

¹⁴ (Elijah) replied, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

¹⁵ The LORD said to him, “Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. ¹⁶ Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. ¹⁷ Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. ¹⁸ Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him.”

¹⁹ So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. ²⁰ Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. “Let me kiss my father and mother good-bye,” he said, “and then I will come with you.”

“Go back,” Elijah replied. “What have I done to you?”

²¹ So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his attendant. (NIV84)

ARE YOU ALL IN?

My family and I have a summer tradition that started a few summer’s back. We love to watch a TV show together called America’s Got Talent. It’s a talent competition that attracts comedians, magic acts, singers, dance groups, and our favorite – daredevil routines. They have knife throwers and bow and arrow stunts, and people that do really dangerous things. Last year one of our favorites was a guy named Uzeyer. He was a short little lovable man who had an amazing and amazingly dangerous routine. He did a free standing ladder routine, where he would climb up and down a free standing ladder. He’d bounce around with the ladder, even would do handstands on the top. It was amazing and I think part of what made it amazing was how dangerous it was. He told a story of falling off a ladder when he was younger and being in a coma for 3 days! This was a wildly dangerous routine. And his performance in the semifinals last year proved it. You know how they say “Don’t stand on the top rung of a ladder?” He ignored that advice in a big way. He not only stood on the top rung, he stood a step higher on the uprights, and then he brought 2 hula-hoops up there with him. But one got caught on his foot and he lost his balance. He fell 20 feet down to the stage below. Luckily he landed on his feet. Had he fallen while he was doing a hand stand, it might have been a different story!

America fell in love with Uzeyer. They appreciated the fact that he was **All In**. No harnesses, not safety nets or mats. It was real danger. He was either going to succeed or he was going to hurt himself badly trying! And America fell in love with him for it! He would have won the \$1M had he not broken his foot in the fall.

Today God asks you “**All In?**” We’ve been looking at that question already today. Our first lesson showed that Paul was **All In** with the suffering that he was willing to endure. Jesus tells us in the gospel that we just read that following him requires us to be **All In**, and now we’ll look at how two Old Testament prophets answer that very same question. And finally like it should, it comes back to us to answer for ourselves. So today we’ll ask and before we leave we’ll answer “**All In?**”

1 Kings 19:14-21

Elijah seemed to be a guy who was **All In** for the Lord. The guy that was supposed to be his friend and co-worker in shepherding God's people ended up being quite the opposite. King Ahab, the most wicked and vile king that the Northern Kingdom had. And his wife Jezebel was even worse. How many people do you know named Jezebel? Zero!?! Not a surprise, because no one wants to be in her category! So instead of help from the King and Queen, Elijah met only opposition. And both of them looked for opportunities to kill Elijah. But he kept on serving the Lord! He knew there was a good chance that his service would end in death, but he served! He was **All In**!

And it's usually the Elijah we see. But we start our lesson with a rare glimpse into a side of Elijah that we might be able to relate to. He was getting a little weary in his service and feeling like it maybe was all in vain. He's speaking to the Lord and he says:

"I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

Have you ever been there? "Feeling like your labors are futile and maybe what you are doing isn't even worth it?" Maybe you get a little depressed because you are seeing the results that you'd like. Maybe you are getting anxious or a little fearful at the way our country is moving politically or socially? Is a Christian going to be able to survive here in 100 years? 50 years? 5 years?

It's pretty easy to start to sulk the way that Elijah did. It's pretty easy to feel alone like he did. It's all too common that we give up. Maybe the fight isn't worth it anymore. Maybe our culture is right and I'm the old-fashioned one! We start to wonder if it's worth it to be **All In** for God anymore.

Or far too often we start losing the **All In** fight before we even get a chance to think about it! The social pressures that surround and bombard us have our minds inclined to sympathize with sin and to excuse shameful attitudes. We develop pet sins that on the grand scheme of things we feel aren't really that bad. We decide for ourselves that we can be *mostly in* for Jesus while still maintaining a few comforts as our own little secrets!

But my friends, there's no such thing as *mostly in* for God! Following him is an All or Nothing proposition. And far, far, far, far, far too often, in fact every single day, our sins chose the nothing side of that equation. We opt for the words, the actions, the attitudes that we think will give us joy and then we find the emptiness of the promises that the world makes. And we're left with the guilt that comes attached to our sinful failures. And we end up being **All In** for the wrong thing. ***For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*** (Romans 3:23). We are not lonely like Elijah but have all too much company. Jesus himself said it: ***For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it*** (Matthew 7:13). That's the company and the destination we deserve because of sin. Destruction along with all the rest in the fires of hell.

We aren't **All In** the way that God requires and because of it we deserve all to be in hell forever. But just like Elijah, we have a Savior-God, one who loves us and went **All In** for us. Jesus went **All In** and came to live with us. He went **All In** and confined himself to a human's body. He went **All In** and gave up glory to take our gloom. He went **All In** and went to amazing lengths to show us Amazing Grace. We went **All In** and did the most dangerous thing that's ever been done – he was willing to stand

1 Kings 19:14-21

in your place. Worse than a stunt that might end in death, he began his act knowing that it would end in death. He what God's plan meant for him and he embraced it! He embraced the plan, because it was the only way that he could embrace us forever. So he went **All In** and lived for us. He went **All In** and suffered and bled in our place. He went **All In** and even gave his life so that we could live.

And now that we have a Savior who is **All In** for us we can be empowered to be **All In** for Him! With sin' forgiven we can serve. With guilt removed, we are free to carry each other's burdens. Being reminded that we are not alone shows us the opportunities that we have to build one another up and encourage our family of faith.

Look at Elisha! He was called to serve and God enabled him to serve! God put that confident trust in his heart that he didn't need to rely on his old way of life. God enabled him to sacrifice, very literally, to serve the Lord. Twelve yoke of oxen was an incredible blessing. He must have been operating a farm that was worth a fortune. But more important than worldly wealth is being **All In** for God! So in faith he goes **All In**.

So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his attendant.

God empowers us to leave the old life behind. We can ignore the empty promises of the world, we can leave our lives of sin and go **All In** for Jesus. It's OK to make sacrifices to follow God. No matter what it is, it's worth it! It's OK if **All In** for Jesus means missed opportunities in the world. All those things are temporary, only heaven is forever.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind. And love your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10:27). That's your calling. That's your **All In** mission statement from Jesus!! And the same one that calls you strengthens you to do just that – to Go **All In** for Him! Live it, love him, serve them! And I think you'll be amazed and the opportunities you have to thank and worship and praise your loving God!

Paul summarized it really well in his letter to the Galatians *The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me* (2:20).

My friends. He's made it possible! So go and live it! Go **All In** for him who went **All In** for you!! Amen!