

Hope Church South Haven July 26th 2026

Standing Alone #4

1st Kings 18:45-19:16

One of the biggest misconceptions about FOLLOWING JESUS is that once you become a Christian, **life gets easier**. Sometimes this the picture we unintentionally paint.

- Follow Jesus and EVERYTHING falls into place.
- Your PRAYERS **get answered**.
- Your PROBLEMS disappear.
- LIFE **just works**.

But that's not the story the Bible tells. Following Jesus is beautiful. It's worth it. **But it's not easy**.

- There are mountaintop moments and there are valleys.
- Seasons of **joy** and seasons of **struggle**.
- Breakthroughs and setbacks.
- Days when your *faith feels strong* and days when you're simply *trying to take the next step*.

And in those difficult seasons, WE OFTEN START BELIEVING LIES.

- If I had enough faith, I **wouldn't feel this tired**.
- If I really **trusted God**, I wouldn't struggle with anxiety.
- If I were spiritually mature, I **wouldn't ever feel like giving up**.

Maybe you've believed one of those. I know I have.

I've shared before how difficult those first five years at Oosterlig in South Africa were.

Ministry was hard. Challenges seemed to come from every direction.

In 2018, everything changed. It felt like God opened the floodgates.

People were coming to faith. Marriages were being restored. The church was growing. We had an incredible staff team and some of the deepest friendships I've ever known. It wasn't just that attendance was increasing. **God was changing lives.** I had the privilege of watching it happen.

I loved every minute of it.

I was leading the missions and family ministry at church. And I gave it everything I had.

Early mornings. Late nights. Weekends. If something needed doing, I wanted to be there.

I genuinely believed God was doing something special. But somewhere along the way, I

FORGOT THAT EVEN GOOD THINGS HAVE LIMITS.

The ministry was flourishing. I wasn't. **Slowly, almost without realizing it, I burned out.**

What had once brought me joy became exhausting. My marriage felt the strain. Being a dad became harder than it should have been. *I was physically present, but emotionally I was running on empty.*

And if I'm honest, there were moments when I JUST WANTED TO RUN. Not because I stopped loving Jesus. Not because I stopped loving His church. I was simply exhausted. **So exhausted that quitting sounded easier than carrying on.**

That's one of the reasons I love today's passage so much. **That's exactly where we find Elijah.** Think about everything he has experienced.

- God provided flour and oil that never ran out.
- God raised the widow's son back to life.
- Standing up against the king and the queen and all the prophets.
- God sent fire from heaven on Mount Carmel.

It should have been the greatest day of Elijah's ministry. An entire nation fell on its face and cried out: **The LORD, He is God! The LORD, He is God!** If anyone looked like they had it all together, it was Elijah.

Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain started falling and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. The power of the Lord came on Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel. //

// Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.”

1st Kings 18:45-19:2 NIV

- The rain finally comes. After three and a half years, the drought is over – **MIRACLE #4**.
- **God has kept every promise He made.**
- The writer tells us that *the hand of the LORD was upon Elijah*. The HEBREW PHRASE is **yad Yahweh**. Throughout the Old Testament, it describes God’s empowering presence. God Himself gives Elijah the strength to do what he could never do on his own.
- **Elijah outruns Ahab’s chariot for nearly twenty miles all the way to Jezreel.**
It’s another incredible miracle – **MIRACLE #5**.

- And then suddenly everything in the story changes.
- *Ahab goes home and tells Jezebel everything that happened.*
 - ⇒ He tells her about the fire from heaven.
 - ⇒ He tells her about the prophets of Baal.
 - ⇒ He doesn’t tell her that his heart has changed. Because it didn’t.

- Jezebel hears the story and sends Elijah a single message: **By this time tomorrow, you'll be dead.**
- Just like that, Elijah's celebration is over.

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. //

// "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

1st Kings 19:3-5a NIV

- Less than twenty-four hours after the victory on Mount Carmel, **Elijah is running for his life.**
- Nothing has changed about God. *But everything has changed inside Elijah.*
- He's EXHAUSTED. He's AFRAID.
- And exhaustion has a way of changing how we see our circumstances and the world.

⇒ Fear grows louder.

⇒ Hope grows quieter.

⇒ Problems that once seemed manageable suddenly feel impossible.

- Elijah leaves his servant behind. He walks another day into the wilderness and **collapses beneath a lonely broom tree**.

- There he prays one of the most honest prayers in all of Scripture:

It is enough, LORD. Take my life.

- This isn't a REBELLIOUS PROPHET refusing to trust God.
- It's a FAITHFUL SERVANT who has **reached the end of himself**.
- Elijah shows many of the signs we associate with burnout.
 - ⇒ He pulls away from people.
 - ⇒ He loses hope.
 - ⇒ He believes his usefulness is over.
- Deep weariness narrows our vision until we can no longer imagine what God might do next.

Maybe you've never prayed: Lord, take my life. But perhaps you've whispered something like: I can't do this anymore. I have nothing left. I'm done.

If you've ever been there, **1st Kings 19 reminds you that you're not alone**.

- And here's the beautiful part of the story. God hears Elijah's prayer. But He doesn't answer it the way Elijah expects. **God says no**.

All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, // “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.” So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.

1st Kings 19:5b-9a NIV

- God doesn’t answer Elijah with **a sermon or a reprimand or a 5-step-gameplan-to-a-better-you**. He answers with SLEEP and FOOD and WATER and HIS PRESENCE.
- *Twice* the angel wakes him. *Twice* **Elijah eats**. *Twice* God cares for him before God says anything else.
- Then the angel says: *The journey is too much for you.*
- That isn’t criticism. **It’s compassion.**
- God isn’t saying: *You should be stronger. You can do better.* God is saying: *I know. This is more than you can carry alone. You need help.*
- Strengthened by God’s provision, Elijah travels forty days to Mount Horeb.

- Mount Horeb is also known as MOUNT SINAI. The very place **where God revealed Himself to Moses** and *made His covenant with Israel*.
- God isn't simply taking Elijah to a mountain. He's bringing him back to the place where he will remember who God is.
- Sometimes God's greatest gift **isn't changing our circumstances.**
- Sometimes it's **reminding us that He hasn't changed.**

And the word of the Lord came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. //

// I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by."

1st Kings 19:9b-11a NIV

- When Elijah reaches the cave, God asks him a question. **Not because God needs an answer.** God already knows. *The question is for Elijah's benefit.*
- God is INVITING Elijah **to be honest**. To give words to his *fear* and his *disappointment* and his *loneliness*. To DISCOVER what he is really **thinking** and **feeling**.

- Sometimes HEALING BEGINS when we stop pretending everything is fine.
- Elijah doesn't hold anything back. **I gave you my everything. And now I am alone.**

My life is in danger! His EMOTIONS are **telling him something**, but they aren't **telling him everything**.

⇒ YES: Elijah had been faithful. He did stand alone. He did risk everything for God.

⇒ NO: He isn't alone. And he isn't finished.

- Because of his EXHAUSTION all he can see is failure and fear and loneliness.
- But our **feelings aren't always trustworthy**.
- That's why God doesn't leave Elijah where he is. **He begins to restore him**.

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. //

// After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

1st Kings 19:11b-13a NIV

- Elijah has returned to Sinai. At Sinai **God revealed Himself to Moses** in *wind* and *fire* and a *trembling mountain*.
- Maybe Elijah EXPECTED God to appear the same way again.
- Instead, God comes in what the HEBREW calls *qol demamah daqqah* – The sound of gentle stillness.
- Elijah DISCOVERS that **God's presence isn't limited to the spectacular**. To miracles.
- Sometimes God shakes mountains.
- Sometimes God quietly reshape our hearts.

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." //

// The Lord said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet.

1st Kings 19:13b-16 NIV

- Instead of giving Elijah more time to sit in the cave, He gives him a new assignment:
Go back the way you came.

- **GO and anoint Hazael and Jehu and Elisha.**
- In other words: *Elijah, I'm not finished with you.*
- What's remarkable is that Elijah doesn't complete everything God tells him to do.
Much of that work will be done by Elisha.
- And that's the point. **Elijah had begun to believe that everything depended on him.** And God is gently reminding him: *It never did.*
 - ⇒ The MISSION has always belonged to God.
 - ⇒ The PEOPLE have always belonged to God.
 - ⇒ The KINGDOM has always belonged to God.
- We aren't called to carry God's kingdom **on our shoulders.**
- I am **invited to join God** in what He's already doing. You are am **invited to join God** in what He's already doing.
- That's both DEEPLY HUMBLING and INCREDIBLY FREEING.

God never condemns Elijah for being exhausted. He restores him. **Then He sends him.**

Grace doesn't help us just to recover.

Grace puts us back on our feet so we can take the next faithful step.

From God's perspective:

GOD MEETS US WHERE WE ARE.

- In your brokenness. In your unanswered prayers. In your shattered dreams. In your divorce.
In your cancer diagnosis. God meets you there.

- Elijah is exhausted. **Emotionally spent.** Spiritually overwhelmed.
- If there was ever a moment for God to *rebuke His servant* this was it. **But He doesn't.**
- **Sinclair Ferguson** writes:

Grace is not simply God's willingness to forgive. It is God's determination to restore.

- That's exactly what we see here. Before God corrects Elijah's PERSPECTIVE, **He cares for Elijah's person.**
- Before God addresses Elijah SPIRITUALLY, **He cares for him physically** and **emotionally** and **relationally.**
- We often imagine God standing over us in disappointment. But **1ST KINGS 19** shows God moving toward tired broken people with COMPASSION.

- Elijah REMINDS us that *spiritual victories do not make us immune to spiritual struggles*. Some of our hardest spiritual battles come *after seasons of great faithfulness*.
- But **1ST KINGS 19** REVEALS God's pattern. It's unmistakable:
 - ⇒ He is present before He **corrects us**.
 - ⇒ He provides before He **instructs us**.
 - ⇒ We can rest before **He recommissions us**.
- **1ST KINGS 19** REMINDS us that God wants to restore the whole person because He **created my whole being**.
- Then God begins the conversation.
- Throughout the Bible, God asks questions not because He lacks information, but because He wants us **to uncover what's happening in our own hearts**.
- To UNDERSTAND where I am and what I feel and what I believe.
 - ⇒ In Genesis 3 God asks Adam: Where are you?
 - ⇒ God knew where Adam and Eve were hiding.
 - ⇒ They had to own their sin and that they were hiding.
- That is why God asks Elijah: What are you doing here?

- Before God corrects Elijah, **He listens to Elijah's pain**. Beautiful promise:
 ⇒ God is never intimidated by HONEST PRAYERS – **say your prayers**.
 ⇒ You don't have to clean up your emotions before coming to Him – **feel your emotions**.
 ⇒ GRACE gives us permission to stop pretending – **be your unrefined self**.
- Finally, **God reveals Himself**. Not in the earthquake. Not in the fire. *But in gentle stillness*. God isn't absent because He seems quiet. **Sometimes His whisper changes us more deeply** than the earthquake ever could.
- But if we're always rushing and always distracted and always filling every moment with noise, we'll struggle to hear His voice.
- The invitation in **1ST KINGS 19** isn't to chase dramatic experiences. **It's to stay close enough to recognize His voice**.

From Elijah's perspective:

BUT HE LOVES US TOO MUCH TO LEAVE US THERE.

- God doesn't want you to stay stuck in your brokenness and in your unanswered prayers. To stay stuck in your shattered dreams or in your divorce or in your cancer diagnosis.

- God doesn't give Elijah what he asked for. After the compassion and the sleep and the conversation and the whisper God says one word: **Go**.
- ANOINT Hazael. ANOINT Jehu. ANOINT Elisha. **Raise up the next generation of leaders.**
- God restores Elijah. *But He doesn't allow Elijah to abandon the mission.*
- One of the lies we believe is this: *Once I feel better. Once I have everything under control I'll obey.* The Bible tells a different story.
 - ⇒ ABRAHAM obeyed before he understood.
 - ⇒ PETER stepped out **before the water held him**.
 - ⇒ JESUS endured the cross before the resurrection.
- Faith DOESN'T WAIT until *everything makes sense*. **It trusts the One who is leading.** No matter what.
- **1ST KINGS 19** challenges us to finish strong. Paul could say at the end of his life:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

2 Timothy 4:7 NIV

- Finishing strong **doesn't** mean you never struggle. It **doesn't** mean you never doubt. It **doesn't** mean you never become exhausted.
- It means that **after God meets you in your weakness**, YOU GET UP and take the next step.
- That's exactly what Elijah does. And that's exactly what Jesus invites us to do.
- **Elijah believed everything depended on him.**
- Maybe that's exactly where you are today. You've been carrying a burden God never asked you to carry. Somewhere along the way, *you began believing everything depends on you.*
 - ⇒ If I stop **my family** falls apart.
 - ⇒ If I stop **my ministry** falls apart.
 - ⇒ If I stop **my future** falls apart.
- But God gently reminded Elijah: *I've already appointed the next king. I've already chosen the next prophet.*
- **1ST KINGS 19** REMINDS us that God's kingdom has **never depended** on one exhausted person.
- We simply have the **privilege of joining Him in what He's already doing.**

- **1ST KINGS 19** REMINDS us that the *same God* who cared for Elijah *is caring for you*.
 ⇒ He is still on His throne.
 ⇒ He still has His people.
 ⇒ He still has His plan.
- God didn't leave Elijah in the cave.
- **Grace always has a direction.** It restores us so we can take the next faithful step. Experiencing God's relentless grace always bring us into action!

Maybe today you feel like Elijah beneath that broom tree. You love Jesus. But you're tired.

Discouraged. Running on empty. Hear the heart of our Father today:

God isn't ashamed of your weakness. He meets you there and He restores you there. But because He loves you, **He refuses to leave you there.** Because the God who restores weary people still delights in using them.

The Jesus who says: Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest...

Is the same Jesus who says: **Go.**