

Sunday Morning Message

June 30, 2019

Dealing with Discouragement?

Edited from a message previously preached on June 3, 2012 from the *Mighty Men of God Series*; also preached on September 7, 2014

Text – 1 Kings 19

Congregational Reading – 1 Kings 19:9 & 10

Introduction

Did you ever feel like you were all alone? Did you ever feel like you were the only one who cares? Did you ever get discouraged to the point where you just wanted to throw in the towel and give up on everything, but particularly give up serving God?

Illustrate – Spurgeon “When a Preacher Is Downcast”

Fits of depression come over the most of us. Cheerful as we may be, we must at intervals be cast down. The strong are not always vigorous, the wise not always ready, the brave not always courageous, and the joyous not always happy.

There may be here and there men of iron to whom wear and tear work no perceptible detriment, but surely the rust frets even these; and as for ordinary men, the Lord knows and makes them to know that they are but dust.

In our passage today that is exactly where we find Elijah. He is down. He is very discouraged. He feels like he is the only one that cares at all about the things of God. He wants to quit. He wants out.

The amazing thing is that this discouragement – this deep depression – came right after a tremendous victory. God had just used Elijah to call down fire from heaven. The 450 prophets of Baal as well as the 450 prophets of the grove had just been eliminated, and Israel was experiencing revival. And it was finally raining, after a drought of 3 and one half years. Things were certainly looking up.

Let’s back up a little, and review some of what has happened in the life of Elijah prior to the events from 1 Kings 19:

God first sent King Ahab and the people of Israel a warning (a reminder):

"And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." (1 Kings 17:1)

God then sent judgment (retribution) – no rain for 3 years and 6 months (according to James 5:17)

During this time, Elijah is being hidden from the king, and God took care of him through the ravens at the Brook Cherith, and then through the widow woman at Zarephath.

After 3 and one half years, Elijah reappears on the scene, sets up a challenge at Mt. Carmel between God, and the false prophets of Baal (450), and the prophets of the grove (400). (Explain what happens)

At the end of chapter 18, we see Elijah running back to Jezreel in a rainstorm, a distance of some twenty miles:

"And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel." - (1 Kings 18:45-46)

Why then would Elijah be discouraged after all that He had just seen God do? Why would Elijah leave the place of his ministry – Israel?

This morning, we will examine 1 Kings 19, and we will discover the reasons why Elijah got discouraged to the point of quitting. We will answer the question, “What are you doing here – Elijah?” And maybe we will discover some parallels to our lives today, and perhaps make some applications to our lives, so that we can avoid quitting on God.

I Elijah is Running Away and Running Down (vs. 1 – 4)

Remember, Elijah already ran some twenty miles from Mt. Carmel to Jezreel, and now he is running from Queen Jezebel who has vowed to kill him; and he runs all the way to Beersheba, which is at the southern border of the southern Kingdom of Judah.



Elijah had to be physically exhausted. First he had the emotional stress of the meeting on Mt. Carmel; next he runs in a rainstorm to Jezreel; then he is running for his life from Jezebel. Not only was he physically exhausted, he had to be emotionally spent. He went from being public enemy # 1 to being the hero of the people, and then back to being public enemy # 1 again.

Notice in v. 4 – he wants to die. He asks God to kill him. I think it is a bit ironic that God still hasn't taken his life. He was one of only two men in the Bible that has not yet seen death. God took him.

II Elijah Is Rejuvenated but Runs Some More (vs. 5 – 8)

Notice that God came and ministered to him at his hour of need. God knows what we need. God sent Elijah an angel. God may send you a person to minister to you.

He slept a little; he ate some food; and he was strengthened for an even longer journey.

Notice he fasted for forty days as he travelled to Mt Horeb, which is on the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula.

III Elijah Is Replaced By Elisha (vs. 9 – 18)

Vs. 9 & 10 – Elijah is still discouraged. He thinks he is the only one that cares about God. He thinks that he is all by himself. He is a little bit bitter at God. Lester Roloff said that he was having a “pity party”, which I guess is true, but I understand how he felt, because I have been there myself.

Vs. 11 – 12 - Notice that God spoke to Him in a still small voice.

Vs. 13 – 14 – Elijah repeats his complaint to God.

Vs. 15 – 17 – Elijah has to anoint his own replacement.

V. 19 – The ministry of God – the Lord's work does not rest solely on your shoulders. God will gladly use you if you are gladly willing to be used, but if you ever get to the place where the ministry becomes drudgery, or a chore; or you begin to think that God can't function without your help, God will replace you.

If you quit on God, you will soon regret it. I have seen it countless times where people are serving, and then they step down because the ministry is too much for them; but then a few months later they want back in; but oftentimes they can't quite get back to where they once were.

Conclusion

Why do people in the ministry get this deep in discouragement?

- 1 They are not completely fulfilling God's will for their life in the first place.**

God has a plan for your life, and you will never be fulfilled unless you are doing what God has called you to do.

They are not doing what God wants them to do.

They are pursuing pleasure instead of purpose.

They are not totally surrendered to God.

They are not giving God 100% effort.

They are not ministering to others.

They are distracted by the world.

They are caught up in sin.

2 They are physically weak or emotionally drained.

They are not taking time to refresh spiritually (time with God)

If you are ministering to people, you are carrying their burdens as well as your own. You need to get strengthened through a daily walk with the Lord. (Prayer, Bible Reading, Church)

They are not taking time to rest physically.

They are not taking time for recreation.

They are not taking time for restoration.

Jesus told the disciples to come apart.

Paul wrote to the church at Galatia:

*"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." -
(Galatians 6:9)*

If we are not supposed to quit, we had better get the spiritual refreshment, physical rest, recreation, and sometimes restoration that we need so that we can permanently stay in the game.

3 They Are Under Attack

If you are in the battle for God, and God is using you to poke some holes in the darkness around you, you will be attacked by the devil:

Illustrate – Job; Paul (thorn in the flesh – the messenger of Satan); Peter (Satan hath desired you that he may sift you like wheat)

The devil may attack you physically; he may attack you through those that are close to you.

You will also be attacked by the world. We are at war. This is a battle, and there will be enemies; and though God may use us to reach some people, maybe even many people, there will be many others that will be furious, and will attack us.

4 They are experiencing difficult times of testing and trial

The Death of a Loved One

Family Problems

Physical Pain

The Physical Pain of Someone Close To You

Financial Problems

Failure

I have wanted to quit, but I don't want to quit. I want to die serving inside the will of God and still in the battle. I don't want to be replaced. I may have to someday do some things differently, and my specific role may change somewhat, but I don't want to quit, and I don't want God to be forced to replace me.

Some of you need to get into the battle. You may be fighting something, but your not fighting for God. And that may be why you are discouraged.

But some of you are in the Lord's army, and fighting God's battle – if you are going to stay encouraged, then you better get some spiritual refreshment, and some physical rest; some recreation at times; and even some restoration; so that you can have the strength that you need to keep fighting. You may need to get some counsel – it helps to talk to someone.

You may need to help someone else. Helping someone else with their problems will encourage you with yours.

Illustrate – Bake some cookies for others

Whatever you do – Don't Quit!