

He Stands Alone

Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus (Mark 9:8).

Scripture: Mark 9:2-8

Song: “Lord, Thou Art God’s Anointed”

As a little girl, I watched the Miss America pageant every fall. I’d pick a favorite contestant out of the five sparkling finalists and hold my breath while the tuxedoed emcee read the judges’ decision. When the winner was revealed, several people immediately encircled her and gave her a crown and a tremendous bouquet of flowers. Then, just as suddenly, she would be in the spotlight alone and walk the runway as the new reigning Miss America.

God set Jesus apart from Moses and Elijah. Christ stands alone as the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets. He is unique as the Son of God. Through a cloud of glory, the Father declared Jesus to be His beloved Son, His chosen.

Have we looked at Jesus and chosen Him above all others? Have we put Jesus in His rightful place of honor in our hearts? Let us consider this glorious Savior who put on flesh and acknowledge once again that He is Lord. He deserves first place in our thoughts, words, and actions. May the glorious Lord Jesus reign today in every aspect of our lives.

Father, fill me with anticipation for the day I’ll see You in glory. May I set You above everything and everyone else today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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 March 22–28. **Sara Schaffer** lives in Colorado with her husband and two daughters. She enjoys studying God’s Word, cooking, puzzles, and having fun with her family.

Refocus

[The disciples] asked [Jesus], “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?” (Mark 9:11).

Scripture: Mark 9:9-13

Song: “O God, in Christ All Focused Is”

When blurry images first came from the Hubble Space Telescope, scientists realized that something was wrong with the main observatory mirror. After an investigation, they discovered the mirror had not been calibrated to see properly in an airless atmosphere. Engineers designed new optics and instruments, and three years after Hubble’s initial launch, astronauts installed the corrective lens. The subsequent clear images from Hubble showed the venture’s success.

Similar to the case of the telescope, Elijah came ahead of the Messiah to refocus God’s people. The nation of Israel had a blurry understanding of why they even needed a Savior. John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elijah, encouraged people to acknowledge their sin, repent, and prepare for the Christ. John turned people’s hearts back to God so they would have a chance of understanding that the Messiah had come. John acted as a corrective lens to sharpen people’s focus on Jesus.

Are we living with a vague awareness of God? We too need to hear and heed the message of Elijah and John by confessing our pride and independence from God. We can ask God to sharpen our eyes and understanding by helping us to read, meditate, and understand the Scriptures each day. Let us allow ourselves to be recalibrated so we can clearly see Christ through His Word.

Father, we humbly refocus our eyes on You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Secret Service

Obadiah was a devout believer in the LORD (1 Kings 18:3).

Scripture: I Kings 18:1-4

Song: “Father, I Know That All My Life”

Sell them into servitude, the father decided. This would give his three daughters a way to survive, since they were without money for their dowries. He saw no other path. The father had once been a wealthy citizen of Patara—a town in the Roman province of Lycia. Around AD 300, when a plague struck their city, he and others faced severe situations. A young man who had lost his parents but not their wealth, heard of the three daughters’ plight. Resolved to serve Christ unreservedly, he secretly went three nights in a row and bestowed three bags of gold—one for each girl’s dowry. It was enough to save them from servitude.

Like the man who gave away his gold, Obadiah worked in secret and saved lives. He demonstrated his faith by rescuing and sustaining 100 people through a drought and persecution. The generous, orphaned young man and Obadiah could have decided to take care of themselves. Instead they took action in their difficult situations to assist the people around them.

How do we live out our belief in God? Do we see challenging circumstances as a reason to help others, or as an excuse for why we cannot? What anonymous action might God be asking us to take to bless and maybe even save someone else? We too can choose to be demonstratively devout.

Father, please give me the courage and opportunity to express my faith in secret service for You today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

He's God in Controversy or Complacency

When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, “The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!” (1 Kings 18:39).

Scripture: 1 Kings 18:20-26, 30-33, 36-39

Song: “Dear Father God, the Sole ‘I Am’”

In 1414 Germany, the Council of Constance asked Jan Hus to attend. Hus opposed the selling of indulgences and wanted to urge his fellow church leaders to stop this practice. He believed one couldn't buy forgiveness; atonement was from Christ alone. When Hus arrived in Constance, however, they arrested him. Without giving him a chance to defend himself, the Council declared Hus a heretic and burned him at the stake on July 6, 1415.

Similar to the deadly differences of opinion in fifteenth-century Germany, God's true prophets in Elijah's day were being killed off by Queen Jezebel (1 Kings 18:4). Interestingly, both sides seemed open to a contest between Baal and God. However, on Mount Carmel the Baal prophets had no response from their inert idol. In contrast, God distinguished himself. He consumed with fire not only Elijah's offering but also the entire altar and trench of water. The people immediately acknowledged, “He is God!”

In modern times, many voices assert that all religions can coexist. This highlights the desperate need for God's Word for the truth. Whether we find ourselves in controversy or complacency, God still longs to make himself known. Let us exalt Him in our current circumstances as the one who is singularly God.

Father, help me to boldly defend the truth that You alone are God and that in Christ alone we find forgiveness. In Jesus' name, amen.

Strengthened for the Journey

The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you” (1 Kings 19:7).

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:1-8

Song: “Be Still, My Heart! All Anxious Cares”

John Bunyan spent more than a dozen years incarcerated in the harsh conditions of Bedford Gaol in seventeenth-century England. At times he was released only to be jailed again for preaching Scripture without a license. Sitting in his prison cell in 1677, John wrote a new book with inspired ease. He described his own struggles and victories through a protagonist named Christian. In the allegory, Christian’s path to the Celestial City showed the universal temptation, despair, hope, and salvation that believers face.

The story illustrated how John Bunyan’s journey, like Elijah’s, was at times too much for him. Elijah received a death threat from Queen Jezebel for his strong stand against Baal worship. John received threats and punishment from his government for preaching the Word. Their persecution often meant standing firm in faith without others directly able to support and strengthen them.

In what ways, if any, are we facing persecution for our faithfulness? When we find our courage failing, God doesn’t get angry. He shows His understanding of our weakness. He nurtures and revives us so we may continue the journey in His strength to His glory.

Father, thank You for how well You know me. When the journey becomes too much, I trust You are more than able to sustain and renew me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Going Back and Stepping Forward

The LORD said to him, “Go back the way you came” (1 Kings 19:15).

Scripture: 1 Kings 19:9b-15

Song: “If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee”

After her release from Ravensbruck concentration camp, Corrie Ten Boom returned home to Haarlem, Netherlands. One day someone asked her to help the underground like she’d bravely done before her arrest, but the task terrified her. She realized that any previous courage was from God, and He had new work for her to do. She began to speak of His healing love. She opened a recovery home where many emotionally wounded soldiers and former prisoners came for healing. Soon a larger location became necessary. One became available: the site of a former concentration camp.

God sent Corrie back the way she had come. Though it was not the same place of imprisonment, God put her in a previous place of death to now minister life. She obeyed, and the facility at Darmstadt opened for her work. Elijah also returned by his previous path. Though initially full of despair on Mount Horeb, Elijah heard God in a gentle whisper. He stepped forward and listened to His instructions.

Our lives may not be at risk, but God might ask us to go back to difficult places. In obediently returning, however, we can step forward with confidence. God restores and renews, and He will strengthen us for all He asks us to do.

Father, if You call me to go back the way I came, I trust You will embolden and empower me to do Your work. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Better Together

“Haven’t you heard, my lord, what I did . . . ? I hid a hundred of the LORD’s prophets in two caves, fifty in each, and supplied them with food and water” (1 Kings 18:13).

Scripture: 1 Kings 18:5-18

Song: “As the Body Is the Fulness”

At 250 words per minute, Bidy took down the lectures and musings of her Bible-teaching husband. Her stenographer skills were twice the speed of most secretaries, and she excelled in rapid, precise typing as well. Gertrude Hobbs, aka Bidy, and Oswald Chambers knew when they married that her outstanding administrative abilities complemented his talent to communicate the Word of God. As he taught, she transcribed his lectures into books, allowing God’s message to be shared with a larger audience.

Similarly, Elijah and Obadiah—both devoted to the Lord—had contrasting roles during King Ahab’s reign. Elijah was on the run while Obadiah served directly with the king. Obadiah secretly served God by hiding many of His followers; Elijah openly called the wavering Israelites to worship God alone. Likewise, we may work with people who have different jobs and personalities from our own.

The various parts of the body Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 12 illustrate how all our gifts and responsibilities are connected parts of God’s design. When we can’t see the blessings, may we humbly serve with others in faith, trusting that by working together we are reaching many more people than we ever could alone.

Father, help me to see others through Your eyes, and give me a divine perspective on how our different gifts can lead to Your glory. In Jesus’ name, amen.