The Prophet Elijah
1 Kings 19:9-18
Grace in Times of Discouragement

This is my message written prior to being preached. Please excuse the bullet point format and any grammatical mistakes. This is meant to be spoken.

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 Ha-zael to be king over Syria. 16 And Jehu the son of Nim-shi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shap-hat of Abel-me-holah 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." (1 Kings 19:9-18)

Introduction

- Today we're continuing our study through the life of **the Prophet Elijah.**
- If you remember, last week he was **alone in the wilderness under a broom tree**.
- And there he was suffering from **spiritual depression** so severe that he prayed...

4 …"It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers." (1 Kings 19:4)

- Elijah wanted to die, but instead of giving **Elijah** what he wanted, **God gave him grace.**
- God didn't **condemn** him for running away in fear or **for wanting to die**.
- **Instead,** He sent an angel to **touch and fed** him, **not once but twice**.
- And the **second time the angel came**, he commanded **Elijah** to…

7 … "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you."

- And Elijah obeyed…

[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. (1 Kings 19:8)

- In his **depressed state**, Elijah received the grace of the LORD,
- which included a call to **go to mount Horeb**, the mount of God, **AKA Mount Siani.**

- Elijah's journey began somewhere near **Beersheba,** in Judah.
- **He traveled forty days and forty nights, some 250 miles** south to **Mount Horeb.**
- And you might think that having received God's grace, **Elijah's** depression would be over.
- **And to a certain extent it was,** at least enough to get him off his **keister,**
- out from under the broom tree and all the way to **the mount of God**.

- But when Elijah arrives at **Horeb**, he still hasn't returned to his **old bold faith filled self.**
- He may no longer be **suicidal**, but he's certainly **discouraged and fearful**.
- **This is pictured** by his new home…

[9] There he came to a cave and lodged in it… (1 Kings 19:9)

- Elijah is on Mt. Horeb, living alone in a cave, **which would be discouraging**.
- And what does he need? **Well, more grace**.
- As we will see, **on Horeb**, Elijah's **discouragement** to self-centeredness.
- He isn't looking upward to God, **but inward to himself**.

- But just like we saw last week, **God doesn't condemn him**.
- Instead, God gives him **more grace** and **then calls him back into active service.**

- **And that is great news for us, because we serve a God of grace!**
- And since His grace was given to Elijah in his time of discouragement.
- We can be sure we'll receive **God's grace** in our times of discouragement as well.

- But before we get to the great news of God's grace for Elijah and us,
- we must first examine **why Elijah was still discouraged?**
- Last week we talked about the **causes of his spiritual depression**.
- Including, fatigue, isolation, opposition, unmet expectations, fear and guilt.

- And some of those are still affecting his emotions and contributing to his discouragement.
- But **on mount Horeb**, as Elijah focuses not on God but himself,
- The **main cause** of his **discouragement** is believing **his own Half-Truths**.

1. Elijah <u>Believed</u> His Own Half-Truths

- And what are **half-truths?**
- Well, they're statements that may be true in part,
- but don't give the full truth, **they're missing crucial data**.

- **For example,** if I were to say to you, **UCR** has gone undefeated in football **since 1976.**
- Without mentioning that the **UCR football program ended in 1975.**
- That's an obvious and **somewhat humorous half-truth**.

- But the half-truths that **Elijah believed** are not so **obvious or humorous**.
- In fact, to him they weren't half-truths at all, **they were the way he saw things**.
- And they were not funny; **they were depressing and discouraging**.

- So, what were these half-truths Elijah was believing?
- Well, they're found in **verses 10 and 14**.
- In these **two verses** Elijah gives the exact **same, word for word** answer to a question from God.
- **And what was the question, In verse 9 we read…**

9 …And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9)

- And **in verse 13** after revealing himself to Elijah,
- God will, **in a low whisper (still small voice)**, ask Elijah the very same question.

13 …"What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:13)

- Now the fact that God asks this question twice implies that Elijah's first answer **was not correct or sufficient**, and so, when Elijah gives the same answer a second time,
- this reveals he's not **getting what God is asking?**

- ***So, what is God asking?***
- Is he rebuking Elijah, telling him that he shouldn't be on Mount Horeb.
- Like if you find your child out of bed in the kitchen sneaking cookies, you might say…
- **What are you doing here? Meaning you are not supposed to be here.**
- And this is possible, because when Elijah was near **Beersheba** and the Lord told him to…

7 …"Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." (1 Kings 19:7)

- The text doesn't say, God told him where to go.
- However, the fact that after this command, it seems Elijah is obeying the Lord when…

8 …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. (1 Kings 19:8)

- **This certainly implies that Mount Horeb is where God wanted Elijah to be.**
- So, what this question probably means, **what the Lord is probably asking Elijah is**…
- Do you understand what you are doing here?
- Do you know **why I called you to this place, to Mount Horeb?**

- Now, we need to wait to answer that question later until later?
- Because **Elijah's** answer **is incorrect or at least insufficiently**.
- Instead of focusing on **why God called him to Mount Horeb**.

- Elijah's answer focuses on himself and his troubles. **Twice Elijah replies…**

[10, 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." (1 Kings 19:10, 14)

- If Elijah is attempting to answer the Lord's question,
- The only reason he believes God called him 250 miles to mount Horeb is so he could hide from those that are trying to kill him.

- And even if that's part of the answer, it's not sufficient for God, **there's more truth**.
- There is more that Elijah **needs to understand about God** and his own situation.
- But because **his perspective is limited**, because he believes only **half the truth.**
- Elijah remains discouraged.
- He's missing, or choosing not to believe, crucial information about **at least three things.**
- **The first involves…**

A. Elijah's Alleged Zeal for God

- Elijah begins his answer to God's questions with these words…

I have been very jealous (zealous) for the LORD (for Yahweh), the God of hosts (the God of masses)

- Elijah is not answering the question of what he is doing here.
- Instead, he points to **what he has done for God**.
- "I've poured out my heart and soul for Yahweh. Everything I've done has been for God."

- And this is certainly true, **as far as it goes.**
- I mean, who had been more zealous for God than Elijah?
- He shut the **rain** up in the heavens through prayer.
- He pronounced **God's judgment upon Ahab's kingdom**.
- He entrusted himself to God's **ravens.**
- He raised a **widow's son** from the dead.
- He taunted the **prophets of Baal** and put them to the sword.
- **He truly lived in trust and obedience to the LORD**.
- No one had been more **zealous for God** than Elijah.

- However, that's only **half the story.**
- **Sadly**, Elijah was no longer as **zealous as he had once been.**
- He'd **panicked** under the **threats of Queen Jezebel.**
- His fear overcome his faith, and he disobeyed God by running away from his calling.
- Which resulted in **overwhelming guilt**, spiritual depression and **prayer for his own death**.

- So, Elijah really had nothing to boast about.
- Currently in the cave on Horeb, if he was zealous about anything, **it was saving his own neck**.
- Notice the irony here: the same man who prayed for death was now desperate to save his life.

- So, when Elijah claimed that he was very zealous for the Lord,
- He was not only **leaving out crucial** and more recent data, he was being **self-righteous.**
- He was **presenting himself in the best light possible**.
- Back under the broom tree he'd admitted…

4 …I am no better than my fathers. (1 Kings 19:4)

- But this humble statement of truth has been replaced with **pride in his past accomplishments**.
- It seems that when God asked him, **"What are you doing here?".**
- Elijah immediately **gets defensive,** *what do you mean what am I doing here.*
- Don't you know how zealous I have been for you.
- Elijah's **defensiveness reveals his self-righteousness.**

- And the same thing can happen to us.
- We, like Elijah, can put ourselves on a **spiritual pedestal**.
- Certainly, we have, at times, been **zealous for the LORD**!

- But this is only half the truth.
- There are also times when we fall, when we sin, and this can be very discouraging.
- But the Spirit of God doesn't leave us in our discouragement, he will come to us with grace,
- He will convict us of our sin and call us to repentance. **He may even ask us…**

What are you doing here?

- Or to be more specific: "**Why are you giving in to this sin?**
- Why are you still caught up in this **unhealthy relationship**?
- Why have you refused to **follow my calling for your life**?"
- Why are you no longer **trusting and obeying me?**

- And when we hear such questions from God, **we have a choice to make**.
- We can stay on **our pedestal**, continuing to believe **half-truths** about ourselves.
- Becoming **defensive and self-righteous.**
- Don't you know how zealous I've been for Jesus, how much I love Him, and how much I have done for him?

- Or we can repent, confess our sin, admit we are **not where God wants us to be**.
- And ask him for **more grace** to get back on track**. (I recommend the latter).**

- So, we've seen **the half-truth Elijah believed** regarding **his Alleged zeal for LORD**.
- And there is more, a second half-truth **is revealed in**…

B. Elijah's <u>Accusation</u> Against Isreal

- **Elijah continues his answer, saying…**

10 …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." (1 Kings 19:10)

- Now no doubt, there is **some truth** in these statements.
- They may even be **more than half true**.
- **In fact,** the basis for each of Elijah's claims can be found in **chapter 18.**
- The Israelites had certainly rejected God's covenant. **Elijah told Ahab…**

18 …you have abandoned the commandments of the LORD and followed the Baals. (1 Kings 18:18)

- The **Israelites** had also broken-down **God's altars.**
- When Elijah went up on **Mount Carmel** to offer a sacrifice to the living God…

30 …he repaired the altar of the LORD that had been thrown down. (1 Kings 18:30)

- **Also,** some Israelites were certainly involved when…

4 …Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, (1 Kings 18:4)

- All these things were true, but there was more that could be said.
- Elijah is **making sweeping statements** about all the people of Isreal.
- **Apparently,** he forgot that **when Jezebel was killing the prophets of the LORD**…

4 …Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water. (1 Kings 18:4)

- He was also forgetting that the Israelites **had their hearts turned back to God.**
- When **the fire fell from heaven** to consume Elijah's sacrifice,
- They had put their faces in the dust, <u>returned to their covenant with the LORD</u>, and proclaimed…

39 …"The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God. (1 Kings 18:39)

- So, the altar had been rebuilt, at least at Carmel.
- And instead of putting Elijah or God's own prophets to death with the sword,
- The Israelites had **slaughtered the prophets of Baal**.

- So, what Elijah said **was not currently true**.
- He failed to recognize **that God had been at work among his people**.
- And as a result, he was telling himself that things were worse than they actually were.
- **In short, he was feeling sorry for himself.**
- Elijah's **self-pity** comes **out perhaps** most clearly in the **last line of his speech:**

They seek my life, to take it away

- Who was seeking to take Elijah's life?
- Well as far as Scripture tells us, **only Queen Jezebel.**
- Remember this **chapter began** with **a nasty message** from her to Elijah…

2 …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 (1 Kings 19:2)

- Jezebel was the one trying to kill him, but Elijah blames the entire nation of Isreal.
- Elijah had turned **"she" into "they."**
- By turning **a queen into an entire kingdom**, Elijah was magnifying his own troubles,
- **justifying his sense of self-pity**.

- And this shouldn't surprise us.
- **Spiritual depression or discouragement** often includes an element of **self-pity**.
- We exaggerate our troubles, **seeing them as bigger than they really are.**
- And focus our problems**, believing they are too big to be** overcome.

- When instead we should **be focusing on God**,
- Seeing and trusting in his great power and amazing grace.
- As he said to the **Apostle Paul**, when he was discouraged about his **thorn in the flesh,**
- He says to every believer in **our discouragement…**

9 …"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9)

- When we're faced with difficult circumstances,
- **even if our lives are being threatened**.
- It does no good **to exaggerate our problems** and **indulge in self-pity**.

- Instead, we must take every problem, every fear, every discouragement to the one who says his grace and power are sufficient to deal with our weakness. **AMEN!**

- So, we've seen two discouraging half-truths that Elijah believed.
- One regarding **his Alleged zeal for LORD** and a **second revealed by his accusations against Isreal.**

- And unfortunately, there is one more half-truth that Elijah believed.
- And we see it in…

C. His Attitude Towards His Importance

- **In his twice given answer to God's question, Elijah said…**

I, even I only, am left

- There is no one else but me.
- It's true that Elijah was left, **but he was not the only one**.
- Again, he had forgotten the 100 prophets Obadiah had saved.

- But more than that he had forgotten **who was in charge**.
- He'd forgotten the **sovereignty and power** of the LORD God of Isreal.
- Elijah thought that **God was limited to Elijah**.
- But God would soon set him straight, in **verse 18** the Lords says…

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." (1 Kings 19:18)

- Elijah was more than a **little off in his calculations!**
- He had underestimated the strength of God's **people by 6,999.**
- What he was saying to God was **not a half-truth** but a **one-seven-thousandth truth**.

- In saying that he was the only one left,
- Elijah was both **exaggerating his own importance** and denying **the sovereignty of God**.
- He thought **the destiny of God's people depended on him**.
- He'd forgotten that **all of God's servants are expendable**,
- that there is **always someone else** who can do the **Lord's work in our place**.

- And God would shortly set him straight on this as well, when he tells Elijah.

16 …Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. (1 Kings 19:16)

- Elijah's claim that he was the only one left, the only one who could accomplish God's plan.
- Shows us **how self-centered discouragement can be**.

- When we struggle with discouragement,
- it is wise to figure out **what half-truths** or lies we've been believing and preaching to ourselves.
- Very likely we've been telling ourselves things like this:

- "I deserve better than this." "I can't take it anymore." "My problems can't be solved."
- "Nobody understands me." "Nobody loves me." "Nobody cares about me."
- **"I am the only one."**
- If this is what we have been telling ourselves, **then it is no wonder that we are discouraged**!

- In his commentary on this passage, Philip Ryken wrote:

Discouragement is a vampire that feeds upon the lies in all the half-truths we preach to ourselves. (Philip Ryken)

- This is one of the reasons why we need to preach **the gospel to ourselves every day**.
- To avoid discouragement, **we need to fill our minds with thoughts like these**:

- "Yes, I still struggle, I still sin" but Christ has given his life for my forgiveness and salvation.
- In Christ I am righteous before God.
- "My troubles are more than I can bear, but Jesus is strong enough to carry them."
- "God understands me." "Jesus loves me with an everlasting love."
- "The Holy Spirit convicts and comforts me."
- "I am not the only one." "Jesus will be with me to the very end."

- When we regularly preach these kinds of Biblical truths to ourselves, it becomes almost impossible to remain in a state of discouragement.

- And so, God comes to Elijah with Grace and Truths, or the grace of truth.
- **Half-truths** that were causing him to continue in if not depression, certainly discouragement.
- And just like we saw last week, **the Lord comes to Elijah's**, in His discouragement, **with Grace.**

- Under the broom tree, God's grace provided Elijah with an angel, food, rest and restoration.
- And **in the cave on Mount Horeb**,
- God's Grace provides Elijah's half-truth-based discouragement, with **God's Whole Truth!**

2. Elijah Received God's Whole Truth

- At this very low point in the prophet's life, God gives Elijah at least **three great whole truths**.
- Truths that focus not only Elijah and his troubles, but on God himself.
- And the first truth we see is…

A. God Has Been Faithful in the Past

- Now even though God gave Elijah two opportunities to answer his question…

What are you doing here, Elijah? (1 Kings 19:9)

- Elijah didn't get it.
- He didn't understand what he was **doing on Mount Horeb?** So why was he there?

- Well, it seems to me and others, that God wanted to remind discouraged Elijah,
- that he (the LORD) had been faithful in the past.
- That Elijah was not the first prophet that God would use to deliver his people.

- That is why God had called him to Mount Horeb also known as **Mount Sinai**.
- Remember Elijah obeyed God's call.

[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. (1 Kings 19:8)

- This verse recalls an incident from **Exodus, when Moses**…

[1] …led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. (Exodus 3:1)

- Horeb is where Moses met God in the **fire of the burning bush**.
- Where God revealed his name (I AM).
- And later, on the same mountain, **Moses was with God again for forty days and forty nights.**
- With the mountain covered with **lightning and smoke and trembling from earthquakes**,
- Moses received **the Law, the commandments of the covenant**.
- **Here God established his covenant** and revealed his presence to his people.

- And it was on this same mountain, **that Moses indirectly encountered the glory of God**.
- Moses had asked **to see the God's glory**…

[20] But," [the LORD] said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." [21] And the LORD said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, [22] and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. [23] Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen." (Exodus 33:20-23)

- So, when Elijah went up Mount Horeb, he was in a place **that held many reminders** of the **faithfulness of God**.
- This was a place where **God had been faithful in the past**.

- **Mount Horeb** is known as the place where Moses stood before the LORD.
- So, it is significant when the **LORD says to Elijah…**

[11] …"Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD."… (1 Kings 19:11)

- By telling Elijah **to stand on the mountain** before the LORD.
- God was reminding him of **his faithfulness to Moses in the past**.
- And he is **recalling Elijah to stand before him**,
- in effect recalling him to his ministry as God's prophet, which he had run from!

- God was calling Elijah out of his **self-imposed retirement, out of his discouragement…**
- and recommissioning him for **kingdom service.**
- **And he does this where he had proved his faithfulness in the past.**

- And whenever we are discouraged,
- or trying to help others who are discouraged,
- we need to **remember God's faithfulness in the past.**

- This includes recounting the many ways that God has protected, preserved and provided for us and others.
- **It also includes reading our Bibles**.
- In our discouragement, we may be tempted to say, ***"But I don't feel like reading my Bible."***
- Refusing to feed on biblical truth,
- is like a sick person refusing to drink fluids until he or she is healthy.

- If we have a cold, we do not wait until we feel better to drink our juice or eat our chicken soup;
- **we eat and drink in order to get better**.

- In the same way, the Christian who is struggling with discouragement must not wait for a hunger for God's Word to return but continue to read the Bible.
- And continue to hear God's word preached in order to be **reminded of God's faithfulness in the past.**

- So, God wants Elijah and us, **especially in times of discouragement**,
- to understand **the whole truth** that **he has been faithful in the past**.

- Why? **Because this means he will continue to be faithful in the present and in the future**.
- We need not be discouraged **because our God is ever faithful.**
- And this is **seen in God's second Whole Truth** he gives to Elijah. That is…

B. God is <u>Gentle</u> in the Present

- Now of course, God may not always seem gentle,
- He certainly did not seem gentle when Elijah was given a spectacular demonstration of his power:
- Beginning in verse 11 we read…

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. (1 Kings 19:11-12)

- Now we should note that when the Lord told the prophet to…

go out and stand on the mount before the LORD

- At first, Elijah declined the invitation,
- This was a sign of his ongoing **spiritual struggle and discouragement**.
- When "the LORD passed by" in his glorious presence and power,
- Elijah was hiding as far back in the cave as he could get.

- It was only after **God revealed himself with 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. (1 Kings 19:13)

- Even then, he didn't go outside, he stood (probably trembling) at the entrance of the cave.
- Oh, how the mighty have fallen.
- Remember when the prophet told King Ahab that he served the Lord, he said…

1 …"As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand… (1 Kings 17:1)

- The man who once stood before the LORD, is afraid to leave the cave and face the LORD.
- This is a reminder that we can't rely on **our past relationship with the LORD**,
- We must daily come into the **LORD's presence through his gift of prayer**.
- Otherwise in times of discouragement, or sin we will **tremble in fear as he seeks us out**.

- As Elijah stood trembling in the entrance of the cave, he had his cloak pulled over his face.
- So, when he gave **his pitiable, self-centered answer for the second time**,
- it must have been a little muffled.

- It's a sad picture:
- one of the greatest prophets who ever lived was cowering in the entrance of a cave,
- with his cloak thrown over his head like a monk.
- Even after receiving, a great demonstration of God's mighty power,
- and hearing his voice in a low whisper, Elijah repeated his self-centered **complaint verbatim**.

- **And yet, we continue to see God's grace at work.**
- Sometimes God's Spirit is in the **wind**, rushing and blowing about the earth.
- Sometimes God is in the **earthquake**, shaking the earth to show his power.
- Sometimes he is in the **fire**, as he was at **Mount Carmel,**
- when lightning fell from heaven to consume Elijah's sacrifice.
- **But there are times when the God's glory is revealed in a much gentler way.**

And after the fire the sound of a low whisper

- Here the **King James Version** uses a beautiful phrase:

a still small voice.

- After **earth, wind, and fire**, God spoke to Elijah in a still small voice.
- Scripture doesn't tell us what or why **God whispered to Elijah.**
- But it seems that In Elijah's weakness,
- anything more than a gentle word from the LORD would have been too much for him to bear.

- And it was only until God used this still small voice, **that Elijah approached him**.
- It seems to me that God came to Elijah **in this gentle way**, because this is what Elijah needed.
- In his discouragement he needed **God to be a friend and speak to him in a gentle voice**.

- God is so glorious that one glance would obliterate us.
- He is so mighty in wind and fire that his mere presence sends us to the back of the cave.
- But then he speaks to us, in a still small voice,
- and if we have the courage to come to the mouth of the cave,
- We will hear him **whispers to us as a friend with a friend**.

- Has this been your experience?
- Do you know the God's still small voice? **Jesus said…**

[27] My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. (John 10:27)

- Maybe we need to get **reacquainted** with Jesus' voice.
- We need to understand that yes, our God is mighty, he is powerful,
- he is the God of earth, wind and fire.
- But at the same time, with his beloved children, **he is a gentle God, a loving Father.**

- **And His love and gentleness is fully revealed in his Son, Jesus Christ.**
- Even in our sin, Jesus Christ is gentle with us.
- If we come to him, he offers forgiveness and restoration.

- He is also gentle in our times of trouble, **even in the trouble was caused by our sin.**
- He is gentle with us in our discouragements and spiritual depression.
- Know and listen to the **still small voice of gentle Jesus**,
- **who as we saw last week, says to us…**

[28] Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:28-29)

- So, we've seen the whole truths of God's faithfulness in the past and gentleness in the present.
- **Now we turn to the Future, where we find…**

C. God is <u>Sovereign</u> Over the Future

- God had asked Elijah twice, if he understood **what he is doing on Mount Horeb.**
- And both times Elijah gives the **same self-centered answer,**
- once before and once after **God reveals himself.**
- Clearly Elijah, in his **discouragement, isn't getting it.**

- And if I were God, I would've probably just left Elijah in the cave.
- But God isn't done him yet, there is more grace and truth to come.

- Maybe Elijah just needed some time to process, **or maybe he needed to get back to work**.
- Apparently, that's the case because beginning in **verse 15** God gives Elijah a **set of instruction.**
- And these instructions which call Elijah back into service,
- Clearly show **that God was still in charge.**

- **First,** in **verse 15**, we see that **God was/is in control of the nations**.

15 And the LORD said to him, (probably continuing in the still small voice) "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus.

- God was calling Elijah to get back in the game,
- you need to continue **to be the man of faith I know you are**.
- And here is **what I want you to do**…

And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. (1 Kings 19:15)

- As Daniel would later proclaim…

17 …the most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.' (Daniel 4:17)

- And so, God calls Elijah to anoint the next king of Syria, **a pagan land.**
- God also had a king (and a prophet) in mind for his own people, so he told Elijah…

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. (1 Kings 19:16-17)

- Now we don't have time to go into all the political and historical details of when and how these things took place.

- But the point is, God was at work orchestrating a new political and religious order,
- And if we had time to go into the detail, we would see that this new order (not Elijah himself),
- would bring about the final victory over Baal worship in Isreal.
- God was working his Sovereign plan, **as he always does**.

- He is appointing Kings and Prophets to ultimately do his will.
- And along with that, **God had reserved seven thousand righteous souls in Israel**…

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." (1 Kings 19:18)

- God always preserves a remnant for salvation, even down to the present day.
- As Paul, using this very example, testified to the Romans…

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. (11:2-5)

- God is sovereign not only over kings and prophets but over the salvation of men and women.

- As Isaiah tells us God is…

[10] Declaring the end from the beginning… (Isaiah 46:10)

- God declares (he is sovereign over) the future, as if it was had already taken place in the past.
- Therefore, what **does Elijah** and what do we have to be **discouraged about**.

- God is always working his plans, not just with kings and prophets.
- Not just with our salvation, **but in our daily live.**
- That's why he can promise his children…

[28] And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

- So, God replaced the half-truths of Elijah's discouragement,
- with the full truths of his glorious grace.
- The God who had been faithful in the past, gentle in the present, and sovereign over future was calling Elijah out of his discouragement and back into ministry.

- And as we will see next week, **Elijah** will again **respond with trust and obedience.**
- As God will use him to call his replacement, **Elisha into ministry.**

- And so, the question for us is how will we respond?
- Maybe, for whatever reason, depression, discouragement, guilt, fear, laziness.
- Maybe you find yourself hiding in a spiritual cave.
- Not engaging in the ministry God has for you.

- Well, know that God is not condemning you,
- **instead by grace, he offers you the truth about who he is and what he will provide for you.**
- He offers you **encouragement and strength** as you recall **his faithfulness in the past**.
- He offers you **comfort and joy,** as you **experience his gentleness in the present**.
- And he offers you **hope and courage** as you **trust in his sovereignty over the future**.

- So, draw upon the **grace and truth that God provides, especially through is word.**
- Listen (look for) **his still small voice** calling or recalling you into service.
- And I would encourage you to respond, **first because you must trust and obey your LORD**.

- But also, it's been my experience,
- that the quickest way to get out of any funk (discouragement) or depression,
- Is to get off the couch and get involved in serving Jesus, living for Jesus.
- Because it is when we do this that our discouragement is replaced by purpose, satisfaction and the joy of the LORD.

- **Would you join me in prayer.**