

THE ENERGY CRISIS

Judges 9:48-49

INTRODUCTION:

I wish to speak to you tonight on one of the most important things in the news, relative to all individuals in this country. We are hounded with this from the newsmedia and from our government. That is, they are trying to say that something has happened in this country, That many do not really believe has happened.

Many years ago there were those who predicted as someday, as in China and Japan, where millions of people live in close quarters - that problems would develop in America relative to the (shortage of resources). All of this while, there have been men who have searched, some even from the university here in Norfolk have been searching for food that might be discovered on the (ocean floor), beneath the sea.

Up at the South Pole and North Pole, they have been exploring to discover what sort of plant growth and things might be developed of food value for the human race.

Other experiments have been going on as to how to keep the air pollution free and pure. This has been something in the news. The water, the streams are being polluted by chemicals and discharge given off by industry. There has been all sorts of things made along this line.

However, now they say there is an energy crisis - there is really an energy shortage. A shortage of fuel, gas, and oil, to operate as the nation has in the past. They are giving out suggestions on how to set your thermostat

in your home. They are passing laws to cut down on the rate of travel on the highway. My prediction is when this happens, there will be less people killed, in cars on the highway. And there are various means that have been put forth as to how to cope with this difficult crisis. Some have suggested that the taxes on gasoline be put up so as to force people out of their cars. And others have suggested that the gas companies be permitted to hike the prices. And increase their income.

I believe that according to the records, the gas companies made more money last year than any previous year in the history of their industry. And I have also read somewhere that this coming year, our country will continue to export several million gallons of crude oil to other nations. Which does not really key up with what our problem is here at home.

There is also an energy crisis of the fuel -- but I think there is an energy crisis that many people have been suffering from for a long time. When you note that there are so many stores today that are nothing but vitamin stores. They have all sorts of pills and capsules, sunflower seed, vitamins that are supposed to do everything. And give you all sorts of energy. And (people are searching) they are out of energy.

I read an amusing story the other day about two elderly women. They were trying to out do each other in discussing their ailments and medications. What they were doing to get more energy. Finally one announced with sort of a glee of the demon, I am taking a pill that has nothing but side effects.

Some years back Hadzicall - came on market as Restorer of Energy - the fountain of youth
Reported - Grandpa - 80 yrs old - took Hadzicall for 6 months
Found him down at Mid Boy Camp - Some one ask - What's wrong? - Missed the School Bus !!

✓ Last Sunday night I suggested in my sermon that maybe the leaders of the church would have to go out and chop wood to keep the church house warm and heated. Now my prediction may be prophecy that comes true in this generation. At least, there has been some sort of fulfillment of it because I understand that after my sermon, that the week before - three of the deacons of this congregation had gone out and bought new axes.

Schools may have to be closed - cutting off Bussing entirely could save fuel - turning the lights off. The tax vaguer strip at night - save \$70,000 per Mo.

Now if that is any indication, I am only surmising that that same thing could be duplicated in all churches. Men, their wives are wanting the husband to call up the oil man and see whether or not he is going to be able to deliver to their house or home the right amount of fuel to keep the furnace buzzing during the winter. There are other wives that have negotiated a new axe in hopes they can keep a fireplace burning. Or they can have a little reserve heat in some small tin heater which they have purchased and put in some

*What is Energy - vague in Def - is something produced by work, room in the home.
 Export Coal - causes pollution - we have enough coal if we could get it out -
 Short Texas Problem - Industry uses up a lot of energy & there is waste
 40% oil comes from middle east -
 70% consumption rate each year beyond what we are producing in each year - Nuclear Plants
 - Solar Energy
 - Nuclear fusion plants -*

The energy crisis is real and it seems to be taking its toll right in our own city - right in our own generation. Now, as I was thinking about this sermon - I found a passage of Scripture over in the book of Judges 9:48-49.

✓ It is the story of Abimelech. It reads like this - "Abimelech began chopping a bundle of fire wood and placed it on his shoulder. Do as I have done, he told his men. So each of them quickly cut a bundle and carried it back to the town, where following Abimelech's example, the bundles were piled against the walls of the fort or the temple and set on fire."

Now I'd like to capitalize on this story -- this story is really not a man cutting wood for an energy crisis - but it is so practical that I think we can get something out of it.

Now Abimelech was a man whose mother was a kinsmen and he was the son of Gideon. And there was a struggle following Gideon's death - and the people had turned to worship Baal. Now Shechem, a Canaanite city, was the place where Joseph was buried and there Joshua made his farewell address to Israel. Joshua 24:1. It was a rallying center for national Israel after Solomon's death. It was sort of a political capitol.

There was a power struggle going on in Verse 4-6 in which Abimelech was trying to get the upper hand. He was putting to death all those that would have been in line to be the leader. And Jotham escaped.

V. 7-15 - Jotham offers (a fable) on Mt. Gerizim - he addressed an assembly and it is a parable about the trees. They were trying to elect a king - somebody to rule over them. And he was giving this as a story as to what was happening in the nation.

The olive tree would not give up her right to give oil to be the king.

The fig tree declined because she offered stable and cherished fruit for the people.

The vine argued that she would not give up producing juice for the people.

The bramble, which is a useless fruitless weed, accepted the offer. Now he said to the trees, it would be an absurd thing to take refuge in a bramble that stands so low compared to a beautiful olive tree or fig tree. And that (Abimelech) stands like a bramble and is a worthless fellow. His prediction is that not only the people but the leader, Abimelech, will be burned up.

The story concludes with the fact that the city is destroyed and of course, the temple is finally burned up and a thousand people, men and women die.

And in conclusion a woman drops a millstone on the head of Abimelech and that winds up what he has to offer to the city in the way of leadership.

Now the Bible is so full and yet practical and profitable with suggestions. Here, you know it is like a lighthouse fifteen miles away. It tells a story to the mariner - it tells him of the danger points and helps him to see that he is not to put his ship in a certain direction. Now of all the bad people mentioned like Herod, Saul, etc. Abimelech was not a good man. But the Bible used him as a warning. God sometimes drives a very straight nail with a very poor hammer.

The city of Shechem had been taken over and Abimelech and his men were to do it.

You can see the exciting marks as they come down and besiege the city. The swords were clacking sharply against the shields. Bow and arrows were flying. And there was death. And the battle goes on all day and as the sun is setting, Abimelech and his army cry surrender to the beaten foe. And unable any longer to resist, the city of Shechem falls. And there are pools of blood and there are severed limbs, glazed eyes looking up for mercy, that war never shows. There are dying soldiers on the laps of mother or wife, or sister who have come out on the field to offer them some kindness. The city is wounded. The city is dead and dying.

Now as you look over this city, you will find one or ~~two~~ buildings still standing. And one is the temple to a ~~God~~ Baal. Some of the soldiers outside of the city, in a tower, finding that they could no longer defend Shechem, now began to look out for their own personal safety.

They fly to this temple of Baal, they shut it up and say, now we are safe.

Abimelech has taken the whole city but he cannot take this temple. Here we shall be under the protection of the gods. And they look to their god.

This was a ~~strong hold~~ and they felt that God could not strike down this heathen temple.

✓ The question is how shall Abimelech and the army take this temple. How are they going to get in - these men are well fortified. Will they do it with a sword. Will they do it with a sphere. Will they use a battering ram and roll it up. And use hundreds of men and their strength to crash against the walls.

No, Abimelech marched his men to a woods in Zalmon.

✓ With his axe, he hews off a limb of a tree. He cuts up some branches. The Bible says he put this limb on his own shoulder and then he said to his men - (you do the same.) They are obedient to their commander.

The next question is, this is a strange army, isn't it? And what strange equipment. Just a bundle of firewood on their shoulder.

✓ They come to the foot of the temple and Abimelech takes his limb of a tree and throws it down. And the first platoon of soldiers come up and throw down their branches. The second platoon also puts down their branches - until they have huge pile of fire wood around that temple. There is a pile of tree branches.

✓ The men of Shechem look out the windows of the temple, and I suspect this looks like childish play on the part of their enemies. But soon the flints are struck and the spark begins to kindle the brush. And the flame comes up all through the pile. And the red elements leap to the casements and the wood work begins to blaze. One arm of flame is thrown to the right side of the temple - another flame goes to the left until all the bottom is encircled. And there under the wild night sky, the cry of fire. And soon there is the cry of fire within. There is no energy crisis as to fuel around that temple. The terror, the strangulation, the doom of the men of Shechem, is sure. And there went up a long and loud shout from the lungs of those outside. And as they stood, they cried victory, victory.

At least 1000 men and women, soldiers, died within that temple.

Now what are the Biblical truths and what are some things that we can get out of this story, that will fit in with our needs tonight. Here we have a man cutting a bundle of firewood. And they use that fire.

I - First of all, we learn that there is folly in depending upon any one form of tactics in anything we have to do for this world or for God. What I am saying is -- look at their weapons. They had a sword. They had battle axes. They had a battering ram. And what single weapon with Abimelech and his men contained - could they have gained such a victory. It was no easy thing to take a temple thus armed.

There is a house preserved that during the Revolutionary War a man and his wife kept back a whole regiment hour after hour. Because they were inside the house. The assaulting soldiers were outside the house.

Yet here Abimelech and his army - they surround a temple that has a thousand people in it - and they capture it (without the loss) of a single man on the part of Abimelech. Although I suppose some of the old Israelite heroes told him that you are going to get cut to pieces. Yet we testify today that by no other means it was not by an ordinary method - could that temple have been so easily taken.

Now what our fathers, mothers, brethren, and sisters in Christ - and what the church wants most to learn this day is that any plan is right, is lawful - is best which helps to overthrow the temple of sin, and capture the world for God.

We must put the old style coat aside. We must come up with a sharp clean glittering sphere. Because they have a thousand spheres there and we will never capture this world for God by any type of sarcasm, or any kind of imagination, or any sharp shooting wit or entertainment. We will never capture

✓ it by a Calvary of horses. Each one must go to the forest of God's promise and invitation and hue down a branch and put it on our shoulder. And let us come around these iniquities. And with this pile, kindled by the fires of the holy zeal of the spirit - and the flames of a consecrated life, we will burn them out.

What steel cannot do / fire may do.

✓ Now I would be in favor, myself tonight, of any plan of religious attack that succeeds. However old, however unpopular. That we need to have in our own prayers, our own preaching, and an Abimelech sword would not do it. We need to come back - there is a fountain filled with blood. "And this is the thing that will bring something to the heart and the minds of people. When men see that fountain filled with blood and then they plunge beneath that flood, lose all their guilt and stains." The Gospel is not a science to be squabbled about. It is a fact that the blood of Christ cleanses us. It is the warm invitation that comes with the good news.

✓ I have seen the sun rise on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem. And from that top, you see the beauty of a new day. But there is no beauty that compares with the light of Christ - that he can give to a soul.

✓ I have heard Beverly Shea sing and other great musicians sing - but I think there is no music that is compared with the voice of Christ when he said, thy sins are forgiven thee - go in peace. That is good news!

Let every man go and cut down a branch of this tree of life and wave it.
Let him throw it down and kindle it. Let all the way from Mt. Zalmon to Shechem

be filled with the shouts of joy. This bonfire of the Holy Gospel will consume the last temple of sin and will illumine the sky with joy. Christ came into the world to save sinners.

Any new plan that makes a man put his sin away - I am in favor of that. The temple must come down. And I do not dare to stand in the way when that happens..

I read a heartening piece of news the other day about a church down on the Gulf of Mexico, as told in Moody Monthly - of an amazing story in a small city of 3300 people - where men's lives once were completely dominated by sin, lust, gambling, profanity, and drink, with all it's evils - now have been completely transformed. The vices to which they were once in bondage are gone from their lives.

Yes, and God did it in the prayer room. The prayer room is located in a little Baptist Church and the numbers have been increasing of men pouring out their hearts to God in intercession. Nominal Christians have given up their habits of drinking, cursing, etc. As the men have experienced true conversion. They have gone out to help others.

Men who sold liquor, who drank, who gambled, and cursed and were filled with evil passions are now studying their Bibles. Some are teaching in Sunday School - others go out daily in the strength of the Lord to witness. To bear fruit.

The Pastor indicated that the rug that covered the floor - every square

inch of it many times had been wet with men's tears. You should hear our young school boys come down here and fall on their faces and pray for their friends and their teachers. He says, I don't know where there is another place in the world that you will find like that.

The time honored custom at Christmas has been eat, drink, and get drunk. But he talked about how the authorities declared it is the quietest, the driest, and the most sober Christmas spent in the history.

The prayer room was started in 1948 by a ~~Pastor~~ who was burdened by the heart breaking problems in the church. He came alone day after day to this prayer room and at Easter he invited some of the men to join him. Six men responded, 45 minutes - the Spirit moved. The next morning the church was packed. The Spirit quickened. And the prayer room has been the power house.

This leads me to say that the energy crisis in the world, the Christian world, may be (contrast) with the power shortage in the spiritual realm in our churches. And this prayer room is unique because it is reserved for men and boys only, to come and discuss their problems from time to time. And to ask special prayer. Only one person prays aloud at a time. Another amazing feature - it has drawing power. During one month 519 entered into that place for prayer, as recorded. (No fewer than six) have prayed in any one day since it began. Many of the men begin the day with prayer in the prayer room. And 11 men have been called to preach the Gospel as a result of that prayer room. It has become a clearing ground for troubled Christians. Many come with problems and go with them solved. Some come with doubt as to their conversion and prayer requests have come in as far as England and China. The impact of

that prayer room and the Saturday evening prayer meetings. The Holy Spirit has poured out his power on them in a marvelous fashion.

The energy crisis - the power crisis in our church is something that we need to give attention too. And we must learn that it is folly to depend upon things that really do not bring the power needed.

II. THE POWER OF EXAMPLE

The second thing I see in this story is that the power of example will have to be used if the energy crisis is going to be effective.

Everyone is going to have to follow the example of the leadership of the nation.

For example if Abimelech had sat down on the grass and told his men to go and get the boughs or the limbs, and go out to the battle - they would never have gone at all. If they had, it would have been without any spirit. Or without results.

Abimelech goes with his own axe and hues down a branch. And with Abimelech's arm - puts it on his shoulder. And marches on toward the temple of evil.

Then my text says, all the people did the same.

How natural that way. What made Stonewall Jackson the most magnetic commander

of this century. He always rode ahead - he was an over-powering example as in the battle of (Manassas) when the man looked at him and said there stands Jackson like a stone wall - in the fore front of the battle.

✓ Here is a father on the wrong road. All his children will go on that wrong road.

✓ Here is a father who enlists for Christ. His children are enlisted. He tries to bring his family by the power of example.

If you have ever visited a great art gallery - the art galleries of Europe, the art galleries in this country. You will see sometimes an artist taking copies of the pictures. Now these copies, they are going to carry with them, perhaps to some distant land. It will be a copy of the life and character of the masterpiece, but it is a copy. Now in like manner - your life is a master piece and it is being copied. And it is going to be copied long after you are gone. It will boom or blast in the home.

You ought to look out for what you say. You ought to look out for what you do. Eternity will hear the echo. The best sermon ever preached is a holy life. The best music that was ever given, is the music of a consistant life. A consistant walk.

✓ Now then years ago the Coast Guard used to have a cylinder with some holes at the side made for the thrusting end of some large poles with long leverage and it was a sort of machine. I really do not know all the details about it, but

there was a vessel in trouble, or going to pieces out in the ocean - this machine could shoot a rope out to the suffering men. They grasp it and the cylinder was turned and the rope winds around the cylinder, and those who are ship-wrecked are saved.

✓ So at your feet, today, there is the influence that is a tremendous leverage - the rope attached to it, may be cast out even into the future. Your children, your children's children, all the generations that are to follow will grip that influence. And feel the long reaching pull, after the figures on your tombstone are so near worn out - that the visitor cannot tell whether it was 1865 or 1600. Or 1950, that you died.

Therefore, I say that the energy crisis is going to be helped by influence. What the leader does - then the others follow.

III. THE ADVANTAGES OF CONSERTED ACTION

Now I think we learn from our text that (if) Abimelech had merely gone out with a tree branch, the work would not have been accomplished. (If) 10 or 20 men had gone and only half of them had brought their axes or lifted them - or had dull axes, they never would have accomplished what needed to be accomplished. (If) each man had cut a branch, and had (left his branch) on the ground by the stump, the victory would never had been gained. The Bible tells us that there was conserted action. (Each man carried his own tree branch and put it down by the wicked temple. And the temple falls.

My friend, today, there is we know one man in the church of God. And ✓ on his ~~shoulder he has a responsibility~~. It is his duty to go forward. And try to storm the place of evil.

✓ But there are men in the church and women who never lift an axe or swing a blow. Now this is the disheartening thing. And the power crisis in the church will never be solved as long as there are those who would not enter into the concerted action.

We all want a little boat, our boat, to get over the golden sands. And most of us are seated either in the bow or in the stern - wrapped up in some fancy clothing. Holding a big umbrella for shade. While there are two or three out there in the heat of that boat blistering their hands as they pull the ore locks, and they groan.

It is time for the religious sleepy-heads to wake up. While we have in our church a great many who are toiling for God. There are some too lazy, to pick up their limb, or even to brush a fly off of their cheek.

✓ Suppose in the military circles - on the morning of battle the roll is called. And a thousand men were called and only a 100 men answered.

What excitement there would be in the camp. What would the col. say.

What high talking there would be among the captains and majors.

Suppose word came to headquarters that these delinquents excused themselves

on the grounds that they have over-slept themselves. Or the morning was ~~damp with frost~~ and they were afraid of getting their feet cold or wet. Or they were busy cooking rations.

Dear Friends, this is the morning of the day of God Almighty's battle. Do you not see the troops. Do you not hear the trumpets of Heaven, and all the drums of Hell.

Which side are you on.

~~If you are on the right side,~~ to what service will you answer. What duty will you take up.

✓ In other words, what are you going to do or where will you be when Sunday School begins. In what prayer meeting are you going to show up. In what worship service are you going to come down the mountainside with your limb and surrender - I'm with you. To what sin are you going to address yourself. What offering are you going to bring. And claim some of the riches of Heaven.

What broken bone of sorrow have you ever set. What broken heart have you ever comforted. What moody soul have you ever prayed for. Are you doing nothing.

It is possible that a man or a woman sworn to be a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ - is it possible that he is doing nothing.

✓ I think there are Christians who try to hide these horrible secrets of their disloyalty to the church and think they are going to keep it away from the judgement book of God. If you are doing nothing, now the world may not find it out. You may be acting in treason to God. May the eternal God arouse you to action.

✓ As for myself, I feel I would be ashamed to die and enter Heaven with little to show. If you should die tonight and enter - would you be happy about the accomplishments that you have made. Is there not something more decisive for the Lord that you would like to do for him. Is there not some new allegiance to Jesus Christ and to work more for his kingdom. Are you ready to join with me in some new work for Jesus.

✓ What we are asking for tonight is (a concerted action) - the temple is very broad and is very high. And there is no man, no individual that is going to conquer these devils. I think (if we had 50,000 ministers--preachers of Christ, in this country who could take one branch of the tree of life - they could accomplish much. However, (if all their congregations should do the same. And we should march on and throw these branches around the great temples of sin and worldliness and let God send his fire as in the day of Elijah when fire fell from Heaven and kindled the bond-fire - we would demolish sin in this generation.

✓ IV. THE DANGER OF FALSE REFUSE

Now in closing this sermon, I find in this text that there is a danger.

✓ In this energy crisis there is a danger of people thinking, the well will never go dry. We have plenty of oil, gas - we are rich. In fact, somebody has said this country is plain filthy rich. Rich with power, knowledge is power. We have schools at every cross-roads. High schools, colleges, and we have money power - billions of dollars.

Now it took Jesus six hours to walk from Nazareth to Capernaum about 25 miles. But today in the Bible, there is an infinite source of power. It never fails nor diminishes. There are means of power. And the tragedy is, like the energy crisis - men have been trying to substitute for the energy crisis - the plastic and other things that they have tried to come up with. But this has not really stopped, the energy crisis.

✓ In the matter of spiritual power we have often ~~tried to substitute orthodoxy,~~ and it is a lot easier to hold a correct idea in one's mind than it is to adjust one's mind to Christ in vital faith.

It is easy to substitute the practical activity. With many, Christianity is doing something around the church house. Activity they say is what we need.

We have also substituted organization. We have tinkered a lot with machinery and we have been mistaken to think that everything is alright as long as we have got an organization that is perfect.

There are others substituting emotionalism - they think that a preacher and the people are to be stirred in their emotions. But does this lead to fuller service.

Why do we make these substitutes for spiritual power. Why do we take these.

Spiritual power is costly. Spiritual power must be honest with the Lord. He must let the Lord be the controlling thing in his life. He must give the Lord full swag. He must let the Lord come into control.

Jesus commanded his Disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power. And there will never be a power crisis if men will tarry and get this spiritual power.

As soon as the men of Shechem got in the temple, they were safe. They said our gods will take care of us.

Abimelech may batter down everything else, but he will not beat down this temple where we are now hid. But very soon they heard the timbers cracking. They noticed the smoke, they died miserably.

You and I are just as much tempted to false refuges.

The mirror this morning may have persuaded you this morning that you have a lovely check. Your best friends may persuade you that you are eloquent, they may have told you that you are alright. But I want to say to you, if you have been unpardoned, you are all wrong. You are on a road that is descending and it is very steep.

I suppose every person in this audience, at this moment, ~~are trusting~~ some kind of refuge. Maybe there are some who have gone into the power of good works. They say I am safe here in this refuge. But I want you to hear the tramp of your unpardoned sins all about the tower. Each have a match, they are kindling the material that will destroy you. By the deeds of the law,

shall no flesh life be justified.

Now you will say, I am trusting in the power of indifference. If this power is attack, it will be a great while before it is taken. I feel at ease. Now Abimelech as ruthless assaults coming on - death and his forces are gathering around and they demand that you surrender everything. Now if you were driven out of your tower of refuge tonight, and you could not hold the door, and you could not keep back the torches of judgement because when those branches were placed there from that forest - that was a live coal - redder and redder. Like a whirlwind. What will become of your refuse of lies.

Now some of you will say, we are engaged in a very mean business - ~~driving us from tower to tower.~~ It is something that we just don't know the answer too. I want to say to you tonight - regardless what happens to the energy crisis, but you can't afford to go on with the power shortage and the power crisis in your life.

I want to tell you that there is Gibraltar that never has been and never will be taken. There is no saying that Satan can assault it. There is nothing that in judgement will destroy it.

The Bible refers to it - in God is our refuge. And underneath thee is the ever lasting arms.

You must fling your life into it or be treaded down.

The hounds of death and parrell are after you and may hurry you. Many a

man has perished just outside the tower - with his foot on the step and his hand on the door latch.

I would plead with you to get in quick - there is no surplus time. In fact, along with the energy crisis - there is a time shortage. God has given you a certain amount of time and now is the day of salvation.

Our great God tells us that life is such an uncertain thing. And he tells us that your foot may be breaking right through a grave - right now. You are moving toward the judgement day.

Time is going to run out - eternity is just around the corner. And then there will be the dead and the judgement day.

I feel that I have something to hold on - for in God is my refuge. And underneath, are the everlasting arms.

Now I may be exhausted sometimes, and I know that I am exhausted in my failure to save myself. I must throw my whole weight, my mind, my body, my soul on this divine promise.

I must do as a tired baby or child - as he throws himself in the arms of his mother. Or like a sick man on his hospital pillow - he just relaxes and there he rests all his weight. So this is the refuge that God is our refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.

This text speaks worlds. And there is so much more that could be said, about the energy crisis. But with our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ - there is never any shortage or any crisis, of power, but what he can provide it. His well never runs dry. Calvary is always fresh.

On Sat India - Bapt - Celebrating 100 yrs Work - NOQA LAND -
Tremendous Meeting - 70 Way Court -
Basket at Door - Each one drop in Stone, as Entered Rev Area For Service -
Thousands - Counted later 27,000 stones in basket;
over 50,000 present outside.

Carbor - this are full with y.p^l - opposition is severe.
Christianity is stronger than ever before -

Hong Kong - Reconciliation - Flash light.
and some on foot field -
Left willing dead. life - all other lights out -
They turned their flash lights on skyward -

Traight - if you're willing - One -