

I. Introduction

- A. This fallen world is a morally corrupt pain machine. For all the goodness in the world, there is a greater darkness. The world is not as it was meant to be.
- B. God created Adam and Eve, and set them in the Garden of Eden. He gave them dominion, the Bible says. That means the right to rule.
- C. God is sovereign — he is the caring and powerful ruler of your life and your world. He is the great king, the King of kings, the master and commander of the universe. His will is the supreme will. He is the ultimate sovereign over all people, all places, and all things.
- D. But he is not the only sovereign in the picture. When God created humans in his own image, he put into us a dose of our own sovereignty.
 - 1. He gave you the power to make decisions — that is called your will.
 - 2. He gave you the right to rule your own life as you see fit — that is called your free will.
 - 3. And he gave you the authority over your own little world — that is called your dominion.
- E. That is how God created the world. That is how he made Adam and Eve. He gave them the scepter to planet earth.
- F. Which they promptly handed over to Satan. In theology, this is called The Fall.
- G. And that is why the fallen world is a morally corrupt pain machine.
 - 1. That is why you are lonely.
 - 2. That is why you might be addicted.
 - 3. That is why people you love get sick.
 - 4. That is why pain happens, evil happens, death happens, and politicians happen.
- H. When Adam and Eve sin, they surrendered dominion.
- I. What that means is this:
 - 1. The Fall unleashed a host of tyrants dedicated to trespassing on your dominion in life.
 - 2. There's a mad scramble for your heart's throne.
- J. Pain. Sickness. Despair. Corruption. Addiction. Greed. Deficit Spending. Debt. Narcissism. Vengeance. Anger. Bitterness. Cynicism. Religion. Legalism.
 - 1. There's a Pandora's box of nasty little Gollum's gnawing at the sovereign soul God gave you.
 - 2. They limit you.
 - 3. They shrink your life.
 - a) They make you less than you can be. They make you smaller, weaker, angrier, cockier, and sadder.
- K. You're in a war. You're in a pain machine, and the pain machine is in you.
- L. So what does it take to live in this pain machine and not get eaten alive?
- M. It takes a quality called GRIT and that is the topic we'll be thinking about all summer long.

II. G.R.I.T.

- A. Our summer series is called Grit.
- B. *Grace Revealed in Trials*.
- C. Let's get right into our Scripture for today, and meet the man whose true grit echoes down the corridors of history.
 - 1. *And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word." (1 Kings 17:1, NKJV).*
- D. This is the first time in the whole Bible we meet one of the biggest heroes of the whole Bible. His name is Elijah. Beside Jesus Christ and Moses, he was the prince of the prophets.
 - 1. No prophet of the Old Testament appears in the New Testament more than Elijah — 27 times.
 - 2. At his start, he comes from nowhere. This verse is all we know about his origins: "Elijah the Tishbite of the inhabitants of Gilead." That's all the data we have.
 - 3. He starts from nowhere.
 - 4. But he ends by riding a chariot of fire to heaven.
- E. He appeared at the worst moment in his nation's history. The economy was a wreck. The nation turned their backs on God. Their leaders were corrupt beyond description. Wrong was called right and right was called wrong. And God's truth was buried in an avalanche of lies. It was not easy to follow God in those days. It was not popular. The worship of the living God was forced underground... and the nation gave their heart's throne to seductive rulers and evil tyrants who masqueraded as good.
- F. Does this sound familiar to you?
- G. I'm describing ancient Israel, but I might as well be describing our culture today. Technology may change, the outward forms may change, but the human heart never changes, and the fallen world never changes either.
- H. Into this fallen, perilous, heartbreaking mess comes true grit in this man named Elijah. Listen to an old time preacher named F.B. Meyer:
 - 1. The throne of Israel was occupied by an effeminate man, the weak tool of his unscrupulous and beautiful wife — the Lady MacBeth of Jewish history. Jehovah's altars were thrown down; His prophets silenced and in hiding; His faithful worshippers a mere handful...
 - 2. Into such a state of things Elijah came, unarmed, from his native transJordanic hills; a highlander, unkempt, unpolished, unaccustomed to the manners of the court of the learning of the schools.
 - 3. At once the tide began to turn. The progress of idolatry received a decided check. The existence and power of Jehovah were vindicated. Altars were rebuilt; colleges were opened for the training of the godly youth; a successor was appointed; and an impetus given to the cause of truth which was felt for many generations.

III. Elijah

- A. Elijah the Disruptor.

- B. Elijah the One who shoved the tyrants back into their creepy little box where they belonged.
- C. Elijah the Game-changer.
 - 1. Elijah, the Nation-changer.
- D. What was his secret? Did he have special DNA? Did he have magical powers? Did he have a spiritual gift nobody else had? What made him special? Was there some mystical anointing on him that isn't on us today? Did he have special talent or a high I.Q. or the best scores on the SAT?
- E. No. No. No. and No.
- F. What made him special was this quality called Grit.
- G. Grit.
- H. Let me define that, and then we'll see how it works out in this paragraph of Scripture:
- I. What is G.R.I.T.?
- J. We could call it endurance. We could call it perseverance. Or resolve. Or courage. Or stubbornness or tenacity or strength.
- K. But it's more than all that. There's a supernatural quality to it. Here's our working definition of GRIT...
 - 1. *G.R.I.T. is the spiritual toughness to face the tyrants that would steal your dominion and to crush them with supernatural weapons of grace.*
 - a) Grit is faith on steroids.
 - b) It is trusting God when trusting God doesn't make sense.
 - c) It is you having such a deep knowledge of God that you refuse to let the devil shrink him.
 - d) Grit is you looking to the horizon of your life, and seeing the giants there — seeing the enemies, seeing the sickness, the dysfunction, the temptation, the debt, the mess that's coming your way... Grit means seeing all those giants, and then seeing the Grace of God on that same horizon, bigger than every giant, and more than ready to meet the foe.
 - (1) It is how you take back the scepter.
 - (2) Grit is how you get your dominion back.
- L. There is no magic to it. No secret. It is a passion for grace plus a perseverance in grace, and it restores the sovereign soul.
- M. Grit is the spiritual toughness to face the tyrants that would steal your dominion and to crush them with the supernatural weapons of grace.
- N. Let's talk about Grit this summer, okay? Let's turn our church into The School of G.R.I.T.... and I have three lessons for you today.

IV. *Lessons from the School of G.R.I.T.*

- A. *Lesson One: The School of G.R.I.T. is the school of hard knocks.*
 - 1. *And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead... ” (1 Kings 17:1, NKJV).*
 - 2. He is a Tishbite, and that means uncultured hillbilly, no offense. Gilead, the larger region, was pretty backward. The Bible dictionary says it was “a country of pasture and tent-villages, and mountain-castles, inhabited by a people not settled and civilized... but of wandering, irregular habit, exposed to the attacks of the nomad tribes of the desert...”
 - 3. Elijah was a mountain man who walked with God.
 - 4. I spoke to a friend not long ago who had a big tree cut down from beside her house. The trunk was massive, and she planned to cut down the wood for lumber.
 - 5. When the sawyer (lumberman) came, he didn't look at the wood as much as at the surroundings. He said the tree was no good for lumber.
 - 6. My friend asked why? She was confused. Normally this kind of tree made for fine lumber.
 - 7. Here's what the sawyer said.
 - 8. “The problem is that this tree stood alone. When these trees grow in a forest of trees, they get strong. That's because they have to compete. They compete for sunlight. They compete for water. They compete for nutrients. That gives them a much denser wood grain, and much more strength. But when they grow alone, they don't compete for anything.
 - 9. “Life was too easy. So they're weak. They're wimpy.”
 - 10. He told my friend, “You can't use this tree. The wood is too weak.”
 - a) People who grow up pampered never develop G.R.I.T.
 - b) People who grow up modeled and coddled and spoiled never develop G.R.I.T.
 - 11. I'm not saying that if your life was needlessly hard it's a good thing. It wasn't a good thing. It was a bad thing... It was the giant pain machine chewing on you. That's never good. It's bad.
 - 12. What I am saying is that God can bring good out of bad. Only God can do this. He can take the trials of your life, and turn them into something strong something that makes you a game-changer in a world gone mad.
 - a) *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience [G.R.I.T.]. But let patience [G.R.I.T.] have its perfect work, that you may be perfect [mature] and complete, lacking nothing. (James 1:2-4, NKJV).*
 - 13. Here comes Elijah. He just bursts on the scene. No refinement here.
 - a) His hair is long and thick, hanging down his back. He had a long beard & mustache (2 Kings 1:8).
 - b) His clothing is a loin cloth, from an animal he probably skinned himself (2 Kings 1:8)
 - c) Sometimes he wore a mantle made of sheepskin (1 Ki 19:13).
 - d) And in moments of high stress, he would cover his face with it. (1 Kings 19:13).
 - 14. He was tough, but he was real. His hands were scarred from hard work. His face was rough and tan. His life was not easy, not pampered, not wealthy, not famous. Nobody knew his name till he burst on the scene.
 - 15. And from the first words out of his mouth, his whole life was Grace Revealed in Trials.
 - 16. True Grit from a True Man.
 - 17. The School of G.R.I.T. is the school of hard knocks.
- B. *Lesson Two: The Catalyst of G.R.I.T. is staying awake to the presence of God.*

1. *And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand..." (1 Kings 17:1, NKJV).*
 2. Elijah was a prophet. We know absolutely nothing about him before this verse happens.
 3. Ahab was a king. He was a nasty guy and an emasculated king.
 4. How did this confrontation go down? We can only speculate... there's King Ahab. He has the day off from his wife who's nastier than he is, Queen Jezebel. Ahab goes walking down the dusty road, through the bustling outdoor markets of Samaria. The smells of roasting meat mingle with the spices and the fish and the human sweat in this busy town.
 5. Ahab's guards clear the way before him. The people scatter and bow.
 6. Suddenly this man jumps out from a doorway. He's tall and strong, broad shoulders, a flowing mane of matted hair. His beard reaches his chest, and his eyes blaze with fire. He has a Tarzan loincloth around his waist, and a Superman cape around his shoulders, and a walking stick in his hand that would make Thor's hammer proud.
 7. No introduction. No bowing. No courtesies.
 8. This giant, hairy man levels a finger at Ahab and shouts... "As the Lord of God of Israel lives..." He's uttering an oath — which is a very serious thing. On a deeper level, he's reminding them that God doesn't need their worship to maintain his own existence. God is self-existence. God lives because he is life itself and has life in himself.
 9. He points his finger at wicked King Ahab and declares, "As the Lord of God Of Israel Lives... before whom I stand..."
 10. In the earthly realm, Elijah stood before a weakling-tyrant.
 11. But the tyrant didn't fill his vision.
 12. God did.
 - a) As the Lord God of Israel lives... before whom I stand.
 13. The catalyst of G.R.I.T. is staying awake to the presence of God.
 14. Grace gets revealed in trials because God is present in trials.
 15. What's your trial right now?
 - a) Is it a marriage in trouble?
 - b) A child who's struggling?
 - c) A health issue?
 - d) Financial stress?
 - e) Job, confusion, or all of the above?
 16. Those trials have come to tyrannize you. They've come to trespass on the dominion in your life. They want to usurp your heart's throne. You should sit on that throne, under the influence of Jesus Christ.
 17. But your problems want to sit there. Your losses want to take over. Your enemies want to rule you.
 18. But here's the deepest truth:
 - a) In Christ, they're not the boss of you.
 - b) Whatever trial you face, God has grace for it. God has provision for it. God has strength for it. God has comfort for it. God has blessing for it. God has a way through it. God has solutions for it. God finds purpose in it. And God towers over it.
 - (1) All that grace is there for you because God is there for you.
 19. Our problem is never that God is absent, it's that we've fallen asleep to his presence and grace.
 20. *But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:31, NKJV).*
 21. On your darkest day, if you can only remember that God is there, you will remember that grace is there.
 - a) His power there, his love there, his blessing there.
 - b) God is reaching right now into the darkest part of that trial and working all things for the good of those who love him.
 22. The nation was going down, the government was corrupt, the king was a tyrant, but Elijah stood before the Lord so he had:
 - a) G.R.I.T., the spiritual toughness to face the tyrants that would steal your dominion and to crush them with supernatural weapons of grace.
 23. The catalyst is staying awake to the presence of God.
- C. *Lesson Three: The FUEL of Grit is the Word of God.*
1. *And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word." (1 Kings 17:1, NKJV).*
 2. I want to put on my professor hat and develop a really important truth with you. But I have to put some pieces together, so stay with me.
 3. Ahab is a really bad king, and really bad things happened under his rule. If you back up just two verses it says Ahab did more to provoke God to anger than all the kings who were before him (16:33).
 4. And here's one of those things he did, the verse right before our verse for today:
 - a) *In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the LORD, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun. (1 Kings 16:34, NKJV).*
 5. This happened under Ahab's rule. A man named Hiel of Bethel rebuilt the town of Jericho. What do you think of when you hear Jericho? The walls came tumbling down. Right?
 6. Jericho was permanently cursed. Five hundred years before Elijah, before Ahab, before Hiel, 500 years before these guys... Joshua pronounced this curse on whoever rebuilt Jericho:
 - a) *Then Joshua charged them at that time, saying, "Cursed be the man before the LORD who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates." (Joshua 6:26, NKJV).*
 7. The curse was that whoever rebuilt Jericho would pay a heavy price to do it. He would bury his first son when he started. And if he kept on going, he would bury his youngest. His family tree would be wiped out from history.
 - a) That's what the Bible said would happen 500 years before Hiel rebuilt the city.

- b) That's what happened when Hiel rebuilt the city.
- c) And when the author of Kings wrote this story, he connected those dots between what Joshua said and what happened to Hiel. See that? The Word of God cannot be broken.
- 8. Now, let's do exactly the same thing with Elijah. Five hundred years before Elijah, the Word of God said this through Moses.
 - a) *"Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest the LORD'S anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you. (Deuteronomy 11:16, 17, NKJV).*
- 9. The Word of God cannot be broken.
- 10. Elijah the prophet knew God's Word. He knew this warning, this promise, this prediction. He had soaked in Scripture, studied the Bible, saturated his mind with God's truth.
- 11. Elijah was a man of the Word.
 - a) I hope you're a person of the Word. I hope you wear out your Bible. Read, study, pray, repeat. One of my best friends said that every morning, as he grew up, he'd come downstairs for breakfast. His father had already gone to work. But there, on the kitchen table, sat his father's Bible. Every morning, his father got up early to read his Bible and pray, and he left his open Bible on the table when he went to work.
 - b) The people that will save this nation are the people whose Bibles are stained with years of coffee, sweat, and tears.
 - c) The fuel of G.R.I.T. is the Word of God.
 - d) How we need the Scriptures to guide us!
 - (1) It's your treasury when you're broke.
 - (2) It's your armory when you're attacked.
 - (3) It's your infirmary you're sick.
 - (4) It's your dispensary you're wounded.
 - (5) It's your boundary when the devil comes to trespass your domain.
 - (a) The only way to keep the tyrants from eating away your dominion is to face them with G.R.I.T.
 - (b) And the only way to develop G.R.I.T. is through taking in the Word of God *all life long*.
- 12. When Elijah read in his Bible that if the people turn aside and worship idols, God will shut up the heavens so that there would be no rain... since the Bible said it, Elijah figured he could bank on it.
 - a) The Bible proved true for Hiel.
 - b) And now the Bible would prove true for Israel.
- 13. So Elijah could say, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain except at my Word..." with profound confidence that the Word of God cannot be broken.
- 14. This is GRIT. This is grace — the courage and confidence to rescue a nation from a corrupt ruler, and from their own death-inducing, heartbreaking, life-wrecking ways — this is grace revealed in trials.
- 15. This G.R.I.T. comes with a price.
- 16. The moment he spoke God's truth, there was a target on his back... but we'll have to pick that up next time.
- V. Training our G.R.I.T. Muscles
 - A. Each week I want to give you one simple exercise to train your G.R.I.T. muscles during the week. One set each day, five reps.
 - 1. Step one: print out this verse and carry it with you:
 - a) *Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.' (Isaiah 41:10, NKJV).*
 - 2. Step two: in your next trial, difficulty, hard time... just read this verse.
 - 3. Step three: then go ahead and do panic or whatever... but just read this verse and let God's grace do the rest.