

On Covenant mount

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[0 : 00] We turn to the passage in 1 Kings 19 that we read together. 1 Kings 19. And we'll read from verse 9.

1 Kings 19 from verse 9. Elijah came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him and he said, What are you doing here, Elijah?

He said, I'd be 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 a sword. And I, even I only am left.

And they seek my life to take it away. 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 wasn't in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 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 : 04] 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 he said, And said, What are you doing here, Elijah? He said, I've been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts.

For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, killed your prophets with a sword. And I, even I only, am left. And they seek my life to take it away. And the Lord said to him, Go.

Return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. This story of Elijah is so well known.

It's a very well known and a very popular story in the Bible. And often we focus on Elijah being under the broom tree in verse 5 and 6 of chapter 19.

And take from it lessons about what it is to be depressed or despondent or in despair. And so on and so forth. And there's a lot of merit in that. But that's not really what this passage is all about.

[2 : 14] This passage begins at Mount Carmel. At the end of chapter 18, we saw the victory. We know the story of the victory that the Lord won through Elijah on Mount Carmel over the prophets of Baal and Asherah.

And how all these prophets are put to death. And then it begins in chapter 19, Jezebel threatened Elijah and he started running. And the story ends in Mount Horeb.

And there, where God spoke to Elijah in Beersheba, when he was depressed and under a broom tree, he asked him the same question at Mount Horeb.

The real focus of the story is Mount Horeb. Why did Elijah go from Carmel to Mount Horeb? Some 200 miles, over 200 miles.

He made his way to Beersheba, then travel another little bit. And then when God says to him, the journey's too much for you, in verses 5 to 7, the journey, not the journey that he's had, it's the journey that he's going to have.

[3 : 16] The journey ahead of you is too much for you. So he gave him rest and food and drink. Why did God want him to go to Mount Horeb? It's because of this.

Mount Horeb is the place of covenant. You see, Mount Carmel was a place of conquering. Great victories, great conquering. Mount Horeb is the place of covenant.

Mount Horeb is Mount Sinai. It's where God gave the Ten Commandments. In fact, much of what we read in this passage, the earth and wind and fire, is reminiscent of Exodus 20, Exodus 19 and 20, where God appears on the same mountain several years before.

This has been a great time. I always had communion. It's a time of great things, and it's been great blessings. And it feels like a victory in many ways. The Mount of Transfiguration experience, communion often is.

But often coming down from that mountain, this is not true, friends, coming down from that mountain, you can be on a downer, you can be feeling low, things cannot be the way you felt the previous days before.

[4 : 23] We've got much to learn here. Because if we're to enjoy, truly enjoy Mount Carmel victories, if we're really to enjoy the blessing of, of the Mount of Transfiguration, of communion, we need to continually be at Mount Horeb.

We need to be grounded in the truths and principles of covenant. Because it is a covenant relationship with God through Jesus that makes us Christians and will keep us going. We will have highs and we will have lows, but Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

He never, ever changes. So the point of today's passage is, let us speak continually, yes, great being at Mount Carmel, but coming to Mount Horeb, the place of covenant.

There are four things that I think this passage draws to our attention regarding our covenant relationship with God. First of all, it reminds us the importance of prayer in our covenant relationship with God.

In verse 10, God is speaking to Elijah, and Elijah says to God, 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, killed your prophet with a sword, and I, even I, only am left, and I seek to take my life, and take, to seek my life, to take it away.

[5 : 48] Here, Elijah is praying to the Lord, in covenant relationship, prayer is crucial. It's not just important, that's underestimating it. It is crucial. Elijah's at least praying to God.

He's not going away on his own. He's not going to a place where he's sulking, or being introverted, or just thinking of everything that's coming in upon him, and trying to deal with it himself.

He's going to the place of prayer. He's praying to the Lord. And you know what else? He brings everything to God. He doesn't hold anything back. He tells God everything as it is. Lord, it looks terrible.

Everything's against me, he says. It's not a very crafted prayer. It's not a very eloquent prayer. But it's a prayer from the heart. He's just pouring everything out.

Do you do that in your prayers to the Lord? Do you just tell him, Lord, I'm in despair. And maybe today you feel in despair. Just tell him. It's so important that we're honest and open with the Lord.

[6 : 47] When we pray, when we lead in public prayer, we need to be careful, because we're leading a congregation in prayer. But private prayer, prayer is not an art, it's a cry.

And this is Elijah's cry. He just absolutely unburdens himself on the Lord, because he knows him. He's in a covenant relationship with him.

The importance of prayer, bear it all before the Lord. And doesn't this remind us also of one man who truly could say everything that Elijah had said.

Everything that Elijah said was not true. He wasn't the only one. God said at the end of this passage, I would say, we've served 7,000 who haven't bowed the knee. But there's one who could say, I've been very jealous for the Lord.

The people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, killed your prophets, and I, even I, only am left. And they're seeking to take my life, to take it away.

[7 : 54] Who's the only one who truly could say that? The Lord Jesus himself. Here is a covenant prayer of Jesus. He was the only one who could say, zeal for your house has consumed me.

He was the only one who truly, with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength, was jealous for the Lord. This is a covenant prayer that reflects the reality of Jesus.

It reflects the reality of Jesus' life. Do you remember when he was in the Garden of Bethsemane? Father, Father, take this cup from me. Everything's against me.

I can't, I can't take this. My enemies are coming in upon me. And they were, he knew they were plotting against him. And he prays on the cross, Father, forgive them.

They know not what they do. And then now, he's not praying, Father, take this cup, or Father, forgive them. He's praying, Lord, remember them. Jesus in glory, in covenant prayer, is praying for you and me today.

[8 : 58] He's praying continually. It's because of his prayers, before the Lord, fully and completely, that we are able to stand every day. If Jesus stopped praying for us, we would never be able to stand.

But he will never stop praying for you. He will never stop praying for me. He lives in the power of an endless life, the writer to the Hebrews says. He bears us up in the presence of God.

As the high priest, at the twelfth cry to Israel, on his breastplate, in the presence of God, so Jesus bears all the people of God, in the presence of God, night and day, night and day, for time and for eternity.

And that's the most important prayer of all. That's where we keep, and are kept, in covenant relationship, with Jesus. So here we see, the importance, of prayer.

Secondly, we see the removal of punishment. We see the removal of punishment. So God is going to speak, and how does he speak? The Lord tells him, go into this cave, and stand at the mouth of the cave, rather, in verse 11, and then the Lord passed by.

[10 : 09] And then the strong wind tore the mountains, and broke in pieces the rocks. And then after that, there was a wind. After that, there was an earthquake, rather. And then after the earthquake, there was a fire.

So there was this fire, there was this earthquake, there was this wind. What do these things depict? Not necessarily here, but what do these things depict ordinarily in the Bible?

These things depict judgment. These are the symbols that the Bible uses, to depict judgment. When judgment comes, if you read the book of Revelation, earth, wind, and fire, earthquakes, and wind, and fire, and hail storms, and all of these things depict the coming of the judgment of God.

And I suppose when we see or read of these things, in our day and generation now, when we see them on the TV and so on, we do think God is judging us, don't we?

When there's tsunamis, when there are these bushfires, when there are these kind of supernatural events, you think God's hand of judgment is upon us.

[11 : 24] Well, remember this, it's not always that way. It isn't always that way. When a tsunami comes, it doesn't mean God is judging a people. God was not in these things.

That's what Elijah says. That's what the Bible says. He wasn't in them. It's not that he wasn't, they're not from them, but he's not necessarily in them. So please be careful. When we pass judgment, on judgment, when we look at our TVs, or even people's lives, when everything seems to be going wrong, and you say, oh, it must be a judgment from God, we're in danger of becoming like Job's three friends, you thought because his life was unraveling, it was God's judgment.

Far from it. We need to be careful when we think of judgment. But there's one thing for sure. These things do represent judgment.

Final judgment. And what it says to us is that on another mountain, a man called Jesus, our Savior, he did bear the earth, wind, and fire of God's judgment.

It gives a picture of something, just a glimpse of what he tasted on the cross, so that our sins would be forgiven, so that God would not be in these things to judge us when the final day of judgment comes.

[12 : 45] So when the final day of judgment comes, there will be earth, wind, and fire, there will be earthquakes, there will be terrible things happening. And you know, for us, you're going to hear this voice, I am not in it for you.

This is not for you. My judgment has come upon another mountain called Calvary, where my son Jesus bore away my wrath. And that is true. Do you believe that today for yourself?

Do you believe that Jesus has absorbed God's judgment for you? There's not an ounce of judgment left in God for you today. Not an ounce. He cannot judge us twice because he's just.

God can't be unjust. He has absorbed our judgment and absolved our sin and that assures us that despite our sin, God loves us.

For Jesus' sake, God loves us. For Jesus' sake, God sticks with us. For Jesus' sake, God will never forsake us.

[13 : 54] For Jesus' sake, you see, this is the covenant. Jesus is the covenant mediator with whom we have everything. In Jesus, God sees no sin in us. Can you believe that?

We still sin, but God sees no sin because we are in covenant with God through Jesus. Hallelujah. It's incredible. It doesn't give us an excuse to sin, but it gives us an assurance and a motivation to live for the Lord.

You know, judgment will drive people to obedience, but it's not a good motivation. Love is what motivates a heart.

If you want to win somebody over, love is the way to win somebody over. That's how God has won us over, by his love. God so loved you that he spared not his own son but gave him up for you. Does that not win your heart today? He removes judgment and wins our heart and our obedience. So we see here the importance of prayer.

[15 : 00] We see here the removal of punishment. We see here the assurance of presence. We see the assurance of the Lord's presence. There's a contrast almost.

There's a comparison as well, but there's a contrast here between old covenant and new covenant. Is there not? There's a comparison in that the old covenant was very much to do with signs.

The new covenant there is to do with signs. Signs, wonders and miracles which authenticate Jesus who he said he was and what he came to do. But I think we have here as represented in Mount Sinai several years beforehand the old covenant where God spoke with wind and earthquake and fire and it was terrible and the people feared and quaked and nobody could go near the mountain. but it's as if we have a glimpse of the new covenant coming here where God is not speaking. He wasn't in these things in chapter 19 here.

He speaks in a still small voice. It's like a foretaste of the new covenant where God doesn't speak in signs as such fearful signs but in this still small voice.

[16 : 21] Jesus comes. Jesus, the voice of God. Jesus, the word of God. In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God and in verse 14 the word was made flesh and dwelt among us and he spoke.

the new covenant is not so much about signs like these but about speaking about Jesus speaking to us. And do you see that on the mountain here?

God is not in these fearful signs but he's in this low whisper. It's a still small voice and a low whisper. The presence of God is shown us as evidence is manifest in a voice and that's what we hold on to today.

That when we have signs, wonders and miracles they can come from the devil and they do. The second Thessalonians tells us that the devil can do these things and will do these things in the end days.

We don't look to signs, wonders and miracles. What do we look to? We look to the voice of God. We look to God speaking. Where does God speak to us? In the Bible. It's all so simple.

[17 : 31] It's all so simple. We listen to the Lord. We seek his presence in the word. That is why everything that we do revolves around the word of God.

This is where he speaks. The Lord speaks to us in different ways. He speaks to us in creation. The heavens, God's glory do declare. The skies, his hand works preach and so on. He speaks to us in conscience.

That voice within ourselves. But our consciences are like a compass that's broken. It can go in the right way but then before you know we're going in the wrong direction. Our consciences are. Don't rely on our conscience.

Don't ever, who was it who said let your conscience be your guide? Was it Pinocchio or somebody like that? Don't ever let your conscience be your absolute guide. But conscience is the voice speaking in us.

But God speaks to us through Christ. And Christ speaks to us through the word. So the word is above experience. The word is above everything.

[18 : 28] The word is above speaking in tongues of men and of angels. The word is above having dreams and seeing things. The word is supreme. The Bible, the Lord says heaven and earth will pass away but the word of the Lord endures forever.

So when I want to hear God speaking to me I don't care if I never hear a voice this is what I turn to. And it often is that still small voice speaking in my heart.

this covenant voice speaking to my soul. There's a children's Bible I don't know I'm sure you've seen it but the Jesus storybook Bible it's called.

It's excellent. And there's a tag line or a subtext under the heading the Jesus storybook Bible which is every story with precious name.

And I like that. It's almost as if it's taken from this story. Ed was throughout the whole from Genesis to Revelation and every story the writer telling the story shows how Jesus is there.

[19 : 37] And when we open our Bibles remember this Jesus is there Jesus is in every story. He told his disciples that from way back in the beginning with the prophets and the Psalms and the writings how the whole of scripture speaks of him.

He's everywhere in it. If we want to hear the voice of Jesus we open the Bible wherever it is and there in some way he will speak to us. Do you want to know God's presence?

We need to know God's presence. How? In the Word. In the Word of God. This living and enduring Word of God. So we see here the importance of covenant prayer and the removal of covenant punishment and the assurance of covenant presence and then finally the motivation of covenant purpose.

The motivation of covenant purpose. From verse 14 God has spoken to Elijah and he says what are you doing here? He asks a question and it's interesting Elijah doesn't say oh I've got he doesn't speak differently.

He rehearses what he said. He still felt the same. He just says exactly the same. I've been very jealous for the Lord the God of hosts. I wanted to say something different because now God has spoken but he doesn't and that shows us when God speaks it doesn't necessarily change how we feel or the thoughts that go through our head but what does change is this Elijah goes he's motivated he then obeys God says to him go he rehearses the story and then God says go go and anoint go and do what I'm telling you to do go and anoint Hazael to be king over Syria and Jehu the son of Nimshi who shall anoint to be king over Israel and Elisha the son of Shaphat you shall anoint to be prophet in your place go and do what I'm telling you go he left with a purpose and that purpose was motivated by knowing the word of God speaking to him and leading him and guiding him and that's important here that despite what we feel and despite what we think we turn to the word and we look to the word and we listen to Jesus speak to us in the word and he tells us today whatever our experience has been over this weekend he says now go we leave this place with motivation because the blessings we received and we have had rich blessings you have had rich blessings this weekend and may they continue may God's hand be shown to continue to be on you there's a world out there that doesn't know that won't sit at a table that isn't here today that won't come to church and how are they ever going to hear of this gospel except you take it to them that's what

[22 : 29] Jesus said on another mountain in the end of Matthew's gospel 28 verses 18 to 20 go and he gave them a purpose making disciples of all nations and he gave them a promise and lo I am with you always Elijah was told to go he had a purpose go and anoint these people that he was to anoint and the promise he says to him in verse 21 there are 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal you're not alone he says to Elijah you're not alone and so as we come to the end of this communion may we focus on these great covenant issues and may we continually as we rejoice in Mount Carmel may we continually be coming to Mount Horry and remembering covenant is key covenant is what grounds us in our relationship with God and covenant is what will grow us as Christians and grow us as a church because the covenant is all of God's doing and all to God's glory amen let's bow into our loving father we do bless and we thank you for your covenant love to us we thank you that though frail and weak as we are yet you are strong and mighty though sinful and unreliable we are yet you are sinless and completely reliable and we gladly again rest our whole hope and trust in you we pray that your covenant love to us it would be established in our hearts and that we would respond in covenant obedience that we would indeed leave this communion season and leave this place going into the world with a covenant motive in our hearts that we would be moved to share this wonderful good news of Jesus and his love with those who father do not know and who so need this gospel we do pray lord that you would then guide us by your spirit and by your word lead us on straight paths of righteousness keep the evil one away when he comes to our hearts and to our minds may we take the example of

Jesus and use the word of God it is written it is written it is written may we use this word of God to fight the evil one the sword of the spirit which is the word of God and may we make reading your bible and learning the scripture may we make it our goal in life for in it we read and we see and we hear the voice of our living God so lord as we present these things to you we ask you also to forgive us and to bless us for Jesus sake amen