

Gloom! Despair! And Agony on Me! – Part I

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church

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September 6, 2026

Text: I Kings 19:1-10; Psalm 42:1-11

Purpose: There are times in our lives when it seems life is just not worth living. Sometimes those feelings of depression seem to linger long and stay with us. The prophet Elijah faced those same feelings when threatened by Queen Jezebel. This sermon will examine the misery of the prophet and the key to refocusing your life.

Years ago, on the program “Hee Haw” there was a segment that featured four men sitting around with moonshine jugs whaling about how bad life was. After a series of tragedies shared and lamented, they would break out into song.



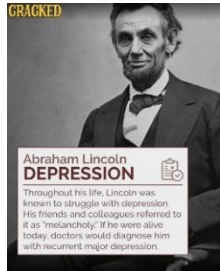
Gloom! Despair! Agony on Me!
Deep dark depression excessive misery.
If it weren't for bad luck, I'd have no luck at all!
Gloom! Despair! Agony on Me!

Gloom Despair Agony on Me – Hee Haw Clip

<https://music.youtube.com/watch?v=-IIKE9p5SEw>

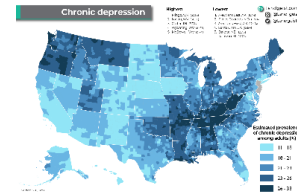
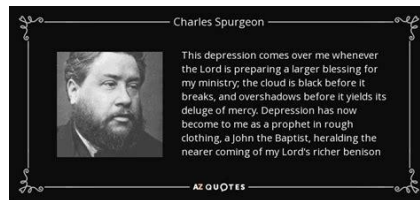
If we were all honest with ourselves and others, we would have to admit things and events in life can overwhelm us. We can wallow in our circumstances and feel as if life is just not worth living. We need to realize this is a common event in all people's lives.

It may shock us to find out that even great men and women go through periods of deep, dark depression. For instance, Winston Churchill said, ***“Depression followed me around like a black dog all of my life.”***



A young lawyer in the 1800's suffered such a deep depression that his friends did everything they could to keep all razors and knives away from him. He wrote these words, ***“I am now the most miserable man living. Whether I shall be better, I cannot tell. I awfully forebode I shall not.”*** This lawyer later became the 16th president of the United States. His name was Abraham Lincoln.

Even a man by the name of Charles Spurgeon, once called the prince of preachers, was given to periods of depression. History tells us that there were times when Spurgeon would be so depressed that he would refuse to leave his home to go to church. On more than one occasion, his deacons had to come and physically carry the pastor to the pulpit.



While these accounts shock us, they also serve to help us. How? They remind us that depression is a common experience. It is something that often happens in life. In other words, if you go through a time of depression, you are not alone. Notice these facts concerning depression.

- Depression affects all classes, races, ages, groups and genders of people.
- 18.3 % of all Americans are dealing daily with some form of depression. This translates to 47.8 million people (2026).
- Depression affects younger adults (under 30) at the rate of 26.7%.
- Lower income adults 35.1%. And during a lifetime it affects 28.5% of adults.
- Depression is the leading cause of alcoholism, drug abuse, and other addictions. Untreated depression is the number one cause of suicide.

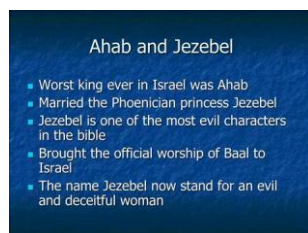
Of course, not all depression is bad. Depression is the bodies' natural reaction to shock. When a time of grief, stress, frustration, or illness occurs, the brain will release chemicals that will serve to numb the mind and body. This is like a shock absorber. However, there are times when the brain and its chemicals become so out of balance that clinical depression may occur. Professionals say that a period of depression lasting over 2 weeks should be considered serious and needs treatment.



Today's scripture passage is taken from I Kings 19:1-8 which identifies one of God's greatest prophets at one of his lowest points in life. Here was a man of God that spoke the word of God to God's people. What Elijah said happened. What Elijah did was successful. And now we find Elijah curled up under a small tree asking God to take his life – He had had enough! He was exhausted and felt as if life was no longer worth living.

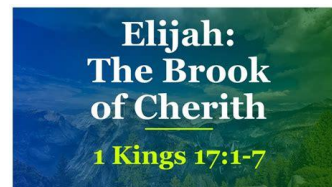
For a few moments this morning I want us to take a look at the misery of the prophet and what happened to get him into this state of depression. Over the next two weeks, we will revisit Elijah and see how the Lord ministered to the prophet and how Elijah was mended.

FIRST, LET'S EXAMINE THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO ELIJAH'S MELTDOWN



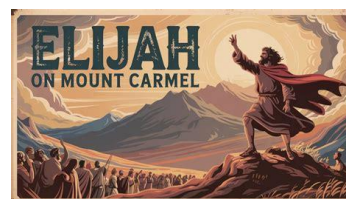
Over the years during our Wednesday night Bible study, we have discussed how the various Kings in the Northern Kingdom as well as Judah did evil in the sight of the Lord. One of the most evil Kings that ruled Israel during that time was one by the name of Ahab and his wife was Jezebel.

As punishment for their disobedience for not following the commandments of the Lord, Elijah told Ahab that no rain would fall in Israel until Elijah commanded it. And you know what, it didn't rain! For three years there was no rain.



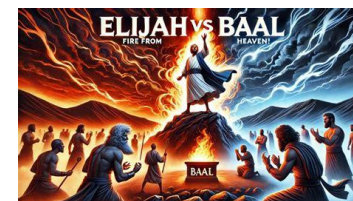
During those three years, Elijah was directed by the Lord to go and live by the Brook Cherith and drink water from the stream and the Lord caused the ravens to bring him meat to eat. When the brook dried up, the Lord instructed him to go and live with a widow at Zarephath who fed him from a jar of flour that never went empty and from a jug of oil that never stopped giving. He even raised the widow's son from the dead one day.

After waiting for three years for Ahab to repent and turn to the Lord, Elijah arranged a meeting between him and Ahab. In that meeting, Elijah proposed a challenge at Mount Carmel.



The challenge was for Ahab to invite all the people of Israel, along with the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah who ate at Jezebel's table daily. They were to meet at Mount Carmel and present a sacrifice to their gods. Elijah would also present an offering to God and whichever God consumed the sacrifice by fire that would be the one true and living God. Ahab agreed and the contest was scheduled.

On the appointed day, Ahab and the prophets of Baal and Asherah came and selected one of the two oxen. They placed the firewood on the altar, they prepared the sacrifice, and then the prophets began to sing and shout and call upon their god to



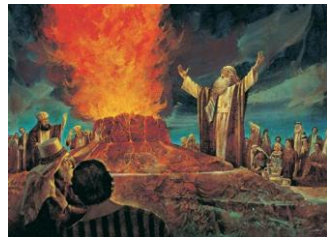
answer their prayers by fire. From early morning, past the noon sacrifice time, there was no answer.

When the time for the afternoon sacrifice came, Elijah mocked them by saying their god was asleep and maybe they needed to yell louder to wake up Baal. So, the prophets yelled louder and even cut themselves to demonstrate their sincerity to Baal. But again, there was no response.

As the time for the evening sacrifice time came, Elijah began to prepare his oxen for the offering. He turned to the people and challenged them “How long will you waiver between two opinions? And the people answered him not a word.”

Elijah turned his attention to the rebuilding the altar. He then placed 12 stones on the altar signifying the twelve tribes of Israel. He placed the firewood on the stones of the altar. He prepared the sacrifice. Then he dug a trench around the altar and had water poured on the offering and the firewood three times until the trench was filled with water.

Then Elijah prayed for God to receive this offering. Suddenly fire fell from heaven and consumed the offering, the stones, the sand and the water. The people of Israel fell on their knees and cried out, “The Lord – He is God!” “The Lord – He is God!”



Elijah had the people capture all the prophets of Baal and they were executed at Brook Kishon. Elijah told Ahab to head home because the rain was coming.



Elijah returned to Mount Carmel and bowed down and prayed for the rain to return. The clouds began to form after Elijah prayed seven times for the Lord to answer.

When Ahab returned home, he told his wife Jezebel how the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Lord God of Israel – YHWH – had answered with fire and all the prophets of Baal had been put to death. When she heard this news, she was furious! She sent word to Elijah that she would see to it he was killed just as the prophets of Baal were.

Jezebel was domineering. She ruled her husband, her household, and she ruled the kingdom. She may have been the queen, but she called all the shots. Ahab was nothing more than the puppet of Jezebel.



When Elijah heard that news, panic overtook him and he was afraid. It is amazing to me that he spent the day with Ahab and spoke boldly to him. But when Jezebel spoke, Elijah was overtaken by fear. Elijah's great success at Mount Carmel was overshadowed by the bounty placed on his head by Jezebel.

THE MISERY OF THE PROPHET¹

The scripture says that Elijah ran. I want you to realize Elijah didn't simply run a few miles away; he ran 125 miles due south. He actually went all the way to the southern border of Judah. He went as far as he could to get away from that evil queen Jezebel.



If that wasn't far enough, Elijah leaves his servant in Beersheba and goes another day's journey into the wilderness and sits down under a juniper or broom tree. It is there that Elijah wants to throw in the towel and give up. He said he wanted God to take his life; it was over. He was alone and could not stand up to the task anymore. He hit rock bottom.

As you can imagine, he was not thinking very clearly. His way of thinking is really irrational. Elijah was at the end of himself and it showed.

We can learn a valuable lesson from Elijah today if these characteristics begin to manifest themselves in our lives. Those key characteristics we should pay attention to are:

1. Elijah cut himself off from those close to him.

He felt he was all alone in the battle against Jezebel and Ahab. He didn't realize that God still had 7,000 followers that had not bowed the knee to Baal in Israel. Elijah didn't know they existed nor did he seek them out.



One of the worse effects of a depressed spirit is the desire to separate oneself from everyone. Many people who become discouraged have a tendency to develop an “*I’m all alone*” or a “*Nobody understands me*” mentality. “**Gloom! Despair! Agony on Me!**”

If these feelings are allowed to go on unhindered the pessimistic person begins to think that they are the only person in the world who is right. It becomes, “*me against them.*” That is a sad, lonely place to be!



You see this kind of thinking in the church at times. A person will become discouraged and will drop out of church saying, “*No one understands me. I just*

don’t fit in.” What they are doing is projecting their own feelings of hopelessness onto those around them. They are looking for a scapegoat to place blame upon so that they do not have to look too closely at themselves. Yet, the fellowship of the church is so important!

Even if the people at church don't understand what you are going through, at least they can pray with you and be a friend to you! We all need people around us!

2. Elijah took his eyes off the Lord and focused on his own circumstances.

When we leave God and His power out of the picture, we are in trouble. That is why we have to “*Turn Our Eyes Upon Jesus.*” We can remember how Peter took a step of faith



out of the boat and took his eyes off the Lord and he began to sink into the water. During our most trying times in life, we need to learn to keep our eyes fixed and focused upon the Lord Jesus.

3. Elijah stopped interceding for others and began focusing on himself.

This was the first time Elijah had prayed for himself. He had forgotten that he was the prophet to Israel. His attention is full of himself. When we become so self-conscious and self-absorbed, that we only think about ourselves, our wants, our needs, our preferences, we are in trouble spiritually.



When we get to the place where everything is about “me”, we need a checkup. Someone that is primarily focused on themselves, is on the verge of a time of discouragement and depression. We must always strive to have a God centered life.

4. Elijah adopted the philosophy, “Life is Hopeless!”



Elijah said, in effect, ***“I’ve had it! I quit!”*** He sat down and he gave up. Elijah felt that life was no longer worth living. As long as we can

remember that there is hope, we can make it through. We need to remember that God is still on the throne, and no matter how bad things become, God is in control! He knows where we are and what we are facing. If His eye

can be concerned about the smallest bird, the sparrow, surely, He will keep His eye on you! God will see us through! At this moment in time, we see Elijah had given up on life, on ministry, and on God.

5. The end of hopelessness resulted in Elijah saying, “I want to die.”

Many people who are depressed have these types of thoughts. However, most are irrational as Elijah was. If he really wanted to die, why didn’t he just stay in Jezreel and let Jezebel take care of it for him? Again, this is just more evidence that he is thinking very irrationally.

All of these things that Elijah said and did are typical of depressed individuals. In fact, it might be helpful to you for me to list some of the symptoms of depression.

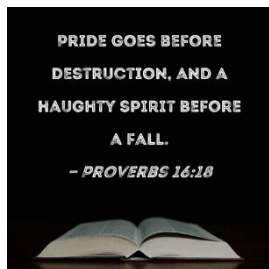


- Lethargy - Everything seems like it’s too much trouble to do.
- Disturbed Sleep - Early waking, difficulty getting to sleep, waking up tired after a normal night’s sleep
- Loss of interest in your usual activities
- Feelings of Guilt, Worthlessness and Hopelessness
- Lack of Concentration
- Irritability
- Exhaustion
- Lack of Sexual Desire
- Sensation of Utter Despair
- Sense of the Hopelessness and Uselessness of Everything

- Fear of Death
- Phobias
- Obsessive Behavior
- Permanent Sense of Anxiety
- Feelings of Wanting to Cry, but inability to do so
- Bouts of Uncontrollable Crying
- Thoughts of Suicide
- Changes in Appetite and Weight
- There Are Many other symptoms. This is not a definitive list by any means.

We need to see that Elijah was rationalizing his situation. Elijah attempts to rationalize his request for death by saying that he was no better than his fathers. Apparently, Elijah had come to believe that he was something special. After all, hadn't God used him in a great way? Hadn't he trusted God and seen the impossible done time and again? Yes, he had, but he was no better than anyone else.

It seems to me that Elijah must have thought that Ahab and Jezebel would repent when they saw what God did. He must have had dreams of leading the whole nation into a great revival. I guess that he thought he was the man of the hour and that the world would fall at his feet. Nothing shocks the system quite so hard as finding out you weren't all that you thought you were! 9th



Could Elijah's problem be *Pride*? Could he have fallen into the trap of believing how great he was? Could he have been caught in the backwash of a great victory and felt as though he was invincible? He believed himself to be more than he was

and when he was reminded that he wasn't what he thought he was, it threw him into the pit of despair!

Every person gathered here has had this problem from time to time. We are all guilty of believing that we are greater than we are in reality. When the truth hits home, it can lead to depression and times of spiritual drought. When we do hit bottom, we are often guilty of trying to rationalize our behavior. We try, like Elijah, to convince ourselves that things are as bad as we think they are. The truth is, they never are, nor will they be, as bad as we think!

I believe there were two primary reasons why Elijah ended up under a tree in the desert asking God to take his life. We need to pay close attention to these two areas as well.

First, Elijah was physically exhausted. If you think about all he did there on Mount Carmel. He alone stood against all the prophets of Baal as well as King Ahab. After taunting them all day, preparing the sacrifice, praying for God to send down the fire to consume the offering, hunting down and killing the prophets of Baal; Elijah was worn out doing ministry! Before calling it a day, Elijah interceded on behalf of Israel seven times for the Lord to send the rains once again.



Then when he heard how Jezebel wanted to have him put to death, Elijah fled for his life. Yes, he was exhausted.

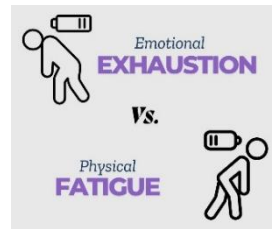
These bodies of ours are not designed to be pushed constantly. The Lord set the calendar of our lives to have a

day of rest. Even the Lord Jesus Christ took time away from His work to rest His body,

Your body needs rest and a break from activity. Let's face the truth; we run from activity to activity, with a cell phone in one hand and a day planner in the other. We stay up late and get up early and never take time for our bodies to rest. This is not what God planned and it can lead to serious trouble for you!

A second point I want to mention is that Elijah was emotionally spent.

This man was drained from the ministry he had been performing. He has been giving out constantly. He was both physically and emotionally drained.



There is an old Greek saying that goes “***You will break the bow if you keep it always bent.***” There are times when you and I must unstring ourselves and relax. If we do not, we will break after a while! God never designed us for the types of pressures we allow ourselves to be subjected to.

Elijah is not the only person in the Bible who had these same feelings. Moses nearly broke under the physical and emotional demands of leading Israel. The Lord helped Moses by giving him 70 assistants to aid him in the work. Another person that comes to my mind is Jonah. Jonah was depressed because of faulty thinking on his part. His primary problem was spiritual. Of course, he too was physically and emotionally drained. God told the prophet what he needed to hear. The Lord set him straight.

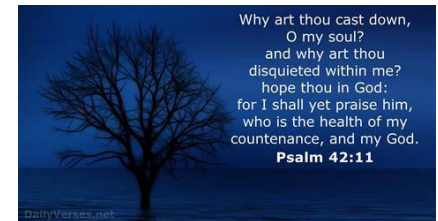
Sometimes our depression can come as a result of faulty spiritual thinking!

While I have never entertained the thought of being better off dead, I too have had moments in my ministry that have caused me to feel exhausted and squeezed. It has been an exhausting summer for us. Hopefully in October, Sharon and I can get away to the mountains just to rest and relax, to pray and listen, and to be recharged and renewed.

So, the next time you feel “***Gloom! Despair! And Agony on Me!***” overtake you, pull back from your circumstances and give it back to God.

Psalms 42:11 gives us the one key to moving from overwhelming despondency: “*Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?*”

Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”



LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Sermon Outline from Sermon Central – I Kings 19:1-21 – The Place of Discouragement