

1 Kings 18-19 The Ever-Changing Mood of Man and the Faithfulness of God

Today, I will be detouring from Isaiah. Thoughts for this sermon came in a coffee shop in downtown Sydney as I was making my way through 1 Kings in my regular Bible reading. As I watched ALL the people of Sydney walking by and as I contemplated my own heart, I was impressed with the faithfulness of God to me, and the faithfulness of God to all his people. In cp. 18, I read about Elijah his great faith and the amazing victory at Mt. Carmel when the fire of God came down upon the altar and consumed the sacrifice, and the people of God destroyed the prophets of Baal. And then I moved to cp. 19 where I saw a different side of Elijah as he comes down from his “mountain top of faith” and comes to the point where he thinks he is the only one with faith and even desires to die. But God puts Elijah in his place with an amazing dose of faithfulness. There are many truths in this passage. However, the faithfulness of God rises to the top. And OH, how we need to drink from the cup of faithfulness. For we are like Elijah. With this in mind, I have two parts to this sermon. First, I want to retell the story focusing on Elijah, highlighting the change of his mood after Mt. Carmel. Second, I want to focus on God’s response of faithfulness. In this part, I have 3 proofs of God’s faithfulness: 1) Faithfulness to Provide; 2) Faithfulness to Reveal Himself; and 3) Faithfulness to his Covenant.

1. The Ever-Changing Mood of Man. For this truth, I simply want to retell the story of Elijah in this passage and make some comments. The setting is Israel, the Northern Kingdom. The very evil Ahab is king. Jezebell, his wife, is the queen. Idolatry is rampant as the people worship Baal, as they have established an entire religious system. There is a serious drought in the land that has been going on for three years. During this time, we see Elijah performing many miracles, even raising a boy from the dead. And in 18:1 we read: “**After many days the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, ‘Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth’**”. And we all know the story that follows. Elijah says to the people: “**How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him**” (18:21). And they did not answer him. So, he sets up a contest between him and the 450 prophets of Baal. Elijah says, “*we will both build an altar and sacrifice a bull. You call on the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, he is God.*”

And the people (not the prophets of Baal) answered, “**It is well spoken**” (18:24). The prophets of Baal had their chance. They went first, as they “*called upon their god*” until midday. And Elijah mocked them saying, “**Maybe his preoccupied, or relieving himself, or he is away on a journey, or maybe he is sleeping**” (18:27). So they started to cut themselves until blood flowed from their bodies for the remainder of the afternoon. NOTHING happened! Then it was Elijah’s turn. The people came near him. He reminded them their name, Israel, as he took twelve stones and built an altar with a great trench around it. He covered the altar, the wood, and the trench with a great amount of water over and over again. And he says, “**O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, and that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your word**” (18:36). Then . . . the fire of God consumed the altar and the sacrifice. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, “**The Lord, he is God: the Lord, he is God**” (18:38). And then, they killed all the prophets

of Baal . . . At least for a time, the people turned to the Lord. And then, to top it off, the drought came to an end.

To talk about a “mountain top” experience, Elijah was there! What an amazing time in Israel! And Elijah was the servant God used . . . Now notice what happens next (cp. 19). Ahab tells his wife, Jezebeel what happened (19:1). And she sends a message to Elijah that by the next day, he will be just like the prophets of Baal (dead). Then we read in 19:3: **“Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life . . .”** And he gets SO down that he desires to die. He says, **“It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers”** (19:4). From this time, he starts running away from Jezebeel, fleeing into the wilderness. He finds a cave to live in. And while he was there, God came to him and said, **“What are you doing here, Elijah?”** I imagine he is saying, **“Why are you here, sulking, thinking about yourself?”** (God knows the answer.) (19:10).

Notice what Elijah says in v. 10: **“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”** (also v. 14). Oh, the ever-changing mood of man! How far have we come? Miracle worker, prophet, man who hears the Word of God with clear instructions, leader of God’s people of faith, one who calls for a drought to begin and calls for it to end, a man who laughs at 450 prophets and mocks them boldly, a man who acts in GREAT faith . . . calling down the fire off Almighty God, a man God has protected his whole life, one of only two men to not see death and go to the Lord. And then, there he is, hiding in a cave, wanting to die, “shaking in his boots” with great fear. And then to top it off, he exercises great pride. He says, **“God, I am the only one. If I die, who will do your work?”** It is almost as if his view of God went from high to low in this moment. (Scott Lewis is not here today, so I will mention him. What would he say to Elijah?)

Let me ask, *“Christian, has this ever been your experience?”* When life doesn’t go as you desire, do you doubt God’s grace? Do you know God’s promises, yet still doubt? When sickness comes your way, do you question God? When your children or your loved ones do not profess Christ, and turn away, do you get angry with God? For the preacher, do you ever think, *“Without me, this church would not be able to continue?”* On and on we can go? . . . For the remainder of our time, I want to give God’s response of faithfulness to Elijah and to us.

2. The Faithfulness of God. Three ways we see the faithfulness of God: 1) Provision; 2) Revelation; 3) Covenant.

i. Provision. The first way we see God’s faithfulness is in the way he provides for Elijah. As he fled into the wilderness, wishing to die, questioning God’s ways, God nevertheless provides for his needs. He even sends an angel and performs a miracle. Look at 19:4-8: **“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 fathers.” 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 a jar of water. 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 ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food **forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.”**

How often we take the common grace of God for granted, especially in physical needs. I would venture to say that rarely a one in a group like this ever had as little as Elijah. We are so blessed! Oh how good God is to give us what we need! And we certainly do not get what we deserve! Jesus says, **“Do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore, do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”** (Matt. 6).

A lot of truth here! Jesus is highlighting God’s faithfulness to provide. But at the same time, he is emphasizing faith in God and his righteousness. He is saying, *“Yes, you need these things . . . And God will provide as he does the birds and the flowers. But, more than these, you need God himself!”* And God will provide EXACTLY what you need for your life and what He has in store for you. Look back at v. 7. **“Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you.”** Brothers and sisters, trust the provision of God to meet your needs. This is why we pray, **“Give us this day our daily bread.”** And it is not merely bread, but EVERYTHING we need for life and godliness in this world.” God is faithful!

ii. Revelation. God is faithful to reveal himself. He doesn’t merely provide through common grace. He also reveals in a particular way. This is special revelation. In fact, without it, Elijah of the OT, or any Christian from the New Testament, would ever know God. Look at vv. 11-13: **“And he said, “Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and 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?”**

God told Elijah to go to place on the mountain. And BEHOLD, a great wind tore the mountains and broke the rocks. But God was not there. And then an earthquake, but God was not there. Then, a fire, but God was not there. What does it mean that God was not there? Of course he was there! Who caused the wind? Who brought the earthquake? Who started the fire? (not to mention

the fire that came down powerfully on Elijah's altar.) This is general revelation. These are the things of this world to which sinners look! And these things bring great fear! They show power. They prove how small we are. But these are the only the edges of his ways. They only reveal his greatness, his power, and even his wrath, the very things the prophets of Baal were trying to invoke! But, these things only brought harm, death, and damnation. Brothers and sisters, the people of this world are looking for miracles. They are looking for God in the wind, the earthquakes, and the fires of this world. Do you remember what Paul said to the Athenians as he wandered through the city and saw all their idols? He said, "***I see all your objects of worship, even an inscription to the unknown God***" (Acts 17:23).

Brothers and sisters, God IS there. But, not in a special way; not in the way that is so vital to salvation. Notice where Elijah finds God. V. 12: "***in the sound of a low whisper . . . a whisper that Elijah HEARD.*** It was the voice of God! Oh, the grace of God to reveal himself to Elijah! This revelation begins with God in his faithfulness to reveal himself. And this revelation results in life. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "***You must be born again*** (born from above)" (John 3). Paul says, "***But God being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together . . .***" How? "***IN CHRIST—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus . . .***" (Eph. 2:4-6). God is not found specially in the things this world thinks are powerful, but in the power of the Holy Spirit through the revealed Word of God. And this word is realized in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Oh, the grace of God to Elijah and to us to reveal himself in spite of his sin! Rom. 5:8: "***But God commands his love toward us, in while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.***" The special revelation of God is given to us in this Word as we read it in the face of Christ. For all the promises of God are yes in Him!

This means we must rely on special revelation. For in this we find the faithfulness of God. We must not neglect the means of grace in the reading of God's word as we look unto Christ!

iii. Covenant. Finally, and very briefly, God is faithful to his covenant. Look first at 19:10: Elijah says, "***For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant . . .***" In a general way, the Bible teaches that God enters into a covenant with his people to bring great blessings upon those who keep it. But, here the people of Israel have been unfaithful. However, God is faithful to fulfill this covenant. This is a covenant that began in eternity and is first put to words after the fall in Gen. 3:15 as God makes a promise to make things right again. Really, this is God's promise to save sinners. And God reminds Elijah of this plan. Look at 19:14: Elijah says, "***I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away***, as if God's covenant can be broken by the fickleness of sinful hearts! Look over at 19:18. God emphatically puts Elijah in his place. As Elijah cries "*woe is me. I am the only one with faith. If I go, what will happen to your plan in this world.*" But God says, Elijah, "***Yet, I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.***"

Brothers and sisters, God is faithful to his covenant. He will carry out his plans to save a people out of every tribe and every nation. And we all will be gathered around his throne to worship the Lamb. Oh, how little Elijah's faith at that time! God is faithful! He will carry out his plan to save. And it is going on all around us as we go and make disciples of the nations.

Be encouraged today! We are up and down, some of us more than others. However, God is faithful. He is faithful to provide all our needs according to his riches and glory in Christ. He is faithful to reveal himself specially in the face of Christ. He is faithful to his covenant. He will save his people.