

1 Kings 19:9-21

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 June 2024

[0 : 00] going to be in 1 Kings, 1 Kings 19. We're going to start in verse 9. I'll give us a little bit of context in case you weren't here this past Wednesday night. 1 Kings 19, we'll pick up in verse 9, we'll go to the end of the chapter which gets us down to verse 21. 1 Kings 19 verses 9 to 21 as we just continue to make our way through scripture. So it's good together with you. Let's open up with a word of prayer and then we'll get right into it together.

God, we're so thankful. Thankful that we have this opportunity of coming together once again. Thankful for the grand privilege of opening up scripture. We have much to rejoice in but Lord, we know that it is a grand opportunity every time we can come hear a word from you. So God, we pray that you would help us to see your word with clarity, that we would understand it with conviction, and that we would apply it, Lord, in our lives on a daily basis. We ask that the truths which we come to realize this evening would be truths that find application, not just a collection of information. And Lord, we just ask that you be glorified and honored through it and we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. 1 Kings 19. Okay, let's put it in context and then we'll get right into our scripture together. Elijah has just had the great showdown on Mount Carmel. You remember where the fire of heaven fell down? The God who answers by fire, he is God, right? He comes out and God answers by fire. They slay the 450 false prophets of Baal and the 400 priests of Asherah. Then he prays and rain comes and he outruns Ahab to Jezreel, the city. Ahab goes into the home of his home where Jezebel is and Elijah is waiting at the gates of Jezreel. Now you don't need to miss, especially in light of what we're going to see this evening, you don't need to miss the reality that when God answered by fire, all of the people on Mount Carmel says, the Lord is God. There's this profession, this public profession. Don't miss that. Okay, and you'll see why in just a moment. The Lord, he is God. So God validated his existence, his reality, and it was the people who joined with Elijah that slew the false prophets down in the valley. So when Elijah asked Ahab to call all of Israel, again, the northern tribes, the 10 northern tribes that came together, the people joined with Elijah. So now you have the people making a public profession. The Lord is God. Yahweh is God. And then living out reality to that, slaying the false prophets. Now we're not here to talk about the rightness of that or the humanity of that. This is just what happens, right? So because Elijah says, if he's God, let's do something, and they do it. And then Elijah runs ahead of all the people. All the people go their separate ways. He goes outside the city gates of Jezreel, and he's waiting because he's hoping for this national repentance, if you will, and he wants it to flow from the palace there or the house of Ahab because the government seat is still in Samaria, but he's in Jezreel where Ahab and Jezebel were living because it's closer to Jezebel's family. Anyway, knowledge of geography there, but he's waiting for the kind of the word from the, you know, the throne room, if you will. Jezebel gets angry and sends out a message to Elijah as surely, and if it's in the original language, says as surely as the gods live,

I will do to you as you have done to them by this time tomorrow. Now the reality in that is Elijah has already proven that the gods, lowercase g, do not live, but Elijah gets scared and tells us he flees for his life. He goes to Beersheba, which is the southernmost part of the land of all of Israel, so he's down in Judah territory, goes as far south as he can. He leaves his servant there, and then he goes another day's journey down into the wilderness in the Negev area around the Salt Sea. So he's there, and he lies under the tree, said, it's enough already, let me die, for I'm no greater than my fathers.

He starts having a pity party, okay, we look at this discouragement. God sends an angel, wakes him up, the angel, you know, tells him to eat twice, two times, and he tells him to go, and then he takes 40 days, and he goes to Mount Horeb, which is Mount Sinai. You remember, from where he is at in the Negev to Mount Sinai is only about 250 miles, 200, 250 miles. It's about a week's journey, okay? It's about a week's journey at that time, but he takes 40 days to get there. God's doing something. That's where we left it at, right? God's doing something, and he's bringing him to Mount Horeb, which is the same place as Mount Sinai. So he's bringing him back to where God, Yahweh, has had this encounter with his people before. So that's kind of where we left it, and I want you to see this evening in the rest of that 19th chapter, the restored laborer, the restored laborer. The Word of God says, then he came there to a cave and lodged there. Now he's on Mount Horeb. Verse 8 tells us he's at Mount Horeb, the mountain of God.

Then he came there to a cave, and he lodged there, and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, what are you doing here, Elijah? He said, I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. Side note. Notice the name of God that he gives here, right? Pay attention to this. It's a right name, but it just further highlights, I say this in the most correct way, the silliness of his discouragement, because he refers to God as the Lord of hosts. That is, he is the captain of heaven's armies, and yet he's running for his life from a lady, and yet he's declaring who God is. So anyway, we keep going. He says, I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. The sons of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I alone am left, and they seek my life to take it away. So he said, go forth and stand on the mountain before the Lord. And behold, the Lord was passing by, and a great and strong wind was rending the mountains, and breaking 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. And after the earthquake, a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, a sound of a gentle blowing, some translations say a still small voice. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, what are you doing here, Elijah?

[7 : 05] Then he said, I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the sons of Israel have forsaken your covenant, tore down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left, and they seek my life to take it away. The Lord said to him, go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram, and Jehu, the son of Nimshi, you shall anoint king over Israel. And Elisha, the son of Shaphat, of Abel, Meholah, you shall anoint as prophet in your place. It shall come about that the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu, shall put to death. And the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elijah, shall put to death.

Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him. So he departed from there, and found Elisha, the son of Shaphat, while he was plowing with 12 pairs of oxen before him, and he with the 12. And Elijah passed over to him, and threw his mantle on him. He left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, please let me kiss my father and my mother, then I will follow you. And he said to him, go back again, for what have I done to you? So he returned from following him, and took the pair of oxen, and sacrificed them, and boiled their flesh, and the implements of the oxen, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose, and followed Elijah, and ministered to him. Here we see 1 Kings 19, 9-21, the restored laborer. We looked at spiritual discouragement Wednesday night, and the reality that often spiritual discouragement follows on the heels of usefulness, right? That God uses us, or he uses his people in a mighty way. And Elijah is a man with a nature like our own. So he's not some super saint, and we see it very clearly in the 19th chapter 8. There's a lot of revelation there of Elijah's character, and kind of his manhood, if you will, of who he is as a person. The reality, it is humbling to see that God uses him in such a mighty way. Yet we hear, we see him being restored. Think of the reality of this. On Mount Carmel, Elijah went up on Mount Carmel, and stood in the presence of all people to prove that the Lord God was God indeed.

And he did. He was seeking to prove to everybody present that God was God. God takes this same man and takes him to Mount Horeb, and on Mount Horeb, God reminds Elijah that he is God. The very one who stood in the presence of so many, and proved the reality that God was God, is now on another mountaintop, and it is there that that same God will prove and remind him that he is indeed still God. Because he needed that restoration. He needed that reminder, as often so many of us do. When we're being used of the Lord, he needs to remind us of that time and time again. So how do we see this restoration? What happens? What happens here? And what happens quite often in our lives? Number one, first, there is a confrontation, right? Restoration does not take place without confrontation, just as God, in his grace and his mercy, did not forsake Elijah and leave him under the juniper tree or broom tree or however your translation describes it. We understand that God woke him up, God sustained him, and God took him and nourished him of that food to a particular place. God was not yet through with this individual, and it is God who confronts the problem. It's amazing when we read scripture, the initiative is always of the Lord. Because man likes to cover up or hide behind or kind of really discount the reality of their problems or what's going on. But here we see that then he came to this place and he found a cave and he's just residing in this cave. We don't know how long he's there, but he's there in a cave and he's lodged there. So now he has went from leaving his servant in Beersheba to hanging out down in the wilderness to now he's up in Mount Horeb and he's still fostering this feeling and this longing for isolation. I know we've said it before, Proverbs 18, one is a real good one. It is a fool who isolates himself. And this is exactly what Elijah is doing because discouragement often leads us to isolation. We don't want to be around anyone. We don't want anybody around us. And the enemy loves it when we get to that place. Now Elijah has went up to the Mount of God and is still hanging out in isolation. But the initiative, the initiative that begins this whole restoration process again rests with God. It says that he was there and behold the word of the Lord came to him.

This is amazing. He is confronted with the word of God. It is first an internal confrontation. Now he is not confronted with the word of God the way we are. If the Lord is gracious to us and we end up in this season of discouragement and we remain disciplined, this is why I say reading the word of God is a discipline to be fostered, right? We don't always feel like reading scripture. We don't always, it's quite often while I'm reading it, I don't feel like reading it because it's confronting me.

Elijah does not have the benefit that we do, that he can open up his Bible and see what God has to say to him. So the first confrontation is an internal one. That is God is speaking to his spirit. We understand this, right? God is speaking within him much like he had been told to go here and told to go there. There is this voice that is speaking to him internally. There is the spirit and we know that because it is set alongside the audible confrontation as well. Later on, God will speak to him audibly.

[12 : 52] That's when he passes before him in the mount. We don't know. Some people suppose this is the same place that Moses stood in the cleft of the rock and the glory of the Lord passed before him as he covered him with his hand. We don't know. More likely it is. But what we see here is that when Elijah is in this place, this place of isolation, he is confronted twice with the word of God. Once internally and the second time, an external audible, he actually literally heard God speaking to him. And both times, it's the same thing. What are you doing here, Elijah? It is a personal confrontation from the word of God.

Why? Because we are not restored until we are confronted by the word. We have to be held accountable to that. We have to have this reality that it is the word of God that pierces to the very depth of our being. It is the word of God that confronts us and challenges us and does all those things that cause us to look within ourselves. It is why we are told that the word is a lamp to the feet and a light to our path, right? It searches us. It tries us. It knows us. All these realities. But it says that while he was in this state of isolation, the word of the Lord came to him, gave him clear instructions, and then he hears God speaking to him. It is both the internal witness of the spirit and external audible witness of God speaking to him. We have a greater witness and a greater word today because we have the great benefit of the fullness of the word of God. We have Genesis to Revelation. What a wonderful thing that is. This is why we must maintain the discipline of being in the word of God each and every day. It is that important. It is utmost important because it is this is where we find our confrontation.

This is what molds us. This is what shapes us. And this is what confronts us in moments of spiritual depression. And this is what confronts us in those moments of isolation. We see this reality here and we see it with clarity that he confronts him. And the confrontation is for the second reality that is a confession. The confrontation is a personal confrontation. He says, what are you doing here, Elijah? He asked him a personal question. Why are you here? Now, this is astounding because for all intents and purposes, when we read the first eight verses of the 19th chapter, God is nourishing him and sustaining him for this particular journey. That is, God led him here. And now he's asking him, what are you doing here? Right? God knew he was going. God probably led him to be there. God was bringing him to this place of confrontation. So we're, the question is much more than what are you doing here physically, but what's going on with you, Elijah?

God has brought the word of God into his life in a very personal matter. And we know this because Elijah answers the question. It's asked to him two times and he answers it the same way both times. He gives a very, it's the repeated phrase and we see it. He says, I have been very zealous for the Lord God, the God of hosts, the sons of Israel have forsaken your covenant. They've torn down your altars and killed your prophets with the sword and I alone am left and they seek my life to take it away. Elijah here gives the reality of what is going on. He tells him why he is there. He is honest and he confesses because there has to be this confession of intention, this confession of what's happening, this admittance of what has led him to this place. Now in this confession, now I know Elijah has a very great and prominent place throughout scripture, but again, we don't want to put him on a pedestal that he doesn't deserve to be on because God is using him and quite often in spite of him or because of him, because of who he is. But in this answer, there bears this kind of overbearing hint of pride and self-focus. I alone am left. Now in reality, that's prideful because at bare minimum, he knows there's a hundred priests that are hidden caves. He's already been told that. At bare minimum, he knows that Ahab has a servant whose name means he is a lover of God. Well, yeah, he knows the reality of the one who is nourishing these priests. So he knows there at minimum 101, right? But in his pride, he says,

I'm the only one jealous. He didn't kill all the prophets, remember? It was the people who said the Lord, he is God who took with him the prophets and did it. He's not the only one who did everything, but yet in this moment of isolation and separation, the enemy has convinced him that he alone is left.

[17 : 53] You're the only one doing anything good. And he makes this profession. It's one of pride. And it's also one of exaggeration. And they seek to kill me. Go back and read your text. Jezebel is the only one who said she was going to kill him. Jezebel. But yet in this confession of Elijah, he says, the whole nation is out to kill me. Friend, that is an over-exaggeration of a reality.

And this is exactly what the enemy of our souls does to us when we are down and when we are isolated. He makes the problem seem much bigger than it is. It makes us seem a lot more isolated than we are.

Elijah believes this. He is confessing it. He states it twice. Now God has got him to the place where he can restore him and use him. We have to admit where we're at. And we have to admit at least how we feel about where we are at before God restores the laborer. He comes to this place of confession and we are astounded by it. Because what he professes does not match what we know.

It does not match what we have seen. It does not even match the reality that he claims that God is the God of hosts. And he is. It is this reality. So now that he's confronted him and he's led him to confession. He brings him to this place of consideration. Now he's going to prove to Elijah that he is God. Elijah has sought to prove to the world that he is God. Now God's going to prove to Elijah that he is God. So these considerations, he says, okay, I want you to go out and meet me in this astounding parade that precedes the coming of God. We've heard it over and over again, right?

There's this great wind, this storm that is literally causing landslides and rocks breaking off the mountain. And then there's the earthquake and then there's the fire. But it says, but the Lord was not in any of these things. What is God doing? God says, I'm going to come meet you. And God is coming with all of his wonders and his works and his authority. He is the God who rends the mountains.

[20 : 17] He's the God who can shake the earth. The Bible says in the book of Hebrews that he can shake it to its core so that what cannot be shaken may remain, right? That he can shake all that can be shaken.

He can split the world. He can consume it by fire. We are told when we get to first Peter that this world will be consumed as of by fire. It will not be consumed by flood, but it will be consumed by fire. And he has this parade that goes before Elijah saying, I can do all of these things, but yet I'm not in all of these things. I am a God who controls all of nature. I can shake, I can blow, I can, I can crack the foundations. I can make the ground beneath you tremble. I can cause a great consuming fire, but yet he's not in any of these things. He is God. And it says, and then there's the gentle blowing of the wind or a still small voice. And that's where God is at. Now we have to give credit where credit is due because Elijah was at least sensitive to the voice of God. Because then it says he went out of the cave and covered himself with the mantle, which is just his clothing. He covered his face because he knew he was in the presence of God. And it was that gentle blowing that God was speaking to him in an audible fashion. It's a wonderful thing. And let's stop and consider here what's going on. Let's take the same considerations. Elijah has been trying to prove by force that God is God.

And yet the very way that God speaks to Elijah is through calmness and still. The force has preceded the wondrous voice of God. All of the strength and all of the might. Some have described Elijah as being a man of hard nature and separation and doesn't really want to be with anybody. That he is a man of fierceness and he wants to prove that God is God and he's going to do it.

He's going to call down fire. He's going to kill the prophets. He's going to slay everybody. He's going to outrun chariots. All these things, all these wonderful deeds. But yet when God speaks to him, he speaks to him in the stillness of a gentle breeze. He reveals his word to him through calmness.

He does not do it through chaos. Quite often we see, we seek to see the manifestations of God in the big events when often the greatest manifestations of God are in those still small events where God speaks to us in the calmness of the moment. We see it today. We want to have the prayer meetings that they had in the book of Acts where the walls were shaken. I mean, I've said it myself. I'd love to have been in that prayer meeting when the church gathered together and the walls of the place where they were at were shaken. I would love to have that kind of prayer meeting. But yet we also know that God often speaks to us greatest in the stillness of the moments. Most of my great prayer moments as pastor of the church are moments where I'm just being still. And that was a matter I had to learn. I read somewhere, I think it was A.W. Tozer who said, and I think I've shared this with you, and it's a practice that I began to put into practice every time I preach, that a man ought to meditate twice as long on the word of God as he does study the word of God. That is, you study it and then you meditate on it twice as long. Sometimes it's in that stillness that God speaks. I'm almost ashamed at times to talk of my sermon preparation. I talk to other pastors and they want to know how I prepare sermons. I'm like,

[23 : 41] I really don't want to tell you how I prepare sermons because the absurdity of it seems so strange. I study, I study, I study, I study, I read, I read, I read, I read. And sure, I read, I read the text and I don't know how many different translations. And I try to get back to every word and try to find all this stuff. And I do my due diligence. And in all of that, I'll study and study and study and I won't have anything. But then I am still. And I quit doing everything.

And I'll be still. And just listen. And sometimes it's for a few moments. Sometimes it's for grand moments. And sometimes if you were to walk in my office, you would think I was doing nothing but being lazy. But I'm just still. And it's there that God begins to speak to you. And it's astounding how many times he fleshes out his word in those moments. I preached my mentor's funeral service and I had people come up to me. So what you said was so fitting. And I said, well, I'd love to have taken credit for any of that that I said. The reality is, is I was driving a bus about to stop at my first bus stop, meditating on scripture before the kids got on. And before the first kid got on my bus, I had 15 minutes from the time I left the school to the time I got to my first stop at that time. I was still driving a bus. That in that 15 minutes, that entire funeral sermon was written in my head.

Because it was still for a moment. I was speaking. We'd love to say, I saw it plastered across the sky. But God's greatest manifestations come in sometimes the subtlest ways. And we see this.

Elijah has been trying to put on big public display what God is doing. But the way God reveals himself to Elijah is in the most intimate of calm moments. And it captures his attention. And we see the reality of it.

Which brings us to this last thing, because now that God has his attention, he gives him a calling. There's the confrontation, which led to a confession. The confession brought him to a place of consideration. And this consideration now is followed by a calling, which is in verse 15 and following.

[26 : 09] The Lord said to him, go return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. Now the wilderness of Damascus takes you up near Samaria. So, he was not only to go back to Beersheba. He was not only to go through the territory of Judah. He was not only to go as far as the city Jezreel. He was to go beyond where he had just come from and go into the heart of Israel, the northern kingdom, to near its capital city. God has a calling. And that calling is to go back, right? He's not done with him yet. We know the story of Elijah. We can just flip over a couple of chapters and see the departure of Elijah. But God's not done with him yet. But one thing I want you to notice from this point on, Elijah does not have what we would call a very public ministry. There's no more showdowns on mountaintops, right? There's no more gather all of Israel to me. There's no more bring all the false prophets in. But yet God has a particular calling on his life. And that calling, God gives him three people to anoint. He gives him three people.

Now, I have news for you. Elijah only anoints one of them. And that's Elisha. It's one of the rare instances that we have the personal anointing of a prophet. Usually it's God calling them and God ordaining them. And we don't see anybody else anointing them. But we have one of these here where Elijah anoints Elisha. That's the only one he anoints. As far as the king of Aram, Elisha will anoint. And as far as Jehu being the next king over Israel, Elisha's servant will anoint. And Elisha's not disobedient in that because we can say, oh, well, Elijah was disobedient. No, that's part of the calling. The calling was that God was still doing things. He was doing a manner of things. But the ministry and the greater work of Elijah would rest in one-to-one ministry. It would not be this public grand display of God bringing fire down from heaven. It would be the pouring of his life into another individual. Because quite often we make the greatest impacts in society by not calling the society to repent, but by changing the individuals that are involved in our life and then imploring those individuals to go live out in that society. I still say the greatest way for world transformation is called discipleship. That's how you do it. That's the plan of Christ. The great commission is to go and make disciples. And then disciples make disciples. And then disciples make disciples. That's why I don't think somebody asked me one time, and I don't want to step on your toes here, so please don't get offended. Not very long in my pastoral ministry, and I've been asked that here, say, well, pastor, you really don't believe in revivals, do you? You don't ever have planned revivals. I say, well,

I absolutely believe in revivals. But I don't believe in planning a revival, because nowhere in scripture have I ever found, and I don't mean this offense, that anybody ever planned a great movement of God. The movements of God began spontaneously when the people of God were surrounded and enamored by the word of God, and all of a sudden God began to work something out, and then we have a revival.

I don't believe, now this is where I get in trouble, okay, and I know we're not, it'll be online, but we're not filming tonight, and I don't mean this to be offensive, and I'm not saying that you're doing it.

I think we do the church a great disservice when we make it about public events than we do about individual discipleship, because discipleship is the mode. God had not called Elijah to go back on the mountaintop. God called Elijah to go to an individual. The individual would stay in the nation. The individual would anoint the next two people, right? It is the recurring, ongoing ministry of what God is doing, because it's not Elijah's work, it's God's work and his calling. Now, I'm not here to say all the Billy Graham crusades and all the big festivals are sinful. I'm not saying that. I believe there's the gift of the evangelist, but check your text, that gift of evangelism is given to a local church.

[30:17] It's just, it's just the way it is, okay? Not being offensive, I just want to be biblical, and so we see the bounds within it. God's plan is the church. I really believe in the church with all of my heart, with all of my soul. If not, I would love to be an evangelist, go make people mad and go somewhere else. I mean, I'm saying that in the human side. I would love that, but God's plan is for the local church, and it's messy. Elijah wanted to be by himself. Isolation. God called him to go get someone, to go pour his life into Elisha, as a reminder that the greatest transformation was not because he would see the nation return back to God, but that he could see one individual who would continue the work, that would continue the work, that would continue to work. We can be despondent and despair because the nation is not turning to the Lord God, and we ought to be, ought to be broken over that, but we can rejoice in the fact that God has given us some to pour into. Some young families, and some children, and some individuals that will continue long after us, right? And it will continue the work of discipleship, and it will continue to progress because it is God's work, not man's work, and it's in that still small voice of pouring into one individual, and just to reassure Elijah that he does not know everything, God says, oh, and I also have 7,000 others. God says, I have my people, and a glaring display of the devotion of the 7,000 others is Elisha. That's why we have that tacked on there at the end of the chapter, starting in verse 19. Elijah's walking through, and he goes to where Elisha is. He throws his mantle across him, walks off. Elisha runs up and says, hey, let me go back, kiss my mother and father, tell them bye. Elijah kind of gives this cold answer because this is a little bit of his nature. It's okay. We can take that, right? Elijah's like, what do I have to do with you?

You know what? I didn't say anything to you. Go back if you want to. Elijah probably looked at him like, oh, well, you're putting your hand back to the plow, and you're looking back. You're kind of being, you know, Jesus says something, let the dead bury the dead. The man said, let me bury my father, and he said, let the dead bury the dead. People think that's cold. No, the reality of what was going on there in the text is that man says, I will follow you after my dad dies. His dad wasn't dead yet, and Jesus says, why are you delaying? You need to love me more than father and mother, and so all Elisha was asking was, I'm just gonna go tell him bye, and Elijah's like, whatever, but if you want to see how good God's people really are, that he really has people who love him, look what Elisha does. Elisha has a place of more ease than Elisha, right? He's there when it's his dad's plowman, and he has 12 yoke of oxen, so he's probably pretty wealthy. He has all these, I mean, you don't have 12 plows and 12 yoke of oxen out there, right, running in the field unless you have some money a little bit. Your wealth was based upon your possessions in that time, and this is a pretty wealthy family, and Elisha, his dad owned it all, but he didn't mind doing some work either, so he's a man of character. He's actually out there plowing with the laborers, and he's in the field with them, and he's working. He's getting his hands dirty. He seems to be a lot quieter, a little subtler man than Elisha. We don't ever see him calling fire down, but we do see him doing some wondrous things, but we understand this here, that we see really the quality of the people that God has, and that

Elisha not only goes back and tells them, bye, he kills his oxen and sets his implements on fire. You know what that is, right? That's a demonstration of full commitment to what he's about to do.

I can't go back. I killed the oxen. I burned the plows. I cooked the food, and he had a feast of celebration. He fed the oxen to every other plowman to celebrate the reality that he was leaving, that he was gone, that he was fully committing to the reality that he was following Elisha.

Remember, Elisha's not the most popular man in all of Israel at this time. The queen wants to kill him, but Elisha is so committed because God always has his people.

[34 : 38] Elisha said, I alone am left. In just a matter of days, he encounters a man who would kill the oxen, burn the plows, and give it all up and follow him. God always has his people. The greatest way that we understand this is the moment we get into a season of spiritual despondency or spiritual depression, that God calls us back to the mission. He calls us back, and he opens our eyes to the reality that there are still others. It may not be this grand national level, but there are the ones and twos. There are the individuals that we can pour into that they can work with us. And look, Elisha leaves all that behind to minister to Elisha. That's astounding. God has his people. And the work of Elisha will continue through Elisha. He will be the one who anoints. He and his servant will be the one who anoints the other two, and it will be a continuation. We don't need to get so upset because the reaction and response does not always appear to what it ought to be. That is, Elisha says, I thought the whole nation would respond. But rather, we are restored when God opens our eyes to the reality that there are still some, and he gives us the opportunity to minister to those some. We can get down and out, and we can get discouraged. We can focus on the reality that things seem to be going way, way wrong, and they quite often are. But there are also seasons of being restored and being reminded that God still has his people. We know he is not done because he's not called us home yet. And we know that the fullness of Gentiles has not come because we're still here. The church is still existing. God has us to pour our lives into other people. And may we not be so discouraged because the big things don't happen, but rather may we be greatly encouraged because of the small things that God continues to allow us to do. Because there are those who will burn the oxen, who will burn the plows and slay the oxen, who will walk beside us, that God can use and empower in greater ways than he can ever use us. It's a wonderful thing, right? This life of faith, this thing called Christianity, and that we're always continuing to train and to equip and to lead others. We're working our way out of a job. That's what we're doing. We're equipping others and raising up others. We're going to pour into them because the greatest way to impact society is to impact it in the ones and twos and to let God use us on the small scale for what he's doing on a much, much larger scale. Elijah never met all 7,000. He just poured into that one Elisha.

And then there's the school of the prophets, and then it just continues to grow, and it continues to grow, and it continues to grow. We see this reality, though, that he is restored because he stood on one mountain seeking to prove to the world that he was God, and God called him to another mountain to show him and to remind him that he was still God, even when things didn't go the way he thought they would. He's still in control. He's still got it. Every one of us find ourselves between those two mountains at some point, going, I'm the only one. I'm doing it all, and we get down and out, but God always calls us back to himself. He confronts us with the word. He leads us to confess what we're thinking, what we're feeling, and then he brings us to a place of consideration.

I've been there. I dare say each and every one of us have been there. Any type of labor for the kingdom, we will find ourselves there, but it's good to be reminded we're not always called to do the ground, but we are called to pour into the ones and twos and the ones around us. Let's pray, and then we'll be through. God, we thank you so much. We thank you for your word. We thank you, God, for the Elijah and Elishas of scripture, but we thank you more that you are the God of the past, the God of the present, and the God of the future, that you still use your people for your glory.

We know there are different levels of giftedness and abilities, but God, we know that you long to use us to pour into the lives of others. So, Lord, may we speak truth this week into the life of one or two.

Would you give us opportunity? We thank you for the reality that you are doing a great work, though we may not always see it, and that your word does not return in vain. So, God, help us to be people of your word, not just for our own benefit, but help us to be people who respond to your word in obedience for your glory and for your honor. Be with us as we leave here. Lord, walk with us in this week. Help us to love you more, Lord Jesus. Help us to love you more each and every day. Help us to be used by you for your glory and yours alone. And God, help us to walk in faithful obedience to all that you call us to do. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, guys. I greatly appreciate your time today.

[40 : 04] Thank you.