

## I. Introduction

- A. We are going to continue our series through the story of Elijah today, but I want to start with three other Scriptures. This will help frame our thoughts for today.
  - 1. *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one [the devil]. (1 John 5:19, NKJV).*
  - 2. *But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age [the devil] has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4, NKJV).*
  - 3. *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world [the devil] be cast out. (John 12:31, KJV).*
- B. The devil has played his Jedi Mind Trick on the whole world, and cast his spell. It's the spell of mistaking a lie for the truth, fantasy for reality. What looks real isn't real. The whole world lies under his sway.
  - 1. The devil is "the god of this age."
  - 2. The devil is "the prince of this world."
  - 3. The philosophies, the world-views, the truth systems that seem so natural and real are polluted. The devil works overtime. He snakes his tentacles into every corner of society. The arts, music, entertainment, government, education, philosophy, morality, finance, banking... it's all polluted. There is a constant stream of toxic lies pouring into every system our world, our culture, and our society has devised.
  - 4. And the essence of this pollution is the devil's attempt to seduce you from dependence upon and faith in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Pet 2:20).
- C. Let's talk cosmetics for a moment.
- D. The word cosmetics comes from a Greek word. It's the word cosmos. We get words like cosmic, cosmos, and cosmology from it. It originally means order, arrangement, or system. To put on make up is to arrange and order the face for maximum beauty. Cosmetics.
- E. When John said the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one, he used the word Cosmos. When Jesus called the devil the prince of this world, he used the word cosmos. Paul was working from the same idea when he called the devil "the god of this age."
- F. They all meant the order, arrangement, or systems of this world. The prevailing philosophies. The new normal.
- G. And Jesus, Paul, John, and all of Scripture says the same thing. The world's idea of normal is so messed up that those who bought into it don't even know how messed up they are.
- H. The new normal is abnormal.
  - 1. What is truth?
    - a) Truth is reality.
  - 2. What is truth?
    - a) Truth is reality as God experiences, God sees it, and God defines it.
      - (1) To walk in truth is to walk in reality. To walk in untruth is to walk in unreality. And that's just crazy.
      - (a) C.R.A.Z.Y. — *Contradicted Reality Always Zaps You.*
- I. It's just a matter of time.
- J. So what does God do? He invites you to step off of the shifting sands of unreality and onto the bedrock truth of his holiness and grace.
  - 1. Last week, I began a message called Reality Check, and this week I want to finish it.

## II. G.R.I.T.

- A. Welcome to part seven in our summer series. The series is called GRIT. We're looking at spiritual toughness and faith. And we're using a case study from the Bible for this. We're following the incredible story of a prophet named Elijah.
- B. Here's our definition:
  - 1. G.R.I.T.
  - 2. *Grace Revealed In Trials*
  - 3. *Grit is the spiritual toughness to face the tyrants that will steal your dominion and the faith to crush them with supernatural weapons of grace.*
- C. Previously, in our story...
  - 1. The whole nation of Israel has embraced a lie. They have turned from the truth of God. They've turned their backs on God. Instead, they have embraced idols. They've been led into this lie by King Ahab and by Queen Jezebel.
  - 2. Since this is crazy, and since contradicted reality always zaps you, their lives have been hard. They've endured a severe drought. Now there is famine in the land, and economic devastation to go with it. The king is desperate. The people are desperate. Elijah has been in hiding since he predicted this whole mess.
  - 3. But now, Elijah confronts King Ahab.
  - 4. In our last talk, we saw how Ahab blamed Elijah for all the nation's woes. Elijah blamed him back. Elijah proposed a contest.
  - 5. You get all your 450 priests of Baal, and 400 priests of Mrs. Baal (Asherah), and let's gather on Mt. Carmel. You guys prepare a bull for sacrifice, and I'll prepare a bull for sacrifice.
  - 6. You call on Baal to send fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice. I'll call on the invisible Creator God, the Lord, we call Yahweh.
  - 7. Whichever God sends down fire, he's God, and we'll follow him. Deal? Deal.
  - 8. So last time we saw how the Baal priests set up their altar, and prepared a bull for sacrifice. They started in the morning, calling on Baal to send fire from heaven. They danced and screamed and shouted and prayed. No dice. No answer from heaven.

9. They cut themselves with swords and lances till the blood gushed out, trying to get Baal's attention. From morning, through noon, and into the evening, the 450 priests of Baal did their fire dance, and bloodied frenzy to get something from this false idol Baal.
10. Not a peep.
11. Let's pick up the story right there, and look for...

III. *And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened." So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them. And when midday was past, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention. (1 Kings 18:27-29, NKJV).*

1. So now it's Elijah's turn, and that's where we left off last time. Elijah will give a clinic on waking up from the devil's nightmare.
2. Some translations say, Maybe he went to the bathroom. Yes, I had to go there. Because it's irreverent. And it's funny. And it's mocking. And that was Elijah's point. Which gives us our first Grit Wake Up Call:
  - a) *REALITY CHECK 1: Any enemy you can laugh at can never defeat you, dominate you, or diminish your dominion.*
3. Part of Grit is the ability to laugh at the enemy. You can never be dominated by something you can laugh at. You can never be controlled by someone you can laugh at.
4. Elijah could laugh at the priests of Baal because he knew that in the end, God always gets the last laugh.
5. St. Augustine said that the Cross is the devil's mousetrap. When he died, the devil and demons rushed in. They cheered, thinking they had won. We've done it! We've defeated the Savior! We've killed him! How they laughed and drank it in and did their victory dance.
6. But then, Boom, God sprung the trap, and up from the grave Christ arose. And he crushed them.
  - a) *Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us." He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The LORD shall hold them in derision. (Psalms 2:1-4, NKJV).*
7. God is not wringing his hands when evil seems to triumph, or when the wrong person gets elected, and you don't need to wring your hands either. Grit enables you to laugh at the forces of darkness, because you have the power of heaven on your side.

IV. *Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come near to me." So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. (1 Kings 18:30)*

- A. The nation was watching the contest of gods. The priests of Baal lay covered in blood, sweat, and tears. Exhausted. Like all religions apart from Christ, they were worn out trying to gain the favor of their God. Bleeding. Tired. Catching their breath.
- B. Now it's Elijah's turn.
- C. First he invites the people to come near him. Why?
- D. Because stepping out of the devil's nightmare has to be your choice. God invites you, but you must choose. "Come unto me," Jesus says, "all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." It's a choice.
- E. Second, he repaired the altar of the Lord. That would be a pile of big stones arranged to hold a sacrifice. He repaired it. Literally, in the Hebrew text, it says he healed the altar of the Lord (this is the only time it's translated repaired). He healed it. Why? Because the broken down altar represented the moral and spiritual sickness of the nation.
- F. What is an altar? It is a place of sacrifice. It is a place where sins are paid for. It is a place where divine holiness is satisfied. It is the Old Testament's way of communicating a New Testament truth: the altar is the forerunner of the Cross of Jesus Christ. It is a powerful symbol of the gospel. The place of sacrifice. The place where sins are paid for once for all. The place where God's holiness is satisfied and God's love flows full and free.
- G. When you read altar in the Old Testament, think "gospel." Think "good news of Christ crucified, the hope of the world."
- H. When Elijah healed the altar, he was basically healing the people's blindness to the gospel.
  1. *REALITY CHECK 2: The secret of gritty faith is a constant turning and returning to the Cross and the Gospel.*
- I. Back to the sacrifice of Christ. Back to the Cross. Recalibrate your mind, and your heart to what happened when Jesus died and to what it means.
- J. Last weekend at our church, we went over this... and we saw our own miracle as grace fell from heaven, and so many women and men were saved. 34 people crossed the line of faith, and drew near to God. It's a miracle every time, and we're so happy for you.
- K. And it's not just for rookies. You can only be saved once, and it sticks forever. But you still return to the gospel of grace. When your heart grows cold. When you're distant from God. When life is hard. When the pain machine chews you up. Return to Christ. Return to the Cross. Remember. Remind yourself. Review what happened, and watch the hard heart melt in the flame of Calvary's love.
- L. This was Elijah's hope for his nation. Let's see what happened.

V. *And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed. And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, "Fill four waterpots with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood." Then 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. So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water. (1 Kings 18:31-35, NKJV).*

- A. The situation is impossible.
- B. He makes it even more impossible. Ridiculously impossible. Impossibly Impossible.

- C. *REALITY CHECK 3: When you see giants looming on the horizon, it takes G.R.I.T. to see your Champion, Jesus Christ, looming larger than any of them.*
- D. See, there's reality lite, and there's ultimate reality
1. Reality lite: water doesn't burn. Can't argue with that.
    - a) Ultimate Reality: God can burn up anything.
  2. Reality lite: there's a bunch of enemies here and they hate me and want to kill me.
    - a) Ultimate reality: my life is in the hand of God, and he's got you surrounded, so bring it on.
  3. Reality lite: fire doesn't normally fall from heaven, especially on demand.
    - a) Ultimate Reality... but God.
      - (1) *while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:18, NKJV).*
  4. The data you see is reality. Can't argue with that. But Grit knows there's a bigger reality, and he's on your side.
- E. If God is real, anything is possible.
- VI. *And it came to pass, at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, "LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at Your word. "Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again." (1 Kings 18:36, 37, NKJV).*
- A. Nothing flashy. No dancing. No screaming. No blood. God isn't hard of hearing. He didn't have to shout. Just a simple prayer. I want to give you step two in waking up from the devil's nightmare. Then we'll work it out from this Scripture together.
1. *REALITY CHECK 4: The most important labels in your life are how you label God and how you label yourself before God.*
- B. First, he relabelled God.
1. *O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. He is the Lord God, Yahweh Elohim, the invisible creator God of our ancestral fathers. Let it be known this day that You are God in Israel.*
- C. Then he relabeled himself.
1. *Let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word.*
- D. Then he relabeled the people.
1. *Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that you are the Lord God, and that you have turned their hearts back to you again.*
- E. They had bought into the devil's lies, and now it was time to hear the truth. When these labels are wrong, a person's life is always out of alignment with reality.
- F. He's basically praying, God, show these people the truth about you, about me, and about themselves in relation to you.
- G. When you have the labels wrong, your life is weird.
- H. One of the labels I grew up with is going to sound really weird. It is the label worm. I'm worthless to God. I'm crushable.
- I. Putting that false label on me made me put a false label on God. Bully. Tyrant. Harsh Taskmaster.
- J. Contradicted Reality Always Bites You.
- K. God was patient with me. He gently showed me his grace. For me, he used the Bible and a few Bible teachers. Over and over again, I saw grace in Scripture. It's like God was putting together a lego set in my heart. His grace. His character. His love. And mainly his son's death on the Cross. When that hit me, I felt forgiven. I felt valued.
1. Not a worm, but royalty.
  2. Not worthless, but a treasured, precious, beloved child of God.
  3. And not something to be trampled, but a sovereign human, given dominion under the mighty lordship of Jesus Christ, and no spirit, and no person, and not even the devil himself has a right to trample on me and my realm.
- L. I woke up from the devil's nightmare. I woke up from religion. I woke up from self-loathing. I woke up from depression. I woke up from lies about myself and unrealities about God.
- M. It's like taking your car in for an alignment, only this was my soul. I wasn't crazy any more — not much at least.
- N. It was a massive realignment to reality for me, and by his grace, I've never looked back.
- O. And that is what I pray for you.
- P. And that is what Elijah prayed for the people.
- Q. And that is what God did for them in the very next verse.
- VII. *Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench. (1 Kings 18:38, NKJV).*
- A. Then the fire of the Lord fell. What was it? The finger of heaven? Something like lightening? A divine flamethrower? What was it?
- B. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, says the Bible.
- C. Listen...
1. *The sight of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. (Exodus 24:17, NKJV).*
  2. *"For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. (Deuteronomy 4:24, NKJV).*
  3. *"Therefore understand today that the LORD your God is He who goes over before you as a consuming fire... (Deuteronomy 9:3, NKJV).*
  4. *For our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:29, NKJV).*
    - a) *REALITY CHECK 5: No matter what the world may say, God is bigger, stronger, better, and more beautiful than you could ever imagine or think.*

- D. The grace of God only has meaning when it is set against the backdrop of his all consuming holiness. No one can look at him and live. Isaiah saw God, and cried out Woe is me, I am undone. Daniel had a vision and fell down as a dead man. John had a vision of Jesus and wrote, *And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. (Revelation 1:17, NKJV).*
- E. If you erase this consuming holiness of God, you turn grace into not grace. You turn it into something meaningless and bland. You turn it into leniency. You degrade to mere niceness. You make God into a senile grandfather, too tired be hassled with our sins. Or an unjust judge, too distracted to balance the scales of cosmic justice.
  - 1. Here is the cup of the devil's narcotic: to make love win at the expense of holiness, or holiness win at the expense of love.
    - a) Both are unrealities.
- F. When you see God lifted up and holy as a consuming fire, and the Cross of Christ as the place that fire fell — and when you know it fell on that sacrifice for you — and instead of you — then you have your first glimpse of a grace worthy of the title amazing.
- G. What is the fire of God that fell? It is the outstretched finger of the character of God.
- H. And when it fell, it consumed the sacrifice and the wood.
- I. But that's not all. It even consumed things that fire normally doesn't burn. It consumed the stones. And the dust. And it licked up the water that was in the trench.
- J. It is a miracle.
- K. And it freaked everybody out.
- VIII. *Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!" And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!" So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there. (1 Kings 18:39, 40, NKJV).*
  - A. When Elijah began his ministry, the people were at spiritual rock bottom. By the time he ended his ministry, there was a revival in the land. There were schools to train Bible teachers and true prophets. The altars to Baal were torn down. And the nation was completely transformed.
    - 1. REALITY CHECK 6: Grit lets God be God.
  - B. This was the law of the land, that false prophets were executed, and let's just let that be and finish the chapter.
- IX. *Then Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of abundance of rain." So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." So he went up and looked, and said, "There is nothing." And seven times he said, "Go again..."*
- X. *Then it came to pass the seventh time, that he said, "There is a cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea!" So he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot, and go down before the rain stops you.'" Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel. Then the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. (1 Kings 18:41-46, NKJV).*
  - A. The rains finally fall.
  - B. Let's zero in on that little cloud. it's the size of man's hand and first. But seven times, there was no cloud, and seven times, Elijah said, go look again.
  - C. Seven times.
  - D. Some of you have prayed for rain. And you've looked five times. But it hasn't come yet. You're living between the first look and the seventh look. You're losing faith. You're doubting God. You're wondering why you ever believed him in the first place.
  - E. Your stuck between the first look and the seventh, and it feels like you've been waiting forever.
  - F. I have three words for you, and then a verse.
    - 1. REALITY CHECK 7: Never Give Up!
  - G. Don't fall for the devil's Jedi Mind Trick. The rain is on its way. Stand on reality, and let the world around you howl. Who cares. Don't give up.
- XI. GRIT Basic Training
  - A. Write it down.
  - B. Carry it with you.
  - C. When in trouble or afraid, read it.
  - D. Then panic. But read it first.
    - 1. G.R.I.T. Basic Training
    - 2. *Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, 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 40:28-31, NKJV).*