screen for you. This is 1 Kings 16:30-33.

When I preach this message at camps, anytime I say the word "Ahab," I make the students boo. All right? He's a bad man. I'm not going to make you do that this morning.

> *And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him.*
>
> *And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him.*
>
> *He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria.*
>
> *And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.*
>
> — 1 Kings 16:30-33

That's saying something. I mean, 60 years of murder, idolatry, and assassinations in the monarchy, and it says Ahab did worse than all of them.

Ladies, just a little thing here: if anybody ever refers to you as Jezebel, that is not a compliment, okay? This lady is evil to the core. She and Ahab were like a dynamic duo. It's believed that she might have even introduced Baal worship to Israel. She had God's prophets in the land murdered. I mean, this lady, she was mean. All right, I'll leave it at that.

Ahab made an Asherah, another false god, another form of Baal worship, probably the mother of Baal. Many believe there would have been a wooden pole or a tree constructed by a shrine that they would bow down to, honor, and revere.

Then it says a second time:

> *Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.*
>
> — 1 Kings 16:33

So God had enough, and He raises a man up to deal with King Ahab and what's going on in the nation of Israel at the time. His name is Elijah.

Now Elijah, like all of God's servants, is not that impressive. He's from the backside of nowhere. He doesn't have a strong resume. He doesn't come from an impressive pedigree. When I picture him, I picture him as a member of the Duck Dynasty family. All right? Long beard, just kind of from the backwoods of nowhere.

God raises him up. According to 1 Kings 17:1, He says, "Elijah, I want you to go to Ahab, and because of his

evil leadership and his sin against Me, I want you to call him out. I want you to tell him that I'm withholding rain. There's going to be a drought. It's not going to rain a drop for three years."

God had warned the people of Israel this would be the case. Way back in the giving of the law, God told Israel, "You don't honor Me. You don't follow My precepts. You don't walk in My statutes. I will judge you in the form of a drought."

In fact, look at Deuteronomy 11:16-17. This is Moses talking to the people:

> *Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them; then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land will yield no fruit, and you will perish quickly off the good land that the Lord is giving you.*
>
> — Deuteronomy 11:16-17

Just a side note here, a little preaching punch, if you will: God is a faithful God. Oftentimes, we think of His faithfulness as His faithfulness toward us. He'll never leave us. He'll never forsake us. That's true.

But what I want you to notice, and what I want to emphasize here, is that God is faithful to His Word. What He says He will do, He will do. That's what's happening here. God's just being faithful to His Word.

This is the law of the harvest. The people are reaping what they have sown. God is just holding to His Word. He warned them that this would happen.

Just a little fun fact here: Baal was known as the storm god. He was given the name "the rider of the clouds." When you see images of him depicted in art, he's always holding a lightning bolt in his hand.

In fact, this was discovered in the 1930s, but it dates all the way back to the 15th to 13th century BC. In the image is Baal, and you see a lightning bolt in his hand.

So you see what God's doing here in all of this. This is a true battle of the gods. He's judging the nation. He's calling out this evil king. He's putting this false god, Baal, in his place.

God is turning off the water spout, if you will, and He says, "Let's see who the real storm god is. Let's see who really is the rider of the clouds. Let's see who the real God is who can send rain and withhold rain."

He's getting ready to demonstrate that there is no God like our God. He withholds the rain for three years.

Because Elijah gives Ahab this message, Elijah becomes the number one enemy of the state. Ahab hates him. Jezebel hates him. Elijah knows if they get their hands on him, he is dead.

So God sends him into hiding for three years. For three years, he's in obscurity. Nobody really knows what Elijah is doing.

As a matter of fact, in your Bibles, you see 1 Kings 17 and 1 Kings 18. It's just one chapter in your Bible. For some of you, it's just one page in your Bible. But it represents three years of Elijah's life.

Again, just another preaching punch here: we know how this story ends. Elijah calls fire down, and we love

that. But I just want you to realize that before Elijah ever called the fire down, God sent him through the fire.

That's usually how it works. God wants to use you in great ways to do great things. But, Christians, how is our faith refined? He sends us through the fire.

George Sweeting, former president of Moody Bible Institute, said it like this: "A Christian is like a teabag. He's not worth much until he's been through some hot water."

That's Elijah for three years. He goes through some intense hot water.

I wish I had time to unpack 1 Kings 17, but time doesn't allow. It's not the point of this message. But God was getting him ready in those three years.

Ready for what? That's what our text is all about.

> *When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him, "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?"*
>
> *And he answered, "I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father's house, because you have abandoned the commandments of the Lord and followed the Baals.*
>
> *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 18:17-19

This is crazy, because you don't talk to a king like this. But when you're God's man, you do what God tells you to do.

If you read chapter 18, verse 1, the Bible says, "The word of the Lord came to Elijah." So Elijah is just doing what God has told him to do.

That's a good word for us. May we be a people who just do what God has told us to do and leave the consequences up to Him.

I want to remind you that, in this moment, Elijah is no super-saint. James would write in his letter in the New Testament and underscore this:

> *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.*
>
> — James 5:17

So we don't need to read this passage of Scripture and think, "Oh man, Elijah was something else." No. Elijah was an everyday, average person, just like me and just like you. He just did what God told him to do and left the consequences to Him.

He calls for Ahab and says, "You go gather Israel, and we're going to have a showdown. I want the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah to meet me on Mount Carmel."

If you're doing the math, it's 850 to one. But how many know that God plus one equals a majority? Come on now. God plus one equals a majority. All we need is God on our side. Elijah knows this.

I'm going to outline this passage in three words. First, we're going to see the question. Then we're going to look at the contest. Then we'll see the response.

The Question

> *So Ahab sent to all the people of Israel and gathered the prophets together at Mount Carmel.*
>
> *And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."*
>
> *And the people did not answer him a word.*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:20-21

The word "limping" here, some of your Bibles translate as the word "waver." The Hebrew word picture for wavering between two opinions is a picture of a bird that won't sit still, just kind of hopping between limbs.

We could put it in our vernacular today and ask it like this: How long are you going to straddle the fence? How long are you going to have one foot doing what God wants you to do and one foot living like the world?

It's interesting here. Israel didn't throw Yahweh worship out the window when they embraced Baal worship. They just added Baal worship to it. Syncretism. It's kind of a buffet-style spiritual living, if you will.

You know what I'm talking about. This Thursday is Thanksgiving. How many of you are ready for that spread this Thursday? It's going to be awesome.

My prayer, when that buffet of food is in front of me, is going to be, "Lord, may my capacity within me be as great as the opportunity before me." All right? That's going to be the prayer.

There's a reason I'm wearing this jacket today, because it would not fit next week.

I've told you before, I've got the palate of a 12-year-old. I don't branch out in my eating. I was in Italy two weeks ago visiting with some mission partners over there. I had cheese pizza every day for lunch, sometimes twice a day, and I loved it.

At Thanksgiving, we're going to have this buffet out, and it's going to have all the fixings. You're going to go and you're going to pick: "I want this. I want this much of this. I don't want that. I'll leave that off my plate. I'll get this. I'll get this."

This is what Elijah is calling out here. He's saying, "You're treating God and His statutes like you treat a Thanksgiving meal. I'll have some of this, but I don't like that. I'll have a little bit of this. I don't want any of that."

Elijah calls this kind of spirituality out. He says it's wavering. It's limping.

Jesus has a word for it in the New Testament. He calls it lukewarm.

> *I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!*
>
> *So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.*

> — Revelation 3:15-16

Elijah is drawing a line in the sand here. What he's saying is, look, if God is God, be all in with God. If Baal is god, be all in with Baal. But this one-foot-in, one-foot-out business, this buffet spirituality where you just pick and choose what you want and what you don't want, he says that's over.

He's echoing the words of Joshua. You remember when Joshua renewed the covenant at Shechem? He calls Israel together and says to the people of Israel exactly what Elijah is saying here:

> *Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.*
>
> *And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell.*
>
> *But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*
>
> — Joshua 24:14-15

He says, "Make a decision. Make a choice."

I want to do the same thing this morning that Elijah and Joshua did all those years ago. I just want to say this morning, Champion Forest, if God is God, let's go all in with God.

If He's not, let's get out of this business of having one foot in the church and one foot in the world. You're doing more harm to the cause of Christ that way. Lukewarm.

If God is God, serve Him. No more one foot in loving the world and one foot loving God. No more one foot seeking the pleasures of this world and one foot seeking the promises of God.

The truth is, you're trying to have it both ways. Living like that does not show this world the beauty and glory of Christ. It's time for that syncretistic lifestyle to end. It's time for the straddling of the fence, wavering and limping between two opinions, to be over.

It's not just me saying this. It's Elijah, Joshua, and Jesus.

Did you notice how the people answered? Look at the second part of verse 21. They don't. They're totally quiet.

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

You know why? Probably because they were offended, scared, or maybe even both. But Elijah didn't care.

You know what he cared about? He cared that God was offended. That's what he cared about.

This word "answer" is an important word in this chapter. It's repeated over and over and over again. The people don't answer Elijah. In just a moment, the false prophets of Baal are going to cry out to Baal, and Baal doesn't answer the false prophets.

One commentary I read had a great line. It said, "A people who won't answer God end up worshiping a god who can't answer them."

That's true.

We're going to see the false god of Baal put on display here. But what's true of one false god is true of all false gods. The psalmist put it like this:

> *Why should the nations say,*
> *"Where is their God?"*
>
> *Our God is in the heavens;*
> *he does all that he pleases.*
>
> *Their idols are silver and gold,*
> *the work of human hands.*
>
> *They have mouths, but do not speak;*
> *eyes, but do not see.*
>
> *They have ears, but do not hear;*
> *noses, but do not smell.*
>
> *They have hands, but do not feel;*
> *feet, but do not walk;*
> *and they do not make a sound in their throat.*
>
> *Those who make them become like them;*
> *so do all who trust in them.*
>
> — Psalm 115:2-8

The gods of this world don't speak. They don't hear prayers. They can't meet needs. The next part of this text proves this.

The Contest

> *Then Elijah said to the people, "I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men.*
>
> *Let two bulls be given to us, and let them choose one bull for themselves and cut it in pieces and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it.*
>
> *And I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood and put no fire to it.*
>
> *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."*
>
> *And all the people answered, "It is well spoken."*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:22-24

Holy fire.

They like this idea. Let's have a showdown.

> *Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many, and call upon the name of your god, but put no fire to it."*
>
> *And they took the bull that was given them, and they prepared it and 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 18:25-26

It's a play on words. The people were limping between two opinions, and now they're limping around the altar that they had made.

> *And at noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud, for he is a god. Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened."*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:27

Maybe he's deep in thought. Maybe he's using the bathroom. Tell him to turn the vent off so he can hear you. All right? Maybe he's asleep and just needs to be awakened.

I love this. Elijah's talking smack now.

> *And they cried aloud and cut themselves after their custom with swords and lances, until the blood gushed out upon them.*
>
> *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 18:28-29

Then it's Elijah's 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

He calls them close.

This is very important here. The altar is where sacrifices were offered. At one point on Mount Carmel, evidently, there was an altar constructed for Yahweh worship. It had been there, but it had been left in disrepair. It had been torn down.

This is important. He didn't have to construct it. He just had to repair it.

Listen to how he repairs it:

> *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.*
>
> — 1 Kings 18:31-32

Look at what Elijah is doing here. The kingdom is split, but Elijah is looking back at the covenant that was made at Sinai, where they were one people. It wouldn't slip past anybody who was there that day what Elijah was doing.

He is reminding the people that they are under a covenant with the one true God, and in that covenant, they are one people. He begins to repair this altar.

Just a point of application here: If we want God to move, if we want revival fire to fall, it may be that we need to rebuild and repair some altars that we've allowed to be torn down.

For some, you need to rebuild that relationship that is broken. Fire can't fall when there hasn't been forgiveness extended and that relationship restored.

For some of you, your time alone with the Lord is an altar that is in disrepair. You haven't been spending time with the Lord. You need to rebuild that altar where you get alone and spend time with Him.

For some of you, it's Christian service. You were serving the Lord in such a way that God was using you, and for some reason, you got out of the game. You need to repair the altar.

Rebuilding broken altars shows God that you're serious. It's part of the preparation process of getting ready for fire to fall.

Now, rebuilding the altar doesn't warrant fire, but it does give the fire something to fall on.

Elijah doesn't want there to be any doubt in this contest about who's bringing the fire and who God is. Look at his instructions, starting in the second part of verse 32:

> *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 18:32-35

Another way of saying it is that it's a really big trench, all right? It would hold gallons and gallons of water.

This is amazing. They're in the middle of a three-year drought. Water is the most precious commodity they have. Elijah is saying, "I want you to soak this altar," so much so that the water goes into the trench. He's

making a point.

When we light a fire, we always light a fire from underneath. Elijah is saying, "If there's fire that's going to fall, it isn't going to come from underneath. Everything's wet down there. It's going to come from above."

It's at this point that Elijah calls on God. The prophets of Baal had their chance. Now Elijah has his.

> *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.*
>
> *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 18:36-37

Notice what he does there. Most of the time, you hear, "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." No, he calls Jacob by his changed name, Israel. He's reminding the people who they are and the God they're in covenant with.

The prophets of Baal went on and on all day, from morning to noon. Elijah's recorded prayer is fewer than 40 words in the original language. He simply makes the request. No show. No dancing around. No cutting himself. Just a prayer: "God, answer me."

Did you notice what he asked for? He asked that they would know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is the one true God and that their hearts would be turned back to Him.

This past Wednesday, at our last Wednesday Prayer and Praise service, we took time to pray for those who were present who had family members where there was a prodigal, or maybe there was tension in the family relationships as we got close to Thanksgiving, or maybe there was a loss this past year and that loved one who was at the table last year is not there this year. We took time to pray over family members.

Next week, we're going to have a special time of prayer in this service for those who, as we get to this holiday season, Thanksgiving and Christmas, have hearts that are a little heavy because of family issues like this. We're going to have an opportunity to pray for you.

I say all this to say that this would be a wonderful prayer to pray for those you may be spending time with on Thursday who are far from the Lord.

You say, "I don't even know what to pray for."

Pray this right here: "God, make Yourself known to them in a way that they know You're the one true God. Lord, turn their heart back toward You."

It would be a great prayer to pray for your loved ones by name who aren't walking with the Lord.

Does God answer Elijah's prayer? You better believe He does.

> *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

Don't forget that word "fell." We'll come back to it in just a minute.

Are you kidding me? This fire consumed everything.

> *For the Lord your God is a consuming fire.*
>
> — Deuteronomy 4:24

The fire that fell that day consumed the sacrifice. It consumed the altar. It says it licked up the water. I don't even know what that means. It just licked it up. Amazing.

I've said of this scene before, sometimes God shows up, and sometimes God shows off. He was showing off on Mount Carmel that day.

We have the question. We've got the contest. Let's see the response.

The Response

The fire falls. Look at how the people respond:

> *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

The fire fell, and when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces.

That's when you know you have revival fire. It's when the response is repentance and worship. That's when you know revival fire has fallen.

It's amazing, the response that takes place here. The people fall on their faces.

If you keep reading, Ahab saw the same fire. You know what he's doing? He's back eating and drinking, carrying on like he never saw the fire of God fall.

That's a dangerous place to be, that your heart could be so cold that God moves, but it doesn't move you.

I just want to offer a warning here. Be careful, because you come each week to this church, and in a very spiritual sense, the fire of God falls. I mean, His Word is being preached. His Spirit is here. He inhabits the praises of His people. His manifest presence is here. We know that. We see people getting saved. That's the fire of God falling.

For us to walk out of these doors and remain unchanged by it is a very dangerous place to be.

How are you going to respond to the fire of God? The people fell on their faces. Ahab went back to business as usual.

You keep reading, and you see what Elijah did:

> *And Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel. And he bowed himself down on the earth.*
> — 1 Kings 18:42

That's what revival fire does. It sets a people to pray.

Again, worship and repentance are the response. When revival fire falls, you'll know it. There'll be embers in your life burning.

When the fire of God falls, there'll be embers burning. You'll become hungry to read God's Word.

There'll be embers burning within you. You'll become more sensitive to sin in your life.

There'll be embers burning. You'll want to pray more and seek God and His presence more.

You'll find yourself caring about lost people more. You'll become more generous and more joyful in worship. You'll want to make things right with people that you've perhaps wronged.

There'll be embers. When the fire of God falls, you'll know it in your heart.

The question for you is, how are you going to respond? Business as usual, or in repentance and worship?

The Welsh Revival of 1904 and 1905 began with a 26-year-old coal miner named Evan Roberts. He held a small prayer meeting in his home in Loughor, Wales. He had been praying for revival for 11 years, and nothing.

You study the history of revival. At the end of this prayer meeting, 17 people stayed behind, and they just began crying out to the Lord. As best missiologists and revivalists can trace it back, the Welsh Revival started in that home with 17 people on their knees, praying for their country.

Within five months, an estimated 100,000 people across Wales had come to faith in Christ.

We're told that the transformation was so sweeping that it became verifiable in unexpected ways. It's reported that crime rates dropped so dramatically that judges didn't have cases to hear. Courtrooms were empty. Public drunkenness plummeted.

One of the most striking documented details of the revival is that coal miners who had been converted stopped using profanity underground in the mines. The pit ponies that hauled the coal, animals trained to respond to profanity-laced commands, became confused because the commands had changed.

The horses literally didn't know what to do because the men had been transformed.

Revival fire. The response: repentance and worship.

When the fire falls, we need to fall.

I'm just saying publicly today, as a prayer, "Let the fire fall."

Amen. Amen.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.