

## 1 Kings Ch 19

We left off witnessing the dramatic duel between Elijah and the 450 prophets of Baal. Or more accurately we might say, between the false god Baal, and Yahweh, the True and Living God. Elijah had said to the nation, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” and The people just sat there staring at him in stunned silence, not willing to make a stand for their convictions *or* change them as needed, they were double minded, wanted the best of both worlds so to speak. Elijah said you can’t mingle the ways of the world with the things of God, you need to choose where you’re going to make your stand. He said, “Grab 2 bulls, you prepare yours and do your thing, and when you’re done I’ll prepare mine, and the God who answers by fire, He is God.” The people said, “Fair enough.” Well, you recall the prophets of Baal danced around whipped themselves up into a fury, cut themselves, and cried aloud, but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention. And the lesson there is that it just doesn’t matter how dedicated you may be, how devoted you may be, how passionate your prayers or sincere your service, if it’s not directed towards the true and living God there’s no voice to respond, no one to answer you and no one to pay attention. Because there is no other God but one, the bible says, *“I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me.”* Isa 45:5 But the bible teaches that God’s ear is turned *towards* and tuned *in* to the cry of the righteous, *“The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles.”* Ps 34:17

And so you recall the happening, the prophets of Baal were unable to call fire down from heaven to consume the sacrifice and so at the time of the evening sacrifice Elijah repaired the altar of the Lord, prepared the bull, had 12 buckets of water poured over it and filled the trench he’d dug around it with water. And He prayed a simple prayer, “God, let it be known this day that *You* are God in Israel, that I’m Your servant, and that I’ve done all these things according to Your word.” and He said, “Hear me O Lord that the people may know that You have turned their hearts back to You again.” and Fire fell from heaven and consumed the sacrifice, lapped up the water, the wood and even the rocks, and the people all began to cry out, “The Lord, He is God!” Elijah said, “Don’t let 1 of the prophets of Baal escape,” so they seized them and brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed all 450 of them right there.

Now you recall that there had been 3 ½ yrs of drought prior to this. Elijah had said it’s not going to rain except at my word. And now that its obvious that Baal was unable to provide for and meet the needs of the people, and his prophets are dead, Elijah says to Ahab, “The rain is coming you better take off.” So Ahab went down the Mt, Elijah went up further and prayed 7 times persistently until the rain/monsoon came, God had told him that He’d send the rain and so Elijah persisted until the reality of the word of God was manifest, another lesson for you and me to glean from. Not to grow weary in doing well, in being persistent in prayer, seek God continually, and consistently until the reality of God’s Word is made manifest in your life. If there’s a certain sin, or snare you’re struggling with continue to pray and seek the Lord until He works deliverance in your life, don’t stop praying about it (well apparently its hopeless) no, God wants to do the work, He’s teaching you persistence in prayer and dependence upon Him.

Elijah had what we'd refer to as a radical Mt Top experience, this was an extremely high time in his life, a pinnacle point, emotionally overwhelming, physically draining, but man God was moving. The hand of the Lord came upon Elijah and he set a world record in running even before Ahab's chariot back to Jezreel before the rains were able to polarize them where they were at.

And I don't know if you've ever noticed it, if you've walked with the Lord for a while you probably have experienced it to some degree. But often times fresh on the heels of high times in the Lord are equally low lows, and sometimes (I think) the Lord is simply allowing balance in our lives, lest we begin to get puffed up, it's like He allows the scales to be balanced. But then other times its like the enemy is just out to sterilize us, and eliminate us as effective components in a given equation. And the bible tells us that Elijah was man of like passions just like you and me, he didn't leap buildings in a single bound, or catch bullets in his teeth, he was subject to the same full spectrum of emotions as you and I are.

Ch 19 finds him just fresh off the Mt Top, falling down into the den and the dump of depression and despair. But even though he rode the roller coaster of emotional ups and downs, and there was some instability and uncertainty, what you need to understand is that God still used his life. Translation, there are times that you struggle with discouragement, find yourself vacillating and unstable, you ride the roller coaster of emotional ups and downs. But the bible says, "*As a father pities his children, So the LORD pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.*" Ps 103:13-14 We have a High Priest who's familiar with our weaknesses and intercedes for us accordingly, and God still wants to use your life, He wants to work healing and times of refreshing in you, bring you out of the den of despair and get you walking in His will, His way again.

Vs1-3

Perhaps his servant was too tired to keep going, or Elijah thought it was too dangerous for his servant and wanted to get some distance between them, or perhaps the servant was fearful and wanted to be some place other than where Elijah was, we don't know. But there are a few things that we need to see here. #1 We've noted as we've gone along that Elijah was a man who had a powerful prayer life. He prayed that it wouldn't rain, for 3 ½ yrs it didn't rain. He prayed for the life of the widow's son in Zarephath to be restored to him and it was. He prayed for fire to fall from heaven and it did, he prayed for the rain to come again, and it was like a hurricane, and with Elijah's prayers came a sense of confidence, of certainty in what God was doing, because he was communicating with God. He was dialed in, he spoke to God, God spoke to him, but did you notice what element was missing with this particular confrontation? Prayer, through prayer and the promise of God's Word, Elijah was able to stand boldly before a nation, its king, and 450 false prophets who wanted to see him dead. But I don't see any prayer here, no direction from God's Word for his life, he just responds in the natural.

And that's never a healthy thing to do, because the inclination of my flesh will always lead me in a way that's contrary to the Spirit.

Now back in vs 46 of ch 18 we seen how having been prayed up, moving in the miraculous, the hand of the Lord came upon Elijah. But it would seem to me that Elijah took that unction of the Spirit and utilized it to move in a direction that God didn't lead him, namely to Jezreel. I don't think I need to bring examples to the table of how men genuinely gifted of God can take that anointing, that coming upon of the Lord in their lives and utilize it in a manner that God never intended. All you have to do is watch TBN, it's easy to use the gifts of God, for the profit of the flesh. Now I'm in no way saying that Elijah is in that company here, but what I am suggesting that perhaps even though God was moving in his life, He never led him to go to Jezreel, he took that upon himself. We don't see him praying before that decision in regards to that decision, we don't see God telling him to go there, he just goes. And we've seen before in the scriptures how that just because God is moving, that doesn't mean that God is approving of the circumstance.

Moses struck the rock when God told him to speak to the rock, now water still flowed forth, God still moved in the situation, saved millions alive, but he didn't approve of what Moses did. And there's no way I can be certain but it would seem to me that this is a similar circumstance, Elijah is moving, God is still with him, but that doesn't signal God's approval. And the point is that when Elijah was moving in the clear direction of God's will via prayer and God's Word, Elijah was a different man. But here he didn't pray, he didn't wait on God's leading, he just responded in the natural, and it's costing him. He just took the situation into his own hands, did what he thought he needed to do, how often we do this. And we find ourselves in a depressed mess, just like Elijah.

But we notice the seared conscience of Jezebel. Ahab comes in, tells her all the things he's heard and seen in and from Elijah and rather than falling on her knees in open confession of error of following Baal, and the need to turn to the Lord, she sends a message to Elijah saying, "The gods do so to me and more if you're not as one of those prophets by this time tomorrow!" It's amazing how calloused a person can become, this is reminiscent of the Pharaoh whom having seen all the miraculous workings of God refused to repent but rather hardened his heart and suppressed God's people. The bible talks about people that refuse to worship God being given over to a debased mind, and those whom having refused to believe the truth will be given over to a lie. Elijah just showed the nation how impotent and unable Baal is to do anything, yet in the callousness of her own heart she refuses to open her eyes. Now of course Elijah was hoping that what had just happened would bring about national revival, but instead, as if he was a wanted man before, now he's #1 on the nations F.B.I. dead or alive list, and there's a huge reward on him (kind of a thing). The whole thing seems to have backfired.

So what does he do? He takes off, didn't consult God or nothing, he flees for his life. Again its interesting that the man who told the widow of Zarephath not to fear, yet here he's afraid, the man who stood firm before the nation, and before 450 false prophets is now faltering

before 1 woman, the man who's watched God move again and again, is moving apart from God. He's been with out fear this whole time, now he falters at that very point, it's like when the meekest man on the planet (Moses) goes irate on the people, Ab the father of faith, failing in his faith lying about his wife. The bible says, "*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*" 1 Cor 10:12 So often its at that point that we're most secure in our minds that we're the most unguarded in reality, because we have self confidence there, rather than Christ confidence, and it will cost us every time. Be careful regarding the areas of your confidence, the enemy loves to get us trusting in ourselves, because it's a sure snare. By the time he's finished running here he's gone no less than 80 miles, he drops his servant off, and notice vs 4.

Vs4

Man how we can relate with this! "God I've had enough, apparently my ministry is a failure, just kill me now!" He's discouraged, depressed, despondent, and dejected, but this is what I was speaking about a minute ago, from the top of Mt Carmel, to the wilderness of despair, from 1 extreme to the other in a matter of a day or so. But again we notice on the physical side he had just been through a radical experience, he was physically exhausted, possibly some sleep deprivation here, and he's just out of it. God has made us physical beings, and sometimes the most spiritual thing we can do is to get some physical rest. Elijah was wiped out, and he's not thinking straight, "God just take my life." He didn't mean that, if he'd have really meant that all he'd have had to do was stay right there and Jezebel would've been all too happy to oblige him.

But that's why he fled, because he didn't want to die. But when we're physically tapped so often we say things we don't mean, that we later come to regret. God help us to watch our mouths. The bible says, "*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.*" Col 4:6 But too often we disengage our brains and set our mouths on auto pilot, and that's such a dangerous combination. Elijah's in the pit of self-pity, and this man, whom ironically enough has still never died physically, is praying for death. We should be glad that God doesn't always answer our prayers in the affirmative. Right now Elijah's like Peter, eyes on the storm rather than the Lord and consequently he's sinking.

Vs5-7

Notice how physically out of it he was, he fell asleep, was awoke by an angel, stayed apparently just coherent to have a piece of angel food cake and crashed back out, until he was woke up again for another slice. As we said earlier, God knows our frame, and that we just but dust, and He pities us as a father pities his children. And what we're seeing here is that in the midst of Elijah's despair ( And he's not out of it yet) but even still God *touch*ed him, nurtured him, allowed him to be physically refreshed and gave to him the strength to carry on even though he was going in a different direction than God desired.

But even though Elijah was going in a direction, God in His love wouldn't abandon him, He never left him, nor forsook him, because He wasn't finished with him. God knew he was going to continue heading south, but He would be with him, and seek to minister to him.

Now again God's not telling him to head south, simply that he knows the journey that he's taking is too great for him. Would to God that we'd all realize that reality, that the journey we're taking in this life is too great for us, we need God's touch, God's nourishment in our lives if we're to make it. We see here in these vs a cake of bread, and water, a picture of the Word of God and the Spirit of God nourishing him that he might make the journey. How we need to feed on the Word of God, and have the Spirit of God flowing through us if we're to complete the journey, we just can't do it apart from His aid to our lives.

Vs8

Another couple hundred miles give or take, now Horeb is also called as you may know, "Mt Sinai." The Mt of God where Moses seen the burning bush, received the 10 commandments, saw the glory of God pass by him and all, and now Elijah is retreating to this area. And of course we could see all kinds of things in this mention of his 40 day fast. Moses did the same thing, the children of Israel went for 40 yrs in the desert on manna, now Elijah is going 40 days on this apparently amazingly nutritious bread. Moses went up on the Mt the 2<sup>nd</sup> time with out any food or water for 40 days right after the children of Israel had fallen into idolatry and 3,000 were put to death over that whole golden calf thing. And now Elijah having slain 450 false prophets, with the nation being overtaken with idolatry finds himself fasting there on the Mt of God 40 days and nights just the same. Jesus fasted for 40 days in the wilderness, of course Jesus, Moses and Elijah were together on the Mt of Transfiguration. So there's no doubt some interesting connotations here that could be pursued. But we read,

Vs9-10

People wonder if this was the place that Moses was when the Lord passed by him, probably not, that was called a cleft, this is called a cave, but it's possible I suppose. But the point is that he's still wallowing in the dark den of depression and despair. He's consumed in the cave of condemnation and self-criticism. And we do well to note the question God asks him, He says, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Time for a little self-evaluation. And anytime we find ourselves in this place, or really at anytime in our walk this is a good question to consider. What are you doing here? What's the purpose, what's the point? What are you looking to accomplish here? Now as it relates to depression the bible says, "*Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression,*" Prov 12:25 and surely we've seen that displayed in Elijah's life. But for you and me, if we're wallowing in despair and despondency, the question is, what are you doing there? Elijah look how God has used your life, look what He's done *for* you, wants to do *through* you, He's blessed you, protected you, provided for and guided you every step of the way. Now what are you doing *here*? The bible says, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*" Eph 1:3 and Again, "*...His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,*" 2 Peter 1:3

And on and on you could go as it relates to what God has done for us, how He's there to take care of us, what He wants to do through us, and just the incredible ways by which He's blessed us, forgiven us, redeemed us, loved us. And yet we have the audacity to wallow in self-pity, despair and dejection, what are you doing here Elijah!?

But he doesn't answer what, he answers why, and even at that he over exaggerates the situation. But that's what *isolation*-mingled with *desperation* will get you, a self-pitied point of view filled with *exaggeration*. I'm the only one who's left, I'm sold out to you, they're all blowing life, they've killed all your other prophets, and now they're after me. He's not the only one left, they haven't killed all the prophets, and there are plenty of others sold out to the Lord. He's just being introspective, he's not considering the prophets of Baal that no longer exist, the protection and provision of God towards his life, and ironically every reason he gave in order to want to die, if they were true would be the very reason he should live! If he really were the only point of light left in the nation, he should *want* to remain there as long as possible, he should *want* to be the instrument of God to overthrow the wicked ways of Jezebel. Rather than just throwing in the towel and writing everyone else off, they're with out hope, being with out God in the world, they need to see the light, but Elijah's given up, he's done, we're seeing here the twisted rationale and the unreasonable nature of fear and unbelief.

#### Vs11-12

What's happening here? Elijah was a man who moved in the miraculous, big signs and wonders, but in this instance regarding the earth, wind and fire God wasn't using any of those things to reveal Himself. But after the radical winds, the massive earthquake, and the fire reminiscent of the scene viewed by the children of Israel on that very Mt, there was a still small voice. Or a delicate whisper, what's God saying here? So often we look for God to speak to us in thunderous ways, supernatural happenings, mystic manifestations but generally speaking that's not God's way. Elijah is bumming because the fireworks display on Mt Carmel didn't turn the nation around. God is saying it's not the supernatural scenes and mystic manifestations going on *around* people that turn them to Me, but rather it's the work, the witness and reality of My Word *in* the people that turn their hearts towards Me. Notice that when all the big events were happening, Elijah wasn't moved to go stand in the entrance of the cave like he was told. But when the Lord whispered into his heart, he knew that God was there. And God's telling him it's the same way with other people, the wonders are great, but the it's the work of God's word working quietly in their hearts that will move them in the direction God desires.

#### Vs13

This wrapping of his face means that he was cognizant of the presence of God. Moses covered his face in the presence of God, in Isa we read where the Seraphim cover their faces with 2 of their wings, there's just something about the presence of God and the holiness therein that causes us to cover ourselves. Elijah knew that he was in the presence of God.

#### Vs14

Elijah still isn't tracking, he's not responding to the Lord according to the question.

## Vs15-17

God says to him, it's time to quit wallowing around here, get back in the game. Go back, its just an unhealthy thing to linger around in the pit of depression, God gave him rest, touched his life, gave him the strength to carry on, gave him an opportunity to vent. But enough is enough, its time to focus on something other than yourself. And in essence though it would be a # of year through discipleship, God essentially says, "Your ministry is over. If you don't want to do it, there's someone else who will. You're all worried about being the only one, you're not the only one, go anoint Elisha to take over." Now again God will still use Elijah's life in the interim period, He's still not finished with Elijah's life, but if Elijah doesn't want to minister on God's behalf, then He won't make him. Now there are other's who see this as further restoration, giving Elijah a friend someone to come alongside him and be there with him, and that may very well be, I have no issue with that whatsoever. And when it comes to being depressed, rest, refocusing, and a good godly friend are great remedies. And God is letting him know that his ministry hasn't been a failure, the work will carry on, God always has a remnant, and by the way.

## Vs18

Sometimes we can't see the forest for the tree in front of our face, but seeing things from God's perspective can really encourage us. You're not alone, God has people who are faithful to Him going through things just like you all over the place. The enemy wants you to feel isolated. "No one's going through what you're going through, not like you're going through it.." Nonsense, our struggles are common to man, and greater is He who is in you than he that is of this world, as long as you cleave to Jesus Christ And keep your heart and mind stayed on Him, He's going to take care of your life.

## Vs19-21

God's going to use Elisha in an awesome way as well, but how does he start out? As a servant, the days of small things, but look at the type of man he was. In his case he had a wealthy family, in times of famine, he had 12 oxen (would be like having 12 Rolls-Royce's in a time of economic recession and depression). But notice he was out there, last in line, 5 other guys in front of him, and he's eating their dust (literally) plowing in the back. The 1<sup>st</sup> will be last and the last 1<sup>st</sup>. He was busy, God seems to find people who are workers to enlist them, Moses tending the sheep, David tending the sheep, Gideon threshing wheat, the disciples on the job fishing, Elisha plowing the field. God's going to use him to bust up the fallow grounds of the hearts of the nation, but 1<sup>st</sup> he's got to be disciplined and prepared for the work. And when Elijah threw his mantle on him, he knew exactly what that meant, and he forsook all, even sacrificing his oxen to pursue God's call on his life, no turning back. He grabbed a hold of the plow that God placed in his hand, and never looked back, God help us to have the same testimony.

(That we would be a people who prayed 1<sup>st</sup> not last, that even when we fail You love us, reach out to us, and are there for us, give us ears to hear the still small voice, that the work of Your word would guide our lives, and that like Elisha we'd burn our bridges, and follow You with all our hearts, and be Your servant, to fulfill Your purpose and plan for our lives.)