

“O LORD, Take Away My Life!”

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[0 : 00] And we're now going to turn to our Bible reading. We're continuing in 1 Kings with Phil Cooplin preaching to us. Do grab a Bible, a visitor's Bible if you don't have one, and follow along as we read this morning from 1 Kings chapter 19.

We're going to be reading from verse 1 through to verse 18. So do follow along. 1 Kings chapter 19, beginning at verse 1 through to verse 18.

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the swords. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, so may the gods do to me.

He was afraid of his life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow. Then he was afraid, or perhaps better translated, when he saw this, he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servants there.

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, it is enough now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my father's.

[1 : 35] And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, arise and eat. And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones.

And he ate and drank and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.

And he arose, and he ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God. There he came to a cave and lodged in it.

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 jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword.

And I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away. And he said, go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord.

[2 : 49] And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great strong wind tore the mountains and broke 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, the sound of a low whisper.

And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, what are you doing here, Elijah?

He said, I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, for the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword.

And I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away. And the Lord said to him, go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.

- [3 : 56] And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazei to be king over Syria. And Jehu, the son of Nimshi, you shall anoint to be king over Israel.
- And Elisha, the son of Shaphat, of Abel Mahalah, you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazei shall Jehu put to death.
- And the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha 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.
- Well, amen. This is God's word. And we'll return to it shortly. Well, good morning. Please do have your Bibles open to 1 Kings 19.
- And welcome to those who are joining us now from Central. No, this is Central. From Kelvin Grove and from Queen's Park. Welcome to you.
- [5 : 00] Please do also have your Bibles open to 1 Kings 19. When was the last time you were on a roller coaster?
- For me, it was years ago. And let me tell you, I have no plans to go anywhere near another roller coaster anytime soon. But even if you've never been on one, you know how they work.
- One minute, you're up flying high. And in the very next second, you find yourself crashing down towards the ground. Careering down at an alarming pace.
- And friends, 1 Kings 18 and 1 Kings 19 are rather like that for Elijah. In chapter 18, he is flying high off the back of a wondrous victory for the Lord on Mount Carmel.
- But in chapter 19, he comes crashing down. So low, in fact, that in this chapter, the prophet Elijah will ask the Lord to dismiss him from his ministry.
- [6 : 08] And also, he will ask him to dismiss him from life. In this passage, Elijah wants to die. He wants to die and to be taken away.
- Now, friends, this is a chapter that you and I must store up in our hearts. For we, too, might well find ourselves as a church and as individuals going through similar lows as Elijah.
- And we need to know the faithfulness and the tenderness of the Lord our God. And the beautiful way in which he deals with shattered servants.
- So let's look at this chapter in four sections. Firstly, in verses 1 and 2, we see a murderous monarch. A murderous monarch.
- Please look at verse 1. Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done. And how he had killed all the prophets, the prophets of Baal, with the sword.
- [7 : 12] Over the past couple of Sunday mornings in chapter 18, we have seen the glorious way in which the Lord made it known to everyone, everyone in Israel, that he alone is the true and living God through Elijah.
- Remember at that time, Ahab was king in Israel. And along with his pagan wife, Jezebel, they pumped foul, raw paganism into the kingdom.
- That is, they established this abhorrent Baal worship in Israel. Baal was one of the pagan gods of the surrounding nations of Israel, round about Israel.
- And he was believed to be the god of the rain, god of fertility. And as a result of Ahab and Jezebel bringing in this idol into the land, the people of Israel were led astray spiritually.
- They started to worship Baal, whilst at the same time, they continued with what they thought was still worship of the Lord. And they limped back and forth, remember, between worshiping Baal one minute and then carrying on worshiping the Lord or what they thought was worship of the Lord.

[8 : 22] They thought that was a viable way of life. And so over the course of chapter 18, the Lord graciously worked through his prophet Elijah to expose Baal as being a figment of man's imagination.

Baal is not there because Baal does not exist. He's an idol, a dead, false god. And at the same time, the Lord showed himself to be the god of the rain, the god of the climate, the god of Israel, the god who is to be worshipped exclusively.

And one of the people who saw all of that was Ahab. Ahab was present on the main event on Mount Carmel. Ahab saw the victory of the Lord.

Ahab saw that Baal gave no reply. Ahab saw the Lord's fire fall from heaven in response to Elijah's prayer. Ahab saw that many Israelites turned away from Baal and confessed the Lord, he is God.

Ahab saw the righteous killing of the prophets of Baal in line with God's law. And Ahab saw the Lord send rain in response to Elijah's prophet.

[9 : 32] Ahab witnessed it all. All of this revelation from the Lord. And at the end of chapter 18 last week, we were all sitting there as readers with hope. We were sitting there thinking, is he going to turn?

Is he going to turn away from the darkness and idolatry that he's been so stuck in? And turn to the Lord in repentance and faith and follow his word. We hoped that the gospel of Mount Carmel might have brought about change in the royal household.

Including in the life of Jezebel. But just look at what happens in verse 2. In other words, I'm going to kill you.

You've got a day left to live. I'm coming for you. And I'm going to kill you. You can just imagine Elijah, who was waiting at that point outside the palace in Jezreel, somewhere in the local area.

He would have been waiting to hear the message. I wonder whether he had hoped that he got this type of message from the servant of Jezebel. Come, Elijah. Bring the word of the Lord to us.

[10 : 59] For we now know that the Lord alone is God in Israel. And you are his prophet. We want to lead the nation in mass repentance. We want to lead the nation in getting rid of Baal.

And to trust in the Lord only. I think that's what Elijah is hoping for. And instead, the messenger of Jezebel brings this vicious death threat.

And clearly she's still an out-and-out pagan notish. She swears by the gods. She still believes in the gods. And she still hates the Lord and the Lord's servant.

Now we will look at Elijah's response in just a moment. But let's just notice what this teaches about the human heart. Friends, just because there was clear proof on Carmel doesn't mean that Jezebel will receive that proof.

Or that such clear evidence will change her. Sometimes today Christians slip into thinking that if only we just get the truth out to people. Or press upon people our most rigorous and logical arguments for the Christian faith.

[12 : 09] Then of course certainly we will win them. Certainly we will change them. Now yes, often, wonderfully, the Lord graciously does use these things to change people and win them for Jesus.

And we should go about seeking to win people with clear truth. But what happens here with Jezebel says that that is not always going to be the case. Sometimes hearing the wonderful truth of the gospel, sometimes receiving God's revelation, it will only stir up murderous hatred against the Lord and his people from hard, unbelieving hearts.

One writer puts it like this. There was a blaze of light on Mount Carmel. But unless the Lord grants internal light to see, his external light, the darkness remains.

The Lord's fire consumed everything back in chapter 18 except the blindness in Jezebel's mind. And the hardness of our will. Jezebel displays the truth later declared in John 3, which says, This is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, but people love darkness rather than light.

This realization must temper all our expectations in evangelism, and counseling biblically, and in preaching. So in other words, friends, we mustn't be surprised today, or disheartened actually, when we share the wonderful eyewitness testimony, the historical evidence of the Lord Jesus, the light of God's revelation.

[13 : 50] We mustn't be surprised if it stirs up hatred today. Not everyone will respond with hatred like Jezebel, but some might. But it's nothing new.

Don't panic. Well, let's look at what happens next. This brings us to our second point this morning. Verse 3 to 5, we see a shattered servant. A shattered servant.

Verse 3, Then he, Elijah, was afraid, and he arose, and ran for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.

For as remember, James chapter 5 tells us, that Elijah was just a man, with a nature like us. He was not some sort of a super prophet, immune to pressure, or hardship.

In response to Jezebel's message, he flees. Now if you've read the commentators, on this passage, you will find that there are many here, who absolutely rip Elijah to shreds.

[14 : 59] They scold him, and they accuse him of being a terrible coward, for what he does here. Well friends, I just don't think that's right at all. I think that's profoundly unhelpful. I think that is clearly not what the Lord thinks of Elijah, as we'll see, when we go through the text.

And anyway, when it says in verse 3, then he was afraid, there is a very, very strong case, for saying that that should be translated, from the Hebrew, as, when he saw this.

That is, when Elijah saw Jezebel's response, when he saw her hard-heartedness, he arose, and ran for his life. In other words, the original Hebrew seems to say, that Elijah wasn't running away, because of the death threat.

He's not running away, because he's afraid. No, he's running away, because not even, the big event on Carmel, has changed, this royal household. Not even the fire from heaven, can bring about the change, in the leadership of Israel, that is so desperately needed.

Ahab was nowhere to be seen here. And his mad wife, was as mad as ever, as hell-bent as ever, on killing the prophet of the Lord. And when Elijah sees, this lack of repentance, it breaks him.

[16 : 18] It absolutely breaks him. He is broken. He is shattered here, but not by the death threat. He's shattered by this woman's heart. And since he was required, not to be meek meat, under Jezebel's guillotine, he flees the place.

And he goes, notice, to die somewhere else. Death is not the thing he fears. He's quite happy to die, yes? He just doesn't want to die, under Jezebel's hand.

Listen to how one writer puts it. It says, Elijah left the kingdom, but not because he was afraid of dying. Rather, he wanted to die, for he was broken. But he did not wish to die, at Jezebel's hand, for that would have been publicly seen, to have been her victory.

Hence his flight. So where does he go? Verse 3 says, he and his servant, they both leg it, out of the kingdom of Israel, and they go way down south.

Way, way down. Out of the kingdom of Israel, into the kingdom of Judah, down to Beersheba. So roughly, if you've got a map, you would see that Elijah and his servant travel a hundred miles south of Jezreel, away from the clutches of Jezebel.

[17 : 34] And when they get to Beersheba, there Elijah left, or literally arrested his servant. That is, he dismissed his servant. Elijah is now totally alone, all alone by himself.

He's willingly taking himself off, into isolation. And in verse 4, Elijah goes off, on another journey. And he goes out to, the wilderness.

And he eventually sits down, under a tree. And there he cries out, to the Lord for dismissal. Look what he says, in verse 4. He says, it is enough, now, O Lord.

And there he's talking about, having to deal with Israel. He's saying, I've had enough, I've had enough, Lord. I've had enough, of that rebellious regime, that cannot, and will not be changed.

Not even far from heaven. I had hoped, but just look at Jezebel. Now, Lord, take away my life, for I'm no better than my fathers.

[18 : 37] That is, I'm no better, than any of the prophets, who came before me. I've had enough. And friends, if you know your Bible well, that should ring bells in your mind, you see.

That reminds me of, Moses, in Numbers 11. Moses in the wilderness, in the same place, had found, the burden, of dealing with the rebellious, and complaining people of God, to be too much to handle.

And he prayed, to the Lord, to take away his life. Well, centuries later, Elijah, is going through the same experience. Like Moses, he's been broken, by the sins, of, the church.

And if you were in growth group, if you're in a growth group, and if you were studying Mark's gospel, in Mark chapter 3, over the past week, you would remember, what happened in the synagogue, where they are, the greater prophet of the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ himself, when he saw, the hard-heartedness, of the leadership of Israel, in his own day, and he saw their unbelief, he too, was deeply disturbed.

And still today, friends, let me just say, there is nothing more painful, there is nothing more painful, especially for those, in pastoral ministry, than seeing folks, under their care, in their church, harden their hearts, to the word of the Lord.

[20 : 06] There is nothing more painful, than seeing, the sin of God's people, grow and grow. Elijah is broken by that, he is shattered.

And he prays, that the Lord, would be his executioner. Kill me Lord, please, kill me, I want to die. And that brings us on, to the third, and the main point, this morning, in verses 6 to 18.

We see, a loving Lord, a loving Lord. In this scene, there's lots of details, that maybe have puzzled people, especially when we get on, to the point, where the Lord, appears, before Elijah, and speaks to him.

But what is absolutely clear, in this section, is that we see, a loving Lord, who is here to shepherd, his shattered servant. The Lord, renews, and restores Elijah, and helps him back.

Helps him to persevere. By faith, and in his ministry. So friends, let's look at this, subsection. I want to look at it, in four headings. Firstly, notice, the Lord is so patient, with Elijah.

[21 : 21] In verse 4, just notice, what the Lord, doesn't do, at any point. He doesn't come to Elijah, in order to rebuke him, and scold him, for fleeing Israel.

Neither does he scold Elijah, for pouring out his pain. He doesn't scold Elijah, for saying, how dare you ask me, to take your life. No, the Lord is wonderfully patient, and tender, with his shattered servant.

He graciously listens, to Elijah's protest, his pained prayer. He takes it seriously. And friends, this is a wonderful truth, that we were just singing about, a moment ago.

We can pour out our prayers, even pour out our pain, to God, because he is our God. This is of truth, proclaimed all the way, through the Bible. We have a God, you and I, if you're a Christian, we have a God, who is big enough, to take the honest outpourings, and the protests, of our hearts.

We have a God, who's big enough, to deal with our pain. And you know, I think that this scene, in verse 4, as Job is slumped, down there, and just wants to die, is very Job-like, isn't it?

[22 : 29] Especially Job chapter 3, where Job, begs, begs the Lord, to kill him, and to wipe him out, from existence. He's in such despair. The Lord didn't scold Job, for doing that.

And the Lord, doesn't scold, Elijah either. It is actually Satan, who likes to do that, to the saints of God's people. Isn't that right? Satan loves, to scold God's people, especially when we're down.

Well secondly, notice that the Lord, is not only patient, but he provides, for Elijah, physically. So having listened, to Elijah's cry, again, notice what the Lord, doesn't do, in verse 5.

He doesn't come to Elijah, and say, come on, come on Elijah, let's sort this out, right now. Let's have a big, weighty, theological discussion. Obviously what's wrong, is a doctrinal matter, in your mind.

We need to have, a big Bible study about this, and a time of, morbid introspection, of intensive prayer. That's right, pray, pray, pray about this, over and over, and over again. And we'll examine, everything within your heart.

[23 : 38] That's where the problem, must lie Elijah. You've got a deep, seated spiritual issue. That's why you're depressed. Look at verse 5. What is the Lord's first treatment, for this prophet?

Answer, sleep. Rest. Elijah lay down, and slept. You see, the Lord knows, that Elijah, is a creature, and that he needs sleep, and rest, just like all of us, all of the Lord's servants.

As Psalm 103 says, for the Lord knows, how we are formed. He remembers, that we are dust. We need our sleep. And so that's the Lord's, first point of action here.

And then at some point later on, after Elijah's been sleeping, we are told, that the Lord sends, a messenger to Elijah. Now in verse 5, it says that the Lord, sent an angel. That is true, it was an angel.

But actually, the Hebrew word used for angel, is the same Hebrew word, in verse 2, that's translated as, messenger. And you're supposed to see, the contrast there. Jezebel's messenger, was sent to, break down Elijah.

[24 : 53] But in verse 5, the Lord sends his messenger, to build up Elijah. And notice that lovely, little detail. The angel, the messenger, draws near, to the sleeping prophet, and touches him.

Angel didn't have to do that. Could have woken up, Elijah, in a number of ways. My two young boys, love to wake me up, in the morning, by coming in, and kicking me in the head. I kid you not.

Sometimes, I feel like my wife, does that as well. Especially when I'm snoring, in the middle of the night. But the angel comes, and just, Elijah, touches him. What's the message there, in the movement?

You're not alone, Elijah. The Lord is for you, and the Lord is with you. And once Elijah is awake, the messenger says, arise, get up, eat.

And behold, just look what was there, for the shattered servant. A hot meal, a cake, baked on hot stones, and a jug of water. And that would not only have met, Elijah's physical hunger, and need for sustenance, but there was also a message, behind the menu.

- [26 : 03] Because, back in chapter 17, when the Lord provided for Elijah, what did he give Elijah, through the widow of Sidon? He gave Elijah, a cake, and a jug of oil, that never ran out.
- It's almost like saying, to him now, in this chapter, Elijah, nothing has changed, you know. I am still God. I am still the one, who provides, food for the hungry.
- I am still the same, the unchangeable God, who provides for you. And as James Phillips says, this is a wonderful word, for a man that feels, that everything has gone to pieces, and that God seems, to have deserted him.
- Well the cake, and the jug are reminders, no, I have not deserted you. Well, having eaten, notice, again, the Lord lets his servant, get more sleep.
- He doesn't rush Elijah, it must have been, that this was a massive, contributing factor, to his breakdown. Elijah's crash, in this chapter, was partly, due to the fact, he was exhausted.
- [27 : 14] He was exhausted. That's why the Lord, lets him sleep. So the Lord, takes plenty of time, to make sure, that he is physically, that he is physically, set right. Again, listen to James Phillips, on this point.
- He says, this is such an obvious need, but apparently, in the church, it is by no means, obvious to many, who seem to miss it, or fail to appreciate it.
- In helping Elijah, it's not a question, of probing into, the spiritual situation, searching out some, defect, some unconfessed sin, that has dried up, the life of the spirit.
- We know, of course, that unconfessed sin, does dry up, the life of the spirit. And that spiritual defects, can bring on depression.
- But we must learn, that not all depression, is caused by sin, or defect. Very often, it is simply something, for which overtiredness, and overstrain, are responsible.
- [28 : 16] So friend, before you go, if you're feeling down, and depressed, before you go, to a Bible study, and burst into tears, think to yourself, do I need to get an early night?
- Do I need to go to bed? Remember that friends. Thirdly, the Lord having provide, for the physical needs, of his prophet, he then invites his prophet, to pour out his frustrations.
- The Lord invites his prophet, to pour out his frustrations. Please look at verse 7. And the angel of the Lord, came again, a second time, and touched him, and said, arise and eat.
- And notice this please, brothers and sisters, very important. What does he say next? Arise and eat, for the journey, is too great for you. Now it becomes clear, that Elijah, he's actually planning on, journeying further, and that, the Lord not only knew, about this extra journey, but also, here clearly, the Lord approves, of his journey, as well.
- In fact, it seems to be, that the Lord is pushing him, on in this journey. Where is he headed? Verse 8 tells us, he's going to Horeb, the mountain of God, also known as, Sinai, Mount Sinai.
- [29 : 46] Sinai, if you like, was actually the most prominent peak, in the whole range, of the hills of Horeb. And this is where Elijah is going. The Lord has sustained Elijah, provided him with food and water, and as he travels through the wilderness, he is going to the place, where the Lord appeared to Moses, back in Exodus 34.
- You see, far from Elijah running away, a lot of people think, Elijah's like Jonah here, he's running away from the Lord, he's not. He's actually running, to the place, where the Lord is taking him to. To the very place, where the Lord is going to meet with him.
- Please look at verse 9. There he came to a cave, on Mount Horeb, on Sinai, and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and said to him, what are you doing here, Elijah?

As I said earlier, there are many who read this passage, and they just flat out condemn Elijah, throughout the whole chapter. They say, he should never have run away. They say, how dare he speak to God, in such a way that he does.

How dare he take himself off, to this cave. Well folks, to read it this way, to view the Lord's words here, as a rebuke, is to be misunderstanding, the chapter completely.

[31 : 03] That's how some people, read these words of the Lord. They say, it's like the Lord is saying, what are you doing here, Elijah? What are you doing here? Should we back up in Israel? You bad prophet. But to read that as a rebuke, it is to get it totally wrong, and to miss out that little detail, in verse 7.

The Lord actually approves, of this journey. I agree with Bob File, and Ralph Davis. The Lord, is not rebuking his prophet here.

The Lord is inviting his prophet, to speak, with freedom. To pour out his frustrations, in his heart. It's not a rebuke, it's a gracious invitation.

And if you look down, at verse 13 quickly, you will see, that the Lord is so kind, he actually allows Elijah, to do this twice. So what does Elijah say, in response to the Lord's invitation, to speak freely?

Please look at verse 10. Elijah said, I have been very jealous, for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel, have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets, with the sword.

[32 : 14] And I, even I only, am left. And they seek my life, to take it away. Notice, Elijah is not primarily concerned, with the threats, on his own life.

He does mention that, but he mentions it last. What Elijah is really, cut to the heart about, is what we've already, pointed out. He's cut to the heart, about the glory of God.

He is gripped, with a great passion, to see the Lord worshipped, as the only God of hosts. He's jealous for the Lord, and the good, righteous sense, of that word.

But this is precisely, what the people of Israel, have refused to do. This is what Elijah, is so cut up about, by the fact, that the people of Israel, have spurned the Lord, and forsaken his covenant.

They've thrown down his altars, rejected his mercy. They've killed his prophets, by the sword. He is the only prophet, but left, and they seek his life, to take it away.

[33 : 14] Now friends, all of these charges, that he brings against Israel, are true. Don't fall into the trap, that some make, by thinking that, Elijah's lost his mind here, and he's not thinking right.

That he's not speaking, the truth before the Lord. They say, well what about, the 100 prophets, that read about, the start of chapter 18. The prophets that Obadiah, had hidden, in the cave.

Has Elijah forgotten about them? How can he say, he's the only one prophet left? Well clearly friends, Elijah's talking about, the fact that, he is the only prophet, of the Lord, who was visibly, and publicly, doing something.

Yes. That was certainly, the case on Mount Carmel. There was no one else, who stood with Elijah, on Mount Carmel. No other prophet. Obadiah's hidden prophets, are still hidden prophets, prophets.

So Elijah's not bragging, he's not being proud here, he's not being deluded, he's speaking truth. Yes, there was a turning, of the hearts, of the people, on Mount Carmel.

[34 : 18] But how long, is it going to last for? Not long, we shall see. Yes, Elijah repaired, one altar of the Lord, but that altar, was destroyed, by the Lord's fire.

All the rest, of them are still broken. And from the fact, that the king, and queen of Israel, were unchanged, by Mount Carmel, it shows, that the future, of the kingdom, actually, remained firmly, down the path, of covenant, unfaithfulness, and rejection.

Carmel was great, but Elijah knows, that it's not, a lasting solution. Remember, this is why Elijah, wanted to be dismissed, and wanted to die. Not because he was, wallowing in self-pity, facing death threats, but he's so broken, that the Lord, is being robbed, of his glory.

The Lord, is not being worshipped, and no lasting change, has been brought about. Now friends, before we move on, to see what the Lord, does, in response, to these charges, against Israel.

Let's just notice, Elijah's passion here. I think actually, when we look at Elijah, and hold him up, towards us, like a mirror, I think actually, what we see here, is that Elijah, is very challenging indeed.

[35 : 38] Especially, to the church. Listen to, Ralph Davis on this point. He says, if we grant, that in the presence of God, Elijah, is carefully speaking the truth, which he seems to be, then does he not condemn us?

Do we not hear, in Elijah's answer, a theology, and experience, that disturb us? Can you and I, earnestly say such words? Do we really care, that much, about the infidelity, of the professing church?

Does the professing church's, doctrinal indifference, blatant lawlessness, that we see today, ever get us upset? For God's sake? What is it, that you and I, get depressed, and despondent about today?

What was the last thing, you were depressed about? When was the last time, you were depressed? For God's sake. Because God, was being robbed of glory. Very challenging, isn't it?

I can't get that, out of my mind, brothers and sisters, I can't get that, out of my mind. Well, fourthly and finally, we see that the Lord, prepares Elijah, for the future.

[36 : 52] The Lord prepares Elijah, for the future. Now in verse 11, the Lord, tells Elijah, to go, and stand on the mount, before him.

For the Lord, is going to pass by Elijah, in the same way, that the Lord, passed by Moses, in Exodus 34. Before Elijah moves, before he's even got up, and done anything, the Lord, starts to move, before him.

And just imagine, being in this cave, we tend to think of this cave, well wouldn't this have been amazing? Actually, being in that cave, would have been terrifying. It would have been terrifying. A terrifying experience.

Verse 11, it begins with a great storm, a great wind, so strong, that it tore the mountains nearby, smashing them into pieces. But just notice, verse 11, the Lord, was not in the wind.

The Lord, wasn't present there. Then came, an earthquake. I've never been in an earthquake. I've spoken to someone, who's been in a very serious earthquake. It was terrifying. That's what Elijah felt.

[37 : 57] The whole mountain shook. The cave in which he was in, shook. But notice again, the Lord was not in the earthquake. His presence wasn't there.

Then came a fire. But again, we're told that the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, the sound of a low whisper.

Literally, a voice. A thin sound. Scarcely audible whisper, whisper is what happens. The footnote in our Bible says that it was a thin silence.

But that is not a, I don't think that's a fair, accurate translation of the Hebrew. All the way through this verse, the word that's used there for this low whisper, is translated as voice. And all of a sudden, we're to make sure, we're to think that it's a low whisper.

No, no, no. I think we're to see that it was a voice, a whisper. And clearly, it's not stated explicitly, but the Lord is clearly, in this whisper.

[39 : 00] This is where his presence is. That's clearly what Elijah thinks in verse 13. For he walks out of the cave finally, and covers his face, because he knows he's about to enter the presence of the Lord.

And in verse 13, the Lord asks him again, the same gracious, inviting question. What are you doing here? And again, verse 14, Elijah brings these same charges against Israel.

A second time. It's as though verses 9 and 10, were like a preliminary hearing, where the prophet brings his legal case against Israel. And here, in verse 13 and 14, we have the formal hearing.

In before the presence of the Lord. And just notice, the Lord does not rebuff Elijah's charges. You see, the Lord seems to agree 100% with what Elijah says.

And in verses 15 to 18, the Lord tells Elijah what he has planned for the future by the sovereignty of his word. So firstly, verse 15a, Elijah is to go back to his ministry in Israel.

[40 : 13] Go back. Don't give up. Keep going. Secondly, verse 15b to 16, Elijah, we're told, is to anoint three people. Notice, firstly, anoint a new king over nearby Syria, called Hazael.

Then anoint a new king over Israel, called Jehu. And then, go and anoint Elisha. Elisha.

To be a future replacement. Why anoint these three men? Well, the answer is, the word of the Lord has sovereignly chosen them to carry out the Lord's judgment over the house of Ahab and Jezebel.

That's what we will see explicitly in the narrative in the next few chapters. But it's heavily implied in verse 17. The Lord is saying to Elijah, yeah, I agree with you.

I agree with your charges. That's why in my sovereign word, I'm going to be quietly working out my judgment on this evil house through these men.

[41 : 21] Thirdly, in verse 18, the Lord tells Elijah that whilst it is true that the vast majority of Israel have turned away from the Lord, it is true that the vast majority have forsaken the covenant, whilst that is true, the Lord won't abandon his people completely.

For, the word of the Lord has sovereignly and quietly kept a remnant of faith and will keep a remnant of faith. Look at verse 18. What does he say?

Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed Baal.

The Lord has been quietly working sovereignly through his word and he will keep on doing so to save a remnant. Now friends, when you look at this section, when you put it all together, that's what's in there, but when you put it all together from verses 11 to 18, I think you start to see what the Lord is teaching Elijah.

He's teaching Elijah that as he heads back to Israel, although there will be no more Mount Carmel type moments coming anytime soon, nevertheless, the Lord's servant can have great confidence that all is not lost.

[42 : 41] Yes, things might not look that great right now, but the Lord is powerfully present in his word.

Always in his word. The Lord is always present in his word and thus his word is always powerful. In fact, his word controls history and his word saves people.

going forward, the Lord is not going to use Elijah to carry out many more Mount Carmel type events, but going forward, the Lord will use his prophet to bring his word and his word is quietly sovereign.

His word is powerful. His word, just because it's not accompanied by powerful signs and wonders all the time, doesn't mean that his word is any less powerful.

his word will work, but it will do so from now on in a much more hidden way. And it will bring about the fall of the house of Ahab through these new political rivals of verse 16.

[43 : 50] And it will preserve a faithful people of God mentioned in verse 18. Going forward, that's where Elijah's confidence is to be in. Just because things don't look like they're going to change, doesn't mean to say the Lord's word isn't powerfully at work, controlling all things, working out its will in all things.

The Lord's work is quiet and hidden. And friends, as a church today, we are called to do the same. We are called to place our confidence not in the Lord using fireworks and doing all sorts of signs and wonders, but through the power of his word.

the word that is powerfully at work all the time in history and in the lives of his people. It was the same back in the days of Elijah and it's the same today.

Just because the work of the word isn't accompanied by great signs and wonders doesn't mean that it's not working. It is working. The Lord is quietly sovereign, bringing about his judgments in history, but also working out his grace in history, preserving his people, preserving his church.

So brothers and sisters, if you're looking around Scotland right now, like me, and all you can think about is, goodness, this is absolutely crushing all the time.

[45 : 18] If you look about the professing church in this country as well, and it also causes your heart to sink, and even if you look at your own life and look at the ongoing sin in your own life and you feel absolutely crushed by that, remember the Lord is powerfully at work through his word.

And if we give ourselves to that word, place our confidence in that word, proclaim that word, we can be sure that we will be kept and persevered and the Lord will bring about his purposes.

We will persevere, trusting in him who is our fortress and our tower. Well, amen.

Let's bow our heads and we'll pray together. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[46 : 33] Amen. Amen. Amen. that is what you're doing. We praise you, Heavenly Father, for your goodness.

Please, gracious God, continue to work quietly by your word. Thank you that you are quietly sovereign. What a wonderful comfort that is to know. Please help us to keep trusting your powerful word so that we will be a people who are safe in your shadow forever and ever.

We pray this in Jesus' precious name. Amen.