

10.13.24

Genesis

Chapter 3 - God's Grace Questioned The Disparagement of Blame (vs. 11-13)

Genesis 3:11-13: And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Jeremiah tells us that the heart of man is desperately sick. We begin to realize that as we see how man begins to manipulate things, people, thoughts, ideas to his own desire and oftentimes to the hurt of many people. He doesn't seem to really care about that. He just seems to care about his own selfish ambition, so he pursues those

things. One of the things that we're looking at, in particular in the Book of Genesis, is the beginning of things, and what we're seeing is the beginning of sin and the beginning of the wages of sin; why sin is such a horrific thing; why veering away, if we can define "sin;" why doing something that would veer away from what God says is best is such a sin. Because everything that God tells us to do and everything that He gives us is good, but that would also tell us that everything that we don't do, that He tells us to do, is bad and it's destructive, and it's hurtful in our life because not one good thing will He withhold from us. But there's something inside of our mind, our thoughts that begin to think that maybe God's not as gracious as He should be, and I really believe that's where sin begins.

In fact, if you were to look at Romans 1, it clarifies that. It says that the wrath of God is revealed against men, and you go, "What is God upset about?" Well, because though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, nor did they give thanks. The point is that God is not only all powerful, but Scripture also tells us that God is love, and

to not honor Him as the God of love and as a God that controls all things would be the beginning of our sin; to not take Him for who He is. It really begins with good theology. When bad theology comes in, we begin to doubt that God is gracious; we begin to doubt that He's good; we begin to doubt that He loves us. Then, that's just a short step away from doing the things that He tells us not to do.

As we've been looking in the Book of Genesis, we've seen that God is gracious in creation. God is gracious towards man. God has been gracious all along, but man tends to question that graciousness. It's not because God is not gracious, it's because man is twisted in his thinking. He's distorted in his thinking. You say, "Well, how could God create somebody that was perfect and yet they'd be twisted in their thinking?" Well, God gave men a choice, and in the midst of that choice, we begin to see man wrestling with whether or not there might be something greater for him, and it is the selfishness of man.

I was thinking about two passages in particular in the New Testament. One is found in Romans 14; the other is found

in 1 Corinthians 8. In both of those passages, it makes reference to the fact that you have things that you're doing that affect others around you. When we begin to feel that we are deserving of something, the selfish ambition starts kicking in and quite frankly, at that particular juncture, we could care less about what anybody else thinks or what happens to anybody else in the scope of it. When Eve takes the fruit, it's not her concern what's going to happen to her or Adam, or how the relationship between her and God is going to be affected. No thought to that. The only thought is, "I have something I want and I'm going to go get it." And that's what she does. What we see in Romans 14 in particular is that there is something inside of us that says that we ought to be able to give our opinions to whoever we want, and whenever we want. We could care less really who it affects or who it hurts, or who it destroys. This particular passage actually kind of ends with this phrase, "Why would you destroy someone whom Christ had died for?" Scripture is telling us is that this person is extremely valuable in the eyes of God it. They may not be valuable to you, but they're valuable to God. But with our

insatiable desire to do whatever we want to do, to prove whatever we want to prove, we don't mind hurting anybody else, and it just shows the nature of sin and how it's destructive.

1 Corinthians 8 kind of shows the same thing in which people are going places where they shouldn't go because it could be misconstrued. Paul begins to talk to them saying, "You better watch about going to these places because somebody could be hurt when they watch you." And oftentimes the Corinthians were going, "Well, who cares? We can do whatever we want to do." And Paul says actually the same quote, "Why should you hurt someone who Christ died for?" The passage is telling us that God is love and He demonstrates that love, but unfortunately man is not, and he oftentimes chooses his selfish desires over the concern for other people. It is this that we've seen within this particular passage and all along what we're seeing is that insatiable desire, that craving, that brings not only sin, but the treachery that comes with selfish ambition and the shame that comes out of this. Fear, then, is also one of the great

characteristics of the things that come out of this kind of sin, the selfishness of man. So, we come now to the passage in which, well, there's just one more sin that man has to add to all of these things. I mean, you have shame, isn't that enough? You have fear, isn't that enough? You've been treacherous towards other people, isn't that enough? Nope, not enough. What we have to do is throw in disparagement, and disparagement of the kind in which we're blaming somebody else for something we've done.

“Disparagement,” if I were to define it for you and I actually wrote down the definition in the Webster Dictionary, it is the act of making false or damaging remarks about a person or things as well as unkind remarks or criticism that show a lack of respect. That would be disparagement. Throwing out accusations that are not true. Oftentimes we do it through innuendos and inferences and that's kind of what we're seeing in this particular passage. Through kind of inferences, we're seeing Adam going, “It's the woman's fault, and quite frankly, God, some of the blame

belongs to You, because You gave me the woman. You're the one that gave me the woman. I mean, quite frankly, if we're just getting down to brass tacks, it was Your idea that I have a woman. So, I can't take all the blame here. I think we're all a part of this and I'm sure we can all get together and work something out.”

So, the way the passage reads, if you pick up with me in Genesis 3:11, God says, “So, you noticed that you did something wrong here? Shame has come into your life. So, you must have done something wrong. Could it possibly be that you ate of the tree?”

(Genesis 3:11) “And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?””

Just a simple “yes” or “no” probably would have worked out ok, but no, no, no; man has to then begin to do this whole sleight of hand thing. I call it like a pea and shell game. “We're going to guess where the blame belongs, and we're going to throw out some, maybe ideas. Hopefully, something's going to stick to the wall.”

(Genesis 3:12) “The man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me...””

“I mean, wasn't she supposed to be my helper? Wasn't that the reason You gave her? This doesn't seem like much help to me. Boy, has she loused up. You gave her to me, and then she gave me from the tree. I mean, she was going to be my helper. So, I'm thinking, ‘Ok, she's just trying to help me out.’ She gave me some fruit, and I ate it. So, what a great guy I am. Too bad that You're not thinking well, God.” Interesting implication is not only that the woman was at fault, but that God bears the blame as well because He formed her. The problem with, of course, all of this thinking is that it has nothing to do with the goodness of God, and it takes away from the glory of God. It is disparagement towards Him, because what you're really saying is, “You're at fault, God.” We're pretty good at blaming, I have noticed. It's almost like we work at it. I don't know if they have classes in it in college, but I'm pretty sure as I've seen a lot of rioting in the colleges that they have a handle on what it means to

blame other people for their problems, and you see it also throughout Scripture.

One of the interesting passages that I oftentimes meditate upon is that wonderful passage in Matthew 18. You're familiar with it because it starts off with Jesus helping the children and they're coming to Him and He's saying, "You don't want to cause these children to stumble." But then goes on to the passage in which it deals with if you have a brother in sin, then you need to say something, and you have a responsibility there. Then Peter goes, "Ok, yeah. People wrong us all the time, God. So, what do we do if they just keep doing it? I mean, how many times do I have to forgive somebody for doing something? Seven times? Would that be enough?" Immediately, the thought of Peter was that in some regard he's a victim in the sense of forgiveness. "I mean, I don't mind being magnanimous once or twice, but fool me once," right? So, the perception is that "I have my limits of being gracious, and I have every right to feel that way" because people are going to take advantage of you. I don't know if that's an epiphany to God when we share

that with Him or not, but we let Him know, "People are going to take advantage of You." And God goes, "I know. They do it all the time." And the magnificent thing about as we've been looking in Genesis and one of the things that was mentioned to me this past week is that while man is hiding behind the trees, Christ was being crucified on one. The very tree that we have a tendency to hide behind is the very one that He brings out in the open, and says, "You don't have to hide anymore. I paid for these sins." Nevertheless, it's very clear that we've wronged Him over and over and over again. It is strange that one of the first things in our minds would not be how wonderful the graciousness of God is in forgiving us, but one of the first things in our mind would be, "So, how many times do I have to be wronged?" Of course, Jesus gives that magnificent example of one that had been wronged of many things, and another that was wrong just a few, and the forgiveness of the one that was wronged so many things and the inability of the one with just a few things to forgive. It is the nature of man because we like to set ourselves up as victims, and in that we go and blame everybody else for our problems.

In 1 Corinthians 6, a very interesting passage, and if you look there with me, you're going to see, once again, the vindictiveness of man. I guess that's basically what it is. It's just man feeling like you have to get even, and "I'm just not going to let him do that to me." And "I always have a good reason to sin, and it's usually the other guy that that does it to me." I mean, why are you unforgiving? "Well, because this guy keeps doing this over and over and over again. That's why I'm unforgiving. I mean, I have a really good reason to be unforgiving. It's his fault." And Scripture continually reminds us that the sins that you commit are not the fault of anybody but yourself. James 1 is very clear when it states that the reason you sin is you're driven by your own lust. I would say that it virtually begins at the fact of denying the graciousness of God, because if in fact you want to follow the graciousness of God, you'll forgive, just as He does. Scripture tells us to forgive the same way that God forgives, and I don't think there's an end to that. In fact, it says if you confess your sins, He is faithful. I'm glad He doesn't actually make a list of all the things and just keep checking it, you know, "Ok, you outdid your number right here." He doesn't do that.

The passage in 1 Corinthians 6 says, “Does anybody have a case against you, or do you have a case against them? What are you going to do, take it to court?”

(1 Corinthians 6:1) “Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous and not before the saints?”

(1 Corinthians 6:2) Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? If the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts?”

In other words, why don't you bring it before the church? Why don't you talk about these things?

(1 Corinthians 6:3) “Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?”

(1 Corinthians 6:4) So if you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church?”

He's basically saying, “Why are you going to the world to settle your problems?”

(1 Corinthians 6:5) “I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren,

(1 Corinthians 6:6) but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?

(1 Corinthians 6:7) Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?”

“Oh no, I can't be defrauded.” “Well, why?” “Well, I want justice.” Yeah. You want justice until it's pointed at you. Then, when it's pointed at you, you want mercy. See, the reason why we're angry, the reason why we're upset is them. We have really good reason to be upset. I mean, if you were to ask Jonah, “Why are you so upset, Jonah?” He goes, “I have good reason to be upset.” “Are you sure?” “I have good reason unto death.” And if you were to ask Jonah, he would actually probably list all the people that had been hurt, died, and suffered because of the Assyrians. “They need to be wiped out, never to be remembered again.” God says, “Well, you don't think I

know that there are some people there that want to be saved?" We don't think in those terms. All we can think about is, "Somebody did something to me and I have every right to be upset." Quite frankly, in the context of this Genesis passage, the woman did offer him the fruit. She shouldn't have done it, but the blame isn't her, it's him. He shouldn't have taken it. You see, we have a legitimate excuse why we're upset, and we have a legitimate excuse why we're angry. I mean, if you ever read the book of Philemon, you understand that Onesimus did steal from him, but Paul basically says, "Let it go." "We can't let it go." Why can't you let it go? Why are you holding on to this anger? What is this that you're holding on to?

An interesting question that Jesus poses to Cain, just a simple phrase, "Where is your brother?" Good question, isn't it? "Where is your brother?" You see, Cain was upset because God didn't accept his sacrifice, but more specifically, that He accepted Abel's but not his. That was Abel's fault, wasn't it? Because he gave a better sacrifice. That was Abel's fault. No, the fault was with Cain.

“Where's your brother?” God is helping us examine our own hearts.

In the book of James, it makes reference to the saints that have been scattered abroad. It actually refers to the fact that it was written to those that were dispersed abroad. They were dispersed abroad because of their faith. So, because of their faith, they're suffering quite extensively. They've lost home and, in some cases, lost family members in being dispersed throughout. The thought is, “I have every right to be angry.” Yet, James will write, “You do know that the anger of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God?”

You'll read in James Chapter 5 in particular, that there were people that they were working for, and it inferred that they were actually believers, but they were cheating the people and not paying them. So, they were having them work all this time and yet withholding their pay. Scripture says, “You can't be critical.” You go, “Well, I have every right to be critical. I mean, they're wronging me.” And that's true, you know, here's a great epiphany, you're going to be wronged in life. I've heard people say,

“It was the parents that God gave me. Had God not given me those parents, I probably wouldn’t have been the kind of person that I am. I was dealt a bad hand with the things that happen in my life, and that's the reason I am the way that I am.” And God goes, “No. The reason you are the way you are is because you made a choice to do those things.” It is ironic that the one person that we would blame the most would be God. “It's Your fault.” What, it's His fault because man sinned? It's His fault because man was selfish, and man was just thinking about themselves and consumed with their own self-indulgence? That's God's fault. We blame God for literally everything, “God's withholding things. God's depriving me of things,” and that kind of bug was put in the ear of a woman, but it was in her heart already, and because of that, it's just a very easy path to take in blaming God. I think of so many things that we blame God for. It is to be noted, and I know I already mentioned it, but I wanted to point this out specifically that we don't always blame God overtly. It is sometimes just through innuendos like, “the woman You gave me.” He didn't say that was a bad thing, he was just going, “I just wanted to remind You that You gave me

this woman and I just want to remind you,” I suppose Eve was there, “you were the one that gave me the fruit.” Not caring once again how anybody's feeling about any of this, but just looking to get themselves off of the problem. Subtlety, innuendos; sometimes all you have to do is think it, you know. You didn't say it out loud. “I didn't blame God out loud.” Yeah, but you thought it; sort of like Sarah laughing, “Sarah laughed.” “I didn't laugh.” “I heard you laughing.” And God knows our hearts, and God knows that we would tend to blame Him for all of the problems that come.

It is interesting that from the book of James, where it begins to deal with people suffering all kinds of things, wrongly so; they're suffering, and they didn't do anything wrong; that James will actually mention a particular character, Elijah. He'll end with Elijah at the end of the book. He'll make this statement, and I just kind of want you to stick this one in your mind, it says this in the phrase,

(James 5:17) “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours...”

We have a tendency to read some of the patriarchs, or those that have been before us, fathers, forefathers, as so saintly that they never do anything wrong. Scripture reminds us that they struggle with the same things, and I think that's one of things you're hearing from Justin is that "I hear that you're struggling with the same things." Yeah, we all struggle with the same things. We all wrestle with the same things, even Elijah.

I have to take you to the passage in particular in 1 Kings 18 if you look there with me. This particular passage is really dealing with the time that was, I would say, difficult in Elijah's life. To explain to you who Elijah was would be that this is one zealous, righteous guy. I mean, that pretty well describes him. He doesn't care what everybody else is doing. He's going to do the right thing. He's so zealous for righteousness that with King Ahab and Jezebel, (they're very unrighteous) in charge, he would actually be glad for there to be a famine, and he would pray it so. So, there was. It's a pretty desperate thing when in Florida, you don't have rain for about two or three months; things start igniting but imagine three years. So, there it sits. God

turns to Elijah, and He goes, “Ok, I think that times up. Go tell king Ahab we're going to bring the rain. Get him ready.” Elijah says to himself, I guess, “I'm not only going to tell Ahab that it's going to rain, but I'm going to call all of the false prophets out on the carpet, and we're going to have a showdown.” Now, there's nothing really in the text that says that God says, “Call all the prophets out and have a showdown.” He just does. I'm not saying that it was a horrible thing, a wrong thing, because they're wicked prophets and they need to die. Nevertheless, I'm not really sure God gave the order for this. In spite of that, they all meet up on Mount Carmel. As they gather them together in Mount Carmel, there are 450 of Baal, 400 of Asherah, 850 prophets. The way the text reads, I guess there's a little bit of grandiosity with Elijah in which he makes a statement, “Ok, so, there are all you guys that are wicked prophets,” and his statement is in 1 Kings 18:22,

“Then Elijah said to the people, “I alone am left a prophet of the LORD...””

This will become his mantra, "I'm the only one." So, he calls them out.

If you back up in verse 19, you see,

"... 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah..."

So, there are 850 prophets and they're all false prophets, and his statement is, "Hey, here's the showdown. You, get your men together, you get sticks and whatever you want to put together; we're going to call fire from our gods and we're going to see who wins the battle; who's God really functions. Put your sacrifice on the altar, and let's see what happens." So, they do, and nothing's happening. They're maybe dancing around, maybe praying before it, and he goes, a little bit of sarcasm, "Maybe you need to pray a little louder. I don't think they hear you." So, they start not only dancing around, but maybe even cutting themselves. After the drama is all done, he goes, "Ok, you guys done?" And I can imagine they're probably just worn out. He goes, "Ok. Get some guys bring some water." I'm saying to myself, "They're on top of Mount Carmel, there's been a famine for three years. Where are they

going to get water?" But somehow, they get water, and they just start saturating these altars, his altar, that is to say that he's going to call upon God of heaven. He says, "Well, we need some more." So, he has a trench, and it fills the trench, and it fills all over the altar, and he goes, "Ok, let's see what happens." Then, he calls before God, and God sends down fire and it just obliterates it. It's interesting when he begins the whole conversation, when there are 850 false prophets and right before it begins, he turns to the people, he goes, "So, who are you guys for?" and the people go, "Well, we really don't have anything to say about that." So, they've kind of backed off, but when the fire comes down from heaven, he turns, and he goes, "Let's kill these prophets." And they go, "Ok." So, it shows how fast everybody can turn. So, the 850 prophets are slain. You can hear it within the text that basically there's kind of a reminder that "You do need to let Ahab know that it's going to rain. I mean, it was good news that I was sending to Ahab. It wasn't the slaughter of the prophets." So, then He begins to tell him that and he tells the servant, "Look for the cloud" and you know the story. Finally, he says, "Ok, tell him there's going to be a

downpour. Tell Ahab to get in his chariot and head out of here.” Because we know what flash flooding can do, and if you're in the desert, it hasn't rained for three years, and it just pours all of a sudden, you better get out of here. So, he tells him to get out of Carmel and gets in his chariot and basically he goes from Carmel to Jezreel, which is 5 miles. Ahab gets in the chariot and starts taking off. Their thought is, “Well, what's going to happen to Elijah?” Elijah runs and he outruns the chariot. So, that's 5 miles and that's not good running miles. Those are rocks and mountains and everything like that. You almost have this feeling that there's a little bit of a competition going on.

(1 Kings 18:44) “It came about at the seventh time, that he said, “Behold, a cloud as small as a man’s hand is coming up from the sea.” And he said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you.’”

(1 Kings 18:45) In a little while the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel.

(1 Kings 18:46) Then the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel.”

That's an amazing text. All's well that ends well, right? No, no, no, Jezebel's angry now. I mean, those were her prophets that he murdered. She's coming after him. She sends word to Elijah, “I'm coming after you and I'm not going to rest till you're dead.” Well, Elijah's had threats before, but this seems to be different. So, he takes off and he runs. It's probably one of the first times in his life that he runs away. The passage reads this way,

(1 Kings 19:3) “And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba...”

Now, that may not seem like a long run to you, but if you were to map it, and as the crow flies, it's 90 miles. It's Beersheba and Judah; he was up in northern Israel and Carmel. That's a long way to run. I mean, even I would be tired. So, the passage reads in this sense that he leaves his servant in that place, and he goes a little bit further out in the wilderness. By the time you get down to Beersheba, you're heading towards Egypt and that particular region.

(1 Kings 19:4) “But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, “It is enough; now, O LORD, take my life...””

You go, “What's wrong, Elijah?” Well, he actually says in the passage,

“... I am not better than my fathers.””

He thought he was better than everybody else. You go, “Not Elijah. He's one of the most righteous prophets.” Elijah was a man with a nature just like us. What's he so upset about? “I'm not any better than anybody else.” I mean, he thought he was more righteous than everybody else. That's one of the reasons why he slew all those prophets. He had every right to do it, but there's something inside of him that says, “I'm so glad I'm not like them.”

(1 Kings 19:5) “He lay down and slept under a juniper tree; and behold, there was an angel touching him, and he said to him, “Arise, eat.””

(1 Kings 19:6) Then he looked and behold, there was at his head a bread cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again.

(1 Kings 19:7) The angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, “Arise, eat, because the journey is too great for you.””

In that one simple phrase, the angel of the LORD is saying, “Elijah, you do know you have limits too.” We sin and I would say probably one of the first thoughts in Elijah's mind or heart was, “It's their fault. They're so wicked, everybody's wicked, and I have good reason to be upset.” Just like Jonah, obviously. But he then gets flustered over the fact that he would even run when somebody threatened him, “Why should I do that? That makes me just like everybody else.”

So, the passage goes on and it says, “The Angel of the LORD said, “The journey is too great for you.”

(1 Kings 19:8) “So he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights...”

Sound familiar? Yeah, it sounds familiar; not only with Christ, but if you back all the way up to Moses.

In Exodus 24 as well as Exodus 34, it actually refers to Moses not eating or drinking any water for 40 days and 40 nights. It's an amazing thought. So, he goes all the way to Horeb. Here again, if you know your geography, you're going through the desert, and from where he was in Beersheba to now, Horeb ("Horeb" is another word for desert.) So, "desert mountain" is the mountain where Moses was, and received the commandments and the Covenant with Israel was made. This is 200 miles away. So, those must have been really good cakes because it's not only lasted him 40 days and 40 nights, but 200 miles. That's amazing. In many respects, you have to ask yourself because the passage doesn't say that God told him to go to Horeb, it just says, "I know where you're going," basically, "and this journey is too much for you. You're going to have to have some help." Now, God was interceding and helping him, but don't you think it's interesting that Elijah wouldn't come to God and say, "I need some help"? I mean, he would be willing to call

down fire from heaven to show somebody up, but he's too good to ask for help for himself. So, here he goes, and it seems as if in some way he's identifying himself with Moses; 40 days, 40 nights going up to the mount Horeb. I mean, of all the places to go, why would he go there? He wants to identify with this.

So, God asked an interesting question in the text,

(1 Kings 19:9) “Then he came there to a cave and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?””

That's a good question, isn't it? “Are you trying to be Moses? Are you so disgusted with yourself that you want to make a new commitment like the Israelites did at this particular mountain?” It is actually the mountain where the burning bush was. “Why are you here? What are you wanting to accomplish?” Elijah responds, and you can feel he's just a little ticked off, and his statement is this,

(1 Kings 19:10) “He said, “I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant...”

It's interesting picture, of course, being on Mount Horeb, thinking about the covenant that was given to them.

Maybe he's looking for a do over. I don't know.

“... the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left...”

Isn't that what he said in chapter 18?

“... and they seek my life, to take it away.”

Let's put it another way, “You left me alone, God, to fight the world.” Have you ever felt like it was just you against the world? “I'm by myself here.”

(1 Kings 19:11) “So He said, “Go forth and stand on the mountain before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the LORD...”

You can't help but parallel it with Moses. One of the great things that Moses was able to see was the great, powerful wind of God parting waters, and you could almost hear God's voice in this going, "You want something fantastic to happen? You want to see something powerful? You want to see the water part? You want to see things moving?" I mean, "I want God to do something" is what he's basically saying. "Why haven't You been doing it? It's all me." There's kind of a blame to God in this because if in fact God intended him to be alone, would He not give him the power to do it? Wouldn't it be a gracious thing? Wouldn't he thank God for it? Nevertheless, he doesn't.

It sort of reminds me of the Book of Jeremiah, a great man himself too, but in Jeremiah 20, what does Jeremiah say after he has to suffer all the things that he has to suffer? He turns to God, and he goes, "You deceived me. I didn't know that it was going to be like this." Now, if you go back to the beginning, in which God called him, He did tell him it was going to be like that. He wasn't prepared for it, and the fault was his, but "it was God who was

deceiving.” See how easily we can twist things in our minds?

In this particular setting, God left poor Elijah alone. “How mean God is.” Think about it. “What a cruel God we serve.”

So, you have this wind, these rocks, and then,

(1 Kings 19:11) “... the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake...”

which was probably reminiscent of Korah’s rebellion, when the Earth opened up and swallowed him alive. I can't help but think that maybe Elijah was thinking, “Why don't we just swallow all the bad guys alive?” I mean, he's probably worn out killing 850 prophets, “So, I could use a little help here.” So, God, in a very interesting way, goes, “What do you want? The wind? You want an earthquake? How about fire from heaven?” I know two disciples that would have liked that, fire called down from heaven.

“... but the LORD was not in the earthquake.”

(1 Kings 19:12) After the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing.”

All those things, whether it be the great, powerful wind or whether it be the earthquake or the fire did not yield to conversation, but a gentle wind would. So, through the gentle wind, Elijah puts on his mantle, walks out of the cave. Here again, I can just hear God going, “You want to talk now?” And Elijah goes, “Ok, I'll talk now.” Now, once again, what we're going to hear is what Elijah's been thinking all along and a repetition of that.

If you look in the passage, it says this,

(1 Kings 19:13) “When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?””

(1 Kings 19:14) Then he said, “I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life...””

“I'm the only one left and they're going to kill me. That's it. So, what are You going to do about it? I mean, I'm the only one doing anything around here. If you want something done, you've got to do it yourself. I just don't know why God is not responding.” He's blaming God for where he is. God turns to him and He goes, “Ok, I want you to anoint some people.” And He has him anoint kings that are going to actually destroy the enemy. Then He says, “And by the way, I'll give you a sidekick. His name will be Elisha. The name sounds familiar so you won't forget it, and I want you to go and get him.” So, he does, he goes. Of course, God is proving that “You're not alone.” In fact, one of the statements that He makes is there's 7,000 others that haven't bended their knee. “I preserve them. You just don't know about them.”

Now, there's a number of questions that come out of this and I'm not going to go into all the details of it, but my first question would just simply be, “Why doesn't he know about it?” Obviously, as we will see in this passage, when he comes to Elisha, Elisha's ready, willing and able to follow him. He's just as zealous as he is, and you'll see

that throughout his life. Nevertheless, he doesn't know about him. The question is, why doesn't he know about him? But Elijah's been pretty introspective. He's a righteous guy. I'm not knocking that. He loves God, not knocking that, but sometimes in the process of us being so righteous and so wonderful, we take on things that we should have never taken on. We run distances that we never should have gone. We go places that we never should have gone. We do things and take on responsibilities that were never ours to take on, and we find ourselves overwhelmed. Then, we turn to God and go, "Why have You overworked me? Why have You done this?" I mean, it's the nature of man to blame God for everything that happens to him.

So, in the passage, when he goes to see Elisha, Elisha is plowing with oxen and wow, I mean, talk about a big tractor; 12 pairs of oxen. That's a big plow. This guy's got to be pretty strong to be able to steer that thing. 12 pairs equals 24. So, there he is, and he's doing this. Let me just kind of put this in the setting, what have we been hearing Elijah say all along? "I'm alone. I'm alone." When God

goes, “Ok, here's somebody that’s going to be right alongside with you,” you would think that when you saw someone and you were all alone, you would just embrace them, wouldn't you? Not Elijah. He's going to walk by him, and he's going to take off his coat; hairy thing that it is. Scripture tells us that's true. You’ll read in Zechariah that it’s one of the things that prophets would all start wearing after Elijah, these hairy robes, and was the very kind of robe that John the Baptist had. So, here you have this old hairy robe, and he takes it off and he just throws it on him. Now, throwing his mantle is basically him saying, “You're ordained for this particular work.”

(1 Kings 19:19) “So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, while he was plowing with twelve pairs of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth. And Elijah passed over to him and threw his mantle on him.

(1 Kings 19:20) He left the oxen and ran after Elijah...”

This is a guy that wants to be with him. He says, “You know, I’ve got to kiss my parents, but I'm with you.” So,

he goes, "Can I just say goodbye to my parents?" He goes, "Go ahead." So, Elijah's response to him when he says, "I'll be right with you," and Elisha's not putting it off. It's not like the Luke passage where it says, "Let me bury my father." That's actually saying, "Let me wait till my dad dies and I can get an inheritance so then I can go with you." But this is a text where he goes, "I just want to say goodbye."

The way that Elijah responds is,

(1 Kings 19:20) "... "Go back again, for what have I done to you?""

Another way of putting it, probably modern vernacular, would be, "Go ahead. I'm not stopping you." Does this sound like a guy that really wants fellowship? There is nothing about Elijah that gives you the warm and fuzzies. The passage is revealing to us, and the reason why it's stuck in the Book of James is it's letting us know there are times that we're going to be angry. It's going to be righteous indignation that we're angry about, and quite frankly, the person that gave us the fruit, they did do wrong. They did wrong things, but the wrong is with us;

the responsibility is with us. The reason why we sinned was not because of what they did but was because of how we responded to what they did. Scripture is reminding us that we can get into our highfalutin, self-righteous perspective and think that, "I'm the good guy here." And in so doing, we take on not only positions, but all kinds of responsibilities that we never should have done, and we find ourselves overwhelmed by these things, and then we turn, and we blame God, and we go, "You gave me this ministry. You gave me these people to minister and look at the mess that I'm in. Look at the problems that I have." And God goes to Elijah, if I could put it this way, "You want to know what the problem is, Elijah? It's you. You want to know why you're alone? Look at your life. You like living alone. You don't even know that there are 7,000 others that haven't bended their knee." When you come to somebody that really wants to be with you, so what? People come before God, and they go, "It's His fault I'm alone. It's His fault that I have all these problems. It's His fault that I don't want to fellowship in the church." And I would say, "Really? His fault? Look at your life. There's a reason why you are where you are." So, Scripture begins

to reveal to us these wonderful things and how our tendency is to blame everybody, including God, rather than ourselves. Truly, the sin is with us, right?

Closing Prayer:

Father, we come before You today and we ask that You would work within our hearts. Lord, we know that there are going to be people that do us wrong, but we don't have to hold grudges; we don't have to become bitter; we don't have to be unforgiving. We are not victims to what they do. In fact, You paid for our sins. You didn't even do anything. I mean, I'm guilty, but not You. Why would You do such a thing for me? Why would You call me to take up my cross and follow You? With your heads bowed and your eyes closed, blame started in the garden; it can end here.