

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

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church

Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.

September 13, 2026

Text: I Kings 19:4-13

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. Part one of this sermon series focused on the misery of the prophet. This sermon focuses on how the Lord ministered unto the prophet.

I don't know if you have seen any of those auction hunter programs on television. There are several ones where individuals go to storage units that are on sale and they are hoping to find a great treasure once they acquire it. If I were to go and buy one of those units, my family would never let me hear the end of it – even if I did find a “priceless” object.



I came across this story this week about a man who went to an auction.



While there, he bid on a parrot. He really wanted this bird, so he got caught up in the bidding. He kept on bidding, but kept getting outbid, so he bid higher and higher and higher.

Finally, after he bid way more than he intended, he won the bid - the parrot was his at last!

As he was paying for the parrot, he said to the auctioneer, "I sure hope this parrot can talk. I would hate to have paid this much for it, only to find out that he can't talk!"

"Don't worry," said the auctioneer,

"He can talk. Who do you think kept bidding against you?"¹

Sometimes it seems as if other voices are causing us to do things we never intended to do. We need to be very careful to listen to the right advice (the word of God) so we do not get caught up by strange voices and led astray.



Last week, I introduced the prophet Elijah to you and we found him far from home wishing to die. For those that were not here, I guess I should give you a brief summary to catch you up to the events I want to focus on this morning.

Years ago there was a television program called "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!



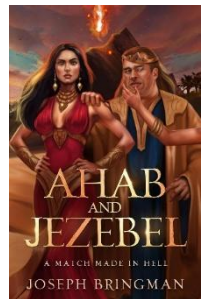
As I said last week, if we were honest with ourselves and others, we would have to admit things and events in life can overwhelm us. We can wallow in our circumstances and feel as if life is just not worth living. We need to realize this is a common event in all people's lives.

We examined that depression affected all classes of people, all races, all ages, and men and women equally. Millions of Americans will deal with some form of depression this year. I also mentioned that untreated depression is the number one cause of suicide.

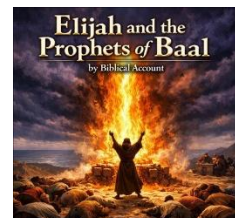
This passage of scripture in I Kings 19 shows one of God's greatest prophets at one of his lowest points in life. Here was a man of God that spoke the word of God to God's people. What Elijah said happened. What Elijah did was successful. And now we find Elijah curled up under a small tree asking God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

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

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.



During those three years, Elijah lived by the Brook Kerith and drank water from the stream and was fed meat by ravens. When the brook dried up, he went to live with the widow at Zarephath who fed him bread 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 eat 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 cut up 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.



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 waver between two opinions?”***

“If the Lord is God, follow Him, but if Baal is God, follow him.” And the people answered him not a word.”

Elijah turned his attention to the rebuilding the altar. He placed 12 stones on the altar signifying the twelve tribes of Israel. He placed the firewood on the stones of the altar. He cut up 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.

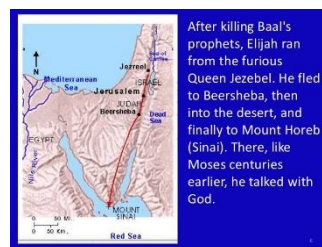
Elijah returned to Mount Carmel and bowed down and prayed for the rain to return. The clouds began to form after Elijah prayed seven times for the Lord to answer.



When Ahab returned home, he told his wife Jezebel how the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Lord God of Israel – YHWH (Adonai) – 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.

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 PROPHET²

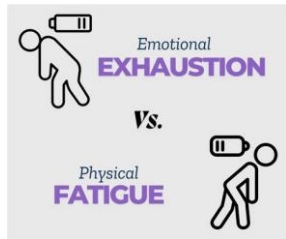


The scripture says that Elijah ran. I want you to realize Elijah didn't simply run a few miles away; he ran 125 miles due south. He actually went all the way to the southern border of Judah. He went as far as he could to get away from that evil queen Jezebel.

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.

Last week we reviewed how Elijah had cut himself off from those closest to him. How he took his eyes off the Lord and focused on himself. He adopted the philosophy that “life is hopeless and I may as well die.”

Many people who are depressed have these irrational types of thoughts. 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.



I believe there were two primary reasons why Elijah ended up under a tree in the desert asking God to take his life. ***Elijah was physically exhausted and emotionally spent.***

In Elijah’s case, God came to him and actually ministered to the Prophet. That brings us to today’s focus – God’s Ministry to the Prophet.

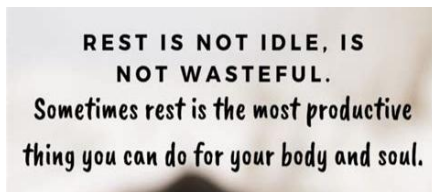
MINISTRY TO THE PROPHET (vs. 5-14)

First, a Ministry of Consideration (vs. 5-8)

After Elijah’s display of self-pity, one might think the Lord would just write him off as a lost cause. I am so glad the Lord doesn’t operate that way! God knew that Elijah needed to get some priorities straightened out in his life. So, the Lord performed a ministry of consideration on behalf of the prophet.

Rest

First, we see that God knew the prophet had expended all of his physical energy and was worn out. What Elijah needed was a break! God knew that and allowed the prophet to rest.



I want to remind you that God never intended these bodies to run like we force them to! Over and over in the Gospels, we see Jesus took time to rest, In Mark 6:31, Jesus said, “*Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest awhile.*” For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.” That sounds like us today! We don’t even take time to eat and rest as we should.

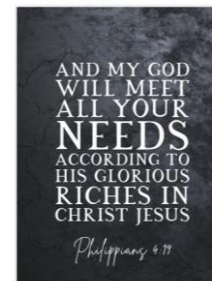
Refreshment

Secondly, we see that there was refreshment – food – involved. We are told that an angel appeared to Elijah and twice supplied him food in the wilderness.



Who was this angel? Some have suggested this was none other than a pre-incarnate visit from the Lord Jesus Christ! This time there would be no brook to drink from or ravens to give him meat, there would be no widow’s bowl or a jar of oil to make bread. Now, the prophet would eat directly from the hand of the Lord Himself. What grace!

Think about it, here is a man who has run away from Jezebel, but we see God hasn’t run out on him! In the New Testament, we see Jesus feed His wayward disciples by the seashore after his resurrection (John 21:1-14) In I Kings 19 the Lord sent an Angel of the Lord to feed His discouraged prophet. The Lord knew Elijah needed to be rested and refreshed instead of lecturing him.



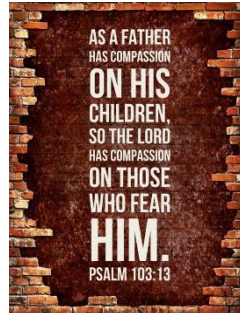
When we are in a time of discouragement, depression, or doubt, we will find that the Lord knows just how to meet our need. Often, He will deal with a symptom before He deals with the problem. Why? So that we might be in a position to listen more clearly! If the Lord had tried to reason with Elijah when he was

exhausted, hungry and depressed, nothing would have been accomplished. Therefore, the Lord met him, dealt with his symptoms and then moved on to take care of his greatest need.

You see, what you are dealing with right now may not be your real problem, but the Lord will deal with you where you are so that He might get you into a position where you can hear Him better. He does have a way of getting our attention!

Second, God Provides a Ministry of Compassion (vs. 5-8)

Not only did the Lord feed Elijah and allow him to rest, He also dealt with him compassionately and directly. It is a blessing to see how the Lord spoke to this discouraged and defeated prophet. It teaches us that the Lord has compassion on ***the fearful, the fallen*** and ***the foolish***. After all, Elijah was all of these things and so are we at times!



God's Compassion involved Gentleness & Mercy (vs. 5-7)



When the Lord comes to Elijah, there are no sermons, no lectures, no threats, no reproaches and no rebukes. The Lord simply touches the prophet, meets his need and gently speaks to him. Verse 6 shows us the condition of Elijah's heart. When Elijah sees the bread laying at his head, there is no repentance for the past, no gratitude for the present and no burden for the future. Elijah is a man in desperate need of a personal revival! Yet, the Lord is so gentle with this wayward man!

I think too many of God's children have the impression that God is standing over them with a whip, just waiting for them to make a mistake so He can lash them with it. While it is true that God is a God who chastises His children, (Hebrews 12:6-11, Rev. 3:19) it is also true that God is longsuffering and patient with His children. Thank God that He is!

God's Compassion involves Grace

God's compassion is also seen in the fact that He dealt with the prophet with the hand of great grace.



We see God's Grace by His Presence.

Even though Elijah had run away from God, God has not left Elijah! God's was still faithful in spite of the failure of the man. God extends the same grace to you and me! Regardless of where the paths of sin and suffering lead the saint of God, we need never fear being abandoned or forsaken by Him. It can never happen!

We have His promise in the matter –

Hebrews 13:5 reminds us that *“He will never leave or forsake us.”*

Ephesians 4:30, *“You were sealed for the day of redemption. God has redeemed us with the blood of His one and only Son, Jesus Christ.”*

2 Timothy 11-13 says, *“This is a faithful saying: For if we die with Him, we shall live with Him. If we endure, we shall reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful: He cannot deny Himself.”*

Jeremiah 31:3 reminds us. regardless of what we do or face in life, the love of God for us never waivers.

We see God's Grace in God's Provisions



Elijah is on a journey of his own choosing, headed to a destination of his own choosing, and still the Lord is concerned about meeting the prophet's need! How many times has God done the same for you and me? We run from Him and His will for our lives and yet He is still faithful, ever present and He continues to allow His blessings to fall on our lives. Why does He do this? It is always an effort to bring us to the place of repentance. (Romans 2:4)

Don't make a mistake and take this the wrong way! If you go off into sin, the Lord will deal with you patiently and with love and compassion. However, if you refuse to repent and return to Him, the day will come when He will deal with you and with your sin harshly. He may exercise patience for a while, but the time will come when you will face judgment.



I want us to understand that it is possible for ONE sin to destroy a person's effectiveness and usefulness to the Lord. Have you ever noticed how many people are judged by their

last worst act? Moses lost the privilege of entering the Promise Land because he struck the rock in the wilderness. King Saul didn't wait on Samuel and went ahead and offered the sacrifice. By doing so, the Kingdom was taken from Him. Every week you hear of a church leader or minister falling into the trap of sin and he loses his place of ministry and service.

God Demonstrates Grace by Being Patient

Even though Elijah is on the run in body and in heart, the Lord is so patient with him. He even allows Elijah to go his own way for a time. God doesn't write Elijah off as a lost cause, because God still has plans for the prophet. However, God allows Elijah to come to the end of himself so that he will learn to look to the Lord again.

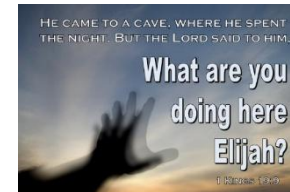
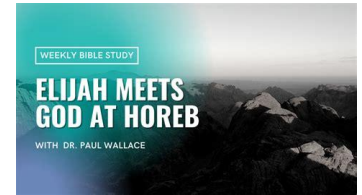


Thirdly, God Provides a Ministry of Confrontation (vs. 9-14)

The Lord was considerate of the prophet's needs and compassionate with him while he worked through his problems. God knew that the root of the problem had to be dealt with. Elijah had sin and pride in his heart and they had to be rooted out before the Lord could use him again. These verses tell us how the Lord went about getting the prophet's attention.

First – A Challenge (vs. 9-10)

Elijah gets up after resting and eating and heads on a forty-day trip to Mount Horeb. This mountain was a place of great significance for the children of Israel. Here, Moses had met God by a burning bush. Here, God had handed down His Law to the people of Israel. Perhaps Elijah went here so that he too might hear the voice of God. When he arrives, he goes into a cave and sits down to wait for God to speak. He is not disappointed! The Lord's voice does come to the prophet in that dismal cave, and when the Lord speaks, it is to issue a challenge. He asks Elijah this question: *"What are you doing here, Elijah?"*



This question is a rebuke of the prophet! What God is asking is this: *"Elijah, what are you doing in a cave on Mount Horeb? Did I not send you to preach to my people Israel? Shouldn't you be in Israel leading my people in a great revival? I didn't call you to run to this cave and hide yourself away. I called you to stand before kings, to defy false gods and prophets and to be an example of righteousness for the people of Israel. So, Elijah, what are you doing here?"*

It was a call for Elijah to examine his life and his priorities. It was time for Elijah to come face to face with the fact that he had sinned against the Lord. Of course, Elijah replies by reminding the Lord of all he has done and how alone he is. Elijah lamented and complained to God how he had done all of this and there was no one to stand with him – he was alone. Basically, Elijah is whining about what he thinks the problem is. Don't you hate whiney people? Elijah was whining!

I wonder if God is asking anyone here the same question this morning. ***“What are you doing here? I didn’t save you to be in this condition! I didn’t call you to be doing things like that! I called you to serve me! What are you doing here?”***

There have been numerous times in my life when I felt the gentle rebuke from the Holy Spirit. We allow ourselves to wander from the path of faithfulness to the Lord and we go our own way. Or, maybe we demonstrate a bad attitude or get lazy in our service to the Lord. Maybe we go so far as to walk in open sin against the Lord.



When we do, the Lord confronts us by saying, ***“What are you doing here?”*** This is God’s way of getting our attention! If He were to speak to you today, would He have to ask you the

same question? It’s tough to think about, but I thank God for the challenges from the Word of God and from the Spirit of God. Revelation 3:19 says, *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”* If the Lord challenges your life, it’s only because He loves you!

Secondly, a Command (v. 11a)

Now that the Lord has Elijah’s attention, He commands the prophet to stand before God. By the way, this is where Elijah should have been all along! God is calling Elijah back to the place of total surrender. To the place where nothing was greater in his sight than the Lord God. Ahab and Jezebel led the people away from God. God called Elijah back to the place where nothing but God matters!



That is the place we all need to be today! Did you know that your problems aren’t your problem? Did you know that your trials aren’t your problem either? When we have problems in life, whether they are spiritual, material or emotional, the real

root of the problem is that something has gotten larger than God in our eyes! If He is all He claims to be, then what problems are there? If He is really God, and He is really in control, then He can take care of any situation.

Like Elijah, we must learn to take our hands off the wheel and relinquish all control to the Lord. Let us take the admonition from the book of Hebrews and fill our vision with Jesus and Jesus alone. *“Therefore, we are also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **looking unto Jesus**, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* (Hebrews 12:1-2)



Third, a Confrontation (vs. 11b-14)



While Elijah stood in that cave on Mount Horeb, the Lord passed by. First, there was an earthquake that shook the mountain to its foundation. Then there was a great fire. However, we are told that the Lord was in neither of these. After that, there was a still, small voice. What the earthquake and the fire could not do, the small, still voice did: it touched Elijah’s heart! This was what Elijah needed.

He needed to know that God isn’t interested in the great, striking things that impress men. He is interested in working in men’s hearts. Elijah was used to the remarkable. He was used to the astounding! After all, who else was fed by ravens? Who else saw God feed three people with a bowl of flour and a jar of oil that never ran out? Who else had seen God raise someone from the dead? Who else had rebuked a king and lived? Who else

had defied 450 Baal prophets, prayed fire down from Heaven and then killed the prophets? Elijah is used to the spectacular!

God wants to teach him that it is God's work in the heart of the individual that is vitally important! The power of God is in the Word of God and in the work of His Spirit in the hearts of men and women.



We're guilty of the same thing, aren't we? We are looking for God to do great and exciting things! We want to see people come to the Lord and numbers increasing here in this church. But we need to remember that God doesn't always move in big, visible, outward manifestations. Often, the greatest works of God are done in the secret places of the heart – In the secret places of your heart. As God speaks to and grows the individual, His glory is revealed in ways that it could not be otherwise! God is in the business of growing boys and girls, men and women into the image of His Son.

The Lord confronted Elijah in the midst of his "Gloom, Despair, and Agony on Me" pity party. The Lord confronted him with a question: ***What are you doing here?***



Maybe the Lord is asking you that same thing. ***What are you doing here?***

May we listen to that still small voice – not the spectacular and loud voices of the world – and be obedient to what the Lord instructs us to do.

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Mikey's Funnies, August 17, 2012 – A Parrott Funny

² Sermon Outline from Sermon Central – I Kings 19:1-21 – The Place of Discouragement