

A Still Small Voice  
(I Kings 19:1-18)  
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

**I. Introduction:**

- A. Turn to I Kings 19 as today weøll be considering the story of Elijah and how God spoke to him in a østill, small voiceö as recorded there in verse 12.
- B. And as usual, weøll look to see how Christ is pictured in this Old Testament story, in keeping with Luke 24 where weøre told that the Lord Himself taught His disciples how all of the Old Testament scriptures actually spoke of things concerning Himself. And so, today as we examine Godøø dealings here with His prophet Elijah, I hope to direct our attention to how God likewise speaks to His people (His sheep) through the still, small voice of His Gospel concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

**II. Verse by Verse Exposition of I Kings 19:1-18:**

- A. Verse 1: ***And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.***
  - 1. Ahab & Jezebel: Ahab was the idolatrous king of Israel (the northern kingdom) at this time. And he was married to Jezebel who was an idolatress who persecuted and even had killed the prophets of the true and living God.
  - 2. What Ahab was reporting to Jezebel is recorded in chapter 18. I encourage you to read that account on your own. But to capture the context of chapter 19, let me briefly review the story of chapter 18 with you.

At this time, there was a great famine in Samaria (which made up much the northern kingdom of Israel) and they were in great need of rain. This was part of Godøø judgment against Israel for Jezebeløø persecution and slaying of the prophets of God.

And the Lord spoke to Elijah and told him to go before King Ahab as He informed Elijah that He planned to send rain. So Elijah sent the prophet Obadiah to tell Ahab to come and meet him.

Hereø Elijah, whom Ahab had been seeking but couldnø find, who suddenly appears out of no where and calls a meeting with Ahab. Some believe that Ahab sought and then proceeded to go to Elijah because he wanted him, as a prophet of God, to undo the øspell,ö so to speak, that had brought the drought.

So Ahab came and Elijah confronted him with the fact that Israel had forsaken the commandments of God and followed Baø-a-lim. He then instructed Ahab to gather all Israel unto Mount Carmel and to bring the 450 prophets of Baal and the prophets of the groves who ate at Jezebelø table. These prophets of the groves worshipped another popular idol, the presumed god, Ashteroth. So Ahab complied with the instructions, although as the story unfolds we learn that Jezebel apparently withheld the sending of the prophets of the grove.

Once they were gathered together on Mount Carmel, Elijah, standing alone as a prophet of God, said unto all the people of Israel (as recorded in vs. 21): ***“How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.”*** And Elijah proceeded to setup a test to validate the true God before the nation. He told them to bring 2 bullocks and let the 450 prophets of Baal choose 1 first, cut it up, and lay it on wood, but put no fire under it. He said you all have many in number and Iøm only one so you dress your bullock first. And then he set up the challenge how they could call on the name of their gods and Elijah would do likewise, calling on the name of the Lord, and he stated that the one God that answers with fire, let Him be God. And the people agreed, perhaps as they marveled that this 1 prophet would go up against 450 prophets of Baal in such a contest. The numbers certainly wouldnø suggest Elijah to be the 1 correct one. So they thought, øSure, such a manifestation would be convincing.ö

Well you know the story. The prophets of Baal prepared the bull and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon and there was no voice ø no answer. Elijah, standing alone, mocks them by saying your god must be busy, maybe heø talking or on a journey or just sleeping. And they cried all the louder out to Baal, cut themselves and carried on but all to no avail.

Then Elijah repaired an altar of the Lord that the people had torn down and he built an altar in the name of the Lord with 12 stones, representing the 12 tribes of Israel. Then he built a trench around the altar and after preparing the bullock and laying it on the wood, he instructed them to pour 4 barrels of water over the sacrifice and the wood and to repeat that 3 more times. As a result even the trench was filled with water.

Then at the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah called upon the God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel to let it be known that He was the Lord God of Israel and that Elijah was His servant, acting in accordance with His instructions. Then the fire consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the dust and even licked up the water that was in the trench. And when the people saw it they fell down and said ***“The Lord, he is the God.”***

Elijah then had them take and kill all of the 450 prophets of Baal. And Elijah then turned to King Ahab and said to get up, eat and drink, for ***“there is a sound of abundance of rain.”*** [Mention the hymn, Showers of blessings] Then Elijah went up to the top of Mt. Carmel and sent his servant to look toward the sea 7 times. And finally, on the 7<sup>th</sup> time, the servant noticed a little cloud out over the sea. And so Elijah sent him to Ahab to tell him to get his chariot and get off the mountain before the rain hindered him. And as you know, there was great rain!

3. Now back to our text, in I Kings 19:1, this is the story that Ahab related to Jezebel.

**B.** Verse 2: So, continuing in verse 2 we read, ***“Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.”*** In other words, Jezebel swore by her gods through her messenger to Elijah that by this time tomorrow, I’ll kill you just like you did the prophets of Baal or else let my gods do the same to me ó kill me.

**C.** Verses 3-4: ***“And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.”*** So he has now gone back to Judah, the southern kingdom over which Jeshospat reigned. But apparently his fear was that he still might not be out of the reach of Jezebel, for as we read in verse 4í

***“But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, <the same wilderness that the Israelites had roamed for 40 years> and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.”*** Here is Elijah, who by the power of God had courageously contended with 450 prophets of Baal before all of Israel and whose God had been so miraculously vindicated thereby, showing his feet of clay (his frail humanity) in being so frightened now by threats of this 1 woman, Jezebel. This simply shows us that this great prophet’s spirit and courage in chapter 18 were of the Lord and not of himself ó for now he acts ðfor himself,ð desiring to die on his own terms and not at the hand of Jezebel.

**D.** Verses 5-8: ***“And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.”***<sup>6</sup> ***And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.”***<sup>7</sup> ***And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.*** <God’s angel told him he wasn’t going to die but rather to go elsewhere><sup>8</sup> ***And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.”*** Horeb is Mount Sinai where God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and where He gave Him the law for the nation Israel ó which law included not only the 10 commandments but also the ceremonial law through which the sacrificial Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, was pictured. Interestingly, he roamed for forty days just as the Israelites had roamed in this same land for 40 years.

**E.** Verses 9-10: ***“And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?”***<sup>10</sup> ***And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.”*** In his zeal for God’s glory he had slain 450 prophets of Baal ó he was jealous for the Lord and had demonstrated this. But he says the children of Israel have forsaken the law, particularly the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 commandments in their blatant practice of idolatry. And so Elijah feels lonely as 1 among thousands of enemies as if to say, ðWhat can I, one prophet, do against thousands. He replies that I am here ó because, due to my opposition to their idolatry, they now seek to kill me.

F. Verses 11-12: ***“And he <the Lord> said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: <sup>12</sup>And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.”*** These verses here are what spawned my interest and further study into this passage. God brought before Elijah a great wind which broke the rocks into pieces, then an earthquake, and then a fire ó but said of all of these the LORD was not in them. We know that our sovereign God is in control of all things including the elements. In Nahum 1:3 we read, ***“... the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, ...”*** What is meant here when it says the Lord was not in the wind, not in the earthquake, and not in the fire, is that He didn't speak directly to Elijah in or through these things as, e.g., He spoke to Job out of a whirlwind (Job 38:1), and as He spoke to Moses on this same Mt. Sinai and the earth shook, even the whole mountain (Psa. 68:8). So even though Elijah witnessed these things that God brought, displaying His majesty and the fury of His wrath, He spoke to Him in a still, small voice. That word, òstill,ö means quiet or calm.

I believe we have represented here that while God is a just God of judgment and wrath, that in showing mercy He by no means sets aside His justice. He's revealed in a still small voice that brings quietness, comfort, assurance, and peace to the soul that would be helpless and hopeless and rightfully perish as sinners before the justice of a holy God.

I'm reminded of the words of Moses to the defenseless Israelites when they were backed up to the Red Sea as Pharaoh's mighty army approached, when he said, òStand still and see the salvation of the Lord.

I'm reminded of our Savior who rebuked the wind and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. ó muzzled, calmed. It says in Mark 4:39, ***“..And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.”***

And so let's see what this still small voice had to say to Elijah, picking up in vs. 13í

G. Verses 13-17: ***“And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, <this being an act of reverence> and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?***

<Interestingly, this is the same question posed to Elijah in vs. 9 and as we will see, he gives the same answer as we read ><sup>14</sup>***And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.***<sup>15</sup>***And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael <Hah-zayø-el> to be king over Syria:***<sup>16</sup>***And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat <Shayø-fat> of Abelmeholah <Aø-ble-may-hoeø-luh> shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.***<sup>17</sup>***And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.”*** God in essence says, “No Elijah, I’ve got more work for you.” In fact, we know Elijah didn’t die but was translated. And He tells Elijah that these others will bring manifestations of my wrath on the disobedience of the nation. Hazael was to destroy those that would engage in war, Jehu would destroy those who didn’t such as Ahab and his family, and Elisha would destroy the children of the idolatrous parents at Bethel. So in this “still, small voice” God informs Elijah that He will take care of things, (judgment and justice shall be executed) but note the comfort that He offers up in vs. 18 when He tells Elijah

H. Verse 18: ***“Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.”*** And so God comforts Elijah, letting him know that contrary to what it may seem, He had reserved for himself a people of even 7 thousand. Wow! But we know that still was a small number compared to the 100s of thousands Israelites of that day.

III. Romans 11 Commentary on this: To better understand how this still, small voice proclaiming that God has a people would indeed be rightly characterized as meaning an assuring, calming, voice of peace as I’ve suggested, it might help us to see God’s own commentary of this through the pen of the Apostle Paul in Romans. So turn with me now to Romans, chapter 11.

A. Romans 10:21-11:5: First, to capture the context look back at the last verse of Chapter 10 where we read of Isaiah saying to Israel, *“All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.”* And so he continues in chapter 11 saying, *“<sup>1</sup>I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. <sup>2</sup>God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not <or perceive ye not> what the scripture saith of Elias? <Elijah> how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, <sup>3</sup>Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. <sup>4</sup>But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. <sup>5</sup>Even so then at this present time <i.e. ó as in the day of Elijah> also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”*

Now it's not insignificant that he refers here to the people that God has reserved not simply as His elect, but He calls it an election of grace. God's choosing of a people is unto something and that something is unto salvation by grace ó i.e. ó they are chosen to be delivered from the just dessert of their sins, not based upon any merit found in the sinner (not based upon Elijah's ability in his own power to overcome the enemies of God) but rather based solely upon the merit of the One who saves us by His grace, i.e. óthe merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, His righteousness alone.

The fact that God has a people, called His elect, reserved unto Himself cannot be separated from the fact that they were elected unto something ó unto salvation in Christ. Consider that almost all, if not all, of Paul's epistles, in the opening verses begin with a phrase like we read in Eph. 1:2: *“Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”* This grace is found in the Person and work of Christ and there alone. Seeing God has an elect people tells us that He shall save, but seeing that the election is one of grace is to see the Savior revealed in the still, small voice of the Gospel of grace wherein we see how God could be just and still justify a sinner based upon the Person and work of that sinner's substitute, Jesus Christ. Grace is from God the Father as the source in His sovereign election. Grace is from the God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in that He accomplished all that was necessary for a holy God to save His chosen people ó to be gracious unto them.

For all whom God's Spirit convicts of sin of their total inability to measure up before the judgment seat of a holy God if measured by their own merits, then the Gospel of grace is great news! For therein we have the righteousness of God revealed as we discover how God has taken all of the sins of each and everyone of His elect and charged that demerit to the suitable Substitute who paid their debt in full in His finished work on the cross of Calvary, bearing away their sins; And likewise imputed (or charges) to their account all of the merit of the perfect obedience unto death of the God-man, the very righteousness of God wrought out by our Savior in His life and death on the cross. That's grace.

B. Now how does Paul distinguish this election of grace. Well, read on in Rom 11: 6: ***“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.”*** So, if we count ourselves among the saved, but imagine that our deliverance isn't of Christ's doing and dying (& His alone), it cannot be grace, for it would have to be conditioned in some way on something done in, by or through us- the sinner of and that's works. And the 2 don't mix.

#### IV. Closing

Now given the sense that Paul relates in his day concerning the comfort God brought in Elijah's day through His still, small voice, I believe Elijah's comfort wasn't in simply in knowing he wasn't alone, but in being reminded that it was GOD who had a people. That God would prevail. That even Elijah's life wasn't his own, but that a people had been chosen by God to worship Him as He is of as a just God and a Savior. And we can only behold that in the Person and work of Christ. We know that Elijah beheld that for the scripture reveals how Moses and Elijah appeared long after their time here on earth had passed with Christ on the mount of transfiguration and as recorded in Luke 9:31, they ***“...spake of his decease <speaking of Christ's death> which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”***

And here in Romans Paul calls that remnant which shall exist in every generation until Christ returns, the election of grace of And if of grace, then it is no more of works. What calming, assurance of mercy, grace, and peace can be found in that still, small voice of the Gospel of grace.



Well, have you heard this still, small voice? You know today God doesn't speak to us audibly as He did with His prophets such as Elijah. But we have the completed written revelation of God at our disposal and just as surely as He spoke to Elijah, He likewise speaks to us in the still, small voice of the Gospel found herein ó one in which peace, calm, and assurance is well founded.

If you imagine as I once did that Christ came to save you, but that there remained a work of faith to be done on your part in order to be saved (i.e. ó that was the determining factor in whether you would live or perish in eternity), then hear God's word ó that's not the election of grace for if it is of works, it's no more of grace. I.e. ó if it's conditioned on you in any way or to any degree, any assurance you might presume to have didn't come from this still, small voice of the Lord.

Do you imagine that Christ met all the conditions for His elect but that God chose you to be represented by Christ because of something good he found in you ó knowing how you would respond as a less obstinate sinner than those who perish? Well that's not the election of grace. That would be an election of foreseen works, would it not?

You see, even if you imagine that Christ and His work is necessary, but that you must procure it or add something else to it that ultimately makes the difference ó your bowing to God's teaching, your act of believing, your faithful practice of religion, whatever ó if it is imagined to play any causal role in your salvation, then it is of works and then no more of grace. It is not Christ plus something else. It is Christ alone or else it is the religion of works. And grace and works don't mix. As Elijah said, *ó how long halt ye between 2 opinions?*" We're to look to Christ alone ó to Jesus as the author and finisher of the faith.

We may perceive (as did Elijah) the evidences of the wind and the fury and might of God manifested therein. We know that the Holy Spirit's work is characterized as being like the wind. We may have our ground shaken up, perhaps literally like the Philippian jailer's. And spiritually speaking, our ground will be shook as always happens when one of God's elect in time is being brought to God-given faith and repentance. And we may gain a sense of God's inflexible justice and sure and certain wrath against sin (like the consuming fire that Elijah saw) that will be poured out in judgment wherever sin is found. And sadly, this wrath shall be experienced personally by all except those vessels of mercy (the election of grace) for whom God's wrath was poured out on their Surety and Substitute — by the shedding of His blood at the cross of Calvary.

But the peace, the calm, certain assurance of salvation is only seen in the still, small, quieting, comforting voice of the Gospel wherein we see and value how we must have Christ and His righteousness laid to our account for God to be reconciled to me a sinner — for peace to be made between God and a sinner.. And all blessed with such God-given eyes of faith can know that they, like Elijah, are “*...blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,*” for as He declared in John 6:37, “*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*”

May God's people hear and rejoice even today in the sound of the abundance of rain, the still, small voice of the gospel of God's grace that points us solely to Jesus Christ and His righteousness for all of our salvation.

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself — the Bible.