

1 Kings 19:1-18 (ESV)

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword.

² Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.”

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

⁴ 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.”

⁵ And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, “Arise and eat.”

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.”

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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?”

¹⁰ 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.”

¹¹ 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.

¹² And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper.

¹³ 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?”

¹⁴ 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.”

¹⁵ And the LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.

¹⁶ And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place.

¹⁷ And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death.

¹⁸ 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.”

Romans 11:1-6 (ESV)

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin.

² God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel?

³ “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.”

⁴ But what is God’s reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.”

⁵ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

I. The Heart of a Disciple

II. The Elijah Complex

III. The Faithfulness of God

The world has changed so much in just the past few years. Just this past week there were two horrific terrorist attacks; one in Britain and the other in Egypt.

In England, a large number of young people were targeted at a pop concert. In Egypt, Christians were attacked and slaughtered in the name of radical Islam.

One gets the impression that this is the new normal. No matter where you are in the world, you could be the next target of a terrorist attack.

Domestically, much of the culture doesn't even seem to have a memory of a Christian worldview.

When I was growing up, it was understood that there was a right and a wrong concerning personal behavior.

People were supposed to wait until they were married before they lived together and had babies.

Marriage was the union of a man and a woman which was supposed to last a lifetime. There were of course deviations from those norms, but the culture frowned on such diversions.

Now there's a new morality, and a new sheriff in town. This is not a judgment free culture we live in today. The judgment and shame of this new morality makes the Puritan Scarlett Letter look like love fest.

As a business, or as a public official, or as a private citizen, if you don't tow the line to the new morality, you will pay a price.

The only taboo is to have taboos. I have found the most telling quote that describes the spirit of the age is this: *When a people know in their hearts that they do not have God's blessing, they will demand the approval of men.*

We're done raising our children, but as a new grandfather, I am deeply troubled by the state of the world in which our grandchildren will be growing up in.

I know that the "good old days" never really existed where everything was where and how it should be. But you cannot deny that the world is a very different place than what it was just a few decades ago.

The apostle Paul, and before him the prophet Elijah had similar laments. The heart of a disciple will grieve when their world and the people of God to be out of sync with the law of God and the Gospel.

Paul grieved over his fellow Hebrews who had waited so long for the coming Messiah, only to reject Him when He came to them in the person of JESUS Christ.

Centuries before that during the time of the divided kingdom, the prophet Elijah observed that the children of Abraham had forsaken the God who redeemed them from the bondage of slavery.

The heart of a disciple longs for redemption; not just personal redemption, but for the coming of the Kingdom; the consummation of Israel and the new heaven and the new earth.

"How long O LORD" is the constant cry of those who wait for the LORD'S return.

This is Ascension Sunday, the LORD'S Day following Ascension Day, when JESUS physically left this world to sit at the right hand of the Father.

After JESUS was lifted up, two men in white robes said to the disciples gathered there:

Acts 1:11

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

The heart of every disciple looks upward as they wait for that day to come. We serve Him here and now with all our energies, while we watch for His return to make all things right.

But just about every disciple will experience what Elijah and Paul went through. As you seek to live in obedience for God's glory, you feel alone, sometimes like you're the only one left.

Many have called this the Elijah complex. It's a feeling of isolation, of despair, of utter hopelessness. For the believer, you know God is there, but it doesn't feel like He's there for you.

For Elijah, he had literally just had a mountain top experience on Mt. Carmel. All of the wicked prophets of Baal had gathered there for the ultimate showdown.

The people of Israel led by King Ahab had gone after the false gods of the nations around them, while claiming to still be the children of Abraham.

1 Kings 18:21-22

And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him." And the people did not answer him a word. ²² Then Elijah said to the people, "I, even I only, am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men."

You remember the rest of the story. Two altars were constructed, and the prophets of Baal called upon their god to consume their offering.

After hours of crying out in a bloodletting frenzy, nothing happened to their altar. Then Elijah called out to the LORD.

1 Kings 18:36-39 (ESV)

And at the time of the offering of the oblation, Elijah the prophet came near and said, "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. ³⁷ Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back." ³⁸ Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. ³⁹ And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God."

This was the most dramatic demonstration of God's provision since the walls of Jericho came tumbling down.

But that didn't stop the powers at hand to exert themselves. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel set out to kill Elijah. Elijah feared for his life, and fled into the wilderness. He sat down under a broom tree:

1 Kings 19:4 (ESV)

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."

That is an interesting statement. *I am no better than my fathers.*

When the idealism of youth is confronted with reality, you realize that all of the things you thought you would accomplish in life, just aren't going to happen.

That's a sobering moment. More than that, it can lead to deep depression and a personal crisis.

So Elijah secluded himself in a cave and brooded about how his life had been failure. He felt worthless and concluded that the LORD was finished with him. As Elijah saw it, he had nothing to live for.

1 Kings 19:9-10 (ESV)

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?" ¹⁰ 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."

We've all been there at one time or another. Some of us are there now. It's the most debilitating thing to feel that everything that you've worked for has come to naught.

It's not that you have lost faith in God, but it feels like the LORD has lost interest in you. Why should He even bother dealing with you anymore? You had your chance to make a difference in the world, and you failed, at least that's what it feels like.

What the apostle Paul was dealing with in chapter 11 is a bit different. It wasn't so much a personal crisis that he was going through, but a question of whether the LORD was done with Israel.

"Has God rejected His people?"

There certainly was a lot of evidence that the Hebrews had rejected the One whom God had sent.

The church in Rome had started out to be composed primarily of Jewish converts to Christianity. But by the time Paul was writing this epistle, the tables had turned and it was primarily a Gentile congregation.

The Gospel seemed to fall on deaf ears when it came to his fellow Hebrews. Was God finished with the Jewish people?

I often wonder about the condition of the American evangelical church. Some of the largest Protestant churches in our country don't seem to care one iota about sound doctrine.

Theology is marginalized as irrelevant. What matters most to people is that they experience something that feels spiritual, whether it's rooted in the Gospel or not.

The doctrines of grace take a back seat to marketing and programs.

There are times when those of us in the Reformed heritage feel like Elijah and we ask the same questions as Paul does here in Romans 11.

Is the LORD finished with the church? Has God rejected His people?

Paul answers his own question. By no means! God is not finished with Israel, and He is not finished with the church, here or anywhere.

What is needed is a different perspective; a bigger picture; a more focused look at the faithfulness of God.

1 Kings 19:11-13 (ESV)

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. ¹² And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. ¹³ 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?"

Replace the name of Elijah with your name. What are you doing here?

- Fulfilling an obligation?
- Going through the motions?
- Earn merit or brownie points?

Or are you in to worship the living God who sovereignly stooped down to become one of us to atone for your sin?

Far too many people come to a worship service as a consumer. "What am I going to get out of this?"

They want an experience more than that want to commune with the living God. Whether it's loud booming music, or flashing lights and smoke, the LORD is not in those things.

He speaks to us through His Word. And His Word is truth. And truth doesn't scream at you, but it resonates in your spirit as a still small voice.

JESUS said that those who worship God will worship Him in Spirit and in truth. The Father seeks those who are true worshippers. (John 4)

A Gospel centered worship service is focused not on us, but on Christ. It's not about how we can feel good about ourselves, but to find our fulfillment in Him.

The Gospel changes our focus. It's not what we do for God that saves us, it's what He has done for us in Christ. Worship is our response to that grace.

God is not done with you. He is not done with Israel. He is not done with the church.

JESUS said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it."

God is faithful. He will fulfill His covenant. His Word will not come back void, but will accomplish everything it sets out to do. What does the LORD want to accomplish in your life?

1. See your part in the bigger picture.

Romans 11:4 (ESV)

But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."

There are Bible believing Christians all around you. Look for them. Seek them out. Encourage them in the LORD. You are not alone. You belong to the family of God.

2. Persevere in the face of adversity by God's grace.

Romans 11:5-6 (ESV)

⁵ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

There is always a remnant. There will always be a witness of God's faithfulness. Don't give up. When you are at a low point, when you feel like you don't have the strength to carry on, watch for God's grace to intervene.

The Gospel is not about you. It's about Him.
Therein lies our hope.