Chameleon - Part Three

# How Long Will You Waver?

## (1 Kings 18:1-21)

We are continuing today in part three of our message series Chameleon, considering ways that we blend into our culture, talking like, looking like, acting like, and living like everyone else around us, instead of being salt and light in the world. In week one we looked at Joshua demanding that the people of God choose whom they will serve, whether the gods of the nations around them or the Lord. In the second week, we looked at a young man named Gideon who was in hiding because his people had been oppressed by the Midianites for seven years. And today in our third week we’re going to look at another man that was used mightily of God.

The Bible tells us, “Elijah was a man just like us…” (James 5:17). And as we’re living our lives, doing what we think is normal, we need to understand that God never told us to be normal, he never expected us to blend in. And Elijah fought the urge to fit in and won. He was salt and light in his generation and God used him to get the attention of his people on earth.

The angel of the Lord told Zechariah that through his son, this miracle baby, John the Baptist, many of the people of Israel would come back to the Lord their God,

“And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17).

I don’t know what you think God is saying to his church today, but John came dressed like Elijah, with clothes made of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Matthew 3:2). And I believe God is still trying to get the attention of his people on earth. He’s still trying to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

Last week we found Gideon hiding, threshing wheat in a winepress, and spiritually Israel was in trouble, but God raised up Gideon to deliver his people. This young man that had grown up knowing nothing but oppression, fearful and unsure of himself, living day by day blending into his surroundings, would soon become the great liberator of his people. He has an encounter with God and this man, the youngest son of Joash, from the weakest clan of Manasseh is transformed into a military hero. And so, God using the very thing that the enemy had used against him, calls Gideon in his weakness, because God said,

“My power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

This is why you and I need to stop hiding our weaknesses. God wants to use our weakness and that’s why the apostle Paul said,

“I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

And so, God takes the foolish things of this world, the most unlikely young man named Gideon to deliver his people from Midianite oppression. God calls him out of hiding, calls him in his weakness, and raised him up so that everyone would know that it was God and not Gideon that won the battle.

Lord God sent Gideon out against this great army of 135,000 Midianites with only 300 soldiers. The Midianites outnumbered Gideon’s army 450 to 1, but the odds were in his favor because God said,

“The Lord is with you mighty warrior” (Judges 6:12).

And in the same way, the prophet Elijah confronted four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, but the odds were even greater, because he invited four hundred prophets of Asherah. And so, when Elijah engaged in spiritual warfare with these false prophets on Mount Carmel, he was outnumbered 850 to 1, and it all began because God called him to confront an evil king named Ahab, who along with his wife Jezebel were determined to turn the hearts of Israel away from the worship of one true God.

You may remember in first Kings chapter 17, that Elijah had declared the word of the Lord to Ahab saying,

“As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word" (1 Kings 17:1).

This of course didn’t go over very well with the king, but the Lord protected Elijah and sent him into a period of preparation in a place called the Kerith Ravine. It was there that God supernaturally provided for him during the drought, providing him with water from the brook, and even commanding the birds to bring him bread and meat to eat. During that time God humbled Elijah and taught him to depend completely on him.

Turning ahead to our Scripture for today in first Kings, chapter18, we find out that “after a long time” verse one says,

“In the third year, the word of the Lord came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land" (1 Kings 18:1).

Elijah had learned to trust the Lord with radical obedience even in the most impossible scenario, and as we saw last week with Gideon, he learned that when God says “go” he needed to go. And so, “Elijah went to present himself to Ahab,” there had been three years of drought and verse two says,

“The famine was severe in Samaria” (1 Kings 18:2).

Skipping ahead to verse 16, the Bible says that King Ahab went out to meet Elijah. “When he saw Elijah,” in verse 17, “he said to him,”

"Is that you, you troubler of Israel?" (1 Kings 18:17).

In other words, Ahab recognized that at least indirectly the drought was Elijah’s fault, and so he blamed him for causing this trouble in Israel; but Elijah wasn’t about to take the blame for the judgment of God on this idolatrous nation. He replied in verse 18,

“I have not made trouble for Israel, but you and your father's family have, because you’ve abandoned the Lord's commands and have followed the Baals” (1 Kings 18:18).

“Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table." So, Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel” (1 Kings 18:19-20).

Like Gideon facing the 135,000 Midianites with 300 Israeli warriors, Elijah steps up to have a showdown with 850 false prophets. He is standing there before the people of God with four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, and with all the authority of God he looks at them and asks,

"How long will you waver between two opinions?” (1 Kings 18:21).

In other words, “How long will you waver between worshiping God on Sunday and serving your idols on Monday?” And if he were here today, reading our mail, or looking at our browser history, he’d probably say the same thing to us, because he says,

“If the Lord is God, follow him, but if Baal is God,”

Or if Netflix is your God, or maybe social media, an immoral relationship, college football or the NFL, or maybe it’s the bar down the street,” he says, “If Baal is God, follow him.”

Elijah said, “How long will you waver between two opinions?” “But the people said nothing.” It was a showdown, Elijah is looking directly at them, he challenges the people to get off the fence, but nobody made a move. He’s like, you can’t waver between two opinions, you can’t claim to be the people of God and worship idols. You can’t go to church, going through the motions, practicing the rituals or sacraments, and then turn around on Sunday afternoon and worship something else that you’ve elevated above the rightful place of God.

And so, he says, “How long will you waver?” In other words, don’t live your lives in limbo, don’t try to get the best of both worlds, either live for God or don’t live for him, but there is no middle ground. And when you live like a chameleon, refusing to make a choice, you’re depriving yourself of the enjoyment of either one, because you are either all in or you are all out. And so, it could be money, it could be your image, it could be material possessions, it could be your children, your career, or your favorite sport. But whatever it is, an idol is anything that you prioritize, placing on the throne of your life, trusting or putting before the worship of the one true God.

The Bible says that God finds that unacceptable, and if you’re a believer,

“The Spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely” (James 4:5).

And so, God yearns jealously for your affections, he wants all of you, because he offered his son Jesus Christ for you, he gave his life to redeem you, and he purchased you with his own blood shed on the cross. And so, saying that you love him and believe in him and then living as if he doesn’t even exist is just unacceptable. The privileges and benefits of the Kingdom don’t come with a part-time commitment, you’ve got to love and serve him with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Let’s consider the stories of Samson and Paul, two different men found in the Bible, both were called by God, both had ministries, and both had choices to make. One day, the Bible says, in Judges chapter 6,

“Samson went down to Gaza, where he saw a prostitute. He went in to spend the night with her” (Judges 16:1).

And then in Acts chapter 16, the Bible says the apostle Paul spent the night in jail, “praying and singing hymns to God” (Acts 16:25).

Now, both of these men had been called by God, but Samson was more of a casual observer, and Paul got down on his knees and worshiped. Both of them moved in power, but because of Paul’s choice the Bible says,

“The foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose” (Acts 16:26).

On the other hand, Samson escaped, he walked out, the Bible says,

“(He) lay there only until the middle of the night. Then he got up and took hold of the doors of the city gate, together with the two posts, and tore them loose, bar and all…” (Judges 16:3).

And so, Samson shook the gates, but he was destructive, and because of his private choices his time was running out. Soon the compromise, the hypocrisy and double mindedness would catch up to him. His power would be snatched away, his ministry forsaken, and he would find himself in bondage because of his choices.

But today you and I don’t have to follow that same downward spiral that Samson chose. Like Paul and Samson, you and I have a choice before us, and I want you to know that Jesus is worth everything that you are afraid of losing. In fact, the apostle Paul said it this way,

“Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him…” (Philippians 3:7-9).

Paul tells us that Jesus is worthy of everything that you can give, worthy of your sacrifice, worthy of rising early, worthy of staying up late, worthy of serving, worthy of your tithe, he is worthy of it all. But my concern is that there may be somebody here, somebody listening, and you’re wavering because you don’t see the sacrifice as worthy of the kingdom.

Today, I want to assure you that Jesus is worthy of everything that you might be missing out on in the world. In fact, Jesus said it this way, he said,

"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it” (Luke 9:23-24).

I believe according to Scripture that when you stand before Jesus, your only regret would be that you held onto what he asked you to give up. Because there will be times when Jesus calls you to sacrifice, to forsake your desires, to spend a night in prayer, and you don’t want to be a Samson, having your life end full of regrets.

I know the pressure of our culture can be overwhelming, the lusts and desires of life can be enticing, and many of us are living our lives trying to hold onto both worlds when Jesus is calling us to give ourselves completely to him. I wonder if there is an area of your life or maybe several areas where you are currently sitting on the fence? Jesus is worthy of everything that you are afraid of losing, worthy of every sacrifice you could make, worthy of every tear, every sleepless night, every opportunity to share the gospel.

In fact, there is nothing that you can give that Jesus isn’t worthy of, and yet so many of us are entangled in this world, caught up in our culture, and distracted by things that don’t even matter. That’s why the first words of Jesus when he began his ministry were,

“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 4:17).

In other words, he says to change your ways, we can’t worry about what people say or what people will do. We can’t be selective about the kingdom, because Jesus calls us to die to self, to be crucified with him, and to be sell out completely for him. In the kingdom you’re either in or you’re not, it’s all or nothing.

I wish we had more people in the church like Stephen, people who were sold out for the gospel, because so many people are worried about being popular or being relevant instead of advancing the kingdom. The Bible says in Acts chapter 6 that the apostles were concerned because the church was growing so much and there were just too many people to care for. In verse two they said to the believers,

“It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables” (Acts 6:2).

And so, they were like we need to find some people to help us, people who are full of the Spirit and wisdom, so that they can help us do the work among the believers.

They chose seven men to do this work and among them was a man named Stephen. They laid their hands on these seven men, they prayed over them, and gave them authority for this ministry, but by the time you get to the end of Acts chapter 6 we discover that opposition arose from the Jews. They started trouble with Stephen, arguing with him, but the Bible says,

“They could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke” (Acts 6:10).

In other words, Stephen was so filled with the Holy Spirit, so full of God’s grace and power, that they couldn’t defend themselves against his teaching.

And so, even though what Stephen was saying was offensive to the Jews he said it anyway because he was sold out for Jesus. Even though many people rose up in opposition to him and he knew if he said the wrong thing it was going to cost him his life, he still declared the truth. And the Bible says in chapter 7, that the Jewish leaders was so infuriated by what Stephen said that they shook their fists at him in rage. Another translation says that they, “gnashed their teeth at him,” but verse 55 says,

“Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55).

And then he said it, this was the last straw, for the Jews this would’ve been the ultimate blasphemy. He said, “Look” in verse 56,

“I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56).

And the Jews were no longer able to contain themselves, “They covered their ears” and verse 57 says,

“Yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him” (Acts 7:57-58).

Stephen said he saw the Son of Man standing, and I believe when you give it all for the kingdom Jesus stands in honor. Your sacrifice makes him stand up, but honestly, I don’t think any of us have made Jesus stand up in a while. There may be one or two of you that got his attention, but I wonder if he’s not sitting on his throne wondering if there is ever going to be another church that will worship without looking at their watches. Another church that won’t compromise the gospel so that it can be popular.

I wonder if there’s anybody in here that is sold out for Jesus, anybody that is willing to do whatever it takes to give Jesus the glory? I hope and pray that we are that church that would talk about Jesus, that would tell the truth about Jesus even if it cost you some friends. I hope you have counted the cost, because this is a church that is going to represent Jesus even if it’s going to mess up your relationships, your family, and your status. Elijah said,

“How long will you waver between two opinions?”

And I want you to know that the verdict is in, it’s not about your opinion, because Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of lords and the Bible says,

“Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).

Joshua said choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve; and I’ll tell you that I’ve drawn a line in the sand, I’ve made my commitment, and I don’t care what the culture says about life, identity, or relationships, because I’m going to follow Jesus Christ. I’ve made my decision, and so our culture can say this or that, our government can approve it, they can even mandate it, but Jesus’ standard is holiness. The standard hasn’t changed and so I’m not going to change what I believe, what I teach, and what I say because of what the world believes.

But I’m afraid that there may be some people, maybe some of you, that have covered their ears and stopped listening to the truth. Somebody that would rather listen to the culture and believe a lie than to be convicted that the life their living doesn’t honor God. You see, the Scriptures are very clear, the apostle Peter wrote,

“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the (unbelievers) that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Peter 2:11-12).

I wonder if there are any of you today that would be willing to abstain from sinful desires, no longer living as chameleons, but living such good lives in this world, that even though they accuse you of doing wrong that you would glorify God by your good deeds? That’s a life that is lived for an audience of one, the doesn’t care what anybody else thinks, doesn’t care if they laugh at you, doesn’t care if you’re different, doesn’t care if they criticize you, because you’re not ashamed to

“Confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:11).

I know that different, but that’s what we’ve been called to do as the church, we’ve been called to be salt and light, a city on a hill, and that is the transformed life that Jesus calls us to. The Bible says,

“In view of God's mercy, offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Romans 12:1-2).

You’ve got to be transformed, you’ve got to be changed, you must have a conversion experience, no longer a chameleon, because you’ve changed your allegiance from the world to the kingdom of God. Today your roots are deep in Christ, you’re dwelling in his word, daily seeking him and his presence, being transformed by the renewing of your mind. Therefore, you’re becoming more like Christ, supernaturally changed by his power, and you’re living a life worthy of the calling that you have received. Let’s pray.

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