

Elijah – Lessons Learned – 1 Kings 17-19

We're in the middle of our theme-series for the year – looking at some of the OT saints, whose lives/experiences were *written down for our instruction* (1 Cor 10:11)
And the goal is to learn the lessons from their day, in order to live the life in ours
So today I want to turn our attention to **Elijah**, found in 1 Kings 17-19 (turn there)

Elijah lived ~870BC, and though 1 Kings 17:1 is the first mention of him in the Bible, it's certainly not the last – he is well attested in the Scriptures
In addition to 1&2 Kings, Malachi references him, Jesus talks about him, and then James cites him as an example for us to follow
All that to say – Elijah has made a huge impact on God's people down thru the centuries, and I trust he will on you as well

- The long and short of **HIS SITUATION** in these chapters, is that he goes to King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel . . .
And says there's going to be a drought in the land for the next several years, until *he* says otherwise
Which is both a commentary on *their* wickedness, and the *weakness* of their god Baal to do anything about it, since that was his area of "expertise"

And right after Elijah tells *them*, God tells *him* to get out of town
Sending him first to *Cherith* (**map**) in the east, and then to *Zarephath* in the north
Where he ends up doing several miracles, including raising a boy from the dead
You might call that part of his life – escape from witch mountain

Fast forward 2 years, and he goes back to Ahab with the drought in full swing – this time *directly* confronting him about his sin . . .
The result of which is a showdown he organizes on *Mt Carmel* (map)
A showdown between himself and the prophets of Baal and Asherah
A showdown he wins due to God's miraculous intervention – resulting in the death of the false prophets of Baal, *and* relief from the drought due to his prayers
That's stage 2 of his situation – showdown on Mt Carmel

None of which makes Jezebel happy as you can imagine
So she threatens his life, and Elijah runs – getting as far away as he possibly can
First to Beersheba, and then to Mt Horeb – another name for Mt Sinai
And it's there that God finally gets his attention, and tells him to get back to work
That's the third stage of his life – Flight to Mt Horeb
Rounding out his situation

The first lesson (**OUR LESSONS**) of which is . . .

LESSON 1 – The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you (17:1-10)

Ever heard that before? I'm not sure where this saying originated, but certainly this is one place where it's found
The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you
Including the grace of his protection (17:1-4,7-10a)

First God led Elijah to speak hard truth . . .
Then he led him into the wilderness . . .

And then he led him out of the frying pan and into the fire, to Zarephath, the enemy – Jezebel's old stomping grounds
And God protected him every step of the way – b/c where God leads, he protects

- And he also provides
Elijah was sustained with *food* in both places . . .
Shelter in both places, especially Zarephath, where he stayed w the widow and her son . .
And he even provided encouragement (17:24)
Where God leads, he provides

And the interesting thing about it, is that he often does so from sources we least expect
Like birds considered unclean to the Israelites . . .
And a pagan foreigner from Jezebel's homeland
The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God's provision cannot keep you
But it sometimes comes from sources we least expect

- I experienced a bit of that recently when Becky and I were on our way back from CA . .
We were standing in the security line at the Sacramento airport, 3 people away from being checked . . .
When I discovered that my license was expired – like 5 months expired

And to make matters worse, Jezebel's long lost cousin was checking them
I had never seen anyone scrutinize them so thoroughly, and so long
I just prayed – "God, I don't know if you want me back in time to preach or not, but if so, you're going to have to do something, b/c this woman is relentless"

So Becky went first, and just like the people in front of her, the lady shined her little UV light on her license, and memorized every number on it
And I thought, I am so sunk, I have no idea how I'm going to get home

And about that time, I started to hand my license to her . . .
When all in one motion, she handed Becky's license back, got up from the chair, and gave way to another security guard, who I didn't even know was there
And I kid you not, the guy reached out to take my license and boarding pass, and signed the thing like this (head turned away) – as he continued talking to her
He literally didn't even glance at my license, let alone scrutinize the expiration date

After we got a few steps past, Becky and I looked at each other, and just said – that was totally a God thing
Protection *and* provision, from an unlikely source
The will of God will never lead you where the grace of God cannot keep you

LESSON 2 – The LORD is God, and there is no other – period (18:20-40)

That was the whole reason for the Mt Carmel showdown
It wasn't to create some spectacle of fireworks
It wasn't to show just how good a prophet Elijah was

It was to get the people to see and acknowledge that the *LORD*, Yahweh, is God
That *he's* the supreme being of the universe . . .
And that they should follow *him*, instead of Baal – 18:20-21

They were tongue-tied; dumb-founded
Most likely b/c they were living a double life, and didn't want to leave it

So Elijah sets up a showdown to hopefully open their eyes – 23-24
So the prophets of Baal went first – and from morning to evening they danced, they
chanted, they ranted, they raved, they yelled, they screamed . . .
And v28 says – they *cut themselves until the blood gushed out upon them*
But, v29 says – *there was no voice; no one answered; no one paid attention*
IOW Baal didn't show up; B/c he couldn't show up; B/c he doesn't exist

At which point Elijah *built an altar in the name of the Lord* (32) – 33-39
The lesson for us is the same as it was for them . . . that the LORD is God, and there is
no other – period
He alone is all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere present
He alone put the stars in place; He alone designed your body
He alone fixed the laws that govern the universe; And he alone knows best
You don't; I don't; And nobody else does either

- The only question that remains, is – How long are you going to go on limping between
two different opinions?
Between living for yourself and living for him?
Between leaning on your own understanding, and leaning on his?
Between trusting in a religion *about* him, and a relationship *with* him?
How long?

How long are some of you going to continue to walk the wide road that leads to
destruction, as opposed to the narrow road that leads to life?
How long are you going to continue in your sin?
How long are you going to risk God's judgment?

- What's it going to take?
What's it going to take for you to confess Jesus Christ as Lord of your life?
To repent of your sins and turn from pride?
To stop living a lie, and start living according to the truth?

What's it going to take?
Fire from heaven? He's already done that
The word of prophets? Done; The testimony of his followers? Done
The death of his Son, in *your* place, for *your* sins? Done
The resurrection of *his* life to guarantee *yours*? Done

Don't u think the time has come for u to follow him just like the Israelites of Elijah's day?
To worship him and obey him? Fully and completely?
To say like they did – *The LORD, he is God?* (39)

- We're going to eat and drink at the Lord's Table in a few minutes, and that would be as
good a time as any to confess that, and follow him
To trust the work of Jesus Christ on the cross to save you from the consequences of your
sins, and keep you for all eternity
To yield your life to him, in its entirety, once and for all

How long before you learn the lesson, and live your life accordingly?
The Lord is God, and there is no other

LESSON 3 – The prayer of a righteous person has great power (18:41-46)

That's the lesson of v41-46 where Elijah prays and the rain falls
Taken verbatim from James 5:16 where he summarizes this event in Elijah's life to
support it
Let me read it (**James 5:16b-18**) . . .

The prayer of a righteous person has great power
And b/c it was true of Elijah with a nature just like ours – it's true of us as well
Our prayers, the prayers of the righteous, the prayers of a person who is right with God,
have great power *****

So be righteous and pray – simple
Live a holy life and tap into the power
Not in some twisted, selfish sort of way, for your own advantage . . .
But for the sake of others and the kingdom of God

- Out with passive prayers, and in with fervent prayers – like Elijah's
Instead of – “Oh Lord, if you happen to think about it, would you mind letting it rain”
Instead of that, pray – “God, let it rain; Reveal yourself and your power to these people,
so that they'll believe”
If the prayer of a righteous person has great power, then pray like you mean it

And pray like you believe it – as if what you're praying will come about
Out with prayers of doubt, and in with prayers of humble expectation
B/c the prayer of a righteous person *has great power*
Pray like you believe it

And pray more – Elijah did
He didn't just throw up a prayer on the way down the mountain
He prayed 7 times, sending his servant to look for rain each time, until finally God
answered
It seems in that case that the well-being of the land depended on Elijah's prayer

Let me ask you something
If the well-being of our church depended on your prayers, where would we be?
Would we be a lighthouse, or an outhouse?

If an outhouse, don't you think the time has come to pray more?
And to pray like you mean it? And pray like you believe it? I think so
B/c like Elijah, the prayer of a righteous person has great power
Learn the lesson, and live the life

LESSON 4 – A little perspective goes a long way (19:1-18)

No sooner had Elijah come down from the mountain, and his mountain-top experience –
than he lost all perspective in the face of Jezebel's threat (19:1-3)

(Map) Beersheba was about 120 miles to the south – the southern-most part of Judah
From there, he went another day’s journey into the wilderness to die (19:4)
“They couldn’t stand in the face of the opposition, and neither can I; So just take me”
He lost all perspective *****

He had just struck a death blow to Baal worship in Israel – literally speaking, with the execution of 450 false prophets according to the Law . . .
He had just seen God work miraculously at the altar on Mt Carmel . . .
His prayers for rain had just been answered, ending a 3½ year drought . . .
And before all that he had experienced first-hand, God’s protection and provision – from unlikely sources, in unlikely places . . .
And it was all forgotten in a moment – b/c he *feared man*

- That’s what the fear of man does
It causes you to act before you think; It causes you to think irrationally when you do
And it robs you of God’s perspective when you need it most
The worst of which for Elijah, is found in v9-10
Having reached Mt Horeb, about 250 miles south of Beersheba, it says . . . (read v9-10)

“Woe is me; I’m all alone; And all is lost”
When in all actuality v18 says there were 7000 people in Israel just like him
But he couldn’t and wouldn’t see them, b/c he had lost all perspective
Until that is, God got his attention (11-13a)

God’s perspective is rarely found or regained – in the extraordinary things of life, or the unusual things, or the miraculous, or the loud, or the phenomenal
But rather, in the quiet and mundane
In simple things like a *thin silence*; or a low whisper
And once found, it only takes a little bit to go a long way in the face of fear, or doubt, or despair

- The question is – are you listening?
Are you listening in the secret, quiet places of your life?
Or do you avoid them like the plague b/c you’re afraid of what you’ll hear?
Or maybe you clutter your life with so much activity that you *can’t* hear
Are you listening?

And are you remembering?
Remembering the mountain top experiences of God’s goodness, guidance, protection, provision, miracles, and love?
Are you remembering all that?
Or are you choosing to remain in a state of spiritual amnesia?

If so, learn the lesson and regain some perspective, God’s perspective
B/c it goes a long way toward living the life (*pray*)

The Lord’s Table

One of the reasons we celebrate The Lord’s Table on a periodic basis, is to *keep* his perspective
To reflect on lessons like these, and so live the life to which God has called us

So in the *quiet* of these next few moments – will you do that?
Will you get right with God, and listen?
Will you pray like you mean it?
Will you trust his grace to keep you where he leads?

And if you’ve never confessed that the LORD is God . . .
If you’ve never committed to turn from your sin with his help . . .
If you’ve never really trusted Jesus and his work on the cross, to save you from the consequences of your sins . . .
If you’ve never offered your life to him, as a living sacrifice – to be used in his service, for his purposes . . .
Why don’t you do that now?

In the quiet place of your heart, tell him you believe
And ask him to forgive you of your sin
And invite him into your life to take first place from now on

It’s not necessarily easy, but it *is* that simple
“God, I believe, please forgive me, take first place – here’s my life”

If you do that, or you’ve already done that, join us in eating and drinking
But if you haven’t, just let the bread and cup pass
B/c they’re meaningless for you anyway, and you risk judgment by participating

So spend some time with the Lord in the quietness of your heart
And I’ll lead us in taking the elements together, when the time comes

- In **John 6:35** Jesus said– *I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.*

Representing the body of Christ and the life he gave . . . (eat) Representing the blood he shed for the salvation we have . . . (drink)

