

THE LIFE & TIMES OF ELIJAH (Part 5)

“A Scared Hero: From the Mountain to the Valley” (1 Kings 19:1-21)

INTRO: “Who hasn’t had the blues?” All of us have been under a “broom tree”. Even Christians, like Moses, Davie, Job, Jonah, & Paul have felt that dark cloud of depression cover (1 in 3 adults!). One described ... Now Elijah, the man of God. How could it be? After all the LESSONS . . . He FORGOT. The fact that this occurs doesn’t necessarily mean you’re out of fellowship with God. Being in the valley is usually not a sin, but symptom of something deeper. MAP...

I. (19:1-5a) DEPRESSED PROPHET

- A. The *Contrast* - Ch. 18 on the mountain victorious over King Ahab, Baal’s prophets, and God’s people - even outrunning Ahab’s chariot. Bold, confident, & faithful. Now, ch. 19 in the valley defeated by the threat of one woman, running for his life, vacillating between running from threatened death to asking to die. Afraid, disillusioned, discouraged & depressed.
- B. A *Common Pattern* – Satan knows we are often most vulnerable after victory. Many times our highs and lows come close together. Often our greatest trials follow our greatest blessings: faith, fear, despair
- C. Why the *change*? How can a man of faith become a man of fear so fast? V. 4c “I have had enough, Lord...take my life.” Is this Elijah? ...
FACTORS:
 1. *Wiped-out physically* - Totally physically exhausted; 3 yrs. of famine; faced & slain 450 prophets in a daylong confrontation; missed meals and sleep; 30 mile run to Jezreel; received a death threat; an overworked prophet.
 2. *Stressed-out emotionally* - The anticipation & excitement was over; adrenaline rush gone; emotionally spent; developed self-pity (v.10); totally self-absorbed in being pursued and threatened.
 3. *Emptied-out spiritually* - v.3 tells us his spiritual condition. In response to her threat he was afraid and ran; up till now he had been fixed on God; now eyed his enemy and ran; spiritual well was empty.
 4. *Dried-out relationally* - He was a loner, which is risky. No mention of any close friends. He left his servant (v.3). Now under BROOM TREE (v. 4).

II. (19:5b-21) A FAITHFUL GOD

- A. “How does God respond to us (Elijah) during such times?” Read vv. 5-14 ... He did not rebuke him, tell him to get busy, load him with guilt, shame his emotions, harshly criticize, nor abandon him - Rather

he finds and delivers him (Psa. 139:7-10; Jer. 23:23-24; Pro. 15:3) Ex. Peter, Thomas.

B. GOD’S COUNSEL & CURE for despair:

1. *Refresh physically* (5b-9a) - For good reason Elijah was physically wiped-out. God saw that he got plenty of rest, sleep, and food. Learn to relax.
2. *Release emotionally* (9b-14) - God knew Elijah was emotionally spent and stressed out. God simply and gently asked Elijah a question twice that opened the lines of communication. Patiently, he allowed twice for Elijah to vent his frustrations and air his feelings - openly, honestly, responsibly, & controlled. Whenever we are physically and emotionally burned out, our minds can plan dirty tricks on us with reality. Talk it out.
3. *Re-focus vertically* (11-18) - Next, God helps Elijah think clearly and realistically. Elijah had momentarily stopped listening to God and started looking at his circumstances. Could not the same God who had delivered from 850 false prophets protect him from one woman? Elijah forgot to stop, pray, & hear from God - so he lost his vertical perspective and he needed to re-focus. He forgot his first lesson . . .

“How did God help him re-focus?”

- ❖ Requested communion (v. 11) – Enter my presence
 - ❖ Spoke to his servant (vv. 11b-13) - Dialogued (vv. 9-18)
 - ❖ Gave him an assignment (vv. 15-17) God still had a plan.
 - ❖ Reminded him he was not alone and was not indispensable (v. 18)
 - ❖ God gave him a friend (v. 16)
4. *Reconnect horizontally* - God gave him a close friend (vv. 19-21). Elijah kept his servant until Beersheba, then he went on alone (v 3). Often, a despairing person wants to escape relationships and be alone. When isolated from the strength of friendships, we are very vulnerable. This story ends happily with these two men shouldering together. Elijah was again ready having found needed rest, communed with God, and a close friend for the final days of his journey.

LESSONS (PPT) . . .

CONC: God found and delivered his fleeing and despairing prophet. We may not identify with Elijah calling down the fire of God on Mt. Carmel, but we can *fully* identify with him in the valley of despair. Does God find you in the desert under a broom tree, ready to quit? He knows, understands, and cares. He offers this wise counsel: refresh physically, release emotionally, re-focus spiritually, and relate horizontally. It is never God’s design to make us miserable, but meaningful.