

God's word will always prevail - 1 Kings 19v1-18

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Preacher: Jonny Grant

- [0 : 0 0] So, 1 Kings 19 is on page 360 in the Church Bibles. So, chapter 19, starting in verse 1.
- Now, Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.
- Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it, and prayed that he might die.
- I have had enough, Lord, he said. Take my life. I am no better than my ancestors. Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, Get up and eat.
- He looked around, and there by his head was some bread, baked over hot coals and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.
- [1 : 2 4] So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled for forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.
- And the word of the Lord came to him. What are you doing here, Elijah? He replied, I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword.
- I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too. The Lord said, Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.
- Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake.
- After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.
- [2 : 3 3] Then a voice said to him, What are you doing here, Elijah? He replied, I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword.
- I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too. The Lord said to him, Go back the way you came, and go to the desert of Damascus.
- When you get there, anoint Hezeiel king of Aram. Also anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king of Israel. And anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel-Moholah to succeed you as prophet.
- Jehu will put to death any who escape the word of Hezeiel. And Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal, and whose mouths have not kissed him.

Pens, notes, anybody?

[3 : 57] Everybody? So previous talks from 1 Kings can be found on the church website.

I encourage you to look in there and listen if you've missed anything. And the purpose of our home groups, yes, it's there to encourage.

And one of the good things about it is we can follow up with anything that we've looked at on a Sunday morning. So questions that arise, things we want to discuss and share, we can do that.

So, yeah, as we go through this morning's talk, if there's things that you want to write down and come back on, bring those questions to home group and let's discuss them and let's talk them out together.

Thank you.

[5 : 24] Let's pray.

Father, your word has promised that when your word goes out, it will not return void, but will accomplish the purpose for which you have sent it.

So we humbly submit ourselves to your word and pray that it will accomplish its purpose in each of our lives, within our families, and within us as a church family.

Do your work. We ask this for your glory. Amen. Well, this book, the Bible that we have just read together and that you're holding in your hands, how would you describe it?

How would you describe God's word? Well, Charles Spurgeon was a famous preacher, and in one talk, he described God's word.

[7 : 00] He said it's like a lion. This is what he said. I do not know whether you can see that lion.

A number of persons advanced to attack him, while a host of us would defend him. Pardon me if I offer a quiet suggestion.

Open the door and let the lion out. He will take care of himself. The word of God is like a lion.

In other words, we do not need to defend God's word. We just need to let God's word loose. You see, God's word will always prevail.

People may attack it. Oh, it's irrelevant. It's outdated. It's backward. Nobody believes that stuff anymore. Why are you reading that book? Governments may try and ban it, making it illegal to own a copy of God's word, or punished if you preach its message.

[8 : 13] Well, despite all the attacks, God's word is like a lion. It will defend itself. God's word will always prevail.

No one and nothing can stop the word of God doing its work. Well, in 1 Kings 19, the lion has been let loose.

God's word is at work, and despite all the attacks, God's word will prevail. First, the word of God is always opposed.

The word of God is always opposed. Have a look back at chapter 18. Mount Carmel, that great event, had been the highlight so far. Remember, there were 450 prophets of Baal versus one prophet of God.

The prophets of Baal were to call out and to cry down to their gods for fire to come. But in verse 29, we read, there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.

[9 : 29] And then, the one prophet, Elijah prayed. Verse 38, Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

And when all the people saw this, they fell down prostrate and cried, The Lord, He is God. The Lord, He is God.

Then Elijah commanded them, Seize the prophets of Baal. Don't let anyone get away. They seized them and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there.

Judgment on the false prophets for leading God's people away from God's word. It was a no contest.

God had won. Everyone would now show up at church praising God, right? Well, despite the evidence, not everyone was willing to bow to the one true God.

[10 : 41] There were those who were still opposed to God's word. Look at verse 1, chapter 19, verse 1. Now Ahab, he was the king of Israel, told Jezebel, his wife, everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword.

So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like one of them.

Now let's remember, Elijah is God's prophet. The prophet was God's mouthpiece. God spoke his word through the prophet.

So to put an assassination order on Elijah was a full-on attack against God's word. Put a bullet in Elijah's head, you kept God silent.

Now this is really nothing new, is it? God's word has and is always undermined. While every other voice is to be heard, God's voice is to be silenced.

[11 : 53] We don't need God telling us how to live or what to do. We know what's best. Keep God's word out of the schools, restricted in our national debates, close the Bible, don't open it.

Now the reality is, if you stand up or speak out for the truth of God's word, you too will become a target. You will be a marked person.

It mightn't be a crazy Jezebel who's vying for your blood, but you will be told by your boss, no religious talk in here.

keep those views to yourself, please. Or you will find that you are no longer liked on Facebook or followed on Twitter.

And that can be really hard. You see, speaking the truth of God's word will be costly.

[12 : 57] You get hit enough times and you will want to give up. Get sidelined and rejected by your peers. You may find yourself doing an Elijah.

Look at him in verse 4. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. I have had enough, Lord, he said.

Take my life. I am no better than my ancestors. Elijah is suffering with spiritual burnout. This guy's done.

Do you ever feel like that as a Christian? No one takes what you believe seriously. Friends laugh. Family think that you've gone a bit extreme.

And then we get the aggressive attack through the media which continues to take swipes at God talk. It's relentless. And some days it becomes too much and you want to stop.

[14 : 03] I've had enough, Lord. I can't do this witnessing thing anymore. No one believes. No one listens. Nobody wants to know about you.

What's the point? The word of God is always opposed. Second, the word of God is always enough.

You see, when the pressure comes on, God's word is what we all need. First, let's see how God's word meets our physical needs.

Look at verse five. Elijah fell asleep. He lay down under the bush and all at once an angel touched him and said, get up and eat.

He looked around and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then went back to sleep again.

[15 : 17] I love the practicality of God's word. Get up and eat. No sermon, no Bible study, just bread and water.

You see, God knows, God understands, God sees what his servants go through and by this simple word of command to get up and eat is all met by God's provision to eat.

sometimes I can be so focused on asking what I want from God that I forget to be thinking and thanking God for what I already have.

Wanting God to do what I command, ready to bring all my complaints and all my discouragements rather than seeing all the goodness in his provision.

So let me encourage you and myself as you munch your way through your cornflakes in the morning or your porridge or whatever you have and you sit there wondering how am I going to face another day?

[16 : 37] How am I going to go into work today? How am I going to face those people? Well, thank God for your daily bread and water.

thank God that by his word he loves you. He provides for you. He gives to your physical needs.

But we need more than just bread alone, don't we, to face the opposition. We need spiritual nourishment.

God's word comes to Elijah again. Verse 7. The angel of the Lord came back a second time, touched Elijah and said, get up and eat for the journey is too much for you.

Now, Elijah isn't so much running away. Elijah is on a journey. Now, I'm not sure if this has all been planned by Elijah that he's kind of worked out all the steps or not.

[17 : 45] All we know, if you look back in verse 3, Elijah was afraid or can be translated, Elijah saw what was going on.

He saw what was ahead. He saw what Jezebel was up to and he ran for his life. His life is in danger so he's done the sensible thing and he's got out of town.

But where's he off to? Well, it seems that God's word is directing his every step. Look at verse 8.

So he got up and ate and drank strengthened by that food. He travelled for 40 days and 40 nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

Now, Bible readers will remember Horeb, sometimes called Mount Sinai. That's why it's called the mountain of God, the mountain that Moses had climbed to meet with God.

[18 : 54] Mount Horeb is where God spoke to Moses and revealed himself to Moses and gave the law and the commands to Moses. You see, Elijah was spiritually done, wasn't he?

Look at him here. He's sitting under the broom tree. I've had enough, Lord. So God in his grace provides food.

But God knows that he needs more than just bread alone. Elijah needs spiritual nourishment. And by taking Elijah to Horeb, God is reminding Elijah and us that we are ultimately fed and strengthened by an encounter with the living God who speaks to us through his word.

Just as God had said to Moses all the years before, man doesn't live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

You see, God knows our needs. We need the nourishment of a good meal, God's generous provision. But how much more do we need to be nourished by the word of God?

[20 : 21] It will feed you. It will grow you. It will strengthen you. It will give to you all that you need to keep going in life as a Christian and to go on serving him amongst all the opposition and all the rejection of God's word.

So, the word of God is always enough. Third, the word of God will always sustain.

not surprisingly, God begins to nourish Elijah spiritually. Look at verse 9, the second part of verse 9.

And the word of the Lord came to him. What are you doing here, Elijah? Now, God knows why Elijah is there.

It's not a surprise. God knows what has been going on. He's been directing his steps. He simply asks Elijah or invites Elijah, what are you doing here?

[21 : 36] Tell me, Elijah, what's going on? You see, God is not some distant, impersonal being who's immune to the struggles and the hardships that we go through.

God is desperately concerned about us and his word invites us, talk to me. Tell me what's going on.

What's your trouble? Verse 10, Elijah replied, well, I've been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty.

The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars and put your prophets to death with the sword and I'm the only one left and now they are trying to kill me too.

That's my concern, Lord. All this preaching, all this witnessing, all this speaking of God's word, it's really not working. I've done what you commanded, but nobody seems interested.

[22 : 41] I'm longing and praying that people turn back to you, but no one believes. no one listens to your word. People say they're going to come to the Children's Rock, but they're not coming.

People say they're going to come to Christianity Explored, but they don't. In fact, it seems like I'm the only one who seems to be hanging in here.

Nobody listens, nobody wants to know. don't you love the way God's word invites us to talk with the sovereign king of the universe?

What are you doing here? Just tell me what's going on. What's on your heart? What's troubling you as my servant today?

he is deeply concerned. Tell him what is going on. Well, talking we can do, but there comes a time when we must listen.

[23 : 53] Verse 11. The Lord said, Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake.

After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. This is a display.

of awesome power. A mighty wind, a rumbling earthquake, a bolt of fire. But let's not get distracted by all this fireworks.

[25 : 06] Yes, this is the God who is over all creation, but this is just a mere sideshow to the all powerful God who speaks his word to his people.

God's power is demonstrated supremely, not in the natural world, but in God's spoken word. Yes, we can admire the creator behind the sun, but God is not in the sun.

The sun isn't going to speak to you. We are to listen to the word of God that spoke this very creation into existence and now speaks that word to his people.

In other words, there is more power in the voice of God than the shattering, crushing, bashing of nature. Look at the end of verse 13.

Then a voice said to him, what are you doing here, Elijah? He replied, well, I've been very zealous for the Lord Almighty.

[26 : 19] The same question is asked, the same answer is exactly given, but what's different? Well, Elijah is now ready to listen.

He is ready to hear the voice of God, to stop looking at what's out there and hearing and listening to what God has to say.

Well, before we hear what God has to say, I think it would be good for us to ask that question, how am I, how are we going to hear God's voice?

Well, let me say two things. First, don't go into the woods of Corabini and sit down amongst the trees and expect God to speak to you through the shade of light that comes through the branches, or go and sit in some rocks by the edge of the cliff and expect to hear a thundering voice.

Nature will display God's power and beauty, but it's not how we hear God. We hear God speak to us as we read the Bible, God's written word.

[27 : 47] God spoke in an audible voice, and what God spoke, he commanded that it would be written down for the first hearers of that word and for future readers.

And here we are, hundreds, thousands of years after this audible voice spoke to Elijah, written down and written for us.

What we have in the Bible is God's sufficient revelation of himself. In other words, every time we open the Bible, we hear God speak.

Now I know the wind and the earthquake and the fire sound rather more spectacular, doesn't it? I know we'd all love to climb up the mountain and hear a gentle whisper from God.

Who wouldn't want that experience? But God's written word to us has the same power as God's audible voice to Elijah.

[28 : 58] We don't need to go looking for God up some mountain. We don't need to go into some special place in creation to meet God. We meet God in his word.

This is where we discover, this is where we do business with God. Where he hears us and we hear him. And as we open his word, his word will sustain you and his word will keep you and his word will provide the very voice that you need in the moment of your trial and struggle and hardship that you are going through.

So the word of God always sustains. Fourth, the word of God always prevail.

God says, so what does God have to say? Well, thankfully, we don't have to guess and make up what God says. Look at verse 15.

The Lord said to Elijah, go back the way you came and go to the desert of Damascus. Elijah, I want you to go back to where unbelieving Ahab and Jezebel are.

[30 : 24] I want you to go back to the people who are rejecting God's word, who don't want to listen and don't want to know. Well, what does God's word have to say?

Well, two things we need to hear. First, God's word delivers on judgment. Look at the rest of verse 15.

When you get there, anoint Hazeiel, king over Aram. Also anoint Jehu, son of Nimshi, king over Israel, and anoint Elisha, son of Shaphat, from Abel Mahaloah, to succeed you as prophets.

Why is he appointing all these new leaders, a king for Israel, a king for Aram, a king of a foreign nation, and a new prophet? What's he doing? What's all this for?

Well, verse 17 tells us, Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazeiel, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu.

[31 : 32] It's a word of judgment. Remember what Elijah had been crying out to God? Have a look back in verse 14. Elijah said, I've been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty.

The Israelites have rejected your covenant, they have torn down your altars, and they have put your prophets to death with the sword. They've turned away from God who made them and who loves them.

the God who redeemed them and entered into a relationship with them. The God who's provided for them and kept them and given to them everything that they need.

And what have they done in return? But they've rejected God's word, but in rejecting God's word, they're rejecting God himself. And after all these years, God says, well, I am going to reject them.

justice will be done. Judgment will fall. You see, God will not allow us to go on ignoring him and fighting him if we reject the one true God who made us and who provides us with all that we have.

[32 : 54] And if we insist and persist in pushing God's word out of our lives and have nothing to do with him, well, he says, I will give you what you want and what you deserve.

Judgment will come. So he delivers on his judgment, but he also will declare his grace.

Verse 18, God will fall on those who fight him, but his grace will cover all those who will submit to him.

God isn't cranky or quick-tempered. He's patient. He loves us. He longs for people to turn to him.

He longs that people will bow to him so that they might know his grace, experience his forgiveness and enjoy God's presence. God will deliver on judgment, yet he declares his grace.

[34 : 23] Don't believe me? Don't believe this word that Elijah is speaking, that God would actually do this? Well, look and listen to the word about the cross where Jesus died.

Because when we look at the cross and listen to the word of the cross, it tells us that God takes our rebellion seriously and judgment must take place because that is what we deserve.

But when we look at the cross and when we listen to the word about the cross, it tells us that God loves us enormously, that Jesus dies in our place, we don't get what we deserve.

The cross delivers on judgment, judgment. But it's not us. So he declares the brilliance and the greatness of his grace towards all who will come and bow before him and kiss the sun.

We need to listen carefully to his word. God's judgment will fall on those who fight him. But his grace covers all who will submit to him.

[35 : 51] You see, this is the word that will prevail. The word of the cross. This is the message Elijah was to speak and proclaim and it's the message we are to speak and proclaim.

This gospel message is like a lion. We don't need to defend it. We don't need to make excuses for it. We just need to let it loose.

And nothing and no one will ever hinder or prevent God's word doing his work through his servants.

in the midst of hard times and difficult times. God's word will prevail. God's word will sustain you and keep you.

And God's word will do his work. He will display the glory and greatness of his power through his word.

[36 : 59] Let us trust him and let us listen to him. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray.