

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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The Encouraging Doctrine of God's Remnant

July 19, 2015

Sermon Text: 1 Kings 19

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 18:1-40

Introduction-

In our ministry here at Christ Reformation Church, as with any person or church that strives to faithfully follow and obey Christ, we face up to much evil. Just last Lord's Day we considered the fact that *most professing Christians will end in hell*, as we looked at Christ's own words about the Narrow way vs Broadway and other portions of the Gospels and Epistles in which Christ repeats these sobering truths.

We have often considered the biblical teaching that many and ultimately most local "churches" are not truly in Christ at all. We compare God's Word with what we hear and see being

announced and taught from pulpits in churches that claim to believe in the authority and inspiration of God's Word. And it doesn't measure up to the standard. Most professing Christians are people who really dislike God's Word and who want their ears "tickled" by leaders whom the Lord has not sent. False shepherds.

And, of course, we are immersed in this ministry to victims of wicked abusers. We hear about their evil tactics every day and we hear story after story of how these evil ones claim to be Christians and how they are accepted as such by their churches, all the while the genuine believers, the victims, are rejected and even excommunicated.

These are negative things, though I still find myself really pumped each time this wickedness is exposed. I love to shine God's light on it all. Nevertheless, I think it is very good for us on occasion to remind ourselves of some things, especially one particular fact, that Elijah was much in need of being reminded of. Namely, this –

“The Lord always preserves and maintains His remnant, his elect, and preserves them as His true church until He comes again. Always. In every era of human history, the Lord’s remnant has always been there, even if they are hard to find and see. Thus the Lord has His remnant now, in our day. We are NOT the only ones left.”

Follow along as I read 1 Kings 19, immediately following Elijah’s great victory over Baal and Mt. Carmel –

1 Kings 19:1-21 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."

(19) So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen in front of him, and he was with the twelfth. Elijah passed by him and cast his cloak upon him. (20) And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" (21) And he returned from following him and took the yoke of oxen and sacrificed them and boiled their flesh with the yokes of the oxen and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and went after Elijah and assisted him.

Did you notice back in chapter 18 at Mt. Carmel, this same thinking came through from Elijah? --

1 Kings 18:22 Then Elijah said to the people, "I, even I only, am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal's prophets are 450 men.

But that was not true, was it? Oh, you can sympathize with Elijah. Those were dark, terrible, apostate times, and there have been many other such eras in the history of the church. Think of the dark ages, and then the days of

William Tyndale in England when you would be put to death if you even had a Bible, or like Tyndale, tried to translate one so everyone could read it. The so-called churches of those days did not know the Lord and they did not preach Christ's truth. I suspect that there were times in such days when Christians would think just like Elijah, "I alone am left."

But it is never true. Christ always has a remnant of His true people and He will not lose a single one of them, ever –

John 17:4-12 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. (5) And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. (6) "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. (7) Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. (8) For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. (9) I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. (10) All mine are yours, and yours are

mine, and I am glorified in them. (11) And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. (12) While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

Think about that. That means, since Christ's prayers are ALWAYS answered, *that no true Christian has ever been lost to the evil one, nor ever will be.* It also means, as the Lord told the downcast Elijah, that Christ's church always exists, no matter how dismal the days may be.

The more you become aware of the state of the visible church in our day, the more you will wonder at times, "is there any true local church anymore? Are there any real Christians anymore?" Those are good questions to ask, but the answer is always – *yes.*

I know that I need to remind myself of this promise. Because so many people who have claimed to be such "fine" Christians over the years have come through this church and, in the end, turned out to be rank hypocrites. In addition, I hear valid, true reports

every single week of the “goings on” in churches all across the country and I am at a loss for words. So many, it seems, of even the pastors turn out to be false shepherds.

Here’s is a very typical experience of a real Christian in a false church:

I saw the same thing in the church I just left. When the pastor arrived about eight years ago, a couple in the church was just then breaking up. The wife asked the husband for a divorce because he was draining them financially; She was the only breadwinner, and he was hanging out with the music director (the same music director who refused to read my prayer request detailing my own husband’s secret-keeping), cozying up to the latter’s family, garnering allies. Meanwhile, the wife felt that after years of trying to get her husband to hold and keep a job, and becoming increasingly suspicious of the guy’s Internet use and secret-keeping, as well as his ongoing expenses racking up their debt, she had no choice but to divorce.

In her conversations with me, she actually expressed hope that they would stay connected and maybe if he got himself to provide for himself, they could restart somehow. Instead, he got married within four weeks of the divorce (having met someone on the

Internet). And where was this championed? Within our church – especially by the pastor and music leader. I remember the almost-Thanksgiving service in which the pastor was talking about things for which we can all be thankful, and in the list, the pastor exclaimed, pointing to the ex-husband in a front row, “And we can rejoice that our brother is getting remarried!” I was shocked, actually. I refused to attend the wedding, and I called the pastor’s wife to express my concern. She defended the pastor saying, “Well, all I know is that the wife filed for divorce.” Nobody really cared about the truth or the details.

In fact, shortly before the divorce, the prior pastor (who had tried unsuccessfully to counsel the couple) told the wife to apologize to me and to another woman in whom she had confided. I told her she need not apologize; That’s what we should do – listen and bear one another’s burdens, but the “church” didn’t stick up for her. They supported the non-working remarrying-in-a-heartbeat husband.. That church was – and remains – a very patriarchal structure. I had no idea what patriarchy was until I went through it myself with that church.

And this thing is very, very, VERY widespread in what claim to be bible-believing, conservative churches. We

are indeed tempted to think, "We are the only ones left."

But we aren't. God always keeps His remnant.

The Apostle Paul picks up on this account of Elijah in Romans –

Romans 11:1-5 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.

Think very, very carefully now about what Paul is saying here. Paul has just told us about the dismal, hardened Jews –

Romans 10:17-21 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (18) But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they

have, for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." (19) But I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry." (20) Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." (21) But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

Israel, the visible covenant people of God under the Old Covenant are disobedient and contrary. They do not seek the Lord. They have heard the gospel and they rejected it, even crucifying the Son of God.

Does this mean then that the Lord has changed His plan? That all His promises to Israel we read about in the Old Testament are null and void? All this talk such as – is it just that, talk?

Isaiah 60:1-22 Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. (2) For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. (3) And nations shall come to your light, and kings

to the brightness of your rising. (4) Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip. (5) Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. (6) A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD. (7) All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you; the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; they shall come up with acceptance on my altar, and I will beautify my beautiful house. (8) Who are these that fly like a cloud, and like doves to their windows? (9) For the coastlands shall hope for me, the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your children from afar, their silver and gold with them, for the name of the LORD your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because he has made you beautiful. (10) Foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in my wrath I struck you, but in my favor I have had mercy on you. (11) Your gates shall be open continually; day and

night they shall not be shut, that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession. (12) For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste. (13) The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the plane, and the pine, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious. (14) The sons of those who afflicted you shall come bending low to you, and all who despised you shall bow down at your feet; they shall call you the City of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. (15) Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, with no one passing through, I will make you majestic forever, a joy from age to age. (16) You shall suck the milk of nations; you shall nurse at the breast of kings; and you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. (17) Instead of bronze I will bring gold, and instead of iron I will bring silver; instead of wood, bronze, instead of stones, iron. I will make your overseers peace and your taskmasters righteousness. (18) Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise. **(19) The**

sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. (20) Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended. (21) Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified. (22) The least one shall become a clan, and the smallest one a mighty nation; I am the LORD; in its time I will hasten it.

No! The promises of the Lord stand. All of these things are looking toward, *the true nation of Israel, the Israel of God – the remnant. The elect. The true Church.* And of course, *the New Creation.*

Listen carefully to the Apostle John as he *applies Isaiah's prophecy to the New Jerusalem, the New Creation, the Church –*

Revelation 22:1-5 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb (2) through the middle of the

street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (3) No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. (4) They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. (5) And night will be no more. **They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.**

And this is precisely consistent with what Paul tells us about the true Israel

Romans 2:28-29 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. (29) But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

So even though – get this now – *even though visible “Israel”, that is to say, even though the VISIBLE covenant people of God are corrupt and unbelieving, it is not the true Church that is corrupt and unbelieving!* Christ always has His true people who are circumcised in the heart by the Spirit.

And so it is today. It is never fun to see the corrupt, false church. But that counterfeit has always been around and it always will be until Christ comes. We must not be devastated by this fact and give up. Christ keeps His true church. Always.

There ARE true Christians who truly love Christ. But often they aren't very visible, and they do not seek notoriety for themselves. The same is true of local churches. There ARE true churches where Christ's truth is loved and where the people truly know and obey the Lord.

But they are hard to find. In Elijah's day, true prophets hid in caves. And Elijah apparently did not know about the 7000 faithful elect believers who had refused to worship Baal.

It is wrong for us to ever be overcome with discouragement and despair, concluding that "we are the only ones left." Or to be dominated by a spirit of thought, "I have been betrayed by people who claimed to be Christians so many times that I am not going to trust anyone again." That is wrong. We become rather useless to the Lord if we embrace that kind of thought. Yes, we must be wise as serpents. We must not foolishly assume that whoever says they are a Christian, must be. We are to test the spirits. We must remember

that *the remnant is a remnant! And that means it is not the majority.*

But the remnant still exists. It always exists.

Isaiah 1:9 If the LORD of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah.

And again, Isaiah says-

Isaiah 10:20-22 In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. (21) A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. (22) For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness.

Paul, in that very same section of Romans, applies Isaiah's words to our era --

Romans 9:27-29 And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, **only a remnant of them will be saved,** (28) for the Lord will carry out his sentence upon the

earth fully and without delay." (29)
And as Isaiah predicted, "If the
Lord of hosts had not left us
offspring, we would have been like
Sodom and become like
Gomorrah."

Therefore, we must not become discouraged. We must not be surprised at these things. When we look around and see that not many are standing with us, and it seems that most every church is just going down Broadway and tells us that we are wrong and narrow and judgmental, we must not believe those accusations.

Because we like that word – Narrow.
It's a good word. It is Christ's Word.