

 **Elijah** by A.W. Pink is a must for all families, but it is especially a great book for fathers to read to their sons because Elijah serves as such an outstanding role model. Once again, my favorite author has done an exceptional job of imparting extraordinary insight into this extraordinary man of God. And since extraordinary times of corruption require extraordinary men of God, this couldn't come at a more opportune time.

Considering that we are in the midst of abject idolatry and apostasy (in truth, the darkest time of our American history), I find this book particularly timely since it reflects Israel's darkest time in her history, as well. When we truly compare our present condition with Israel's at the time of Elijah, it becomes apparent that these apostates were no more deplorable than the degree to which we have departed from the beneficent Father. Furthermore, the measure of Ahab's and Jezebel's wickedness is no greater than the wickedness of our present leaders. And the wickedness in which their leaders plunged their people was no more than today. But what makes this book particularly important for our time is the hope Pink reveals of God's perpetual faithfulness to His Church, as stated in **Isaiah 59:19** "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him."

In essence this book reveals the character of a righteous leader and exposes the root of the "power of Elijah"—that dauntless courage in which he faced his archenemies, Ahab and Jezebel. Elijah feared God and not man and thus did not shrink from his duty to God's Word, for he knew that all men's actions are in the hands of God who turns the hearts of kings like channels of water.

Interestingly, Elijah pinpointed the people's lukewarm service toward God when he asked them "How long halt ye between two opinions?" It wasn't that they had completely abandoned God, they just wanted to serve two masters instead of holding allegiance to one. Elijah called their vacillation to task and made it clear that God shares His glory with no one. "If Jehovah be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." Either we are completely for Him, or we are not for Him at all. "He that is not with Me is against Me; and He that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30).

How closely this parallels the church today. "These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me" (Matthew 18:5). When practice and profession remain inconsistent, incompatibility most certainly exists.

In the early 1900s, Pink commented on the state of the people. "Alas, on every side we behold those who are seeking to serve both God and mammon, attempting to win the smile of the world and to earn the 'well done' of Christ. And how many professing Christians there are in these days who can hear Christ and His people reviled, and never open their mouths in reprimand—afraid to stand up boldly for God." And then Pink pronounces Christ's judgment, "Oh guilty silence, which is likely to meet with a silent Heaven when they are pleased to cry for mercy."

"Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men." Pink says, "Ah, my readers, truth cannot be judged by the numbers who avow and support it: the Devil has ever had the vast majority on his side. And is it any otherwise today? What percentage of present-day preachers are uncompromisingly proclaiming the truth?"

"Our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29) that descends upon sacrifices to show acceptance by purifying that which has been defiled by sin. Therefore, it was most appropriate to show the people the need for purification of their sins by bringing His holy wrath upon the

sacrifice that was laid open for all to view. Only the shedding of blood can atone for sin, and thus God pointed these people to Christ once again. Atonement from sin can only be obtained through Christ, and those who attempt to obtain it any other way will be placed in the “lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15), where God’s wrath continues to burn but never cleanses.

For six hours the priests of Baal called unto him with all the zeal and passion any god could possibly expect, yet he answered not because, “They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not...they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not...they that make them are like unto them; so is everyone that trusteth in them” (Psalm 115:4-8).

When you think of Israel’s apostasy, do you think of America’s apostasy? It is so easy for us to criticize the sin we see in others without realizing that we mimic it to every degree. So engulfed in idolatry, the people could not see God in the chastisement He brought upon their land. For if they had fully understood the purpose of the drought, they would have repented, and God would have relented, long before Elijah’s contest with the priests of Baal.

Do we think that we provoke God any less? Do we fully comprehend God’s purpose in the chastisement He has brought upon our own land? It is absolute treason to think that the events in our lives are sheer happenstance. “When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isaiah 26:9). I pray that we are not like Pharaoh, who after each plague hardened his heart all the more or like Jeshurun who “waxed fat, and kicked” (Deuteronomy 32:15).

And so it was with Ahab, for when Elijah appeared before him, “Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel?” Wow, three years of drought, and yet Ahab’s heart was still not humbled by his great sin against God. Pink states that “it is always the mark of an unhumiliated and unjudged heart for one who is smarting beneath the righteous rod of God to throw the blame upon someone else, just as a sin-blinded nation which is being scourged for its iniquities will attribute its troubles to the blunders of its political rulers.” “‘Know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that My fear is not in thee,’ saith the Lord God of hosts...” (Jeremiah 2:19).

Pink sets the mind to examine the heart when he says, “And my reader, if you be a worshipper of idols, and continue so, you shall yet discover that your god is just as impotent and disappointing as was Baal...Is pleasure your god? Do you set your heart upon a ceaseless whirl of gaiety—rushing from one form of entertainment to another...Are your hours of recreation made up of a continual round of excitement...Is mammon your god? Do you set your heart upon material riches, bending all your energies to obtaining...those things which are supposed to make for comfort and satisfaction? Is it the acquisition of property, a large bank balance, the possession of stocks and shares, for which you are bartering your soul...giving unto some other object that which is due unto Him alone, an insult which He will not tolerate or pass by.” My, how sobering!

In reference to the priests’ zeal and fervor in which they worshipped Baal, Pink says, ‘The expenditure of great earnestness and enthusiasm is no proof of a true and good cause. There is a large class of shallow-minded people today who conclude that a display of religious zeal and fervor is a real sign of spirituality, and that such virtues fully compensate for whatever lack of knowledge and sound doctrine there may be.’

“And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob. 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 measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood. And he made a trench...and said, fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time.

And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran around about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water; and it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, 'Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel and that I am Thy servant.' Notice that Elijah's chief aim in life was God's glory, not his own, which he exemplified consistently throughout his life.

We have all heard that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16), and I dare say have heavily leaned on that promise when making our requests known to God, but how often have we actually considered our hearts before praying? Pink prints the following verses to remind us that it is the prayer of a man right with God through obedience to His Word that availeth much. For "if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18). "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). "Your sins have withholden good things from you" (Jeremiah 5:25). "We have transgressed and have rebelled. Thou hast not pardoned, thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through" (Lamentation 3:41,44).

For Christ tells us: "If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7). And again in 1 John 3:22: " whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."

Pink goes on to say that "Christ has not died in order to purchase for His people an indulgence for them to live in sin; rather did He shed His precious blood to redeem them from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

God says that He honors those who honor Him, but He also states: "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us" (1 John 5:14). Elijah did not ask for something because he felt that it would be best for the people. He asked that which He knew to be the will of God. And thus, "The fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench." Wow, what a testimony of the mighty power of our God! Our God is a consuming fire!

This was also a powerful witness to the sinfulness of sin. And because Elijah took hold of God's Word and did according to His Word, our Holy Lord purged the sin of the people. "And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and they said, 'The Lord, He is the God; the Lord, He is the God.'"

"So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees." What a stark contrast between the living and the dead! Pink says, "It is the crises of life which reveal the secrets of our hearts and make it manifest whether we are really new creatures in Christ or merely white-washed worldlings. It is our reaction to the interpositions and judgments of God which brings out what is within us. The children of this world will spend their days in feasting and their nights in revelry though the world be hastening to destruction; but the children of God will betake themselves to the secret place of the Most High and abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

We may look upon Ahab in total disgust for not humbling himself under the mighty hand of God, but how often do we neglect to acknowledge God's mercy and might even though it is displayed every minute of our lives? And at this moment of crisis in our own nation, are we spending most of our time pursuing worldly endeavors, feasting and reveling in the activities of pleasure while our country hastens toward destruction?

Elijah lived a life apart from his world but very close to the heart of God. I loved that Pink pointed out that when facing man—all Israel,

Ahab, and all Baal's priests—Elijah stood erect, but when he came before God, "he cast himself down upon the earth." Elijah was truly a man of God who sought after the heart of God.

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And though a man of God, yet God held the rain until Elijah persevered in prayer for what God had already promised. "Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you" (Isaiah 30:18). All things work for our good to keep us dependent upon Him so we know that nothing is accomplished through our own strength but solely by Divine grace. "And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, 'Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand'...there was a great rain."

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Pink goes on to say that "it is the duty of God's servants to...rebuke wickedness wherever it be found and to declare that the wages of sin is death. This will not make for their popularity, for it will condemn and irritate the wicked...Those who expose hypocrites, resist tyrants, oppose the wicked are ever viewed by them as trouble makers. But as Christ declared, 'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you...'" (Matthew 5:11,12).

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"And it came to pass...there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire...and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." God's provision for Elijah throughout his life fully confirmed God's promise that "no good thing shall be withheld from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11).

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This book is such a priceless treasure!