

**1st Kings 19: 13-18 – “God’s Reserving 7,000”, Message # 11 in the series –
“Lessons from the Life of Elijah”, A Bible Study conducted
by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 20th, 2017,
for those gathered at his home.**

The last time that we were together I said to you that there were four ways in which the Lord addressed Elijah’s discouragement, in this time period in which he fled from Jezebel. We looked at the first two of them the last time we were together. 1st – God addressed Elijah’s discouragement by asking him a pertinent question: What are you doing here Elijah? He brought this question to Elijah to show him that He had been pleased with Elijah’s sense of duty and his obedience to speak His word when he confronted the prophets of Baal, and He wanted to gently reprove Elijah by asking him – Why aren’t you able to continue on with your duty, and glorify Me? But He knew that there were real lessons which Elijah needed to learn. And 2nd – He addressed Elijah’s discouragement by showing him the truth about Himself in the still small voice.

Elijah needed to understand that God’s purposes and plans were greater than his. He needed to understand that, yes, God does do things in ways that will demonstrate His wrath and make His power known. There are ways that He demonstrates His majesty and His justice as He did at Mt. Carmel, and now here at Mt. Horeb, in the demonstration of these acts of power. But in the changing of men’s hearts, in the salvation of their souls, it is not just power that is exhibited, but it is peace that is spoken. And great and meaningful lessons are conveyed to His people through His still small voice. He wants us see that it is with this still small voice that He does indeed change the course of men’s lives forever. It is His gentleness that makes them great. Now tonight, we want to look at the two other ways that God addressed Elijah’s discouragement: In order to encourage him, God 1st of all – God hears Elijah’s complaint and by His patience teaches Elijah to wait on Him and to trust in Him. (verses 13 and 14) And 2nd – He gives to Elijah some understanding of His decrees. I pray that in our study of these things tonight that we will learn these good lessons for ourselves and that they will bring lasting peace and encouragement to our hearts.

1st of all – God hears Elijah’s complaint, and by His patience He teaches Elijah to wait on Him and trust in Him.

It says in verse 13 – “So it was, when Elijah heard the still small voice, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave.” “And suddenly a voice came to him, and said, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’” This was the second time that God had asked him this question; because He knew that Elijah, even though he was a prophet, and even though he had seen His acts of power, and heard His still small voice, he still did not have the definite answer that he was looking for; as to why he had not seen revival in Israel after the acts of power which God demonstrated through him at Mt. Carmel. God knew that this was the reason that Elijah was so discouraged. We know this because Elijah gave God the same answer to God’s question as he had before. We are not told whether he said it more insistently and definitely, or whether he said it more quietly because he had had heard the still small voice, but he still wanted to convey this greatest concern of his heart and mind to God: “I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword.” “I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.”

By the way, you should know that God is well able to answer all of the questions of your mind and heart, but He will do so in His time and His way. While you are waiting for the answers He has some things that He wants you to learn. Turn with me over to Psalm 62, verses

1-12, and I will show you this. “Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation.” “He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.” “How long will you attack a man? You shall be slain, all of you, Like a leaning wall and a tottering fence.” “They only consult to cast him down from his high position; they delight in lies; they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.” “Selah” “My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved.” “In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.” “Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.” “Selah” “Surely men of low degree are a vapor, men of high degree are a lie; if they are weighed on the scales, they are altogether lighter than vapor.” “Do not trust in oppression, nor vainly hope in robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.” “God has spoken once, twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God.” “Also to You, O Lord, belongs mercy; for You render to each one according to his work.”

Now what I am hoping that you will understand from these words is that our God wants you to learn to wait upon Him, and to trust in Him at all times. He wants you to do this in the times of reformation and revival, when you are spiritually on top of the world, and greatly involved in the work of the Lord. And He wants you to trust and to wait upon Him in the times when He brings His judgments and executes His justice. And further, He wants you to wait and to trust in Him even in the times when you think that He is doing nothing at all. Still His purposes are in motion in regard to all people in all the earth. And His purposes are in motion concerning you. The most important thing to God is your relationship to Him; how you see Him, how you think about Him, what you do in relation to Him, at all times. In the text that we are studying tonight, we see that Elijah fell into leaning to his own understanding; to fearing Jezebel would kill him, and fearing that spiritual revival would never come to Israel. But I want you to look at how David thought about God during his trials. He says – “My soul waits for God, from Him comes my salvation.” “He only is my rock and my salvation; His is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.” In other words, in the midst of His greatest difficulties David would continue to see God as his defense, His salvation from sin and from his enemies; the One who was watching over him and protecting him, and he would not be greatly moved. He would not worry or fret. He knew that God would help him.

He speaks in verses 3 and 4 about how sinful his enemies were; attacking him and consulting to cast him down from his high position as king. They delighted in lies. They blessed with their mouth, but inwardly they were cursing him. David knew this, and yet you do not see him worrying or fretting about it, or thinking that he had to attack them back. He was content to wait silently for God alone. He was content to commit the matter to God and to pray for wisdom to know how he should think about the whole matter. He saw God as his defense and he would not be moved. He saw God, it says in verse 7, as his glory; the rock of his strength, and his refuge was in God. He counsels all of us who are reading this Psalm in verse 8 to trust in God, when we are in difficult situations, and to pour out our hearts before Him because He is a refuge for us.

We see in verse 9 that God indeed gave him wisdom in terms of how he should see the men who were against him; whether they were of low degree, or whether they were of high degree. The men of low degree were a vapor and a lie, and if they are weighed in the balances, they are altogether lighter than vapor. And so, he was not to trust in oppression; either in his own ability as king to oppress them, nor in thinking that taking things from them, or using his riches as king to get them to do what he wanted, would help at all. He was not to set his heart upon anything of earthly power that was in his hand to do. He was to trust in God. God had spoken this once to him and twice he had heard it; that power belongs to God. And God is well able to render to each man according to his works.

In applying this to our study, we should see that God is just as interested if not more so, in the process of building character into the lives of His people as He is in answering their most perplexing questions about why the hearts of people around them do not change, even when they are most zealous to preach and declare the will of God to them. “What are you doing here, Elijah?”, is a question that was asked by the God who knows all things. He knew exactly what Elijah was thinking and why he was discouraged. And he kept Elijah in the dark about the answer to his most pressing question – Why don’t people’s hearts change when Your greatest acts of power are shown to them, until He had finished dealing with Elijah’s spirit in a gracious way.

The answer to our greatest, most pressing and important questions of God, will come to us in the still small voice of God, speaking to our hearts in relation to His word. And what God would say to us in His still, small voice is often this – Because I would have it this way so that You might be more sensitive to My purposes and plans. And I would teach you to wait upon Me for the answers. Dear Christian – Is this something that You are willing to do? To wait upon God; to trust in God, seeing Him as your refuge, and your strength? Are you willing to abide what He will show to you in the providential orderings that He has for your life and your future, and the future of your loved ones, and the future of the nation that you love, and want to see turned back to back to God? This is the way back from discouragement, disappointment, and even depression. It is that we will learn to wait upon God and trust in Him at all times; to answer God’s question to you – What are you doing here? If you can say – I am waiting upon You, Lord, I am trusting in You, and I know that You are wise enough to give me the answer and lead me into all the truth of what I need to learn; to build my character and make me useful in your service, then that is the best of all places to be.

Now 2nd – In order to bring lasting encouragement to Elijah, God gives to him some understanding of His decrees.

We need to see that Elijah needed to know that God had things perfectly in his power and control to deal with wicked men, He most definitely had the power to encourage His prophet, and to move forward His purposes in the salvation and sanctification of His people. His purposes had been more secretive than Elijah would have liked, but this did not mean that they were not definite. For in verse 15 we find the Lord saying to him, “Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria.” “Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel.” “And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.” “It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill.” “Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.” These were definite actions that God had ordained, in justice and judgment, even though He would not be a participant in any of the sins committed by these kings. Nevertheless, these things were a part of His decrees in relation to Israel. Through His raising up of Hazael as king over Syria and Jehu as king over Israel, He would thoroughly judge the wickedness of the nation in the years to come. And through Elisha, God would bring a reviving of the work that Elijah had longed to see come to pass.

All these decrees were revealed to Elijah so that He would be not be overwhelmingly discouraged, but rather he would be encouraged, and restored to his former holy confidence in God and all of His future purposes being fulfilled. And this most certainly did come to pass in his life. He now knew that God would righteously judge and bring down the wickedness that presently ruled in Israel. And what is more, God had told him that he had reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees had not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that had not kissed him. Truly, this must have been a revelation to Elijah; that there were that many left in Israel who were still worshipping the true and living God. He had thought himself alone in his work,

and without support among the people. We find that this verse is used by the apostle Paul in Romans chapter 11, verses 1-6, if you will turn with me there. "I say then, has God cast away His people?" "Certainly not!" "For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." "God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew." "Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 'LORD, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS AND TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY SEEK MY LIFE?'" "But what does the divine response say to him?" "I HAVE RESERVED FOR MYSELF SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." "Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

Now, you could see how easily Elijah could become discouraged; thinking that God had cast off His people, and that lasting reformation and real revival would never come. But the divine response to Elijah was He had reserved for Himself seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal. What is this kind of language, but the language of election. The language of election is the language of definiteness. God's reserving for Himself this number of people should tell us that it always was His purpose to do so, in relation to this time where so few seemed to believe and witness to their faith in the true and living God. The number 7,000 may represent the actual total number of God's elect during that generation. Or it may be a number which represents the total number, whatever that total number would be, of those chosen by God to salvation.

When you are chosen to salvation, you are also being called to a pure worship of God, a worship where idols are put away, and those who speak the word of God will be received, and their words believed, and acted upon, because it is God's word that is being delivered. If you are chosen of God, you will be praying to live a righteous and holy life through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul, at the time in which he wrote this epistle (his present time) was declaring that there was a remnant of Jews according to the election of grace. He was saying that this too was a remnant which God would know that He had reserved for Himself; Christians who would stand for the truth of the gospel and the doctrines of grace. For, he tells us here, their salvation was not by works but by grace. It was not by their own free will and choice, but by God's choice and His supplying them with grace and strength, and Christ's righteousness to cover the best of their works. And these truths are something which is true in all generations of the Church, both Old Testament and New.

Let us learn from this not to become discouraged by smaller numbers of those who will confess their faith publicly in our day. This does not mean that God has stopped doing conversion work in the world today. There will always be a remnant according to the election of grace, and reason to rejoice that God is doing a great work in the salvation of souls, in accordance with His purposes. These 7,000 were those whose mouths had not kissed Baal, and this was their public confession to God; that they would not kiss him. And the reason that they did not kiss him was because they had been given saving grace to resist that temptation and to overcome the evil one, and to prove the truth of their holding fast to the commandments of God's law. They believed in God, and they waited upon Him for the good spiritual things that He would bring to them through the ministry of men like Elijah and Elisha. Zeal for the Lord of hosts is greatly valued by God and it will be rewarded by Him. We shall see the truth of this in future messages.

A.W. Pinks view of 1st Kings 19, v. 18 –

"Yet I will leave Me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him". On this verse we take decided exception to the interpretation given by the great majority of the commentators, who see in it a Divine rebuke

unto the prophet's dark pessimism, supposing it was God's reply to his despondent "I only am left," when in reality there was a multitude in Israel who refused to join in the general idolatry. For several reasons we cannot accept any such view. Is it thinkable that there could actually be thousands in Israel who remained loyal to Jehovah and yet the prophet be totally unaware of their existence? It is not surprising to find one writer of note saying, "It has often been a subject of wonder to me how those seven thousand secret disciples could keep so close as to be unknown by their great leader: a bouquet of roses will always betray its presence, hide it as we may" - but he creates his own difficulty. Moreover, such a view is quite out of harmony with the context: why, after bestowing honour upon the prophet, should the Lord suddenly reprove him? The careful reader will observe that the marginal reading opposite "Yet I have left Me seven thousand" is, "Yet I will leave me seven thousand." The Hebrew allows of either, but we much prefer the latter, for it not only removed the difficulty of Elijah's ignorance (which the former necessarily involves), but it accords much better with the context. The Lord was graciously comforting His despondent servant. First, the Lord informed the prophet that another should take his place and carry on his mission. Next He declared He was by no means indifferent to the horrible situation, but would shortly make quick work of it in judgment. And now He assures him that, though summary judgment should be visited upon Israel, yet He would not make a full end of them, but would preserve a remnant for Himself. Nor does Romans 11:4 in anywise conflict with this, providing we change the word "answer" to "oracle" (as the Greek requires!), for God was not replying to an objection, but making known to Elijah things to come. It will thus be seen that we take an entirely different view from the popular interpretation not only of verse 18, but of the whole passage. Every writer we have consulted regards these verses as expressing the Lord's displeasure against a refractory servant, that He dealt with him in judgment, setting him aside from the honored position he had occupied by appointing Elisha in his stead. But apart from the gentle rebuke implied in His question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?", there is nothing to signify the Lord's displeasure, but much to the contrary. Rather do we regard these verses as a record of God's comforting answer to the prophet's despondency. Elijah felt that the forces of evil had triumphed: the Lord announces that the worship of Baal should be utterly destroyed (v. 17 and cf. 2 Kings 10:25-28). Elijah grieved because he "only was left": the Lord declares "I will leave Me seven thousand in Israel." So desperate was the situation, they sought to take the life of Elijah: The Lord promises that Elisha shall complete his mission. Thus did Jehovah most tenderly silence his fears and reassure his heart."