

OVERCOMING DEPRESSION

“I’m the only One”

Introduction-

*Have you ever been depressed because you felt your work wasn't appreciated, your trials weren't understood, your ministry was rejected, and that you were **the only one**?*

I think that all of us, at one time or another, have felt alone in our circumstances, almost sure that no one could appreciate the situation we were in. And even if we got to the place where we thought there were those who understood, we didn't think they cared or stood with us. Any show of hands?

We are going to look at a slice in the life of a man who came to believe he was the only one. His sense of isolation was so great that he asked the Lord to take his life.

1 Kings 19:3-4

3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there,

4 while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." NIV

If one knows anything about the prophet Elijah and his importance in Scripture (both historical and prophetic), this verse is startling. To understand how he came to this place in his life and ministry, one must understand his times, his trials, and his temptations.

His Times-

1 Kings 17:1 NIV

Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word."

And thus Elijah appears in Scripture, suddenly, abruptly and powerfully. To get a sense of what is going on here, one must back up a few verses.

1 Kings 16:29-34

29 In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years.

30 **Ahab son of Omri did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him.**

31 He not only **considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam** son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and began to serve Baal and worship him.

32 He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria.

33 Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him.

34 In Ahab's time, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the LORD spoken by Joshua son of Nun. NIV

It was to King Ahab that Elijah prophesied about the drought as a divine judgment. Sometimes we read phrases like “did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him” and gloss over it. To help us gain some perspective of Ahab’s evil, it may do us well to consider all the Kings of Israel that went before him (not to mention Saul, David, Solomon, and Rehoboam!).

1. Jeroboam, son of Nebat – Reign 930-909 BC – 22 years
 - ❑ Was a rebel – 1 Kings 11:26
 - ❑ Instituted golden calf worship in Israel – 1 Kings 12:26-30
 - ❑ Corrupted the institution of the priesthood – 1 Kings 12:31; 13:33-34
 - ❑ Made himself a priest/king – 1 Kings 12:32-33
 - ❑ Replaced the Feast of Tabernacles – 1 Kings 12:33
 - ❑ Had shrines built in the high places – 1 Kings 13:33-34
2. Nadab, son of Jeroboam – Reign 909-908 BC – 2 years
 - ❑ Same sins of idol worship as his father Jeroboam – 1 Kings 15:25-26
3. Baasha, son of Ahijah – Reign 908-886 BC – 24 years
 - ❑ Rebel, “conspired against him” – 1 Kings 15:27
 - ❑ Murderer, “did slay him” i.e., had him put to death – 1 Kings 15:28; 16:7 KJV
 - ❑ Slaughtered Jeroboam’s household – 1 Kings 15:29
 - ❑ Guilty of all of Jeroboam’s sins – 1 Kings 15:34-16:2
4. Elah, son of Baasha – Reign 886-885 BC – 2 years
 - ❑ Drunkard – 1 Kings 16:9
 - ❑ Same sins of idol worship as his father Baasha – 1 Kings 16:13
5. Zimri - Reign 885 BC – 7 days (1 Kings 16:18)
 - ❑ Rebel chariot commander – 1 Kings 16:9-10, 20
 - ❑ Remained idolatrous – 1 Kings 16:19
 - ❑ Treasonous – 1 Kings 16:20 KJV
 - ❑ Murderer – 1 Kings 16:10-13
 - ❑ Arsonist – 1 Kings 16:18
 - ❑ Committed suicide – 1 Kings 16:18
6. Tibni - Reign 885-880 BC – 4 years
 - ❑ Waged a civil war for four years – 1 Kings 16:21
7. Omri - Reign 885-874 BC – 12 years
 - ❑ Led a civil war against Tibni – 1 Kings 16:21-22
 - ❑ Sinned more than Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, or Tibni – 1 Kings 16:25
 - ❑ Idol worship like Jeroboam – 1 Kings 16:26

In light of all these men, the Lord considered Ahab more evil than them all. Not only did he think that Jeroboam's sins were trivial (never mind that they got him and his whole family wiped out), he also married Jezebel, who introduces Sidonian Baal worship in Israel. Not only that, he set up an Asherah pole and angered the Lord God of Israel more than those who had gone before him.

[Baal was worshipped with human sacrifice, burning the victims alive in the fire (2 Kings 16:3). Asherah was worshipped by temple prostitution, both male and female.]

This was the context of the times when we first see Elijah appear. At his word, he stops the rain. For the next three and a half years he is in hiding as Ahab and Jezebel seek him out.

One last note, it was during Ahab's time that the walls of Jericho were rebuilt. This shows how little respect men had for the prophetic word, even as it was fulfilled in their day.

His Trials-

1 Kings 18:1-15

- 1 After a long time, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: "Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land."
- 2 So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria,
- 3 and Ahab had summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of his palace. (Obadiah was a devout believer in the LORD.
- 4 While Jezebel was killing off the LORD's prophets, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves, fifty in each, and had supplied them with food and water.)
- 5 Ahab had said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs and valleys. Maybe we can find some grass to keep the horses and mules alive so we will not have to kill any of our animals."
- 6 So they divided the land they were to cover, Ahab going in one direction and Obadiah in another.
- 7 As Obadiah was walking along, Elijah met him. Obadiah recognized him, bowed down to the ground, and said, "Is it really you, my lord Elijah?"
- 8 "Yes," he replied. "Go tell your master, 'Elijah is here.'"
- 9 "What have I done wrong," asked Obadiah, "that you are handing your servant over to Ahab to be put to death?"
- 10 As surely as the LORD your God lives, **there is not a nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to look for you. And whenever a nation or kingdom claimed you were not there, he made them swear they could not find you.**
- 11 But now you tell me to go to my master and say, 'Elijah is here.'
- 12 I don't know where the Spirit of the LORD may carry you when I leave you. If I go and tell Ahab and he doesn't find you, he will kill me. Yet I your servant have worshiped the LORD since my youth.
- 13 Haven't you heard, my lord, what I did while Jezebel was killing the prophets of the LORD? I hid a hundred of the LORD's prophets in two caves, fifty in each, and supplied them with food and water.
- 14 And now you tell me to go to my master and say, 'Elijah is here.' He will kill me!"

15 Elijah said, "As the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, I will surely present myself to Ahab today." NIV

Verse 10 tells us that Elijah had been a wanted man, but had eluded discovery and capture during the drought. Now the Lord is ready to allow him to release heaven at his command. The stage is set for confrontation.

1 Kings 18:17-24

17 When he saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is that you, you troubler of Israel?"

18 "I have not made trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "But you and your father's family have. You have abandoned the LORD's commands and have followed the Baals.

19 Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table."

20 So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel.

21 Elijah went before the people and said, "How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him." But the people said nothing.

22 Then Elijah said to them, "**I am the only one of the LORD's prophets left**, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets.

23 Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it.

24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire-he is God." Then all the people said, "What you say is good." NIV

One cannot fault Elijah's boldness, prophetic power, or even his obedience. But look carefully at verse 22, "I am the only one of the Lord's prophets left." Obadiah had just told him how he had saved the lives of 100 prophets and hidden them in caves. How could he think himself alone? And here we see a danger sign. "It's me against the world." "I am all alone in this." Even though his actions don't betray this attitude, his words do. And out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

1 Kings 18:23-29

23 Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it.

24 Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire-he is God." Then all the people said, "What you say is good."

25 Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire."

26 So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. "O Baal, answer us!" they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.

27 At noon Elijah began to taunt them. "Shout louder!" he said. "Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened."

28 So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed.

29 Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention. NIV

For a full day, Elijah puts up with and withstands the antics of the prophets of Baal. When it becomes painfully obvious (pun intended) that Baal is not going to respond, Elijah swings into action.

1 Kings 18:30-39

30 Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come here to me." They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which was in ruins.

31 Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Your name shall be Israel."

32 With the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs of seed.

33 He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, "Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood."

34 "Do it again," he said, and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he ordered, and they did it the third time.

35 The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.

36 At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command.

37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."

38 Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.

39 When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD-he is God! The LORD-he is God!" NIV

Do you remember the verse "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16b)? It speaks of Elijah. Do you think we can learn some lessons about prayer from Elijah? Absolutely!

Prayer Points:

- ❑ He timed his prayer to coincide with the evening sacrifice in Jerusalem ("the time for the evening sacrifice" "at the time of sacrifice" – verses 29, 36).
- ❑ He rebuilt the altar, bringing people back to its establishment.
- ❑ He used twelve stones, signifying the unity of Israel.
- ❑ He appealed to covenant in the prayer ("God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob").
- ❑ He had a sacrifice on the altar (no sacrifice, no fire!).

1 Kings 18:40

Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize the prophets of Baal. Don't let anyone get away!" They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there. NIV

Not content with just showing them up, Elijah pressed the fight and had the prophets killed!

We began with Elijah asking the Lord to take his life. Following is a quick synopsis of all that happened prior to that request (1 Kings 18:1-19:3):

- From morning to evening, dealt with the prophets of Baal.
- Built the altar and sacrificed the animal, calling fire down from heaven.
- Supervised the slaughter of at least 450 and at the most 850 false prophets.
- Ran over 20 miles from Mt. Carmel to Jezreel ahead of Ahab's chariot.
- Traveled 95 miles from Jezreel to Beersheba after receiving Jezebel's message. (Night and day, no rest).
- Traveled an additional day out into the wilderness (15-20 miles at least?).

Thus, we have one full day of spiritual confrontation, one full evening of slaughter, a night and two days of travel – approximately 135 miles of travel in about 36 hours with little to no sleep!

1 Kings 19:1-4

- 1 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword.
- 2 So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."
- 3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there,
- 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." NIV

How God responds to this prayer is a bit ironic. Along with Enoch, Elijah becomes a type of those who do not die but are gathered up to heaven! But that is another lesson for another day.

His Temptation-

Anyone who despairs of life is depressed. Elijah lays down in the desert in exhaustion ready to die and be gathered to his fathers.

1 Kings 19:5-8

- 5 Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat."
- 6 He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.
- 7 The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you."
- 8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. NIV

It is interesting to note how in this narrative, time seems to flow backwards. The walls of Jericho are rebuilt, the wilderness is entered, angel's food is eaten (Ps. 78:24-25), a time period of 40 is traveled, and Elijah ascends Horeb, the mount of God, Sinai.

1 Kings 19:9

There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" NIV

God's question should startle us. What are you doing here, Elijah? Is this place any more special or safe than any other place I might send you? What do you expect to find here that you did not have in Israel? Why have you run away?

1 Kings 19:10-13

10 He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

11 The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper.

13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" NIV

My power is not in the nostalgia of romanticized better days, but in the reality of intimate relationship. What are you doing here, Elijah?

1 Kings 19:14

He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." NIV

I've been zealous for you, but no one cares. Every other prophet is dead. No one in Israel believes. I'm the only one, and they want me dead. Boo, hoo, hoo!! How does the Lord respond?

1 Kings 19:15-17

15 The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram.

16 Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet.

17 Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. NIV

I'm on the throne and will direct history, the Lord says. I'll take care of the house of Ahab. I'll set up rulers and bring others down. And I'll even fill the room of your office. If you are indeed the only one, why are you here? Why aren't you back there doing the work you should be doing? But you are far from being the only one.

1 Kings 19:18

Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him." NIV

His temptation, to react to rejection, persecution and apostasy with despondency and depression, is the same we face and is caused by lack of perspective. We forget in times like that that even if we were truly alone, we wouldn't be because:

Rom 8:31

What, then, shall we say in response to this? **If God is for us, who can be against us?** NIV

Heb 13:5

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, **because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."** NIV

What lessons can we learn from all this?

- The danger of falling prey to temptation of any kind is much greater after a success than a failure. Why? Humbleness is more natural when we are down. Pride is more likely when we are up. After defeating an enemy, we have a tendency to let our guard down.

1 Cor 10:12 "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." NKJV

- Even our trials are not special or specific. They are common. In that they are common, the feeling that "I'm the only one" is really a lie. Not only are our temptations and trials common to all, they all have a door out. This means that when we fall to temptation, it is only because we have decided not to escape, not to take the Way out! (Therefore there is no excuse!)

1 Cor 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. NKJV

- Jesus was tempted in all ways like as we are and yet without sin. He is the Way out. There is no situation, success or failure, that He does not understand or that He cannot help us in.

Heb 4:14-16

14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

15 For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. NKJV

Heb 2:17-18 NKJV

17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

18 For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

➤ Finally, God is to be found in daily renewal not in the nostalgia of a bygone era.

Eph 3:13-21

13 Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,

17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--

19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

NKJV

AMEN!