

“Our Leadership (3): He Leadeth Me!”

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[1 King 19:1-12, ESV]

1 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.

[Introduction]

Hallelujah!

To mark the beginning of 2025, we have been looking at "**Elijah**," known as the "**prophet better than a king**," and reflecting on how "our leadership" should flow properly. If we briefly summarize last Sunday's content.

* **Our Leadership (2)**

1. **Leadership that identifies the core of the problem!**

: With the "**responsibility of a leader**," like a mother's leadership, reflecting on oneself first, **recognizing that the core of all problems lies solely with the Lord**. It is a leadership that '**walks closer to God**' personally and leads those entrusted to us toward Him.

2. **Leadership that rebuilds the Lord's broken altar together!**

: A leadership that **restores the beautiful fellowship** among believers **rebuilds worship** where God Himself restores and heals us, and **recovers the identity** of being God's children, Israel.

So far, we have examined Elijah's remarkable leadership. Although he is called a "prophet far better than a king," he, like all of us, is nothing more than a weak human being. Inevitably, there were times when Elijah and we fell, stumbled, and faced despair.

As we've seen before, today's passage from 1 Kings 19 is the scene where the leader Elijah, fleeing from Ahab's wife Jezebel, sits under a broom tree and cries out in deep lamentation, "Lord, please take my life!" So, while the degree may vary, even the amazing leader Elijah, appointed by God, experienced moments of despair and lamentation.

And so, as a leader, parent, and household head, I, too, can face such moments of despair and crying out.

However! Is there anything for us to fear? Is there? Absolutely nothing! Why?

Because the One who appointed me as a leader, as a parent, as the head of my household, is none other than our God! Because there is no mistake or regret in His calling! Because He governs everything and leads us in the best way possible!

Just as Elijah did, we, too, can faithfully fulfill the mission entrusted to us as leaders solely because the Lord is the one who governs us! Hallelujah!

While meditating on today's message, the hymn we sang earlier, "**He leadeth me**," kept echoing in my heart.

That's why I titled today's message, "**He leadeth me!**" The chorus of that hymn, originally in English, goes like this:

*** Our Leadership (3): He Leadeth Me!**

**He leadeth me, He leadeth me, For by His hand, He leadeth me.
His faithful follower I would be, For by His hand, He leadeth me.**

"Leadeth" is the archaic form of "lead," and in Korean, it has been beautifully translated as "거느리시네" (He leads us). The dictionary definition is **"to take care of and lead those under one's care, such as young ones, family, or subordinates."**

The hymn expresses this so well: **"He leadeth me, He leadeth me; By His own hand he leadeth me~"**

Because it is our leadership, where the Lord Himself appoints us as leaders, cares for us, embraces us in His arms, and holds us tightly with His hands!

Even though moments of despair may come, and I, too, may lament to the Lord, I am confident that God will care for our mission as leaders and will fully accomplish it through His will.

So today, as we consider how our God cared for and led Elijah, let us also fix our eyes on Him. May we all, as those called "royal priests" in this very place, live out our God-given mission as the Lord leads us.

Today, we will look at two key points together.

[Main]

1. The Leadership That the Lord Touches

First, the apparent truth is this: **"It is the leadership that the Lord touches!"**

Looking at the beginning of today's passage, we see weak Elijah failing to see correctly. Instead of focusing on the Lord, he is overwhelmed by his circumstances, becomes fearful, and runs away. Shall we read verses 1 to 3 together?

*** Our Leadership: He Leadeth Me!**

1 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 (Or Elijah saw), and he arose and ran for his life...**

Elijah had fled once before, three years earlier, but at that time, it was because "God told him to hide!" However, today, it says, **"he saw"** and ran away on his own to save his life. The Hebrew word for "he saw" is closely related to the word "he was afraid" at the end, which is why many English translations render this part as **"he was afraid."**

In any case, Elijah is now afraid as he looks at the situation where Jezebel has threatened to kill him.

But!

If we take a closer look at the difficult situation Elijah is observing, Jezebel's actions seem somewhat inconsistent. She sent a messenger to deliver the warning: "By this time tomorrow, I will kill you." But if we think about it carefully, if Jezebel truly intended to kill Elijah, there would have been no need to send a messenger first. She could have simply sent an assassin immediately to kill him on the spot. No one who genuinely plans to kill someone goes out of their way to kindly give a warning in advance, saying, "I'm going to kill you." It doesn't add up.

However, Jezebel didn't actually do that. In reality, **she was only threatening Elijah with words**. Why is that? It's because Jezebel had just heard some incredible news moments earlier.

As it says in verse 1, Jezebel had heard a detailed account from King Ahab about "**all that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets of Baal and Asherah with the sword**." Because of this, Jezebel couldn't easily lay a hand on Elijah!

She had heard how, when Elijah prayed, fire came down from heaven and consumed not only the burnt offering but also the wood, stones, and even the soil. She also knew how Elijah and the Israelites captured and destroyed the prophets of Baal and Asherah as they fled. Furthermore, she had witnessed how, through Elijah, God sent a great rain after three long years of drought.

After hearing all this, Jezebel could only threaten Elijah with words; she dared not touch him. The emotion Jezebel felt at this moment wasn't so much anger as it was closer to fear. Jezebel, in reality, was terrified. As the saying goes, "Dogs that bark loudly often don't bite," so Jezebel resorted to bluffing. Ultimately, she was not just afraid of Elijah but, more profoundly, afraid of the God who stood behind him.

And yet! Despite this, Elijah, the prophet of God, looked only at the immediate circumstances, became afraid of Jezebel's words, and fled in haste.

The reality is this: despite the undeniable fact that there had been countless amazing works of grace that God had accomplished through Elijah, and despite **the clear truth that "He leadeth me!"** God had done truly incredible and awe-inspiring things through him—

Even though the rest of the world knew this and was actually more fearful because of it, Elijah himself, in that moment, **looked only at his immediate circumstances and situation**. And swayed by one word from Jezebel, he allowed himself to spiral into despair and fled, falling into a pit of his own making.

As leaders, parents, or heads of our households, the situations where we fall into the pit of despair are often very similar to Elijah's. Instead of focusing on the reality of God's work, we tend to fix our eyes on our immediate, overwhelming circumstances.

When this happens, even a seemingly insignificant "word" can sway us back and forth. That word starts to appear as an enormous problem in our eyes, and no one else is pushing us into despair—we end up walking into the pit ourselves.

So, instead of focusing on these illusions and becoming leaders who constantly run away, let's remind ourselves of what is truly real.

What is **the undeniable reality** within us? **"The Lord cares for me always and personally leads me!" Hallelujah!**

Now, as the Lord leads us, let's take a closer look at how He personally comforts and cares for us. Shall we read verses 5 through 8 together?

* **The Leadership That the Lord Touches**

5 And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, **an angel touched (Naga) 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 (Naga)** 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**.

Here, the word "touched" is originally derived from the Hebrew word "naga", which often conveys **God's immense and overwhelming power**. For instance, when God "touches" something, the earth melts, and mountains vanish into smoke—His unapproachable and mighty majesty is revealed.

However, as in today's passage, when "naga" is repeated twice—"naga, naga"—it uniquely conveys the idea of gentle care or a tender touch.

This is how the Lord tenderly touches the despairing leader, Elijah, providing him with freshly baked bread on hot coals and water. And then, the Lord comes again, touches him a second time, and reassures him.

What happens to Elijah as a result?

"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."

Strengthened by the Lord's tender care, Elijah once again follows "the Lord's leading" and reaches the mountain of God, Horeb. Hallelujah!

The same tender touch of the Lord is found in the life of another leader, Daniel. Let's read together the account of how God touched Daniel, as recorded in Daniel 10:16–19.

* The Leadership That the Lord Touches

“And behold, **one in the likeness of the children of man touched (naga) my lips.** Then I opened my mouth and spoke. I said to him who stood before me, “O my lord, ...**For now no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me.**” Again **one having the appearance of a man touched (naga) me and strengthened me.** And he said, “**O man greatly loved, fear not, peace be with you; be strong and of good courage.**” And as he spoke to me, **I was strengthened and said, “Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me. (Daniel 10:16-19)”**

Elijah, Daniel, and even our forebears in faith were all human—weak, prone to exhaustion, and often falling into despair. Yet, every time they reached such a low point, our Lord unflinchingly came to touch them gently, not just once but again and again. Lord tenderly reassures them, saying, “You who are highly esteemed, do not be afraid. Peace! Be strong now; be strong!” I firmly believe the same Lord is speaking these words to us today, pouring His strength into us anew. Hallelujah!

Every time I meditate on this passage, I can't help but envision our Heavenly Father gently touching us again and again, with such tender care. It's as if His mighty hands, so powerful and awe-inspiring, are carefully cradling His beloved children—His sons and daughters—with the utmost gentleness, ensuring no harm comes to them. This is the image of a Father who lovingly wraps us in His hands, always reaching out to comfort and strengthen us.

So, instead of focusing on our burdens and difficulties, which only drag us into despair, let us lift our eyes to see the reality of His unflinching care.

Today, may we rest in those tender hands of our Abba Father, who touches us, again and again, with His loving embrace. And as “the Lord leads us,” may we rise with renewed strength, pressing on toward God's mountain—Horeb—drawing ever closer to Him. I earnestly bless each of you, royal priests, to live out this calling with courage and hope. Hallelujah!

2. The Leadership Through Which the Lord Passes

One more thing, it is indeed true that “**our leadership is the kind through which the Lord passes.**” Previously, the Lord tenderly touched Elijah, again and again, feeding him with a cake baked on hot stones and water, strengthening him to travel forty days and forty nights until he reached Mount Horeb, the mountain of God. But now, Elijah has once **again hidden himself deep inside a cave.** It seems that once we fall into the pit of despair, we tend to keep hiding, and it becomes incredibly difficult to come out again. Shall we take a look at the state of Elijah in his weakness this time? Let's read verses 9 and 10 together.

* Our Leadership: He Leadeth Me!

9 (1) **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, (2) **“I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. (3) 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.”

=> (1) **Cutting Off Relationships** (2) **Self-Righteous Zeal** (3) **Blaming Others**

(1) First, 'the leader Elijah, deeply sunk in despair,' as shown in (1), entered the cave and stayed there. The word "stay" here means **hiding** in the cave. We don't know exactly how deeply or for how long he hid, but until God directly asked him in verse 9, "Elijah, what are you doing here?" he had cut himself off from everything. This shows Elijah, in deep despair, completely isolating himself.

Just like cutting off all relationships and choosing to **"relationship blocking,"** in today's language, this is like "going off the grid" or "ghosting," and even when it comes to his relationship with God, he seems reluctant to engage until God directly asks him. He just wants to be alone, hiding, showing a clear image of 'cutting off relationships' in the deep despair Elijah is experiencing.

(2) Then, when God asks him, "Why are you here?" Elijah begins to pour out all the thoughts he has been hiding inside. As shown in (2), he says, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty! You know better than anyone, God! I have worked so hard, to the point of wanting to die!" He is now revealing his **"self-effort."** In fact, in verse 10, he repeats the exact same thing in verse 14, word for word. This is Elijah, deep in despair, putting forth his **"self-effort" or "self-righteousness,"** showcasing how he relies on his own efforts and righteousness in his distress.

(3) And eventually, what happens is that Elijah, while saying, "I have worked so hard," turns his finger toward others, as shown in (3): "The Israelites have rejected Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword! I am the only one left!" This leads to **"blaming others."** Originally, this was the typical behavior of King Ahab, the wrong leader, but now we see it in Elijah, who is deeply immersed in despair. Just a chapter earlier, in chapter 18, Elijah's behavior was completely the opposite of this.

(1) It wasn't **"cutting off relationships"**; in fact, it was "drawing near to all the people" and saying "Come near to me!" It was a **"restoration of relationships!"**

(2) It's not **'self-effort'** either! It wasn't my effort, but it was **the zeal of the Lord of hosts** that was being accomplished, and I followed exactly as the Lord led me!

(3) And it's not '**blaming others,**' but rather, Elijah as a leader **who first examined himself with the heart of a mother and embraced all the people with the heart of a father!**

However, he too is weak, and today, this leader, Elijah, is quite broken in despair. But our God would never leave him in such a state. Lord will certainly **pass by** him, make him realize, guide him with goodness, and lead him with grace. Hallelujah!
Shall we read verses 11 and 12 of the passage together? Let's begin!

* **The Leadership Through Which the Lord Passes**

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.

=> "And he said, "**I will make all my goodness pass before you** and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. (Exodus 33:19)"

It is clear that "**the Lord passes by,**" and we see the great and strong wind that splits mountains and shatters rocks. But in the midst of that wind, the presence of the Lord is not visible to me. Similarly, we see a tremendous earthquake, but my eyes do not see the Lord's presence in it. We also see a great fire, but even in the fire, the Lord's presence is completely hidden from my sight.

Just like this, all the great and amazing phenomena in our world are clearly visible to my eyes, and even though these things happen "before the Lord," and the only one who governs them is our God, yet the presence of the Lord is not visible to my eyes.

Only when we lift up our 'eyes of faith' can we see the Lord's work!

This is how the Lord has always passed by His children, both then and now. And it is certainly not that He is just passing by us carelessly.

So, how exactly does the Lord pass by us? Let's read Exodus 33:19 together.

With all of God's goodness, with what is "tov"—the best, the most complete in His eyes—though we may not see Him in our circumstances, He is surely passing by us, and today, He is still leading us.

Similarly, in the book of Job, even though God is not visible, Job still feels His work in the midst of difficult circumstances. Let's read Job 23:8-10 together.

* **The Leadership Through Which the Lord Passes**

“Behold, I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I do not perceive him; on the left hand when he is working, I do not behold him; he turns to the right hand, but (1) I do not see him. But (2) he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, (3) I shall come out as gold. (Job 23:8-10)”

=> (1) **God's Sovereignty** (2) **God's Discipline** (3) **God's Outcome**

Job's confession here is not found at the end of the Book of Job but in chapter 23, roughly in the middle of the 42 chapters. At this point, Job is still in the midst of extreme suffering, walking through the very heart of ongoing trials, and this is his honest confession during that time.

The earlier part of his statement is similar to today's passage. The evidence of God passing by him is nowhere to be seen.

"I am so overwhelmed, yet where is our God, and what is He even doing? Surely, He must be at work, but I can't see Him in front of me, nor behind me, not on the left or the right. I have no idea what He is doing—nothing about God's actions is visible to me!" This was Job's honest sentiment at the time.

However, even in the midst of his suffering, there are three truths that our forefather of faith, Job, firmly held onto and lived by: (1) **I do not see him. But (2) he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, (3) I shall come out as gold.**

(1) First, like point (1), the path I take is never one I can fully know. Only "He knows"—"He alone knows my life's path and every way I take." Job first trusted in this truth of "**God's sovereignty.**"

(2) Then, like point (2), Job recognized that for someone as weak as himself, "He" must refine him through this "work of suffering, this process of training." Job firmly believed in the necessity of "**God's discipline.**"

(3) And like point (3), though there are still so many imperfections in my current self, ultimately, God will continue to shape and mold me. Someday in the future—though I cannot know when—it is certain that I will stand "before Him" as a result as pure as refined gold, as radiant as fine gold. Job firmly held on to this assurance of "**God's result**", living out daily with that faith. Hallelujah!

May we, even in moments of despair, hold fast to the truth that though we may not see Him, our God is always passing by with all His goodness. Like Job's three confessions—**God's sovereignty, God's discipline, and God's ultimate result**—may we completely trust Him and live out the life of leadership entrusted to us by the Lord who guides us faithfully.

[Conclusion]

Dear saints,

Today, we reflected on our leadership once again. To summarize, there are two key points:

*** Our Leadership (3): He Leadeth Me!**

1. The Leadership Touched by the Lord

: Leadership that, in **the comforting hands of our Abba Father, who continually touches and cares for us**, moves toward Mount Horeb of God, 'drawing closer to **the Lord**' with strength as we follow "**as the Lord leads.**"

2. The Leadership Passed by the Lord

: Leadership that, even when unseen in moments of despair, firmly believes in **the sovereignty of God, His training, and His ultimate results**—because the Lord always "**passes by us in all His goodness.**" Living out this leadership as we follow "**as the Lord leads.**"

May we all become such royal priests in Christ. Amen!