

# Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

*You Must be Born Again!*

*“The habit of preachers today is to address their people as though they were all Christians and just need instruction...men and women are being treated as saved who never knew they were lost.” [Lloyd-Jones]*

*“In my lifetime I did not care to hear that word that cut me most, and showed me my lost estate aright. I was vexed to hear my sins mentioned, and laid to my charge. I loved him best, who deceived me most; who said, Peace, peace, when there was no such thing.” (Jer. 5:30,31).  
[Bunyan, John. A FEW SIGHS FROM HELL]*

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*Elijah and the Remnant –  
Encouragement in Dark Times*

*June 23, 2024*

**Sermon Text:** Romans 11:2-5

**Scripture Reading:** 1 Kings 18

Rom 11:2-5 God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to

God against Israel? (3) “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” (4) But what is God's reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” (5) **So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.**

As we have just seen in our reading of 1 Kings 18, the days in which

Elijah lived were very dark and evil times. A wicked king had defied God's command and married an even more wicked woman from among the pagan Sidonians – Jezebel. A name so associated with evil that no parent would name their daughter with that label.

1Ki 16:29-34 In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri began to reign over Israel, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. (30) And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. (31) And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he took for his wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal and worshiped him. (32) He erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria. (33) And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

Jezebel set out to completely eliminate all traces of God in Israel, killing any she could find who refused to bow to Baal. Dark times.

We find ourselves living in dark times as well. Not as terrible as the days of Elijah, but nevertheless we see similarities here in our own nation and in some nations today we do see times as evil as those of Jezebel.

In such times as these, we as God's people can begin to despair. There is a spiritual lethargy in our land – that is plain to all with eyes to see. And there is even open hostility to Christ and His Church. Our nation used to be a place where going to church on Sunday was the common thing. Where the Lord's Prayer was recited in the schools each morning. Now there is a huge hateful outcry when Louisiana makes it a requirement to post the Ten Commandments in every public school. "How dare you tell the children, "Thou shalt not kill."! So we live in dark times which have at least many parallels to the days of Elijah. You could well say

that we have Ahab and Jezebel ruling here today!

Now, in such times, it is very easy for us as Christ's people to slip into depression, discouragement, and despair. The church seems to be dwindling. There are very few people in our church. Our unsaved neighbors have little or no interest at all in hearing the gospel. The media is so often vile and wicked. We can start to wonder if we are having any effect at all and if Christ's church, and this church as part of it, will continue.

But none of this is new. Our experience and trials are not unique. In fact, they are characteristic and have always been characteristic of Christ's true Church.

Elijah was in a slump. He needed to be reminded of these things, and God gives him that reminder. It is the doctrine of *the remnant*:

1Ki 19:1-18 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the

sword. (2) Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow."

(3) Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.

(4) But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers."

(5) And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." (6) And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. (7) And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." (8) And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty

days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

(9) There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (10) He said, “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, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.”

(11) 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 was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. (12) And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. (13) 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 said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

(14) He said, “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, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.”

(15) 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. (16) And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. (17) And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. (18) Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

This is the very Scripture which the Apostle Paul quoted and applied in his letter to the Romans:

Rom 11:2-5 God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he appeals to God against Israel? (3) “Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” (4) But what is God's reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” (5) **So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.**

The gates of hell shall not prevail against Christ's church. He will build it. Elijah's thinking was entirely wrong and he had to be corrected. Like us, he tended to look for the great, strong wind, the earthquake, or the fire. Visible and widespread power. Mega churches that conquer all opposition, filled with thousands of people. But that is not faith. Faith sets its eyes upon

that which is hidden, not upon that which is seen. The Lord most typically is in the quiet breeze, just as Elijah found out. It was in response to this gentle wind that Elijah met the Lord –

...the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak...

It is a serious yet common error which we commit when we despair in response to a lack of a great, strong wind, or an earthquake, or blazing fire. Or when we, as Elijah did, look at our own works and are discouraged because there appear to be no results. Most people who profess to be Christians and so many local churches are all the time chasing the hurricane, the earthquake, or the fire. They just cannot grasp that God works most typically in the whisper of a breeze.

I recently read a sermon by Martyn Lloyd-Jones on this very subject. The title is “Of the Church” and the text he was speaking on was this:

1Jn 2:18-19 Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. (19) They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

NOTE: I highly recommend MLJ's sermons on First John entitled *Life in Christ*, now in one volume. I don't see these sermons on the MLJ Trust website, but the book is available on Amazon.

I wish I could share the entire sermon with you, but I will read some points from it for you which I am sure will be a huge antidote for what we might call *The Elijah Syndrome*. "I alone am left!" And I hope that hearing these truths from someone other than just myself will serve as a real help and encouragement to all of us [This is taken from the Crossway Books Publication of Life in Christ by Martyn Lloyd-Jones, 1993] -

"We are all aware of the fact that we are living in a very difficult and critical period; there has been a great falling away in the Christian Church. Compare churches and attendances at churches today with what it was earlier this century. Then it was the thing to do and the custom to go to God's house on Sunday; the church was popular, and the Church counted. But now it is almost an exception to be a member of a Christian church, and because of that, certain things are tending to happen. Because of this dwindling in the Christian Church, because also of the attacks that are being made on the Church from the outside...because of this present grave situation, certain things tend to happen to many people who are in the Church.

It seems to me, further that it is essential that we should face together what John has to say, because at this point his words are as relevant to us now as they were in the first century when he wrote them. There are very many people whose faith is being shaken

because of the present position. There is a kind of encouragement, after all, in proving that we are only natural and human, and there are many people who look at the dwindling Church and the dwindling attendance and are liable and tempted to ask, ‘I wonder if this is right after all? Are we, who are but a handful of people, the only ones who are right, and are the masses, the great majority of people, wrong?’ The time of falling away (apostasy) is always a time when our faith is under attack. We all tend to conform to ‘the thing to do.’ We follow the majority, and there are many who are filled with a sense of foreboding and who find that their faith is seriously shaken. In other words, there is a good deal of despondency and pessimism.”

Can we all identify with this? There was a time when this church was quite filled with people. Now we are a handful. What has happened? What have we done wrong? What is it that we need to do about it? These are the questions and doubts that Lloyd Jones also saw and his people experienced.

And they are the questions and doubts *that Elijah experienced*. “I alone am left!”

“Indeed, if I were asked to name the peculiar temptation that confronts us as Christians in these days, I would say it is the tendency to despair, the tendency to become profoundly pessimistic. As we look at the situation, we are tempted to say, ‘What of the future. How can the Church possibly go on?’ Now, THAT is the kind of condition with which John deals, because of course such despondency leads to *confusion*. A time of difficulty not only leads to despair – it is also a time in which there is *a tendency to panic*. People become frantic and desperate and say, ‘*We must do something to save the Christian Church.*’ They look at the numbers; they emphasize statistics; they say, ‘We must be up and doing – we must organize something to stop the rot.’ And so they rush into a busy activity.

So it behooves us to consider the message that John has for people in that precise situation – what has he

to say?

The first thing John tells us is *that we must not be surprised or alarmed at such a situation*. ‘Little children,’ he says, ‘it is the last time. And as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists...If we are given to panic or a sense of despair, it is because we have not read our Bibles truly, for the *Bible is full of warnings of the very kind of thing which we are experiencing.... There is nothing at all which is so false and so far removed from the New Testament picture of the Church as the idea that the Church of God, from the beginning, should go on to develop and increase, so that every century should see the Church stronger than she was before, and that this should go on until you arrive at a state when the whole world has become Christian*. There is no passage anywhere in the Bible to support such a view.

Indeed, I have tried to show that it is the exact opposite. Read the epistles in the New Testament, go back even before that to the book

of the Acts of the Apostles, and you will find that the first preachers of the gospel warned the first believers. They said, ‘*You are going into a fight, a conflict. There is a mighty, subtle adversary opposed to us, and he will fight to ruin and destroy the Church.*’ All the prophecies – about the man of sin, the antichrist, and o on – are here before us. Indeed, you remember our blessed Lord Himself asked this question: ‘When the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?’ No, this idea that the Church was going to be an institution which would increase and ever go onwards and upwards is not based upon Scripture but upon a false philosophy, a false teaching.

We must not be surprised, therefore; we must not be amazed or shaken. There is a sense, though it may sound paradoxical, in which the *weakness of the Church today should confirm our faith and be an assurance to us of the truth of the Word of God*. So far from being cast down, we should, in a sense, be able to say as we confront the



present situation, ‘The very wrath of man shall praise Thee, and is praising Thee.’”

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

Let me explain this because, surely, it is a point that needs to be emphasized at the present time. John, I say, *is not interested in numbers, nor is he interested in organization*. Is this not one of the subtle temptations that comes to us today? So much of our talk and interest centers upon numbers and organizations (ie, activities).... The great thing that is emphasized in the New Testament is *the purity of the Church and not her size*. I wonder if we are prepared to face the fact that *the Church of God in this age and generation may in a sense have to go back to the catacombs*. That is the position of many countries today. The Church is ‘in the house of so and so,’ as it

was in the New Testament, and we must realize that the Church is quite as much the Church if she is a handful of people as if she is a great crowd; the thing that matters in the Church is not numbers, not activity, but the purity of the doctrine.

We see our own dwindling numbers and congregations, and the statistics are telling their tale from year to year. So what are we to do? They say, ‘There is only one thing to do; we must all get together. This is no time for arguing about what people may believe; if they believe in God and use the name Christian, they are one with us. So let’s all get together and form a union to face the common enemy.’ But we must say, better a handful of people who believe that Jesus is the Christ than a crowd who are uncertain as to whether He is or not.

Is there any doctrine in the bible from beginning to end like *the doctrine of the remnant*? Is there anything that stands out so much as that God *has done everything*

*through one man who stood in the breach alone?* Go through the Scriptures and see how God often deliberately reduced the numbers. Read the Story of Gideon and see how he gets rid of a great crowd until he has only a handful left. It is the power of the Spirit that matters. We have a power behind us and in us which is mightier than the enemy and which must prevail, but He only honors those who honor Him.

God, according to John, had in a sense thrust these people out of the Church in order that a distinction might be made, in order that He might show the false and reveal the true. Now, I interpret that in this way: A time like this is one of *great value to the Christian Church; it is a time that tests us. So we take courage.* A time like this tests people, and those who hold on to these things at such times have got something. The majority are not interested, and how easy it is to go with them. We are being tested. We are being sifted and examined. We see the crowd going the other way, and still we stand.

Mat 3:12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

A time like this gets rid of that which is wrong and false and thereby cleanses the Church. The loose adherents leave, the people with the doubtful doctrine go, and thereby the dead branches are being removed and the Church is being cleansed and purged and purified.

When the false has been taken away, the true remains; those who belong to the Church and are of the Church remain steadfast and continue –

2Ti 2:19 But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity.”

“Lord, they have killed your

prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life.” (4) But what is God's reply to him? “I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” (5) **So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.**