

**1st Kings 19: 1-8 – “God’s Help in Discouragement”, Message # 9 in the series –
Lessons from the Life of Elijah, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall
on July 25th, 2021, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

When we last left Elijah, he was at the height of spiritual victory and triumph. He had been mightily used by God to demonstrate to all the children of Israel gathered there that day on Mt. Carmel, that God of Israel was the only true God. What acts of power were ordained by God to be done that day, through the instrumentality of Elijah! But here in these verses we find that even though Elijah had done these great things for Israel and for the Lord, that he fell into a deep discouragement. It was such a great discouragement that he prayed that God would take his life.

In order to understand this, I want us to look at 3 statements which will show us why Elijah fell into this discouragement. 1st of all – The statement of Jezebel that brought about Elijah’s discouragement. 2nd – The statement of Elijah that compounded his discouragement. And 3rd – The statement of the angel which ministered encouragement to Elijah. In thinking about these statements, let us consider how we might prevent discouragement from coming to ourselves, and how we might minister encouragement, to other believers around us, who need it.

1st of all – Let’s look at the statement of Jezebel that brought about Elijah’s discouragement.

Verse 1 says: “And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword.” “Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, ‘So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.’” Now, you would think that Ahab, in telling Jezebel about all of what had happened that day, would have tried to show Jezebel that these acts of power were proof that Baal was a false god, and how wrong she had been, in the past, in promoting his worship in Israel. If he was a man who was really thinking correctly about what had actually happened that day, he would have been thoroughly convinced that Baal was not really a god at all.

By all rights of outward evidence, we should have now found him on his knees before the Lord, pouring out his heart in repentance and saying that he had been such a fool to have broken God’s commandments, and led the children of Israel into Idolatry. But we hear nothing of this from him. He was still a wicked man after seeing all this. None of these things had changed him, or moved his heart, or caused him to see what a great sinner he really was, in the sight of the Lord. This great demonstration of God’s acts of power did not convince him either that he or Jezebel had been sinfully wrong in worshiping another God besides Jehovah, the one true and living God.

Ahab was still a totally deceived unbelieving man, and he had married a self-deceived unbelieving wicked woman who was hateful and power-driven in her rule as queen of Israel. Let us see here that if there was anything which should have changed these two wicked people into believing righteous people, it was these acts of power by God through Elijah. But it moved neither of them to consider their folly or their unbelief, or their dishonoring of God in their thoughts and actions. Instead, we read of Jezebel’s flying into a fit of passionate rage. This is clear proof that people do not come to their senses and repent of all of their great and mighty sins against God, by beholding God’s acts of power by themselves.

We should conclude that nothing but God’s showing them grace, and savingly enlightening their minds to the truth, will do this. Unless shown mercy by God, they will reject the right logical conclusion; that God would have them to humble themselves and repent of all of their sins, and turn from their wicked ways. Actually when people continue in sin after seeing God’s mighty works of power, they are only hardening their hearts against Him, which will only lead to more of God’s hardening their hearts in response. When He brings His judgments upon them,

they do not respond in repentance. The classic example of this is Pharaoh, king of Egypt, in the days when God was bringing the children of Israel out of Egypt. Turn with me over to Exodus chapter 7, verses 10-13. "So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh, and they did so, just as the Lord commanded." "And Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent." "But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers; so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments." "For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents." "But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods." "And Pharaoh's heart grew hard, and he did not heed them, as the Lord had said."

Now, you will notice here that Pharaoh's magicians were able to duplicate Moses' miracle of throwing his staff on the ground and their staffs became serpents also. But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. In other words, God's word to Pharaoh through Moses would stand and eat up all the resistance that would be made to God's word through Moses being fulfilled. Pharaoh saw this miracle, but his own heart became hard in seeing it. By all rights it should have become softer, but because of the hardening influence which sin brings to a heart which resists God, it will do no good unless God's grace intervenes.

Look at Exodus 10, verse 1 and 2. Now the Lord said to Moses, 'Go in to Pharaoh; for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his servants, that I may show these signs of Mine before him, and that you may tell the hearing of your son and your son's son the mighty things I have done in Egypt, and My signs which I have done among them, that you may know that I am the Lord.' This is the same kind of thing that God was doing with Ahab and Jezebel. They hardened their hearts against the thought that God was the only true God, and so God further hardened their hearts so that His signs would be shown as a witness to them, that they would indeed fall under His judgment because of their hardness of heart.

And, in all this, God was righteous for these acts of God would be performed so that people might truly know that He was God. But Elijah, even though he surely knew the Scriptures, as a prophet of the Lord, he still thought that things would be different in this case where he was permitted to do these great acts of power. He really thought that Ahab and Jezebel would repent of their idolatry. And so when the messenger came from Jezebel and told him her words – "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time," it says that he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there."

I think that we can reasonably conclude that he was afraid that Jezebel would indeed take his life. It is good to us to ask, therefore – Why did he fall into this sin of unbelief at this point? I think it was because he temporarily forgot the truth of Isaiah 55: 8 and 9 – "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord." "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." You would think if Elijah was able to confront Ahab and not be afraid, that he would not be afraid of Jezebel's threats at this point. He would have said something like – "If God has protected me all of the time before this, will he not protect me now?" "I will not be afraid."

I think that we can also apply Isaiah 26: 10, 11, to Elijah's situation. "Let grace be shown to the wicked, yet he will not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he will deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." "Lord, when Your hand is lifted up, they will not see." "But they will see and be ashamed for their envy of people; yes, the fire of Your enemies shall devour them." Elijah had forgotten that God's purposes, both in mercy and in judgment were greater than he could understand. We should not forget this, as believers, when things do not turn out the way that we logically think that they should. Only God, can make effectual His own works of power to be a means of changing people's hearts, and He does not always do that in the way that we would expect.

2nd – We want to look at the statement of Elijah that compounded his discouragement.

Verse 4 – “But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree.” “And he prayed that he might die, and said, ‘It is enough!’ “Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers”. Here we find this man who had bravely stood up against 450 false prophets of Baal, now has fled away into the wilderness because of the anger of Jezebel. He who could reprove the king, could not now reprove his queen. He had known God’s presence and His power. He had known God His directing him in this challenge to the false worship of Baal. But now he believes that somehow the whole cause that he had undertaken in bringing reform to Israel, was over.

Even though such great signs had been done, yet unbelief still reigned in the king and queen, and since they were so opposed to him, he fell into the unbelief of thinking that God was not with him in this good work any longer; for whatever reason. It reminds one of Jonah after the Lord granted repentance to Nineveh. Jonah 4: 1-4 – “But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry.” “So, he prayed to the Lord, and said, ‘Ah, Lord, was not this what I said when I was still in my country?’” “Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.” “Therefore now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!” “Then the Lord said, ‘Is it right for You to be angry?’”

In Jonah’s case, he was angry over God’s showing mercy to those whom he thought that God ought to judge. But in Elijah’s case, it was disappointment leading to discouragement because he thought that he should not have to go through persecution for the great deeds which God had let him do. It led him to his temporarily abdicate his responsibility to look to God to lead Him and to guide him into what he should seek to do. Evidently, since he says that “he is not better than his fathers”, he believed that he could excel his fathers in the results he accomplished for God. He believed that he would not have to suffer for righteousness as many of the prophets before him had.

In other words, Elijah’s problem was a subtle form of pride. He was leaning on his own understanding. He had, however, fallen into fleshly thinking without even knowing it. He was depending upon everything that God had allowed him to do before, to exempt him from having to suffer at this point, instead of triumphing in God’s protective care of him. He did not think that he should have to experience this persecution from Jezebel. At this point, then, he was very disappointed, because he thought that he had to go it alone; that Jezebel would send forth her servants, and they would find him and kill him. In falling into this unbelief, he thought it would be better if God would simply come and take his life. He lost all confidence that he could continue ministering for God.

He lost that particular aspect of his faith that had been so strong in before; his holy courage. He did not think that he would be able to do more great things for God in the future. And so he says – I give up God. You can take my life now. And thus we see, this great man who is commended for his prayers, in the book of James, prayed in an unbelieving way. Sometimes Christians can fall into this kind of proud, unbelieving, skeptical frame of mind, and when they do, God takes notice of it, and he will take steps to deal with it, and bring that Christian to a better frame of mind; a better way of looking at things. We shall see how God does this in our next study.

And then, 3rd – We want to look at the statement of the angel which ministered to Elijah.

Verse 5 says – “Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, ‘Arise and eat.’” Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water.” “So he ate and drank, and lay down again.” “And the angel of the Lord

came back the second time, and touched him, and said, ‘Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.’ “So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.” Now, this is a very helpful piece of information which is given to us here. God knew that Elijah was exhausted from all of his labors in ministry, and he knows also how to help us. He is not limited in means but will do the thing that He knows will help us the most.

In this case, it was sending an angel to speak just a few words to Elijah. “Arise and eat”. “Arise and eat for the journey is too great for you.” The Lord knows when things are too hard for his ministers or for His people, and He will help them in very practical ways. Sometimes God’s servants, His ministers do not get enough rest or refreshment in their ministry. They become consumed with fulfilling their ministry, and they neglect to do the very practical things which would rejuvenate them in their ministry; like eating and drinking, and sleeping. Nothing more practical than that. And yet, how many fine ministers, or even ordinary everyday Christians, may not pay enough attention to their own needs in this regard. Elijah had to be mercifully reminded by an angel who God sent to him at that very hour of his greatest discouragement.

Let us be prayerful, then my brethren, about the true needs of people around us; especially people who are working hard in their ministry for the Lord; in the word, or in good deeds. They can get too weary to go on; so weary, that they may be tempted to give up the good work that God has called them to do. They may be so weary that they may think of giving it all up and praying for God to take them home. The way that you can help them is with gentle words of encouragement, and acts of kindness which you believe will help them to persevere in all that the Lord has given them to do. In this regard, be an angel of the Lord to one of your weary fellow brethren today.