

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

The Books Of Kings: The Kings Of Israel And Judah From Solomon To The Babylonian Captivity

II. The Divided Kingdom, 1 Kings 12:1-22:53

R. God's Use Of His "Remnant" To Encourage Us Amid Apostasy

(1 Kings 19:19-21)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We believers in Christ can be tempted to get discouraged over the ungodliness we face in today's world:

(1) At the national level, "Republican Sen. Susan Collins, a key vote on President Donald Trump's pick for the Supreme Court, said Sunday . . . 'I would not support a nominee who demonstrated hostility to *Roe v. Wade* because that . . . would indicate an activist agenda.'" (Hope Yen and Ken Thomas, "Collins would oppose court pick with *Roe v. Wade* hostility," Republican-American, July 2, 2018, p. 3A) Activism? "Justice Harry Blackman, author of the 64-page document that came from the *Roe v. Wade* decision, said that objection to abortion came mainly from two sources: the oath of Hippocrates and Christianity. Since the oath specifically forbids abortion, the Court wrestled with its influence but concluded that, in the context of general opinion, 'ancient religions did not bar abortion.' As for Christianity, it was apparently dismissed by the court because of separation of church and state. In effect, the Court omitted two thousand years of Judeo-Christian influence and reached back into paganism to find a basis for its moral judgment," -- **that** is activism! (The Rebirth of America (DeMoss), 1986, p. 86) It can tempt us to be discouraged.

(2) We face the temptation to feel discouraged over news of spiritual decline among professing Christians, for "(n)umerous studies . . . reveal that the lifestyles, values and . . . worldview of most of those who attend 'evangelical churches' are no different from the world." (Brannon Howse, Religious Trojan Horse, 2012, p. 430)

Need: *So, we ask, "In view of the discouraging apostasy we face, how does God direct that we be encouraged?!"*

- I. We previously learned that Elijah had repeatedly told God that he felt alone in his stand for Him amid Israel's great apostasy, and that the Lord's enemies also wanted to kill him, 1 Kings 19:10, 14.
- II. However, the Lord had informed Elijah that He had reserved for Himself 7,000 people in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal nor kissed his image in false pagan worship, 1 Kings 19:18 NIV.
- III. God had also told Elijah to anoint Elisha as prophet, so he knew Elisha would be part of God's remnant.
- IV. So, to be **ENCOURAGED**, Elijah **IMMEDIATELY** sought for Elisha that he might anoint him and enjoy his **FELLOWSHIP**, and **THROUGH** Elisha, God led Elijah to an **EDIFYING GROUP** of His **REMNANT**:
 - A. Though God had **first** told Elijah to anoint Hazael as king of Syria, **then** Jehu as king of Israel and **last** Elisha as prophet (1 Kings 19:15-16), Elijah left the anointing of Hazael and Jehu for Elisha later to perform (2 Kings 8:7-15; 9:1-10) and **immediately** left Mount Sinai for Abel-Meholah to commission Elisha to be a prophet:
 1. The 1 Kings 19:19a phrase, **misham**, "from **there**" indicates Elijah departed from Mount Sinai to go **directly** to Abel-Meholah for Elisha where God said he lived, 1 Kings 19:16; Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 547-548.
 2. Elijah thus put God's assignment to anoint Elisha ahead of performing God's other anointing assignments that he go far north to Damascus to anoint Hazael and to Ramoth-Gilead to anoint Jehu, 1 Kings 19:15-16.
 - B. Elijah's **reasons** for commissioning Elisha **before** addressing God's other anointing assignments was twofold:
 1. Negatively, Hazael and Jehu were violent men, the reason for God's using them to destroy Baalism in Israel, so anointing them would be emotionally draining, what Elisha experienced when he later dealt with these men (2 Kings 8:7-15; 9:1-10). Elijah wanted to avoid such draining encounters right after burnout.
 2. Positively, news of a godly remnant sparked Elijah's motivation to anoint Elisha, for he wanted to contact the man in the Lord's remnant who would replace him as prophet to enjoy his fellowship and offset the **loneliness** and **drain** in ministry that he had experienced and that he had voiced to God, 1 Kings 19:10, 14.
 - C. When Elijah met and commissioned Elisha to be the next prophet, Elijah would have been greatly encouraged by the responsiveness of both Elisha and his associates who were also of the godly remnant, 1 Kings 19:19-21:
 1. Elijah first met Elisha as he was plowing with twelve yokes of oxen, eleven of them in front of him where he could manage what his eleven servants did with their yokes as he drove the twelfth yoke, v. 19a.
 2. This was a **huge** endeavor as evidenced by the Hebrew text: the emphatic pronoun "**he**" appears twice in verse 19a, **first** to describe Elisha's oversight of **twelve** yokes **ahead** of him and **second** to indicate that Elisha **himself** was simultaneously occupied with plowing with his **own** yoke of oxen!
 3. Elijah did not wait for Elisha to cease his busy work, but he walked right up to him, threw his mantle over Elisha to signify his call to the prophetic ministry and continued walking past Elisha, 1 Kings 19:19b-20a.

4. Elisha was **stunned** by Elijah's abrupt, wordless commissioning of him to be a prophet as is evidenced in his having to run after Elijah to speak with him. Elisha had to adjust to the event's significance, v. 20a.
5. Nevertheless, **Elisha's response** and the **response** of his **godly associates** to his call by Elijah would have **greatly encouraged Elijah** after his recent burnout experience back at Mount Sinai, 1 Kings 19:20b-21:
 - a. Recovering from his initial shock, Elisha quickly **heeded** God's call to follow Elijah, and thus ran after him to ask if he might kiss his father and mother farewell prior to following Elijah, 1 Kings 19:20b.
 - b. Elijah's reply, "Go back again: for what have I done to thee?" is not a critique of Elisha, but meant, "What have I done to stop you?" (v. 20c; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 529) Elijah was trusting God's Word that He had a godly remnant, that Elisha, one of that remnant, would heed God's leading in his life.
 - c. Elisha certainly **DID** respond to God's call, too: he returned to his oxen, butchered them and cooked them with the wooden plow instruments they had pulled and served the meat to his family and friends in a farewell feast, 1 Kings 19:21a; Z. P. E. B., vol. Two, p. 521. Elisha was considerate of his eleven servants who needed to keep their oxen and plows to remain in their occupations, and he was considerate of his family ties so as to produce this feast. However, the oxen he had butchered and the plowing tools he had used to cook them signified he was making an **irreversible commitment** to God's call to be a prophet!
 - d. Significantly, Elisha's family and associates also **ate** the cooked oxen, indicating their fellowship with Elisha and thus their **consent** that he leave them for God's calling, 1 Kings 19:21b. Elisha's parents had given him his name that meant, "Elohim is salvation" (Ibid., p. 290), for they revered the Lord, so though they would be sad to see their son leave them, they ate of the meal, giving their consent for their son to follow after Elijah, the prophet of God who had led the nation Israel to confess the Lord at Mount Carmel!
 - e. 1 Kings 19:21c claims Elisha then rose and followed after Elijah, **sacrificially** giving up a secure livelihood in a big farming operation to live hand-to-mouth by faith (ravens at Cherith, widow at Zarephath), **sacrificially** giving up closeness to family to follow a wandering outlaw of the court (of Ahab and Jezebel) and **sacrificially** giving up leading eleven other plowmen to serve as an apprentice to Elijah.
 - f. 1 Kings 19:21d adds that Elisha then "ministered" to Elijah, the verb, **sharat**, meaning to serve an important person versus performing menial tasks (which is represented by the verb '**abad**, B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 1058; H. A. W., Theol. Wrdbk. of the O. T., 1980, v. II, p. 958) Elisha became a spiritual helper to the embattled Elijah, encouraging him following his burnout at Mount Sinai!

Lesson: *When God told Elijah that He had 7,000 in Israel who had not worshiped Baal, and that he was to anoint Elisha, a man of that remnant as prophet in his place, Elijah DIRECTLY left his "burnout" site at Mount Sinai to find and commission Elisha, and the SUPPORTIVE RESPONSE of God's godly remnant in Elisha and in his godly family and associates provided GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT for the embattled Elijah!*

Application: *To offset the temptation to feel discouraged over the apostasy we face today, may we (1) trust in Christ for salvation, John 3:16. (2) May we then heed God's lead to fellowship with His "remnant" for encouragement.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

Last Sunday, (1) three believers (2) of various generations (3) from different families (4) opposite my gender (5) at different times (6) independently of each other spoke to me (7) about different topics we had taught that day:

(a) The first lady asked about the "broom tree" mentioned in the sermon, wondering how we had learned of it, and she added that she wants to learn a lot more about the Bible. She asked what I might suggest as good but also affordable books to that end, so I recommended the Ryrie Study Bible and The Bible Knowledge Commentary.

(b) The second lady told me she had had an "Aha!" moment when in the sermon we mentioned that after God's raw power displays of a wind, an earthquake and a fire, the "still, small voice" Elijah heard in 1 Kings 19:12 represented the voice of a prophet. We had explained that God in Deuteronomy 18:15-19 had said He would **replace** using His Mount Sinai power displays with speaking to His people by a prophet! She had heard many errant views on the "still, small voice" Elijah had heard, so she was appreciative for our study that had explained this truth.

(c) The third lady asked about a Scripture passage I had mentioned in Sunday School that told of God's protection of us as a Church that went beyond our efforts regarding Church security. I replied that it was Psalm 127!

Since the circumstances of each lady's input **varied widely** from that of the other two ladies, and yet each lady exhibited appreciation for our teaching, their comments taken together left me highly motivated to start studying for this sermon! I saw it all as God's use of these ladies, who belonged to His "remnant," to encourage us in our ministry!

May we trust in Christ for salvation. May we fellowship with God's "remnant" for encouragement.