

# What makes faith not a flop

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[0:00] If you can find a Bible with 1 Kings 19 in it, you would find it really, really helpful to do that. Perhaps you can share a cross with somebody if you're not completely confident as to where that might be.

If you've got a blue Bible from the back, it's on page 361.

Let's pray. Lord, our eyes are upon you. We ask that we might have receptive hearts to hear your voice and that you, by your Holy Spirit, would be speaking to us as we come now to your word. Please speak, O Lord, and make us people who are hearing. For Jesus' sake, Amen. Let's come back to that theme of futility.

What stops Christianity from being a flop, a failure, something that is futile? A flop is something that doesn't stay up and can't convince.

[1:23] A failure is something that doesn't succeed in its aims and doesn't work. And something that's futile doesn't achieve any purpose or meaning. And what stops Christianity being those things?

A flop, a failure, something that's futile. Now, not all religions are the same. I know the government says they're all faith communities and they're all the same.

But they're not all the same. And some, or many, or all other religions can be flops, failures, and futile. I looked up some.

Do you know about cargo cults? Cargo cults was a religion based on Western technology, European technology, arriving in places where it hadn't been before.

And on Wikipedia, so it must be true. I've got this from Wikipedia. Since the modern manufacturing process is unknown to them, members, leaders, and prophets of the cults maintain that the manufactured goods of the non-native culture have been created by spiritual means.

[2:27] Such as through their deities and ancestors. So somebody arrives with a mobile phone and thinks, we'll worship this. It's fantastic. You even get the weather on it. That's a futile religion.

It's not based on truth. Marxism, I would say, is a religion, a big way of looking at the world. But it's hard to find, well, not impossible, but there are fewer convinced Marxists nowadays, I would have thought, because it hasn't produced the golden age.

Transcendental meditation. I was looking at some of the Beatles history. John Lennon was quite outspoken in not being convinced by the Guru Maharishi, whatever his name was.

A lot of you have no idea. This ancient history, Beatles and things like that. George Harrison was convinced by it, but not John Lennon. Transcendental meditation. And what about, a bit closer to home, Moses and the religion of the Old Testament?

Is that a flop? Is it a failure? Was it futile? The New Testament writer, Paul, says of Moses and his, what he brought.

[3:46] There's one aspect of it. It says, the ministry that brought death was engraved in letters on stone and came with glory. So he's got a yes and no.

It was a glorious thing, but it didn't bring life. It brought death. So whether you call that a flop or a failure or a futile, I don't know. What about Jesus and the religion of the New Testament?

Actually, one of the things that Paul is very keen to point out is that it isn't a flop, it isn't a failure, and it isn't futile. And he pins it on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and says, if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not raised.

And if Christ hasn't been raised, our preaching is futile, and so is your faith. So he said Christianity would be futile if Christ hadn't been risen, wasn't risen from the dead.

But he goes on to say, Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.

[4:50] So there's an answer there, which we're going to come back to. It isn't a failure. Christianity isn't a flop.

It isn't futile. And my job this morning is to say to everybody here, make sure the religion you have is not a flop or a failure or an exercise in futility.

So I'm saying get Christianity because that is not a flop. So let's go to our story.

So I need to give a bit of history just to remind us of the story so far. It is history. It goes to the time when God's headquarters was in Jerusalem and he had an earthly kingdom.

And the kingdom started off well but declined. They originally followed the Lord, capital letters in Hebrew, Yahweh. That's his name.

[6:02] He's the God of Abraham. Abraham and Moses, Ten Commandments, Exodus. David, the king. But as history went on, the people of God went off in completely the wrong direction.

And in the bit of history we've been looking at, they started worshipping golden calves, idols. Jeroboam and Jeroboam and Jeroboam started that off.

No, I shouldn't have put Jezebel there. And they exchanged their glory for a lie. This is a characteristic thing that they had something good and they exchanged it for something rubbish. And the Bible says that that's not just them. That is absolutely typical human behaviour. That though we know who God really is, we inevitably exchange this glorious God for something much less.

Some created thing. Something that we've dreamt up. Typical human behaviour. And they moved further than that to worshipping a different God. Baal.

[7:13] The Canaanite fertility God. An idol. A complete. It's not worshipping the Lord the wrong way, but worshipping a different God altogether. And this is another way of saying what the human condition is.

We worship anything and everything but the real God. We make up a version of who God is and worship that. And that's our sin. That is an insult to God.

Demonstrates how rubbish we are spiritually. And in the story, the covenant, the relationship between God and his people was broken.

And without going into a lot of details, God said, when that covenant breaks, you won't have any rain. That's part of the terms and conditions. And go back again to what happened. There was a contest under the leadership of the prophet Elijah, who's the chap there with the cloak.

So, you know, that's him. And he says, who is God? Is it the Lord or is it Baal? We'll have a competition. And the one who can bring fire down from heaven and accept a sacrifice is the winner.

[8:23] And God won. The Lord, he is God, they all said. And Elijah would have been really chuffed because everybody was saying, yeah, the Lord is God.

And you think, right, that's super. The prophets of Baal were put to death. I won't stop and comment on that, but that's what happened. And it ended up, this is where we got to last time we were looking at this, with Elijah having prayed on the top of the mountain, rain having come.

So you think the relationship with the Lord is back together again, prayers being answered. The king eats and drinks, perhaps symbolizing communion with God.

So that seems to be right again. And the king is going back to his headquarters city. Off he goes with the prophet, who must have been quite an athlete, running ahead, saying, as it were, good news, the victory's won, everything's right again, the king's coming back, and he's coming back to the city, and here we go.

It's sort of a picture of what the world ought to be like, with the king coming back and everybody getting ready. That's what the Christian message is, isn't it?

[9:40] The king is coming. Hooray, hooray. God's kingdom has come. So that's where we left it last time, except it didn't work out like that, as we've seen in the chapter today.

So what do we make of this chapter? It's a powerful chapter. I don't know whether you clocked it all when we were reading it, but it's life and death in this chapter. Just have a look.

About life, verse 2. I will make your life like one of them, says Jezebel to Elijah. I'm going to kill you.

Verse 3. He went off and prayed, Take my life. I think he says it again somewhere in there.

Verse 4. I've had enough, Lord. Take my life. And verse 10. They're trying to kill me.

[10:40] They're trying to take my life. They put your prophets to death. They're trying to kill me. And in verse 14. Same thing.

They put your prophets to death. Now I'm the only one left. They're trying to take my life too. So it's life and death. It's a bit difficult for us sitting in a nice, warm, cozy room to think, you know, this is life and death going on in this chapter.

And there is that bitter cry in verse 10. Take my life. I am no better than my fathers, than my ancestors. I think you have to get to a pretty extreme position to be saying something like that.

In this chapter there are powerful images of fire and wind and earthquake. So it's lots of tremendous things. But what does it all mean?

It's a little bit difficult actually to puzzle out what all this powerful stuff is saying. We'll have a go. But I don't think that I've got all the answers.

[11:46] Let's see what happens. I think this text is much misunderstood. Because even our translation sort of tilts it in favour of saying, here is Elijah bottling out.

Here is Elijah losing the plot. Here is Elijah as a coward. He's running away. This is to do with the psychology of fear.

And all this stuff he says, I only am left. Well, this is his self-centredness. So these are things to avoid. That's often the way this text comes across.

And I think that's not quite right. What I think we have here is human realism. But I think we have more theology than psychology.

And I think really it's not a text about somebody being self-centred, but about somebody being God-centred. So let me see if I can persuade you of that as we go through. What's going on in this text?

[12:48] Well, would you notice, would you like to notice there's pairs of things? So just take a look in verse... What verse is it?

Verse 5. He lies down to sleep. And he does that again, end of verse 6. And an angel comes and touches him.

Verse 5. Get up and eat. And the angel does that a second time. Get up and eat. And he has food provided for him twice. So there's a pairing there.

And this question is there twice. Verse 10. What are you doing here, Elijah? Sorry, verse 9. And it's there in verse 13.

What are you doing here, Elijah? And you get the same answer. You get the answer twice. I've been very zealous for the Lord Almighty. That's replied twice. And at the end of that question and answer, the first time you get to go out and stand on the mountain.

[13:53] And then the second time you get it different. Go back the way you came. So it's not a random passage. There's things there that happens and it happens again.

It's said and it's said again. Two is often the number of something being confirmed. Two witnesses. Things like that.

So that makes us think this isn't a chapter of things going haywire. It's a chapter in which God's saying, I'm confirming this very definite thing.

So let's see if we can find out what the definite thing is. On the mountain, there are four mighty manifestations. And then on the mountain, second time around, there's three anointings and one keeping.

So there's four things that happen in each case. So let's get back to the story. We had hoped at the end of chapter 18, that it's almost like the last chapter in the Bible.

[14:58] Everything is hunky-dory. Everything is where it ought to be. The king and his city, people worshipping the Lord. But it turns out that's not the case at all.

Because it says in, following the text through now, Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So his wife Jezebel, who is a Baal worshipper, there he is, there's Ahab, and he's talking to his wife.

And he says, do you know what happened to your prophets? You used to look after them. They're all dead meat now. And Jezebel, instead of saying, I got that completely wrong, I should be worshipping the Lord, she gets quite stropky about this.

And she swears in this message to Elijah, may the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I don't make you dead meat by this time tomorrow.

That's not what Elijah was hoping to hear, is it? So right from the seat of power, because you think about that, you think, who's actually wearing the trousers in the castle there, in the city there, it isn't actually King Ahab, who was very compliant, it's Queen Jezebel, and she is not convinced.

[16:24] In fact, she's opposing me completely. She's opposing the Lord completely. So she sends a messenger, and the messenger says, Elijah's dead meat.

So, what happens next? Right, verse 3. Elijah was, what's the next word in your Bible?

Faith. Okay, anybody got anything different? Saw in the margin. Saw is in the margin. Has anybody got Elijah saw in their Bible?

Okay, well I'd like to put in a plea for that translation, because it seems, the words are very, very similar, and there is evidence evidence for the seeing translation.

So let's not get off on the wrong foot. I don't think it straight away says he starts to tremble and go panicky. I think he sees. And it must have been quite a thing to see.

[17:24] What is this real situation? I thought we'd won. But he now sees. That's not the case. That's awful. And rather than being sort of close to the throne and the prophet and the priest and the king all together there, the prophet is on the back foot.

He's under attack. And he sees. That must have been quite a thing to see. And the next word, it says, Elijah was something, so I'm saying Elijah saw.

And what's the next word in your translation? Ran. Anybody got anything else? Most translations have ran.

He does do running. There's a word for running where he ran ahead of Ahab into the city. Can't just see it at the moment. Yes, it's in previous chapter, verse 46.

He ran. It's a different word. The word we have here is not run. It's just the normal word for departing. Most of the time, I think apart from this, it's translated, he went.

[18:41] And, whoops, I'd like to say, don't think of him running away. Think of him strategically saying, this is not safe here.

I'm going. He departed. And when the word of God departs from a place, that's a judgment, isn't it? It's a judgment on our country when gospel churches close and areas of the country have no gospel witness. And Elijah, I would say, departs.

He departs for his life. Jesus told us that when you see such and such a sign, he's told the people living in Jerusalem, when you see such and such a sign, flee from, flee, don't go back home to collect your belongings, just run away.

And there's good spiritual sense in not wasting your life in that way, but departing. We don't sort of make ourselves martyrs in that sense.

[19:49] So off he goes. Now, is this a random thing? He came to Beersheba in Judah and he left his servant there while he himself went a day's journey into the desert.

So he's heading for the desert. And is he just getting as far away as possible? I think not. I think there is a purpose in his journey. He's heading for the desert.

And if you notice, it's not like, it's not like, the name's gone. Who's the prophet from Nineveh? Jonah.

Do you remember? He ran away from the Lord and the Lord sort of pushed him back by that storm and getting him swallowed by a big fish. This isn't like that.

The Lord isn't trying to catch Elijah and put him back. The Lord helps him on his way. So I think there's a purpose in this journey. I think this journey is approved and helped by God. And at this point, we have Elijah seeing the sobering spiritual reality of hard-heartedness and rejection.

[20:58] I'll come back to that thought in a moment. But there is a sobering reality. I know Christians aren't very good at counting. They sometimes say, we had an evangelistic campaign and hundreds and hundreds

of people were saved.

But you come back a couple of weeks later and you find there's been not a lot of impact. We need to be realistic. Sometimes there isn't a lot of impact. In this situation, he sees the sobering spiritual reality of what hard hearts are really like.

Would make you weep, really. So let's take him on in this journey. We get him to verse 3.

He leaves his servant there while he himself goes a day's journey into the desert. Can you think of another time where somebody went somewhere, left his friends and went on a bit further?

Jesus? In the Garden of Gethsemane. He had some business to do that only he could do by himself. And I wonder if there's a little sort of thought of that here.

[22:11] He leaves his servant, goes on alone because there's a task just for one man to do. So let's take him on that journey. He comes to a broom tree, a juniper tree.

He sits down under it and prays that he might die. So let's put him under the tree. Let's put him praying. And he says, I have had enough, Lord.

Take my life. I am no better than my fathers, than my ancestors. We won't need to ponder that that he says there.

Let me just give you a bit of translation on it. The word for enough is actually too much. There's been such a lot. And it doesn't say I.

It's more just, you know, there's been such a lot, Lord. It makes it sound very self... He's sad about his own himself. I've had enough. But it doesn't quite do justice to how it's written.

[23:20] It's too much. There's been an awful lot. Take my life. I'm no better than my fathers. Ponder that thought.

So he's under the tree and he falls asleep. There he is, sleeping. Now, why does he go to the desert? Let's ponder that.

Is it out of panic and fear? I think there's a reason. I think he goes to the desert and he's heading there because the desert is the place where Israel sorted things out with God.

The desert is a place of getting things right with God. Working things through with God. Jesus sometimes went to lonely places, didn't he, to pray.

And I think that's what he's doing. He's saying, this all needs rethinking. You know, we've had this very dramatic story so far and what's just happened means I need to rethink that.

[24:26] Have you ever had times like that in your life where you need just to go away with God and rethink and pray through? And why this disappointment? Is the translator right to make it about Elijah?

I've had enough. I mean, sometimes people can genuinely say that I've had enough. But is that what he's saying? And why does he mention the fathers, the people who've gone before?

I think there is something more than just regret. I think he's saying, we came to a point in the history of Israel, in the history of God's people, where they'd gone worse and worse and that just decline had been happening and happening generation by generation.

It just got worse and worse. And I thought we got to a point where everything changed. I thought we got to a point on Mount Carmel when the fire came down and everybody said, the Lord is God, the Lord is God.

I thought things had changed. But they haven't. There's Jezebel. She's ruling the roost.

[25:47] And all that acclaim that seemed to be going on was just completely evaporated. And the condition of my fathers and the nation historically, I thought it had changed, but it hasn't.

It's no better. I'm no better than my fathers. The situation is no better than my fathers. I really had hoped things had changed.

But they haven't. And I think that's what lies behind this take my life. The bitterness of seeing no spiritual change.

I don't know whether you've ever tasted something of that. Maybe somebody you've prayed for. Maybe some situation you've followed.

Maybe some missionaries that you've been praying for. Maybe you just look at the story of Europe and you think, this is so disappointing.

[26:51] This is so heartbreaking. You know, Paul experienced that when he thought about his own fellow citizens. He says, I could almost wish

myself a curse if my people could be saved.

Do you remember him saying that? It's that sort of thing. This is so awful. And I think what Elijah is saying is, I've given everything that I could possibly do.

I've given everything. And everything that could possibly be done has been done. Because we had that big competition. It was stacked in exactly the right way.

The challenge was the right challenge. The prayer was the right prayer. The prayer answer was the right answer and still nothing's changed. And he was heartbroken over this.

And I think that's him saying, take my life. Because I haven't got anything more to give. Why the death? Because he had nothing more to give.

[27:50] There's other examples of people offering their lives. you might like to flip back to Moses in Exodus 32-31. Don't worry if you can't find it.

I'll read it out. I'll read it out. this was when everything went wrong right at the beginning of the covenant. Moses was busy up the mountain getting the Ten Commandments and all the rest of it. And meanwhile down below the people were busy swapping for another god. Making idols out of gold melted in the fire.

And in Exodus 32-31 Moses says, what a great sin these people have committed. They have made themselves gods of gold. Please forgive their sin.

If not, then blot me out of the book you have written. And God says, Moses is almost saying, you know, take my life if these people could be spared.

[28:57] And God says, I'm not going to do that. That's a deal I'm not going to do with you, Moses. It's a deal I'll do with somebody but not with you. The person who sinned against me I'll blot out of my book.

So Moses was actually offering something that sort of made sense. It might have achieved something but God said no. Elijah, Elijah, I think, is just saying it's all, everything has been done. It's all so much and we're no better off than our fathers. So let's take him now on to this journey. So, we have these two meals.

He, all at once, so where am I now? Halfway through verse 5. An angel, he's fallen asleep under the tree. An angel touches him and says, get up and eat.

So the angel touches him and he looked around and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals and a jar of water. Do you think it's brought anything to mind?

[30:01] Do you think there's other places where there's been cakes and jars? The widow, yes. He was looked after by a widow previously and she baked a cake like this one and she had a jar, it was a jar of oil, wasn't it?

So I wonder if this reminds him, God looked after you in the past and will still look after you now. So he eats and drinks and then he lies down again.

Then the thing is more or less repeated, verse 7, the angel of the Lord came back a second time, touched him and said, get up and eat for the journey is too much for you. So he got up and ate and drank.

So there's a journey. He hasn't bottled it. He's got a journey with a purpose and the angel knows that he's going to need some food and drink and sleep before he does that journey.

It's very understanding of the angel. Angels don't have problems like needing to eat and drink and sleep, I presume. They're sort of slightly different. There's very understanding of the angel to realise that we do.

[31:10] I hope you realise that you do. I hope you realise that you do. I hope even if you are very young and vigorous, you don't imagine that you can stay up all night, every night and go to work in the morning and serve the Lord and pray without falling asleep and all those sorts of things.

You need sleep and food and drink. Just realise we're not angels, we're people and what this angel understood of him is true of us and where is he going to?

Verse 8, 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 and there he went into a cave and spent the night.

Now Horeb is an important place. It's otherwise known as Mount Sinai. It's the place where the whole thing kicked off with the covenant and 40 days and 40 nights incidentally is the same time that Moses spent on the mountain so we've got a sort of link.

These details are reminding us we're suddenly becoming Moses-like. We're going back to the origin of the covenant. Israel crossed the desert those 40 years but we're thinking back into Exodus territory here.

[32:30] We're going back to basics and I think that's what Elijah has had in mind all the time. We need to reset this back to basics. So let's now go up on the mountain.

He spends the night in a cave. So I've done the mountain. Do you understand my picture there? So that's the mountain and that's the cave. I had to do it big enough to get him into in a moment. Just think Mount Horeb, Mount Sinai, cave, just bear that thought in mind. And we get this repetition now.

So verse 9, let's ask this question, what are you doing here, Elijah? What is it to you here? It's a very compressed question.

What's up? Why are you here? What's going on? And his answer is, with zeal have I been zealous for the Lord Almighty.

[33:37] You translate it, I've been very zealous. I've really cared. I've really, really cared about the Lord Almighty.

and look what I can see. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, so all this wonderful provision that you've made, this relationship that you've brought them into, this marriage that you've set up, they've rejected it.

And your altars, the place where sacrifice was made so that this relationship could continue, so that your sin could be dealt with, they've broken those down.

And your prophets, the ones who spoke the messages of love from you, Lord, to your people, they've killed the prophets. And that is why I'm here.

I think we should take that at face value. I don't think we should read into that, that he was cowardly or self-centered. I think we take it at face value. He really, really cares about the kingdom of God, and the glory of God, and the people of God.

[34:51] And it sort of makes us think, well, I hope we care. I hope we're not apathetic. Sometimes we can get apathetic, can't we? And the thing that we care most about in our lives is when Strictly Come Dancing is going to return to our screens or whatever it might be.

I mean, that's a pretty sad situation, isn't it? This is, he says, what are you doing here? I really, really care about this. And in some way, which I don't think I've quite computed yet, he's saying, it all boils down to me.

I find myself in the position where I am the solitary representative of a people who've gone adrift all over the place.

And he says, I, only I, am left. And my life is on the line too. In some way, this whole covenant thing has now just boiled down to me, and I am facing death myself.

So that's, let me look at my notes here. that's what's said, and that's what's repeated.

[36:13] The same thing, end of verse 13. What are you doing here? Answer, I've been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, put your prophets to death with the sword.

I am the only one left, and now they're trying to kill me too. So I take from the fact that that is repeated, that we're meant to find that confirmed. He's not just sort of rambling on off the top of his head.

He's saying this is definitely the situation, this is definitely the situation. Okay. So what happens next?

So after the first statement, so I'm going back now to verse 11. what happens? Go out, stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.

Now I don't know whether you know this, but that's exactly what the Lord did when Moses was up on the mountain. There was a time when Moses was up on the mountain, and it is Exodus 33, and if I may I'll just refer you to that.

[37:27] Exodus 33, verse 19, the Lord said, I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and in verse 22, when my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by, then I will remove my hand, you will see my back, but my face must not be seen, and the Lord, 34, 6, he passed by in front of Moses, so there is a Moses thing going on here, in not a cave, but a cleft in the rock, that's what happened to Moses, and here is Elijah, and the Lord passes by him, the technical word is a theophany, a theophany is God showing himself through various means, it's a theophany, that's the word for it, and here's Elijah, in a cave, little bit like Moses, not a cleft, but it's a cave, it's a little bit like Moses, and what does this theophany, how does it, what happens when God passes by, then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart, and shattered the rocks before the

Lord, so you've got this huge hurricane wind, rattling the houses, ripping the slates off the roof, that sort of wind, severe, adverse weather conditions, Met Office weather warning, in those days they would have said, oh it's climate change, anyway, there's this huge wind, but it says, the Lord was not in the wind, number two, there's an earthquake, where am I, powerful wind, but the Lord was not in the wind, after the wind was an earthquake, so again, a huge earth shaking, shattering thing happening, as the mountain quakes, and all of these are genuine ways in which God has revealed himself, mighty wind, it's very much like the Lord, an earthquake, sometimes the Lord has shown himself through an earthquake, remember where they prayed and the earth quaked, but he wasn't in this earthquake, and then there was a fire, after the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire, fire is a genuine way that God reveals himself, he sent down fire just a few chapters earlier, when the Holy Spirit came, tongues of fire came, it's not an illegitimate revelation of God, but in this case the Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire came a little voice, a weedy, thin voice, the same word used as the weedy animals, the cows after the seven years with Joseph, they were thin, it's a thin voice, and presumably it doesn't say the Lord was not in the thin voice, presumably the Lord was in the thin voice, and what are we to make of that?

The honest answer is I wish I knew, it seems so powerful but yet so unclear, what's it saying, that you've got all these mighty things and you think that's the way God's going to work, but in fact he reveals himself in this little quiet voice, maybe Elijah would think, you know, we will win the day because we had the biggest, most, you know, CGI effects demonstration of God that we could possibly have on Mount Carmel, and God's saying, well actually, I'm going to work through quietly speaking to people.

let's go to the second sort of repeat of this, the question what are you doing here, the answer I've been very zealous to the Lord Almighty, and verse 15, what does the Lord say this time, the Lord said to him, go back the way you came, go to the desert of Damascus, when you get there, etc. [42:10] So there's a sort of sense in which God says, okay, you've been very disappointed, it's been heartbreaking, and I appreciate that, but this is what you're going to do, you just get on with what I'm giving you to do, and this is it.

the sense of wisdom in that, sometimes we get all het up about things, and perhaps we're very disappointed, or we feel we've failed in various ways, and the Lord says, okay, let's just work that through, and when we work that through, now you just get on with the thing that I've given you to do, just take the next step.

And that's a bit what he's saying here. this is what I want you to do, so I want you to go north, to the kingdom which is north of Israel, it's really an enemy kingdom, when you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram, I want you to make sure he's the king up there, and I want you to anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, so that's the northern Israelite kingdom, and I want you to anoint Elijah, son of Shaphat, from Abel Meholah, as the prophet who is in your place after you.

Because we've now moved into a different gear. We were in the gear of reforming and restoring the nation and saying, which is God?

The Lord is God, follow him. And that got so far, but as we can see, it was heartbreakingly disappointing. It was a flop.

[44:01] And we've now moved into a mode of judgment. If people are going to reject the Lord, then these are the key people because, verse 17, Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazeel, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu.

So we're into judgment mode here. With one exception, there are 7,000 that I've kept, and I've kept them believing, and I've kept them for myself, and I'm going to keep them, and they don't follow Baal, and they're not headed for judgment, they haven't kissed Baal, they love me.

And God says, there's one exception to this judgment, it's this little group that I know about, and I've done this, it's a remnant saved by grace.

And the Apostle Paul in the New Testament says, that is characteristic as to how God works. In fact, I would say to you, how come you're here today as a believer?

Do you think it was because you were so good that you deserved God to bless you? Or do you know that you were so wayward and so unresponsive and yet God in his mercy said, well I'm going to include that in the number of my people, I'm going to include you, in the number of my people?

[45:45] Would you not say that the truth is that you're here because God saved you by his grace? And just said, I'm going to have them. 7,000 or whatever number it is, saved by grace.

This is how the Lord works. So may I sort of draw to a conclusion by putting this mountain alongside a couple of other mountains mountains.

Sorry, the writing's a bit small now because there's a lot of words. Think of Moses who was on the mountain. He was the man of God at the beginning of the old covenant.

He said to God, show me your glory. There he is as the Lord passes by. The Lord puts his hand to protect him from the extremity of glory. At some point Moses says, blot me out of your book.

And God says, no, I'm not doing that deal with you. But Moses brought in this glorious thing which in the end was a flop because if righteousness came by the law, no one could be saved.

[46:49] And we have this huge project which points forward but it doesn't do the job. It does not change hearts. Telling people what they ought to do doesn't save them.

Telling people how they should live does not save them. Telling people to try harder doesn't save them. The law represents that. Moses represents that. Here's Elijah.

He's in the cave. The Lord passes by. He's like the covenant policeman. He says, look what Moses did and here we are. Why can't we get back to that? Why can't we incorporate that into our lives?

Look, here's huge signs to show us this is what we should do. He's the one who prayed, changed their hearts back. He's the one who said, take my life and the Lord said, no, that wouldn't achieve anything.

I know what you mean but I won't achieve anything. Here's the one of powerful word and sign and earthquake and fire and wind and that couldn't change the heart either.

[47:50] It doesn't do the job. He's no better than his father's. And here's somebody else on a mountain. Here's Jesus. The mountain is a bit different. He's the son of God.

He's God himself. He brings in a new covenant. He does what no one else could achieve.

And his mountain is actually what in the hymn is a green hill far away outside a city wall. And on his mountain there are three crosses where three criminals are executed and the one in the middle is Jesus executed as a criminal.

he cries out why have you forsaken me? And as he offers his life it's not like Moses where God says no I'm not doing this with you.

And it's not like Elijah where God says in effect well that wouldn't achieve anything. The father accepts the offer of the son take my life and the father says yes I will.

[48:59] and this saviour yields his life for his people and rather than saying well that was a pretty pointless exercise that achieved nothing gets us no further forward when Jesus dies on the cross he says it is finished and he achieves what none of these other people could achieve what Moses couldn't achieve by telling people the law Jesus achieved what Elijah couldn't achieve with all his drama I'm no better than my fathers Jesus achieves it it's finished and he was in a cave wasn't he he was in a

tomb and he escaped from the tomb by his resurrection and the resurrection shows us this is not a failure this is not a flop this is not an occasion for which we say alas nothing has been achieved we're no better off than we were before on the contrary as Jesus rises from the tomb we sort of say hallelujah he's done it he's achieved it he's done what no one else could do he saved his people from their sins so that they will never be lost again he's done it and he's the one who says

I make all things new so in answer to the question right at the beginning a flop a failure or futile Moses the servant of God well he does achieve something there is a glory but what the law ends up really doing is showing us our sin and ability our sin and inability that's a useful lesson to learn I hope you've learned it if you haven't Moses will help you it's good to know our sin and our inability if you're sitting there thinking well I don't need a saviour to die for me you need to think again here's Elijah the prophet in mighty in word and deed but he didn't change hearts and he only brought judgment is this where you are are you sort of impressed but unchanged you know the people were impressed but unchanged I don't know whether that's where you are in the spiritual life you're impressed with Jesus impressed with Christian things impressed with the Bible but it hasn't actually changed you yet you need more you need

Jesus the son of God his cross his resurrection the gift of the Holy Spirit effectively moves us from sin and guilt and death to righteousness justification and life he's the one we need isn't he he's the one who did it hallelujah let's sing