

1 Kings 19:1-8

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[0 : 00] Thank you, Bibles, going me to 1 Kings 19. 1 Kings 19 is where we will be at this evening as we just continue to make our way through the book of 1 Kings.

And we have now made it to the 19th chapter. So I'm going up with a word of prayer and then we'll get right into the word of God together. God, we're so thankful.

Thankful for the opportunity you've given us. Thankful for the grand privilege it is of being able to gather together with brothers and sisters in Christ and Lord, just have the opportunity to open up the word of God.

Lord, to study it with one another, to learn more of you and to grow closer to you in our walk. So Lord, we pray that you be with us tonight, Lord, as we open up the scripture, that we would see who you are.

We would see who we are. And Lord, that we would draw closer to you and to one another through it. We pray as always for those working with the children and the youth. We pray for all that goes on in and around this place.

[1 : 00] We ask that Christ would be glorified and the gospel would be clear and that it would have an impact on our lives. And we ask it all in Christ's name.

Amen. Trust that you've had a good week. We are in 1 Kings 19, right on the hills of the Mount Carmel victory.

It's a very telling portion of scripture, one that Bible scholars and Bible translators allude to quite often because we can get caught up in what happens preceding this event, but we don't want to separate it from it because at the end of the 18th chapter, we know that after Elijah had his showdown with the prophets of Baal and the prophets of the Asherah, that when the fire of heaven fell, that God had shown himself to be the true God because that's what that whole ordeal was about was that the God who answered by fire, he is God.

And then Elijah calls the people to respond to what God has just shown them. They end up slaying all the prophets. And then that wasn't the end of the account because if you remember, he sent Ahab ahead of him.

Elijah began to pray for rain. Seven times he asked his servant to go and then on the seventh time, they saw a cloud forming and Elijah takes off running and out runs Ahab, the chariot of Ahab to the city of Jezreel and stops at the gate.

[2 : 28] Jezreel is not the capital of the Northern Kingdom, but it is where Ahab and Jezebel have moved their residence. So it's where they reside, Samaria is the capital.

So essentially every decision is being made at Jezebel, by Jezebel at Jezreel. Unfortunately, Ahab is the king, but Jezebel seems to be making a lot of the decisions. So we're here.

So that's the context, right? That's where we're at. And so we're in the 19th chapter. We're just going to look at the first eight verses. So verses one through eight. And it's just a continuation of what we have just seen in the 18th chapter.

Now Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, so may the gods do to me and even more if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.

And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belonged to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a juniper tree and requested for himself that he might die and said, it is enough now, O Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my father's.

[3 : 45] He laid down and slept under a juniper tree and behold, there was an angel touching him and he said to him, arise, eat. Then he looked and behold, there was at his head a bread cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water.

So he ate and drank and lay down again. The angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, arise, eat, because the journey is too great for you. So he arose and ate and drank and went in the strength of that food 40 days and 40 nights to Horeb, the mountain of God. 1 Kings 19 verses 1 through 8. What follows is again one of those wondrous accounts in scripture where Elijah has the glory of God pass him by and you know the account, right?

He wasn't into rumbling and the thunder. He wasn't into flashes, lightning, but in that calm steel breeze that blew by. So we'll see this manifestation of the glory of God that passes by Elijah. But we need to understand what happens before he gets there because this is a springboard event, if you will, of what happens following this event. You have Elisha who is commissioned and called. [4 : 58] You have the anointing of another king who will be used of God to be a judgment upon Ahab. You have all these things, but there is this event which proceeds any of that or precedes any of that in the first eight verses and it is spiritual discouragement.

What it looks like to live in the midst of spiritual discouragement. Bible scholars and Bible translators have often pointed to the reality that you come to this event, that Elijah was used mildly of the Lord God and then immediately following that enters into a grand season of discouragement. We can ask ourselves why this happened. We can kind of ponder the reality of it, but I want us just to see three truths that resonate with this discouragement because this is not a problem that is confined to Elijah.

As a matter of fact, it is a problem that is common to man. It is common to those that are used of the Lord and hopefully we'll glean some truths from this. As we look at Elijah, we are reminded that James says, and I know we've said it over and over again, but it bears repeating because this is one of those accounts that reminds us of the reality of what James says, that Elijah was a man with a manner like unto ours.

He was a man like us. I know when we look at Elijah, he's called up to heaven in the chariots of fire. He's with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. I fully believe he's one of the two witnesses that is there in the book of Revelation, that it's the spirit and the power of Elijah that goes as the forerunner before Christ, that John the Baptist came in that spirit and power of Elijah, that he is the one who prepares the day.

[6 : 33] Elijah seems to have a place of prominence throughout scripture. But yet in the midst of that, this is one of the things that I love about scripture, by the way, and it ought to reassure us, is that scripture does not fail to reveal the humanity of those that God uses.

Over and over again, we are reminded of the humanity, that is the human nature, of those that God uses. Because apart from that, we would say, well, I'm no Elijah.

And we could discount it and say, that's Elijah, that's, he's a super saint, or he's all this, and we could put him over there. But scripture is so good about pulling back the curtains and showing us who man is with all of his shortcomings, all of his failures, with all of his problems, and it's an encouragement.

One of the past time preachers, I know I've told you this before, not of the Baptist faith, but one that I resonate with in spirit, though he died when I was a year old, is Martin Lloyd-Jones, D. Martin Lloyd-Jones.

He wrote a number of great books. He was a biographer of a number of people, but yet he would not let anyone pen his biography. And the reason he was so hesitant to let anyone pen his biography is because most biographers love to highlight the goodness of the individual they're writing about.

[7 : 52] If one is going to write my biography, I want him to write warts and all. That is, I want him to remind the readers of my humanity. He understood the danger in that.

We see it over and over again. I've read a number of great biographies. By the way, one thing that I think Christians ought to do, not just Christians in vocational ministry, is be readers of biographies. Because if God uses mankind, it would behoove us to know which type of mankind God uses, right?

And so I've read some that, oh, this person was great, and I've read some that tell you everything about the person. I like the ones that tell me everything about it because it seems more scriptural. So we see this reality here when we get to Elijah. We see this period of spiritual discouragement. Number one, I want you to see spiritual discouragement often follows seasons of usefulness. We know it. We say it all the time. We cannot live on the mountaintop forever, and we often end up in the valley.

But spiritual discouragement often follows seasons of usefulness. It says, Now Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done. Jezebel went, not Jezebel, Elijah went to Jezreel and stopped at the gates. [8 : 58] He didn't go in. He didn't go into the city. From all accounts, when we read scripture, it seems that he got to the city and he just stopped short. He was waiting outside the gates. Why was he there? Elijah went because he knew that's where Ahab was living.

He knew that's where Jezebel was at. And he had just done something amazing. So we need to understand all that's going on. Elijah's purpose wasn't just to go kill the prophets of Baal, right? Elijah wasn't what we would say having a holy war.

He wasn't just out to kill the prophets of Baal. Elijah's purpose was to call the nation back to worship of the holy God. The purpose of Elijah was to put God on display so that the people would repent and return in faithfulness to serving the Lord God.

That was his purpose. So don't miss that because if we miss that, we will misunderstand the discouragement. If all he sought to do was to get rid of 850 false prophets, we could count it a victory because he did that.

But he was being used of the Lord to call the nation back to God. And he knew that that decision was going to be made at Jezreel because as goes the king and the king's household, so goes the people.

[10 : 09] God had declared that through all of the Old Testament, especially when he was in the book of Deuteronomy, that the king would essentially lead the people. That's why every seven years they were to read the book of Deuteronomy and the hearing of all the people.

That's why the king was to commit the law. That is the first five books of the Bible to heart. That's why all these things are to happen is because as goes the king, so goes the people. So Elijah goes to the city gate and he's waiting.

And he's waiting on word to come back. Ahab goes in and he tells Jezebel everything. Now Ahab's the king. That's kind of one of the fallacies we get with him. Not that we're picking, not that we're being chauvinistic here. Ahab, Jezebel's not even Jewish, right?

She's not. She is a daughter of a priest of a false god from a foreign country and is a worshiper of foreign gods. She's the one that introduced all this idolatry to Ahab.

And he sought and brought that into the land. But yet he goes and tells Jezebel everything that goes on, everything that happens. And Jezebel sends a messenger out to Elijah. And the messenger says, As surely as the gods, lowercase g, live, you will be like unto one of them tomorrow.

[11 : 18] She said, I'm going to kill you. And if you read it in this original Hebrew, it's, may the gods do to me if I don't do this to you. Now, the gods don't do it to her, but the God of heaven allows it to happen, right?

So what she is pronouncing actually does come about. But we're amazed because this man who stood alone on the mountain among the multitude of false prophets, among the king of the land, among all the people of Israel that had gathered together up there, this man who so boldly stood and had this showdown, now it tells us he's afraid.

That he hears this word and he's afraid and he flees for his life. There's more to that than meets the eye and we'll get to it in just a moment. But what we understand is that Elijah was seeking to call the nation to repentance.

That was his hope. That was his ambition. That was his goal. That's what he had surrendered his life to. Called, he was a man from nowhere, called out of nowhere to be somewhere at a point in time in history to be used of God to call people back.

And yet this reality, he understands, is not happening. He's just been used mildly to clearly show for all to see exactly who God is.

[12 : 40] He has allowed the people to put God to the test and God has passed the test. It has been clear for everyone. Yet, there's no repentance, there's no coming back, and there's really just a threat in his life.

So it is the spiritual usefulness followed by spiritual discouragement. Because when we're used the most, it's the easiest to get discouraged.

Often it follows this, and the reason it follows is because, well, for lack of better ways, we expect God to do something when he uses us.

And when that expectation is unmet, it is easy to be discouraged. When God seems to be using us in the greatest manner and in the greatest ways and in the mightiest works, it is not for our glory, it's not for our own recognition, we have this willing surrender, but yet the expectation is that what we fully believe, other people will come to accept and fully believe as well, and the reality is people just let us down.

And it brings discouragement. They tell pastors not to ever make a decision on Monday. Why? It's because Sunday might have been a great day, but most times Monday is just Monday, and what things you might have expected to happen on Sunday didn't always come about.

[14 : 13] And so you kind of have this season of discouragement on Monday. They also tell pastors most of the time, well, the best advice I've ever got is for you not to make Mondays your day off, so don't give your family your most discouraging day, right?

So I go back to the office on Mondays and just get back into sermon preparation. That's kind of been my practice all along. But we understand this in our own life, and that's not just for pastors. When God is doing something amazing and when he's using us and we've had this opportunity to be bold in our witness and to share with someone, we just naturally desire, and it's not a desire for selfishness, it's a longing for the glory of God that people will see and behold all that we see, and they would respond to that.

But when they don't, we get discouraged because we realize just how great a grip Satan and the enemy has on individuals. I mean, there was no doubt in the land of Israel who was God. It had been proven, but yet there's no response. There's no repentance. There's no desire for that. Spiritual discouragement often follows seasons of usefulness, and so we ought to be prepared for that.

It's a natural reality. It's something that happens, and quite often, it's something that we can't avoid because we do get discouraged. Number two, we see that spiritual discouragement, sadly, fosters a sense of isolation.

[15 : 40] Elijah flees. It says he flees for his life and he goes to Beersheba. Now, you need to understand that, okay, Jezreel's in the northern kingdom, so the ten tribes to the north. Beersheba is in the southernmost region of the southern kingdom of Judah.

So it's the southern tip of the land of Israel. Beersheba is as far away as he could get from Jezebel. So he flees.

He goes probably all night long and he gets to Beersheba. And it says that when he gets to Beersheba, that he leaves his servant there. Again, we don't know who his servant is. But though he has gone as far as he can go away from Jezreel and Jezebel, it's not far enough because he goes all the way to Beersheba and he leaves his servant there.

And it says, and he goes another day's journey into the wilderness. So if you're looking at a map, you see Beersheba's down there next to the coast of the Salt Sea.

So he's went down there in all that wilderness, rough terrain area below the Salt Sea. Okay, it's in this desolate area. It was just really, looks like a forsaken land.

[16 : 50] And he's down there and he finds some kind of tree. It's referred to in NASB as a juniper tree. The translation is called a broom tree. It's just, it's a tree that we're really not sure what kind of tree it is. But he finds a tree and he sets down.

So one thing that we notice here is that unfortunately, discouragement often breeds and fosters isolation. He had his servant with him.

He had someone with him, but he left him behind and he went further down and he went further and he kept going south and he kept going south until he finally gets to the point where he is by himself and he's under a tree and he's despairing. And it's easy to despair in that discouragement because he has isolated himself.

And in that isolation, he feels like he's useless, that God isn't even using him or doing anything. And he cries out to God, says, it's enough. Just go ahead and kill me. Now he's not suicidal. The statement is actually saying that nothing I am doing matters.

That's what he says. Well, I'm no more good than my fathers who went before me. So he says, what I'm doing is just as good as what those who are already dead is doing. It's not going to get their attention. It's not going to, you know, he has this pity party.

[17 : 52] He says it up on Mount Horeb. I'm the only one left and God reminds him he's not. We'll get to that later. But what he's essentially saying is, I'm not doing any good. Nothing is happening. No matter how hard I try, no matter how hard I go, I mean, there's the biggest showdown I could

have.

And I showed everybody, you know, it hasn't rained for three and a half years. I prayed and it rained. The fire of heaven came down. God, you showed yourself. But he gets in this period of isolation. And in that isolation, he convinces himself and he tries to convince God that he's not doing anything good.

Proverbs 18, one says, it's a fool who isolates himself. And the enemy of our soul loves it when we isolate ourselves because in isolation, he often convinces us of the worst possible scenario.

And when we have isolated ourselves, we don't have anyone around us. His servant could have said, well, don't you remember the cloud coming over the Mediterranean Sea? Or don't you remember how we filled all those 12 barrels of water?

And don't you remember how all that was, but there was nobody there because he had isolated himself. This is why Hebrews says, forsake not dissembling together one another is because the reality is there are seasons in every one of our lives where we need one another.

[19 : 05] The one another's in scripture, especially in the New Testament, are just rampant, just over and over and over and over again. I have a list of them in my office of all the one another's. And it's essentially clear throughout the scripture and especially when you start getting into the church age, the book of Acts, and onward that Christ has commanded us to be involved with one another.

We are not to live isolated, separated lives. Why? Because spiritual discouragement essentially and eventually comes to each and every one of us. The Bible says, Paul tells the believers to carry your own load, but to bear one another's burdens.

The best way I've heard it described is you carry your own lunch sack, but I'll help you carry the boulder that's on your back. Right? You're going to carry your own load. Don't ask me to carry things that you can carry, but when it comes to the reality that there are matters you can't carry, that's where you need other people.

Right? That's the discouragement. That's the weight. Each one of us need that. But when we get to this spiritual discouragement time, much like Elijah, we leave behind those who can help us and we go further south.

And we essentially find ourselves under a tree saying, I'm not any good. And the enemy has us right where he wants us because it fosters this grand sense of isolation.

[20 : 28] I would say that every one of us have done that. Every one of us in any moment have been used by the Lord God in a mighty way, in a special way, and we enter season and unfortunately our natural tendency is to kind of pull ourselves back, to isolate ourselves and to separate ourselves where the enemy works on us.

We need people to come around us, not to vainly puff us up and tell us we're good, but to honestly remind us that God is using us in spite of who we are.

We need that. It's a wonderful thing when you can look at a brother, sister in Christ and speak truth into their life and remind them of how God is using them and how God has blessed them and how God has equipped them and how God has gifted them because honestly we don't hear that enough.

The enemy is constantly whispering to us how we fall short. We have the grand privilege and opportunity as brothers and sisters in Christ to look at others and remind them how God is using them.

It's astounding what that word can do, how it can be an encouragement when someone finds themselves laying under a juniper tree. Right? So we see these two truths that it follows seasons of usefulness, it fosters a sense of isolation, but let's not look, let's not forget number three because that's what finishes up our passage.

[21 : 56] Spiritual discouragement forces us to a deeper devotion. It forces us to a deeper devotion because why do these seasons come?

The great question is why did Elijah get discouraged? Why did he deal with this season of depression? Why did these matters happen to begin with?

I believe the reason, I believe in the sovereignty of God. With all of my being, I believe in the sovereignty of God. That is, God in his sovereignty either ordains or permits every event that happens in our life.

That's what I believe. I don't have time to sit here and kind of flesh it all out for you, but I believe it. I believe it's clearly told in scripture. Could God have intervened and brought some encouragement to Elijah before he got down there a day's journey south of the southernmost point out into the middle of nowhere?

Sure he could have. Could he have had somebody meet him along the road to say, man, what a great time that was, Elijah. Could he have done it? Sure he could have. But God permitted him to get to this point. Why? It's because it is these seasons.

[23 : 02] These seasons are the ones that force us to a deeper devotion. But notice that though he had isolated himself, God does not forsake nor abandon his people.

And we are reminded again of the initiative work of God. Because Elijah, we see him in his humanity. Right?

We see him being upset. We see him being discouraged. We see him being depressed. We see him saying, well, I'm not doing any good anyway. I mean, this is the man that just a couple of days ago, you know, was bringing people back to life, praying rain in and calling fire down.

And he's in there going, I'm not doing any good. Some people believe the servant was probably the son of the widow he raised back from the dead. I mean, all he could have done was look at the man that he just left behind and said, well, I did do some good.

But here he is saying, I'm not doing any good, right? Here he is in all of his humanity and he just gives up and it says he falls asleep under the tree. So he's down here in the middle of nowhere under a tree and he fell asleep.

[24 : 09] It says an angel came and woke him up. Now, what are angels? We get into this, scripture is very clear. Angels essentially means messenger. They are messengers They are messengers who follow the clear commands of the Lord God Almighty.

In the book of Revelation, I have it underlined. John sees an angel and John falls down to worship that angel.

You know what the angel says? The angel says, don't do that. Don't worship me. By the way, side note, this is how anytime we encounter an angel in the Old Testament and he allows someone to worship him, then that is a Christophany.

That is an appearance of Christ before Christ is incarnate in the flesh. So think when Joshua meets the angel of the Lord who is the captain of the Lord's army, Joshua takes his sandals off his feet and worships this captain of the Lord's army and that angel allows him to worship him without rebuking him.

Why? Because that is Christophany. That is Christ. Every other encounter where man has with an angel, the angel always says the same thing, don't worship me because an angel who longs to be worshipped was cast out with Satan.

[25 : 18] That is where a third of the heavenly beings were cast out of heaven because that is what those, those were fallen angels who wanted to worship that belonged to holy God anyway. So when an angel, often with a capital A, if it does not have a capital A, feel free to write a capital A over that because it is not just a regular angel that allows an individual to worship them is not just an angelic being.

This is either a theophany, it is an appearance of God in the Old Testament. I refer to them as Christophanies because no one has seen the Father but Christ and Christ manifests the Father. So anytime we see an appearance of God, we are seeing Christ.

So it is a Christophany in the Old Testament. But James, go back to the book of Revelation, sees the angel, falls down at the angel, the angel says, don't worship me. I am not here to worship, you worship God.

And he tells him this, because I am your messenger and a servant of yours. So the angels are God's servants to his believers.

Now the reason I have it underlined is because in the very next chapter it tells us, I know I am kind of getting on a tangent here but this is too good to miss, you don't want to miss this. It's in the book of Revelation where that angel tells John that he is his messenger, he is John's servant.

[26 : 26] In the very next chapter it tells us the angels hold the keys to the abyss where Satan is bound. So our servants hold the keys to keep Satan in bondage. That's pretty good, right?

I mean, you could have thrown an amen sign up right there. Those are good. The messengers that God sends to be our servants are the ones that he entrusts with the keys that hold Satan captive

during the thousand year reign of Christ which is astounding.

So anyway, this angel comes and he wakes up Elijah. Why does he wake up Elijah? Only because God told him to go wake up Elijah. That's what they do, right? God is taking the initiative.

He tells him to get up and eat and there's this loaf of bread that's been baked on a hot stone and there's a jug of water so he eats it and he goes back to sleep. The angel comes back a second time and wakes him up again for he says, for the journey is long.

Stay with me here. We're fostering a greater sense or we're forcing ourselves into a deeper devotion. This is what's going on. God is drawing him to a deeper devotion because of the discouragement.

[27 : 29] That is Romans 8. God is using this for good and God nourishes him by sending this angel to wake him up and it says, and then God sustained him because it tells us that he arose and ate and drank in verse 8 and went in the strength of that food so that went in the strength of that food that God gave him and fed him and the angel told him to eat and he went 40 days and 40 nights.

There are two other people in scripture that have 40 days and 40 nights. Anybody know who they are? Jesus and, I said there's two. What is it? The flood was 40 days but no, there's two other people 40 days and 40 nights.

Oh, I'm just going to give it to you because Elijah's going back to the same place that happened once before. Moses went up on Mount Horeb on Mount Sinai 40 days and 40 nights, right? God has a way of sustaining his people.

So now, Elijah, you ever wonder why there's three people on the Mount of Transfiguration? Elijah, Moses, and Jesus, all of them 40 days and 40 nights, right?

All of them have been through that season. God has sustained them and fed them and now, he calls them and he goes 40 days and 40 nights to Mount Horeb. Mount Horeb is also Mount Sinai, okay?

[28 : 40] Place of the Ten Commandments. It's the Mount of the Lord. Same place, same location. But here's what's amazing. From Beersheba to Mount Horeb is only about a week's journey away.

It's 250, 200, 250 miles. By foot, it takes about a week. I told you in the book of Exodus that after they stopped at Mount Sinai, it's referred to in the book of Exodus, they were there two years.

That's where Moses is getting the commandments. That's where they're building the tabernacle, they're constructing all those things. And it took them a week to get to Kadesh Barnea. From Kadesh Barnea, they should have went to the Promised Land. It took 38 years for them to go back around.

They circled the mountain for 38 years. Right? It only takes seven days to get from Mount Horeb, Mount Sinai to the Promised Land. But God took Elijah through the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights.

Why? He wasn't just taking him straight there. He was entering into a deeper devotion. And he was bringing him back to Mount Horeb. It was here, as we read on, that God would go before him and manifest himself there.

[29 : 47] There was another man who stood on that same mountain and the glory of the Lord passed by him. That was Moses. God hid him in the cleft of the same mountain, of the same rock. What God is doing is bringing Elijah closer to him.

Right? It's not that this is just a holy place, but he's bringing him back. He's reminding him he is God. He is the covenant God, Yahweh. Though Elijah may not think that he's done any good, though he may not think that people are going to repent, though he looks and everything around him is falling apart, God is bringing him all the way back and he's reminding him he is the covenant God.

He's bringing him to a place where it doesn't depend upon man, it depends upon God and he sustains him and brings this. But what is so astounding about all this is that this whole deeper devotion was a result of the initiative of God.

Elijah wanted to lay under the tree and die. But God called him closer to himself. When we enter into seasons of spiritual discouragement and the enemy tries to isolate us and discourage us further and to demoralize us, it is a gracious thing that our heavenly father calls us closer to himself and brings us closer to his side.

Sometimes he has to send an angel to kick us and wake us up. Sometimes he has to do astounding things. He sustains us but he calls us to himself. The reality is that God doesn't waste any

opportunity or any discouragement and this spiritual discouragement that came upon Elijah will be for his good.

[31 : 26] He'll walk by Elisha and throw his mantle over him. He'll go anoint another king. He'll do all these things that would not have happened had he not entered into this season.

God is using this for the good even though it's a very difficult season that he's in. So when we find ourselves in those seasons of discouragement, may we be reminded Elijah is a man just like us.

He's weak. He has fallacies. And we can say it present tense because as far as we know in scripture, Elijah has never died. He hasn't met that appointment yet.

He's a man just like us. Yet God uses him in a mighty way which we stand amazed that God would use such as Paul would refer to broken vessels.

He uses imperfect people to bring about the perfect purposes of a holy God. And for that, we're thankful. We praise God that he didn't just go from the mountaintop to the anointing of Elijah.

[32 : 38] We thank him that he showed us it's not that Elijah was perfect but that the God who was using him was perfect. And he uses him in spite of his imperfections.

And those imperfections are the very things that God uses to call him closer to himself. And we see it in 1 Kings 19 verses 1-8 as Elijah struggles with spiritual discouragement.

Thank you, my brothers. Thank you, my brothers.