

P.U.F.F.
(Pray Until the Fire Falls)
1 Kings 18:21-40

ILL: We are looking at the next Spiritual discipline which is prayer. Last week we saw how prayer can make us into **Difference Makers**. Today we are looking at the kind of prayer that brings the Power of God into our lives; the kind of prayer that ignites the fire of God in our souls.

Fire in Scripture usually speaks of God's refinement, God's judgment or God's power and in today's text we see the fire demonstrating God's power.

[Read 1 Kings 18:21-40/pray/dismiss Jr. Church]

Let the Fire Fall

Years ago, before we became conscious of ecology, tourists at Yosemite Park were treated to a nightly display that never failed to please the crowds that gathered to witness this demonstration. High over the valley floor, the park rangers would set a number of logs on fire and wait upstream near one of those marvelous steep waterfalls that grace that magnificent valley. When the hour of darkness had finally arrived, the echoing voice of a park ranger would ring out from the valley floor: "Let the fire fall!"

Then the moment would come that all had waited so patiently to witness; a hail of sparks and flames would appear as the waters carried the burning logs over the brink of the falls and down the steep descent of several hundred feet to the valley floor and the waiting stream. The crowd loved it. The fire fell along with the water. It appeared to happen as if it were solely at the command of one man with a booming and demanding voice—as if he had some special contact with heaven itself.

If that is how it appeared to these campers in Yosemite Park, how must it have appeared to those somewhat skeptical Israelite fence-sitters who refused to adopt wholeheartedly Yahweh or Baal as their God? For just as surely as the park ranger called, "Let the fire fall," so this preacher from the backwoods area of Israel called to the living God. He did not rig his demonstration—this was the real thing. It was so real it was terrifying. Anything that would eat up rocks, dust, water, animals, and all has got to be some sort of supernatural display.

But what does it take to get the Fire of God to fall???

First, let's look at...

1. WHAT IT TAKES TO EXTINGUISH THE FIRE

A. Compromise

- 1) The text says, **"...How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him..."**
- 2) There is a showdown about to take place between God and the Baal
 - (a) Baal was a pagan god that represented everything we find in the world today: self living; pleasure driven thinking, man pleasing
 - (b) Basically Baal worship is worldliness today
- 3) The showdown was between God and the World
 - (a) There is nothing more exciting than a showdown. Consider:
 - (1) The U.S. Hockey team against the Russians in the 1980 Olympics
 - (2) The OK Corral [The Earp brothers, Doc Holiday vs. Billy the Kid and the Clitons]
 - (3) The North vs. the South in the Civil War
 - (4) The match up between the Colts and the Bears
 - (b) The greatest showdown though is played out daily in our lives.
 - (1) When it happens there is no media present and it never gets recorded in the history books.
 - (2) It is the battle between God and the World, between good and evil, between moral and immoral living

- 4) All of us face this showdown, this struggle, to be fully devoted to God, and yet still have our own way, *"I want it my way...or we boast as Frank Sinatra did, "I did it my way."*
 - (a) We want God's blessing, but we want man's approval
 - (b) We want His protection in our hour of need, but we struggle to let go and trust Him with all
 - (c) We want His delivering power, yet we cradle and nurse our worldly possession as a mother cradles and nurses a newborn baby
 - (d) We want to say that God is the most important person in our life, yet we are easily swayed and drawn away from that allegiance
- 5) This is called compromise and will almost assuredly lead to...

B. Idolatry

- 1) The fruit of a divided heart is always idolatry, and it will eventually catch up with us.
- 2) It will steal the power God wishes to deposit and release in our lives.
- 3) As I said the pagan god Baal represents the world
 - (a) Baal was the god that provided fertility
 - (b) He was the god of the earth and things of the earth
 - (c) He became known as the god of money, fame, pleasure
- 4) Today we can allow many things to become gods to us.
 - (a) Money, fame, work, or pleasure can become gods when we concentrate too much on them for personal identity, meaning, and security.
 - (b) No one sets out with the intention of worshiping these things.
 - (c) But by the amount of time we devote to them, they can grow into gods that ultimately control our thoughts and energies.
- 5) Letting God hold the central place in our lives keeps these things from turning into gods

Next, let's look at...

2. WHAT IT TAKES TO IGNITE THE FIRE

A. Right Altar V.30

- 1) Throughout the OT God's people built altars to God and we see four reasons why they built these Altars:
 - (a) **As a place of Prayer**
 - (b) **As a place of Worship**
 - (c) **As a Place of Sacrifice**
 - (d) **As a Place of remembrance**
 - (1) **Remember God's promises**
 - (2) **Remember God's presence**
- 2) There are basically three kinds of altars:
 - (a) **National Altars** - Our nation has replaced its altars of worship of God with worship of every other imaginable thing. Turtle eggs, dolphins, & the environment have become of higher value than human life. Rather than teaching children **"Thou shalt not kill"** our schools are teaching them that they need to express themselves and that human life is of no value. Some 43 million doctors, lawyers, bankers, preachers, senators, representatives, skilled laborers, educators, managers, farmers, factory workers, truck drivers, airline pilots, missionaries, and other people have been killed by the knife of abortion doctors in the name of freedom of choice. Moral decay is at an all time high. Gender distinction has been fuzzed so much that little girls grow up having no idea how to be a good mother. Boys have no idea that being manly means treating women with respect and practicing self-control.
 - (b) **Family Altars** - Nations are built upon families. As the family falls, so falls the nation. Children are growing up knowing nothing about God. Parents are leaving spiritual training of their children to someone else. It is time for family altars to be rebuilt across our land. It is time for parents to take responsibility for the spiritual training of their children.
 - (c) **Personal Altars** - If we are going to be all that God wants us to be, each of us need to maintain a personal altar—a place where we regularly meet God in prayer. Jesus demonstrated that even He needed time alone with the Father. We as His followers need to take time each day to feed upon His Word and pray. It is the only way to grow spiritually.
- 3) The human heart can be seen as an altar – In scripture the heart refers to our very being:

- (a) It is where real Prayer starts
- (b) It is where real Worship happens
- (c) It is the place where true sacrifice takes place
- (d) It is the place where real remembrance lives

B. Right Sacrifice V. 33

- 1) The sacrifices and offerings that were brought by the people were to be the physical expression of their inward devotion – there were 5 kinds of sacrifices:
 - (a) **Burnt** - symbolized the offerer's voluntary presentation to God. Anyone could offer a burnt offering as an act of devotion or dedication, and typifies the Lord Jesus' offering of Himself unto death (Heb. 10:5-7). The Christian should likewise offer himself as a sacrifice to God
 - (b) **Peace offering** - was the only offering in which the offerer shared by eating a portion of the sacrifice. This illustrated fellowship between God and man (as well as between man and man) on the basis of blood sacrifice. To you and me this offering illustrates our peace with God through the blood of Christ's cross and fellowship with other believers
 - (c) **Sin offering** - was to be brought in cases of sins done *unintentionally* (i.e., known sins committed out of weakness or waywardness), in contrast to sins of presumption done in defiance of God's laws. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ was the full and final sin offering
 - (d) **Grain offering** - was an offering the people brought that was given to the priest and used by them to support their work it was to be the first fruit it represents the tithe.
 - (e) **Guilt [trespass] offering** - neglecting to pay a tithe, eating parts of the sacrifice that belonged to the priests, failing to redeem the firstborn. Not only did restitution have to be made, but a penalty had to be paid equal to a fifth part of the value. This would be representative of a Christians responsibility to seek God's forgiveness for our neglecting Him and His holy commands according to 1 John 1:9
- 2) The sacrifice was to be without defect as was our Lord Jesus, the only high priest who never sinned.
- 3) Romans 12:1

C. Right Prayer V. 36

- 1) The prayer was directed toward God
- 2) The prayer was based upon His Word
- 3) The prayer was intended to draw peoples attention to Him

D. Right Motive V. 37

- 1) Elijah didn't ask anything for himself
- 2) He didn't ask to be elevated to some place of prominence
- 3) He simply wanted God to receive the glory
- 4) He wanted the people to see just how big and mighty his God truly was

E. Our most effective tool is prayer

- 1) James 5:16-18, ***"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. ¹⁷Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. ¹⁸And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."***
- 2) The event James is speaking about is the event that surrounds our text today
- 3) Never underestimate the power of one life totally dedicated to God in prayer

Third, let's look at...

3. WHAT COMES AFTER THE FIRE FALLS

A. The Fire Fell 38

- 1) The Fall of this fire demonstrates God's great power when fell it eat up rocks, dust, water, animals, and all has got to be some sort of supernatural power there
- 2) This also pictures God as a refiner, one who would take the silver and plunge it into the fire to melt off anything un-silver-like in it.
 - (a) God works with a passion to purify us, to clean us, to sanctify us, to make us like His Son.
 - (b) His cleansing isn't always pleasant Romans 8:28 tells us that, ***"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."***

- (c) It doesn't say all good things it says all things; James tells us that we will face trials
- (d) We certainly go through hard times, James tells us that (1:2) but God wants to use them to make us like Him.
- (e) This is His burning passion, Romans 8:29 says: ***"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son ..."***
- 3) The fires of God come into your lives, not because He doesn't love you, but because He does.
 - (a) He loves you just the way you are, but he loves you too much to let you stay that way.
 - (b) As I have said many times, God is more concerned with your holiness than your happiness.
- B. The People Fell 39
 - 1) Once the people experienced the Fire of God
 - (a) Seen His mighty power demonstrated there on the mountain
 - (b) They fell on their faces the text says
 - (c) This is a picture of real repentance.
 - 2) When men meet the Lord they are changed
 - 3) When the people see the Lord move in such a miraculous manner, they fall on their faces before Him in genuine humility
- C. The Enemies of God Fell 40
 - 1) Elijah tells the people to go out and kill all the prophets of Baal
 - 2) These prophets were those who had lead them into idolatry
 - 3) The time has come to kill the prophets of Baal in our life too.
 - (a) The time has come to kill all the false gods and to rid our self of all the voices in our life that keep us serving the things of the world.
 - (b) The time has come to get rid of everything in our life that comes between us and serving the True God that is the only One who can answer by fire and supply the needs in our heart and life.
 - (c) Don't let one remain.
 - (d) Let none escape.
 - (e) Clean out every corner of your heart!
 - (f) It's time to bring them to the altar and kill them right now, right here, this very day!

Conclusion: I believe we, as a church, stand at a point in the life of our church where we need the Fire of God to fall. Last week I had you come and pray for our church, for God to demonstrate His mighty power by meeting our \$8,000 need. Well, is beginning to happen. I received a call Sunday night from a member who said she came to pray for the church and before she finished praying she also prayed for a financial need in her life. Before she even left the building God had meet the need; she found out that her tax return would be double this year from what it was in past years.

There also, has been a challenge issued to the members of this church by someone who has not joined yet. Dud Suisher has pledged \$1,000 of the \$8,000 and challenges the rest of the member's of the church to come up with the rest. I am calling this the Nehemiah challenge [pledge] since that is where I preached from last week. When Nehemiah surrendered to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem they didn't have the resources to do it in the traditional way so he had each family rebuild the part of the wall their home butted up against. The Bible tells us that they finished the wall in record time of 52 days.