

[Elijah] said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." And the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.""

Dear Friends in Christ, and fellow redeemed:

As a person who is not all that capable when it comes to do-it-yourself tasks, I always appreciated the character of Tim, the Tool Man Taylor. Here is a man who considers himself the king of do-it-yourself (and even at his worst had much more skill and ability than I have). If you are familiar with the show, *Tool Time*, you know that Tim has his problems. Time after time, Tim would undertake some task only to be warned by Al, his faithful sidekick, that he isn't doing it quite right. But Tim will give an answer that said in some way, shape or form: "trust me, I know what I'm doing" Sadly, Tim didn't always know what he was doing and that meant that his efforts turn into comedic disasters, which is, of course, the whole premise of the show.

If someone like Tim Taylor says to you, "Trust me, I know what I'm doing", you would have every reason to be skeptical. But are there not times when we show that same skepticism in our relationship with God? We are willing to concede that God has absolute power and authority over all things in creation, but we also question the things that God is doing and the way in which his plan is unfolding. At times it can seem, at least from our perspective, that even God isn't quite sure of what's happening. But when our God says to us, "Trust me, I know what I'm doing", we can be confident that He not only has a plan, but that His plan is unfolding just the way it should, as He works to accomplish His gracious purposes.

If there was someone who should have clearly been able to see that God knew what He was doing, it would be Elijah. One of the study notes in *The Lutheran Study Bible* describes Elijah this way: *the heroic prophet of 1Kings. To counteract the evils of Ahab's reign, God raised up one of the most arresting figures among the OT prophets. In "spirit and power," Elijah was to foreshadow One besides whom there was none greater "among those born of women" (Lk 1:17; 7:24-28). As Moses was the type of the Prophet (Dt 18:15-22), so Elijah prefigured the forerunner of the Messiah, John the Baptist (Mal 4:5-6; Mk 9:4-5).* (The Lutheran Study Bible, p. 567. Concordia Publishing House.) Elijah was a key figure in God's plan. The Lord sent Elijah to confront wicked king Ahab and to tell him: **"As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."** (1 Kings 17:1, ESV) That began the three year drought that led to the famine in Israel. God, knowing that Ahab would seek to punish Elijah, told him: **"Depart from here and turn eastward and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. You shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there."** (1 Kings 17:3-4, ESV) After the brook dried up, the Lord told Elijah: **"Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. Behold, I have commanded a widow there to feed you."** (1 Kings 17:9, ESV) God provided for the widow, her son and for Elijah by ensuring that the supply of oil and flour didn't run out. During this time the widow's son dies and she is sure that Elijah has been sent to remind her of her sinfulness. Elijah takes the boy and through prayer and the power of God raises the boy to life again. This causes the widow to declare: **"Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."** (1 Kings 17:24, ESV).

All of this is just preparation for what came next, as God once again sends Elijah to confront Ahab and Jezebel and to confront the idolatry that is rampant in the land. It leads to that contest on Mount Carmel where the true God would be revealed by sending fire from heaven to consume the offered sacrifice. After the prophets of Baal fail in their task, Elijah prepares his sacrifice and prays: **"O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back."** (1 Kings 18:36-37, ESV)

We know that God did respond. **"Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench."** (1 Kings 18:38, ESV) It is a moment of great victory for Elijah. It was such a powerful moment that the people respond saying, **"The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God."** (1 Kings

In spite of all that has happened, Elijah finds himself having to flee for his life. Suddenly he doesn't seem so sure that God had everything figured out. At the very least, it didn't seem to be working out as it should. Led by God to Mount Horeb, he lets God know how frustrated he is with the plan as he has seen it unfold so far.

From Elijah's perspective, everything is falling apart. All that was supposed to happen has failed. Things have gone wrong. But God simply says to Elijah, "trust me, I know what I'm doing." His plan has not yet reached its fulness. A day of reckoning is still ahead, and Elijah is to anoint those who will carry that plan forward. God also points out that Elijah doesn't see what God sees. He doesn't see the big picture. For example, he doesn't see the people who have remained faithful to the Lord. He doesn't see what God can yet accomplish according to His gracious purposes.

That's our problem too, isn't it? It is hard, when you're in the middle of it, to see anything good coming out of the struggles and strife of your life. Let's face it—there have been more than a few times when we have felt that God really doesn't know what He's doing, or if He does, then He isn't paying attention to things right now. But we can trust God to do what is right and best, according to His all perfect holiness. He tells us: ***"For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope."*** (Jeremiah 29:11, ESV) But if that is the case, why don't we see things working out that way, God? Why do we see the hardships and disappointments, the setbacks and the struggles? We may even think, "God, we know what needs to be done. Why not do it our way for a change? Then things will be all right."

In those moments, God simply tells us again, "Trust Me. I know what I'm doing." ***"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."*** (Isaiah 55:8–9, ESV) Again and again, we can all find examples in our lives of those situations in which we thought we had it all figured out, but God had a different idea. But if we are truly honest and open, we will also have to admit that God's plan worked out better than our intentions, even when we couldn't understand it. His wisdom is so much greater than ours.

The psalmist reminds us: ***"The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations."*** (Psalm 33:10–11, ESV) My dear people, loved by God, you can trust Him! He knows what He is doing! Even if His plans are somewhat hidden from us, His plans will always—always—come to fruition. What He wills must be accomplished. That is why we learn from Jesus Himself that we need to pray, ***"Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*** (Matthew 6:10, ESV) We pray that prayer confidently and with trusting hearts that know God has it all worked out.

Like Elijah, we have seen how God does great and wonderful things. The perfect example of this is seen through all our dear Saviour did for us and for our salvation. God's plan goes all the way back to the very fall into sin, with His promise to send the One who would crush Satan under His feet. Sometimes people thought that the plan had fallen off the rails. There were those who were sure God didn't know what He was doing. Even as the Saviour lived among His people, there were many who thought that they had a better plan. Even among the disciples, we see this happening. When Jesus speaks of His suffering, death and resurrection Peter tries to talk Him out of this plan. ***"And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.'"*** (Matthew 16:22, ESV) Jesus rebukes Peter rather sternly, reminding Him that the Lord does know what He is doing. We can trust His plan. Yes, that plan led Jesus to the cross, where He willingly and lovingly suffers the punishment that you and I deserve. Yes, it meant that He would die a cruel death. The devil and all the forces of darkness thought that God didn't know what He was doing, to allow this great tragedy. But God did know what He was doing! As He had often said, over and over again, this death would pay the price for all sin, but it wouldn't stop there. Death, hell and Satan would be defeated once and for all as the crucified Lord rises again from the dead. He lives—and if that doesn't assure us that God knows what He is doing, I don't know what will.

Day by day we are confronted with situations that make us feel like Elijah. We feel lost, confused, defeated. Our lives can change in an instant. We face some unexpected tragedy, and struggle to understand why God would allow this, if He has a better plan for us. Our health changes and we don't know how we can go on. We see the evil that is in the world, and we wonder why God hasn't done something about it. Thankfully, we can trust God. He does know what He is doing. We have the confidence that David expressed in our psalm earlier in our worship: ***"I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken."*** (Psalm 16:7–8, ESV) God is our strength and our shield. He knows our needs and provides for us. His plans will always work out, not necessarily in our time, but always in His time. As the psalmist tells us: ***"Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act."***

(Psalm 37:5, ESV) He has already acted for your good, giving His Son to bring you forgiveness, life and salvation. Trusting in Him, we know His plan means life and salvation for us forever. Amen.