



## Lessons from Elijah's Life

# Delivered from Despair (Pt.1-2)

Date: 1 & 8 April 2020

Text: 1 Kings 19:5-18

Key Lesson: God does not give up on His children

After Elijah's great victory day, he plunged from the mountain peak to the valley deep the moment he read Jezebel's threat. In fear for his life, he fled south all the way to the wilderness below Israel. That is where we find him this evening, asleep under a juniper shrub.

### God did not give up on Elijah

Elijah was fearful instead of being full of faith. He was wallowing in self-pity. He was running instead of standing strong. Though he lost his fellowship with God, he had not lost his relationship with God. God never disowns His true children, even when they fail Him. Failure does not mean defeat or an end of our usefulness to God. God had not given up on Elijah. God did not consider him a lost cause. The Lord understood his human frailty and graciously reached down to restore him.

Many of the notable men in the Bible experienced discouraging or carnal times before returning to the Lord. **Job** got so discouraged that he wished he had never been born. **Abram** had a son by Hagar instead of waiting on the Lord. **Jacob** deceived his father instead of trusting God with his future. **Moses** in anger hit the rock instead of speaking to the rock as God had said. While fleeing from Saul, **David** went to the Philistines for protection instead of trusting God. **Jeremiah** tried to quit preaching, but he could not escape God's call. **Jonah** fled from God's call to missions. **Peter** denied that he even knew the Lord, but later became a mighty preacher. **John Mark** quit as a missionary but later God used him to write the book of Mark.

There will be times in your life and mine when we get discouraged. We will at times step out of fellowship with God. When that happens, the devil will want us to think that we are useless to God; that we have failed beyond recovery; that life is no longer worth living. **Such thoughts are nothing but lies.** If we will repent and humbly obey God, there will always be something we can do for Him. It may not be God's original plan, but God is expert at remoulding our clay pots that become marred on His Potter's wheel (Jer 18:1-6; Isa 64:8). If we will cooperate with Him, God will remould our lives for His glory. If God can do it for the men we just noted, He can certainly do it for you.

### God Delivered Elijah from Despair

Elijah's stress had caused him four major problems. 1) He was physically exhausted. 2) He was emotionally stressed. 3) He was spiritually wayward. 4) He was mentally derailed.

#### Elijah was physically exhausted, so God let him rest and eat (v.5-8)

- The Lord sent an angel to minister to him (v.5). The angel touched him to awaken him.
- Imagine the terror that must have suddenly rushed through his emotions knowing that someone had found him. Perhaps the angel calmed his fears before addressing his need, we do not know.
- His instructions were, "Arise and eat". In a miraculous way, God made a fire, baked Elijah a cake of bread on the coals and gave him a jug of water to drink.
- Without objection, Elijah obeyed the angel, sat up, ate and drank and then laid back down and fell asleep (v.6). God does not record any word of response from Elijah, **not even a word of thanks.** Keathley points out, "When we are depressed and out of fellowship with the Lord, we tend to be as insensitive and ungrateful as the unbelieving world."<sup>1</sup>
- After a good rest, the angel awoke him again and said, "Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee" (v.7). Just as before, he arose and obeyed the angel (v.8).
- When we are down and discouraged, two things that will often help are rest and refreshment. When we are tired or hungry, it is difficult to listen to instructions. God knows that often our physical needs have to be met before our spiritual needs can be met.

#### Elijah was emotionally stressed, so God gave him six weeks of no stress (v.8-9).

- He spent forty days and nights travelling to Horeb (Mount Sinai). Keathley notes, "A straight trip from the broom tree would have required little more than seven, maybe eight days."<sup>2</sup> He had already travelled a day's journey south of Beersheba where he slept under the juniper shrub. From that location to Mount Sinai is less than 400km.
- God let him take his time travelling for nearly six weeks with no stress.

<sup>1</sup> Keathley, <https://bible.org/seriespage/16-restoration-elijah-1-kings-195-18>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

- When he reached Mount Horeb, God led him to a cool cave for his lodging. Was that a coincidence? No, you can be sure that the Lord was directing him even if he was not asking for direction.
- This slow-paced travel and pleasant cave stay was just what his emotions needed to recover.
- When our emotions are stressed, it is time for us to take a no-stress holiday.

### **Elijah was spiritually wayward, so God met with him at the cave (v.9-14).**

- During this entire fearful flight, Elijah had gotten out of fellowship with God. How could he go from the great faith and answered prayer on the mountaintop to such a deep valley of despair so quickly? The devil got him to worry. When Jezebel issued his death warrant, instead of praying to the God who had just sent fire and rain, he began to worry. When we worry, we stop thinking biblically and we stop trusting God. We focus on the “what ifs” instead of on the faithfulness of God. We have at least one advantage over Elijah. We have Philippians 4:6-8. **“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”**
- Though Elijah was not seeking to draw close to God, God had not forgotten him.
- God asked him a convicting question, **“What doest thou here, Elijah?”** (v.9). Alan Carr points out that God’s question is in the present tense, but Elijah answered him in the past tense. It doesn’t matter what you’ve done for the Lord in the past, the question is: **“What are you doing today!”**<sup>3</sup>
- Elijah’s answer (v.10) indicates that he was still feeling sorry for himself. God had met his physical and emotional needs, but spiritually he was still struggling.
- He told God how jealous he had been for His cause. He claimed that he ONLY was left and they (Jezebel and her soldiers) seek my life. His answer was full of self-pity, discouragement, defeat, exaggeration and totally void of God’s provision by the brook, His provision for he, the widow and her son, the resurrection of the lad from the dead, the mighty answers to his prayers on Mount Carmel for fire and rain. He never mentioned the revival of God’s people and the death of Baal’s prophets. He forgot about God’s blessings and only counted his burdens. Sounds all too familiar, doesn’t it?
- God then taught Elijah a lesson (v.11). God told him to stand on the mountain before the LORD. A powerful wind blew, but God was not in the wind. Then the earth quaked, but God was not in the earthquake. A fire suddenly appeared, but God was not in the fire (v.12). God then spoke to him in a still small voice. He feared God’s voice and returned to his cave (v.13).
- God repeated his question, **“What are you doing here?”** (v.14) Again, Elijah gave God the same sob story. He still had not grasp the fact that God was in control of all things.
- When we are in despair, we must force ourselves to look beyond our self-pity and reflect on God’s Person and His power. We must count our blessings and sing of God’s faithfulness.

### **Elijah was mentally derailed, so God assigned him work to do (v.15-18)**

- It appears that mentally he had quit serving God. He had resigned. He gave up.
- If he had not quit, he may have convinced himself that God could no longer use him because he had fled in fear after the greatest victory in his life. The devil fills our minds with negative thoughts when we are discouraged. I have been there many times. You probably have as well.
- God was not finished with Elijah. Instead of taking his life as Elijah had requested, God delivered him from despair and gave him work to do.
- He must go north to Damascus and anoint Hazael king over Syria (v.15).
- He was to anoint Jehu as king over Israel (v.16).
- He was to anoint Elisha as his successor (v.16)
- God assured him that through those three men, He would bring judgment on the wicked of Israel (v.17). God had not overlooked wicked Jezebel’s threat. Payday was coming for the wicked.
- Last of all, God assured him that he was NOT the only one left who served Jehovah. There were yet 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal (v.18). God knew the exact state of Israel. Just as God knew their hearts, God also knows our hearts.

<sup>3</sup> Alan Carr [https://www.sermonnotebook.org/elijah/1%20kings%2019\\_15-21.htm](https://www.sermonnotebook.org/elijah/1%20kings%2019_15-21.htm)