

**1st Kings 19: 13-18 – “God’s Reserving 7,000 in Israel”, Message # 11 in the series –
“Lessons from the Life of Elijah”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
In the Afternoon Worship Service on August 15th, 2021.**

In this last verse that I read to you, we find the greatness and the certainty of God’s purposes in the things that He decrees. “I have reserved to Myself, seven thousand in Israel”. When Elijah related to God the reason for his discouragement, that the children of Israel had forsaken His covenant, and torn down His altars, and killed His prophets with the sword, and that he alone was left, this was how God brought Elijah comfort and encouragement. And if we will pay close attention to this message, this is also how the Lord will bring us comfort and encouragement when we are doubting and fearing the worst for ourself, and for our nation as well.

From the vantage point of this statement then, I want to show you 1st – That God’s decrees encompass all of His blessed work in your life now as a Christian. (verses 13 and 14) And then, 2nd – God’s decrees encompass all of His blessed work in your ministry, and those who will follow after you. (verses 15-18) Let’s see if we will receive the comfort and encouragement which God intends from these verses.

1st of all – We want to see that God’s decrees encompass all of His blessed work in your life now as a Christian.

“So it was, when Elijah heard it, (that is the still small voice of God), that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave.” “Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’” “And he said ‘I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword.’” “I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.” The last time that we were together we thought about how God ministered to Elijah’s discouragement, when he fled away to Horeb, the mountain of God because of Jezebel’s death threat to him.

Elijah did not understand why the king and the queen did not repent and turn the nation back to worshipping God. He had indeed been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts. And he thought that he was the only one left in Israel who was trying to turn the nation back, publicly, to worship God. Well, we saw in the last message that I gave to you that Elijah needed to understand that God’s purposes and plans were greater than his own perception of them. He needed to understand that, yes, God is willing to demonstrate His wrath and make His power known. There are ways that He demonstrates His majesty and His justice just as He did at Mt. Carmel, and also there at Mt. Horeb, in those acts of power.

But in verse 13, God asked Elijah for the second time – What was he was doing there? God asked this question twice for Elijah’s sake. He knew the answer to His own question. He knew that Elijah, even though he was a prophet, and even though he had seen His acts of power, and even though he had heard His still small voice, he still did not have the definite answer that he was looking for; as to why he had not seen revival in Israel after the acts of power which God demonstrated through him at Mt. Carmel. God knew that this was the reason that Elijah was so discouraged. Elijah did not see the evidence of hearts being changed.

He needed to understand that in the salvation of men’s souls, it is not just that God exhibits His power, but it is also peace that is spoken to the heart that is trusting in Him, when their sins are forgiven and the direction of their heart is changed forever by the New Birth. And so, we should understand that great and meaningful lessons are conveyed to God’s people through His still small voice. He wants us see that it is with this still small voice that He does indeed change the course of a person’s life forever. It is His gentleness that makes them great. But Elijah could not quite take this in yet. He thought of himself as a failure in his ministry and he still had questions for God that He had not received the answer to. By the way, you should know that God is well able to answer all of the questions of your mind and heart, but He will do so in His time and His way. While you are

waiting for the answers He has some things that He wants you to learn to do. He wants you to trust in Him, that His plans will have their complete fulfillment. This is because God decrees not only the end of a matter, but also the means that He will be glorified in relation to that end.

Turn with me over to Psalm 62, verses 1-7, and I will show you this. “Truly my soul silently waits for God; from Him comes my salvation.” “He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.” “How long will you attack a man? You shall be slain, all of you, Like a leaning wall and a tottering fence.” “They only consult to cast him down from his high position; they delight in lies; they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.” “Selah” “My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him.” “He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be moved.” “In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God.”

Now what I am hoping that you will understand from these words is that our God wants you to learn to wait upon Him, and to trust in Him at all times. He wants you to do this in the times of reformation and revival, when you are spiritually on top of the world, and greatly involved in the work of the Lord. And He also wants you to trust and to wait upon Him in the times when He brings His judgments and executes His justice. And further, He wants you to wait and to trust in Him even in the times when you think that He is doing nothing at all. Still, all of His purposes are in motion in regard to all the people in all the earth. And His purposes are in motion concerning you.

The most important thing to God is your relationship with Him; how you see Him, how you think about Him, what you do in relation to Him, at all times. In the text that we are looking at now, that Elijah fell into leaning to his own understanding. He feared that Jezebel would kill him, and he feared that spiritual revival would never come to Israel. But I want you to look at how David thought about God during his trials. He says – “My soul waits for God, from Him comes my salvation.” “He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.” In other words, in the midst of His greatest difficulties David would continue to see God as his defense, His salvation from sin, and from his enemies. He would trust in his God, the One who was watching over him and protecting him, and he would not be greatly moved. He would not worry or fret. He knew that God would help him.

He speaks in verses 3 and 4 about how sinful his enemies were; attacking him and consulting to cast him down from his high position as king. They delighted in lies. They blessed with their mouth, but inwardly they were cursing him. David knew this, and yet you do not see him worrying or fretting about it, or thinking that he had to attack them back. He was content to wait silently for God alone. He was content to commit the matter to God and to pray for wisdom to know how he should think about the whole matter. He saw God as his defense and he would not be moved. He saw God, it says in verse 7, as his glory; the rock of his strength, and his refuge was in God.

Now let’s read verses 8-12 – “Trust in Him at all times, you people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.” “Selah.” “Surely men of low degree are a vapor, men of high degree are a lie; if they are weighed on the scales, they are altogether lighter than vapor.” “Do not trust in oppression, nor vainly hope in robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.” “God has spoken once, twice I have heard this: that power belongs to God.” So, in verse 8, David counsels us to trust in God, when we are in difficult situations. He tells us to pour out our hearts before Him because He is a refuge for us. And we find in verse 9 that God indeed gave him wisdom in terms of how he should see the men who were against him; whether they were of low degree, or whether they were of high degree.

The men of low degree were a vapor and men of high degree a lie. And if they are weighed in the balances, they are altogether lighter than vapor. And so, he was not to trust in oppression; either in his own ability as king to oppress them, nor in thinking that taking things from them, or using his riches as king to get them to do what he wanted, would help at all. He was not to set his heart upon anything of earthly power that was in his hand to do. He was to trust in God. God had

spoken this once to him and twice he had heard it; that power belongs to God. And God is well able to render to each man according to his works. In applying this to our study, we should see that God is just as interested if not more so, in the process of building character into the lives of His people, as He is in answering their most perplexing questions about why the hearts of people around them do not change; even when they are most zealous to preach and declare the will of God to them.

“What are you doing here, Elijah?”, is a question that was asked by the God who knows all things. He knew exactly what Elijah was thinking and why he was discouraged. And he kept Elijah in the dark about the answer to his most pressing question – Why don’t people’s hearts change when Your greatest acts of power are shown to them, until He had finished dealing with Elijah’s spirit in a gracious way. The answer to our greatest, most pressing and most important questions of God, will come to us in the still small voice of God, speaking to our hearts in relation to His word.

And what God would say to us is often this – I have decreed things in just this way, so that you, my servant, might be more sensitive to My purposes and plans. And I would teach you to wait upon Me for the answers. Dear Christian – Is this something that You are willing to do? To wait upon God; to trust in God, seeing Him as your refuge, and your strength? Are you willing to abide by what He will show to you in all the providential orderings that He has for your life and your future, and the future of your loved ones, and the future of the nation that you love? We do want to see people turned back to back to God.

Well, this is the way to be kept back from discouragement, disappointment, and even depression. It is that you will learn to wait upon God and trust in Him at all times; to answer His question to you – What are you doing here? If you can say – I am waiting upon You, Lord, I am trusting in You, and I know that You are wise enough to give me the answer, and lead me into all the truth of what I need to learn; to build my character and make me useful in your service, then that is the best of all places to be.

Now 2nd – God’s decrees encompass all of His blessed work in your ministry, and even those who will follow after you.

We need to see that Elijah needed to know that God had things perfectly in his power and control to deal with wicked men, He most definitely had the power to encourage His prophet, and to move forward His purposes in the salvation and sanctification of His people. His purposes had been more secretive than Elijah would have liked, but this did not mean that they were not definite. For in verse 15 we find the Lord saying to him, “Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria.” “Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel.” “And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place.” “It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill.” “Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

These were definite actions that God had ordained, in justice and judgment, even though God would not be a participant in any of the sins committed by these kings. Nevertheless, these things were a part of His decrees in relation to Israel. When God would raise up Hazael to be king over Syria, and Jehu to be king over Israel, He would thoroughly judge the wickedness of the nation of Israel in the years to come. And through the ministry of Elisha, God would bring the reviving work that Elijah had longed to see come to pass. All these decrees were revealed to Elijah so that He would be not be overwhelmingly discouraged, but rather he would be encouraged.

These things which God had told him that He had decreed, would restore Elijah to his former holy confidence in God; to his believing that all of God’s future purposes would be fulfilled in righteousness. And that even in the midst of judgment, God would remember to show mercy to His elect people. All of this most certainly did come to pass in Elijah’s life. He now knew that God would righteously judge and bring down the wicked rulers who presently ruled in Israel. And what

is more, God would indeed reserve seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees had not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that had not kissed him. Truly, this must have been a revelation to Elijah; that there were that many left in Israel who were still worshipping the true and living God. He had thought himself alone in his work, and without support among the people.

We find that this verse is used by the apostle Paul in Romans chapter 11, verses 1-6, if you will turn with me there. "I say then, has God cast away His people?" "Certainly not!" "For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." "God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew." "Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, 'LORD, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS AND TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY SEEK MY LIFE'?" "But what does the divine response say to him?" "I HAVE RESERVED FOR MYSELF SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL." "Even so then, at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

Now, you could see how easily Elijah could become discouraged; thinking that God had cast off His people, and that lasting reformation and real revival would never come. But the divine response to Elijah was He had reserved for Himself seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal. What is this kind of language, but the language of election? The language of election is the language of God's definite choice of people to salvation. It is God's reserving for Himself this exact number of people. It should show us, that it always was His purpose to do so, in relation to this time where so few seemed to believe, and witness to their faith in the true and living God.

The number 7,000 may represent the actual total number of God's elect during that generation. Or it may be a number which represents the total number, whatever that total number would be, of those chosen by God to salvation. When you are chosen to salvation, you are also being called to a pure worship of God, a worship where idols are put away, and those who speak the word of God will be received. Their words will be believed by you, and acted upon, because it is God's word that is being delivered. If you are chosen of God, you will be praying to live a righteous and holy life through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul, at the time in which he wrote this epistle (his present time) was declaring that there was a remnant of Jews according to the election of grace. He was saying that this too was a remnant which God would know that He had reserved for Himself; Christians who would stand for the truth of the gospel and the doctrines of grace. For, he tells us here, their salvation was not by works but by grace. It was not by their own free will and choice, but by God's choice and His supplying them with grace and strength, and Christ's righteousness to cover the best of their works. And these truths are something which is true in all generations of the Church, both Old Testament and New.

Let us learn from this not to become discouraged by smaller numbers of those who will confess their faith publicly in our day. This does not mean that God has stopped doing conversion work in the world today. There will always be a remnant according to the election of grace, and reason to rejoice that God is doing a great work in the salvation of souls, in accordance with His purposes. These 7,000 were those whose mouths had not kissed Baal, and this was their public confession to God; that they would not kiss him. And the reason that they did not kiss him was because they had been given saving grace to resist that temptation and to overcome the evil one, and to prove the truth of their holding fast to the commandments of God's law. They believed in God, and they waited upon Him for the good spiritual things that He would bring to them through the ministry of men like Elijah and Elisha. Zeal for the Lord of hosts is greatly valued by God and it will be rewarded by Him. We shall see the truth of this in future messages.