

12. The weak side of a mighty man of God

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Everyone has weakness with the exception of our God. Even if that person could handle just about every imaginable difficulty, there is at least one area where he or she tends to give up or crumble under pressure easily.

In last chapter, we found the man of God Elijah stood all by himself against 850 prophets of Baal who jumped up and down while they called out to their god Baal to bring down a fire from heaven. They spent hours doing that without any success. But when it was Elijah's turn, he simply prayed to the Lord of the universe, "Whoosh!" the fire came down from heaven and consumed everything on the altar including any shred of courage from the heathen prophets' hearts.

Elijah had all 850 of them killed and prayed to the Lord to bring forth a rain to the land where there had been a drought for over three and a half years. If there is a time to celebrate a spiritual victory, that was the time.

But the Lord had something special in mind for this prophet who was on a roll. Undoubtedly 1 Kings 18 & 19 are Elijah's highest and lowest.

A. AN ESCAPE FROM JEZEBEL

1 Kings 19:1-8 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. 2 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." 3 And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went 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 prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!" 5 Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat." 6 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. 7 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." 8 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.

When the torrential rain began to fall, Jezebel was in Jezreel and may have thought that Baal the storm god had triumphed on Mount Carmel. However, when Ahab arrived home, he told her a much different story. Instead of repenting and calling the nation back to serving the Lord, Jezebel declared war on Jehovah God and His faithful servant Elijah.

From Jezreel to Beersheba, it is about 100 miles in distance. After he arrived at Beersheba, Elijah went further into the wilderness of Negev. He ran for his life. Then he sat under a broom tree, a.k.a. a juniper tree. I think he was really scared of this woman Jezebel. I am sure that when Elijah read Jezebel's letter, he could see her evil look from the tone of her message.

What did happen to this mighty man of God? James gives us a little glimpse about the man:

James 5:17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months.

Elijah was no different than anyone of us. He was not a spiritual giant without any weaknesses. He had a short coming just like of us. That is what we are seeing here.

Did you notice something was missing between Elijah getting the message from Jezebel and running away? Prayer. In a moment of fear, he forgot all that God had done for him during the last three years. He did not seek God for help, nor guidance. He didn't depend on the same God who threw down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice and had 850 prophets of Baal killed. He took his eyes off from God to himself. Now he was walking by sight, not by faith.

That is exactly what happens to us if we do not seek the Lord. We have to run from our enemy satan if we don't seek Him. When Jesus tells us to seek first the Kingdom of God, it is not only to keep the right priority in our hearts, but also it is to protect us from the evil ones.

Whenever we are fearful of the situations we are facing, that is the greatest evidence of the lack of our prayer and dependency on God.

In v4, we find Elijah having a major self-pity party. If he really wanted to die, why did he run from Jezebel's threat? It was nothing more than whining on his part. Besides, who did say to Elijah that he should be better than his ancestors? NO one, except himself.

God doesn't give someone else as a standard for us to measure up to. We ourselves do that. We compare ourselves with others and get disappointed. We just need to be what the Lord wants us to be, no one else.

Instead of slapping Elijah silly, and telling him, "Quit your whining, boy," our gracious Lord gave him a special heavenly ration that he didn't have to eat next 40 days and nights while he headed out to Horeb, a.k.a. Mount Sinai which was located about 250 miles away.

B. THE WHINING CONTINUES

1 Kings 19:9-10 And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10 So he said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."

Elijah and many other servants of God suffer throughout the history of Christianity and the present time. Shouldn't we be rewarded all the time for serving the Lord? If that is the case, the reward would entice people more than the love for the Lord.

Like Elijah, it is not unusual for us to think that we are the only ones who are going through difficult times when we lose sight of our God who protects us. We need to remember that nothing comes to us without our God's approval. We even think that God doesn't understand our difficulties.

If that is the case, we need to go back to the Garden of Gethsemane. Let's put ourselves in Jesus' sandals. How would you like to know what kind of tortures you are about to go through, the humiliation you have to endure, the horrible crucifixion pain that is waiting for you? To top it all off, the Father would forsake His only begotten Son because all the sins of the mankind is being dumped on you that you go from Holy Son of God to the worst sinner in the history of human race. Do we still think that our Lord doesn't understand our difficulties? I think not.

C. THE STILL SMALL VOICE

1 Kings 19:11-18 Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces 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 a still small voice. 13 So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 14 And he said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." 15 Then the Lord said to him: "Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. 16 Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. 17 It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. 18 Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

In v13-14, this was the same question the Lord already asked. Elijah gave Him the same lame answer which was not a real answer to the question. In his answer, he revealed both pride and self-pity. By mentioning that he was the only one left, he made it as though he was indispensable to God's work. No servant of God is indispensable. If we don't make ourselves available to the Lord, He will simply take another servant's availability. It is our loss, not His.

Whenever we want to hear from God for His will and direction, we have a tendency to expect to hear God's booming voice in the midst of thunders. If He chooses to do so, He can. But in most cases, He speaks to us with a still small voice. When we learn to recognize and hear His voice, it has enough volume to make His message clearly known to us.

The best way to hear from God is through the Word of God, our Bible. That is why I encourage you to memorize the Word of God.

The problem is not that God's voice is not loud enough, rather we just don't listen to Him carefully enough because we have our own agenda. If He has to make a thunderous noise to get our attention, it shows us that we are not paying attention to Him.

Actually the whispers from Calvary by Jesus Christ are infinitely more powerful than the thunder of Sinai in bringing men to repentance.

From v15 to 17, our Lord gave him another incredibly accurate prophecy with people's names. Elijah's ministry ended around 850 B.C. and he was taken away by the

Lord. King Jehu of Israel and king Hazael of Syria were not even in the picture until 841 B.C. When Elijah anointed them, Hazael was a servant to King Bed-hadad, Jehu was a captain of the army, and Elisha was just a farmer.

Like we see in v18, during our self-pity session, we are so wrapped up in our own situation and so focused on our own matters, we think that no one understands our difficulties and nobody goes through trials and tests like we do. That is far from the truth. Many people go through far worse than us, yet they keep their eyes on the Lord.

I have not heard any American losing their lives in America because they are born-again Christians with the exception of a few isolated incidents like the murder of the young teenagers at Columbine High School. But there are many brothers and sisters who get killed around the world just because of their faith in Christ.

No matter how much or how often His servants fail Him, God is never at a loss to know what to do. Our job is to obey His Word and get up and do it.

D. ELIJAH AND ELISHA

1 Kings 19:19-21 So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. 20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" 21 So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

When I was young in the Lord, I used to get confused by these two people's names – Elijah and Elisha.

After the good lesson from the Lord, Elijah got back on the track and gave a great point to his successor Elisha. Throwing one's mantle to someone means that God is calling that person to serve the Lord as a prophet and be his successor.

When Elisha was quickly rebuked by Elijah, Elisha burned the yoke and threw his own farewell party. In our term, he burned his bridge behind him. Elisha was not like the people who were making excuses when Jesus called several people to follow Him.

Luke 9:62 But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

E. CONCLUSION

1) To glamorize or criticize the past accomplishes little. What's important is that we do our job in the present and equip others to continue it after we're gone.

2) Whenever we are fearful of the situations we are facing, that is the greatest evidence of the lack of our prayer and dependency on God.

3) No servant of God is indispensable. If we don't make ourselves available to the Lord, He will simply take another servant's availability. It is our loss, not His.