

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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The Remnant

Sunday School - February 21,
2021

Text: 1 Kings 19

Let's begin by reviewing 1 Kings 19. Remember that this is in the time of Elijah when Ahab and Jezebel ruled in the northern kingdom (Israel). Also note that this was some 175 years or so before the time of Jeremiah (who was a prophet in the southern kingdom, Judah). So this is the era of what is called the divided kingdom.

The great contest had taken place on Mt. Carmel. Baal was shown to be false god and Elijah had executed the Baal priests. And then...

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.”

We looked at several important principles in this text last time –

1. It was entirely the Lord’s Spirit in Elijah that enabled him to face the enemy at Mt. Carmel. In himself (and so it is with us), he was not capable of standing. Now we see him running away.
2. The Lord sustains His people in the wilderness. WE are in the

wilderness right now, as the imagery in Revelation teaches:

like the wind which we cannot see.

4. And then you have this:

(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.”

In that dark time of Ahab and Jezebel, the Lord had preserved His church. Elijah didn't see it – just like God showing Himself as that gentle breeze. *Yet I will leave 7000.* It is the Lord's doing. This is particularly important for Elijah (and for us) to grasp. Elisha is going to replace Elijah and as we will see shortly, the Lord is going to take Elijah home. *God's work of redemption, His work of establishing His kingdom, is not dependent upon Elijah or anyone else. Elijah is NOT the only one left.*

I want to talk to you more about this doctrine of *the remnant*.

We saw that the Apostle Paul opens up this verse in Romans 11 –

Romans 11:1-5 ESV I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means!

Revelation 12:1-6 ESV And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. (2) She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. (3) And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. (4) His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. (5) She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, (6) and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which she is to be nourished for 1,260 days.

3. The Lord is at work and present with us by His Spirit who *we do not see*. There are times of “fire from heaven” such as at Mt. Carmel, but typically His Spirit is

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.**

At the present time. Now. Today. All through the church age until Christ comes again. God keeps for Himself His remnant, His church. As Christ's true Israel, we are His creation and this is all by God's gracious *choice* of us.

If you do not have a firm grasp on this truth – the remnant – then you are going to be discouraged just like Elijah was. You look at the visible church today, and it is discouraging. Increasingly we wonder if there are even any real Christians besides us. But there are. They are there. And typically you aren't going to find them in places you can *see*. They won't look like the Temple of Jesus' day, and they won't look like the

pomp and outward glory people crave in religion.

Hebrews 11:36-40 ESV Others suffered mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. (37) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword. They went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, mistreated— (38) of whom the world was not worthy—wandering about in deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. (39) And all these, though commended through their faith, did not receive what was promised, (40) since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

This is what Elijah had to learn and it is what we must learn or we are going to be in trouble. *If you think that you must SEE the church, that the Body of Christ must be VISIBLE and functioning in fire and earthquake and hurricane ways, that the church must fit the traditional forms and structures you have been used to in more peaceful times, then what are you going to do when Ahab and Jezebel reign? And what are you going to do when the visible church is*

so thoroughly corrupted that it seems wherever you turn the false prophets are filling the pulpits and the false sheep fill the pews?

So let's get a firm hold on *the church as the remnant by God's choice*. To do so, let's go back to Romans 9 –

Romans 9:1-5 ESV I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— (2) that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. (3) For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. (4) They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. (5) To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.

Here, Paul shares his grief over the same old, same old story of His earthly nation – Israel. His words remind us of Jeremiah. In physical, earthly terms, the Israelites were the descendants of Abraham. Chosen by God to be a

kingdom of priests and represent His glory to the nations. They had this tremendous heritage Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, King David – the earthly lineage of the Messiah. God established His covenant with them, gave them His Law, the ordinances of worship in the tabernacle, and all the sure promises of God.

But...you know how it went. So that when Christ came, these very people, these “children of Abraham,” were His enemies. So Paul continues:

Romans 9:6-8 ESV But it is not as though the word of God has failed. **For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,** (7) and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” (8) This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

Paul might have been tempted to say what Elijah said – “I alone am left.” But he didn't. Why? *Because he knew about the doctrine of the remnant. He knew that just because someone was born physically as a descendant of Abraham*

that in itself did not make them a true child of God, a true Israelite. And Paul proves it from the obvious:

“Through Isaac your offspring will be named.”

Understand? –

Galatians 4:22-28 ESV For it is written that **Abraham had two sons**, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. (23) But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while **the son of the free woman was born through promise.**

(24) Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. (25) Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. (26) But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. (27) For it is written, “Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.” (28) **Now you, brothers,**

like Isaac, are children of promise.

Get it? Isaac was born by God’s miraculous fulfillment of His promise to Abraham. Abraham and Sarah were way past childbearing years. And yet Isaac was born. Furthermore, this child of promise *was the one God chose to establish His covenant with that He had made with Abraham.* Not the slave’s son who was, you could say, the creation of man.

And Paul applies this. Look at it again:

Romans 9:6-8 ESV But it is not as though the word of God has failed. **For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,** (7) and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” (8) **This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.**

The true people of God, the remnant, the Body of Christ, the church – *is not the product of man’s doings. We exist because God has promised and because God has chosen.*

Ephesians 2:10 ESV For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Paul goes on-

Romans 9:9-13 ESV For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.” (10) And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, (11) though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— (12) she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” (13) As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”

This is the doctrine of *divine election*. God's choice. And notice the emphasis upon *...and had done nothing either good or back...before they were born...not because of works...*

Here you had two twins. Sons of the same father – Isaac. But God chooses to

establish His covenant with Jacob, not with Esau.

Romans 9:14-18 ESV What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! (15) For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” (16) So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy. (17) For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.” (18) So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

Now notice this reaction carefully. Paul is anticipating the natural, sinful reaction of people to this doctrine. “Injustice! God is not just! This isn't fair!” And he takes us right back to Scripture again:

Exodus 33:19 ESV And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The LORD.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

And again:

Exodus 9:13-16 ESV Then the LORD said to Moses, “Rise up early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh and say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, “Let my people go, that they may serve me. (14) For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. (15) For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. (16) **But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.**

- So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.
- So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

The remnant, God’s true Israel, exists. Always. AND we exist ONLY because of God’s choice of us, because He has shown us mercy. What of the rest? He

passes them by and they are hardened in unbelief, *by their own free choice*. As R.C. Sproul put it-

Some receive mercy. Some receive justice. NO ONE receives injustice.

There would be NO one saved if salvation were not of the Lord. No one would choose Christ. Make no mistake, YOU would not have believed in Christ if the Lord had not first grabbed hold of you and given you faith.

1 Corinthians 1:28-31 ESV God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, (29) so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (30) And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, (31) so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

One final point – and we could keep going for a long time examining what the Bible says on this subject – but we leave it at this:

Galatians 4:29 ESV But just as at that

time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now.

The remnant, Christ's true people, have always been persecuted by the false children of Abraham. That is to say, the false church always persecutes the true church. This is another theme you can follow from Genesis to Revelation. And many of you have experienced it. You have been sorely treated by the visible church. You have been hated and persecuted by people that you thought, from outward appearances, were Christians. *Do you see how vital it is then for us to understand that the true people of God, the real Body of Christ, love one another.* And I can say confidently that most of what parades as "the church" fails this test miserably.

YOU are not alone. You are not the only one left. God has His remnant.