

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

Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC

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Text: I Kings 19:11-21

Purpose: There are times in our lives when it seems life is just now 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. Part two focused on how the Lord ministered unto the prophet. This sermon focuses on the mending of the prophet.



One day, a couple of young boys were fishing at their special pond off the beaten track. All of a sudden, the game warden jumped out of the bushes. Immediately, one of the boys threw his rod down and started running through the woods. The game warden was hot on his heels.

After about a half mile, the young man stopped and stooped over with his hands on his thighs to catch his breath, so the game warden finally caught up to him.

"Let's see yer fishin' license, boy!" the warden gasped.

With that, the boy pulled out his wallet and gave the game warden a valid fishing license.

"Well, son," said the game warden, "you must be about as dumb as a box of rocks! You don't have to run from me if you have a valid license!"

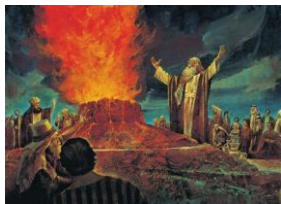
"Yes, sir," replied the young guy, "but my friend back there, well, he don't have one."¹

Don't we all need a friend like that? Someone willing to give us a head start against the game warden. Don't we all need someone that is more concerned about our needs than their own?

For the last few weeks, I have introduced the prophet Elijah to you and we found him far from home wishing to die.



Elijah was one of God's greatest prophets in the Old Testament. The high point in his ministry came when he confronted the prophets of Baal there on Mount Carmel.



As I have shared with you earlier, on the appointed day, the people of Israel came, along with King Ahab and the false prophets and prepared their sacrifice and called upon their god's Baal and Asherah. From early morning, past the noon sacrifice time, there was no answer.

When it was Elijah's turn, he 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.

When Ahab returned home, he Jezebel how the Lord had answered with fire and all the prophets of Baal had been put to death. 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.



The scripture says that Elijah ran. I want you to realize he ran 125 miles due south and Elijah was ready to die. 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. It was here that he began to sing that familiar song from Hee Haw: *Gloom! Despair! Agony on Me!*



This passage of scripture in I Kings 19 shows one of the 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.

Part I of this sermon series focused on the **misery of the prophet**. Elijah felt all alone in the confrontation with the prophets of Baal. Elijah was physically and emotionally exhausted from the demands of his ministry. Elijah was in need of rest and refreshment.

Part II of this sermon series focused on how God came and **ministered to Elijah.**

It was an angel of the Lord that touched him, provided food for him, allowed him to rest and be refreshed. The Lord reminded Elijah that there was still more for him to do and Elijah had to be reminded how to listen once again.



God did not speak to Elijah in the great and glorious methods the world would expect. God did not speak to Elijah in the wind, the earthquake, or in the fire. Yes, Elijah was accustomed to the specular and sensational. But God spoke directly to his heart in that still small voice.

I hope you have thought about how God speaks to you today. He is still calling people to respond to Him by faith. He is still calling people to give their lives in service back to God. He is speaking to hearts today to go and tell others of God's amazing grace and amazing love.

God extended Elijah grace even though he had run away from the appointed task as prophet to the people of Israel. God's grace was evidenced by his presence there under a broom tree a day's journey into the desert. God had not abandoned Elijah.

And you know what, God has not abandoned you! You may be feeling as if God has forgotten you. You may be singing the "*Gloom, Despair, and Agony on Me*" song yourself. But God is with you.

We have His promise in the matter, Hebrews 13:5 reminds us that "*He will never leave or forsake us.*"



Regardless of what we do or face in life, the love of God for us never waivers.



There at the mouth of the cave of Mount Horeb, God confronts Elijah and asks him "***What are you doing here?***" I wonder if the God is asking anyone here the same question this morning. This question is one that God may be asking you to get your attention! We can let our problems become bigger than our God because we have made our problems our God. But our God is bigger if we only turn our eyes upon Jesus and look full in His wonderful face. When we do, then the things of this earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.

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)

The Mending of the Prophet²

Today, I want us to turn our attention to how the Lord mended the prophet.

When the Lord asked Elijah that question, “*What are you doing here?*” all Elijah could do was whine about the past. If you examine the question carefully, you will see the Lord was asking Elijah a present tense question – today, right now, what are you doing?

I need to point out to you this morning, it doesn’t matter what you’ve done for the Lord in the past, the question that comes us for us to consider is, “What are you doing for the Lord TODAY?”

This is where the Lords set the prophet Elijah straight and tells him how things really are. God has a threefold plan to get Elijah back on track.

First, God Gives Elijah a Commission of Tasks to be Completed

Elijah’s 3 Tasks (1 Kings 19:9-18)

- 40 days journey in the desert to Mt. Sinai.
- 1. Anoint Hazael to be king of Syria.
- 2. Anoint Jehu to be king of Israel.
- 3. Anoint Elisha as prophet to succeed him.



There at the cave, the Lord told Elijah to return to Israel through Syria. There, he is to anoint 2 kings and a prophet. He is to anoint Hazael to be king of Syria and Jehu to be king of Israel. He also is to anoint Elisha as a prophet to succeed him. He is given an important assignment from the Lord. He is given evidence that the Lord is not finished with his ministry just yet.



There may be some here that have done good and great things for the Lord in the past. Maybe they have headed in a direction away from the Lord and today could be the day that you decide to confess that you have sinned and ask God for a new assignment. Let me remind you the Lord is faithful; He will forgive you and He will use you again if you yield your life back to Him.

The Bible is filled with people that had once been useful to the Lord but sin separated them from useful service.



David sinned with Bathsheba.

David was restored and the Bible describes him as a man after God’s own heart.

Moses sinned by killing an Egyptian.

Moses was able to lead the people out of Israel out Egypt and receive the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.

Jonah refused to be a witness for God to Nineveh and was swallowed by a whale.

Jonah got up from that sandy beach after being tossed on shore by the whale and converted the whole nation of Ninevah.

Simon Peter denied Jesus three times in one evening. **Simon Peter’s** preaching lead thousands of people to receive the Lord as their savior.

Each of these repented and were able to be used once again by God.

If God can restore an adulterer, murderer, runaway, and a betrayer, surely, he can use you for the Kingdom of God! Our God is a God of second chances. You don't need to stay in your pit of depression, dejection, and discouragement. He still has plans for your life, or else you would already be in Heaven!

Secondly, God Also Gives Elijah a Commission of Peace

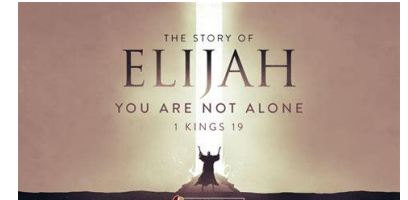


As Elijah hears the commands he is being given by the Lord, he hears that he is to anoint a man named Jehu to be the king over Israel. This must have been music to the ears of the prophet. This meant that Ahab and his reign of wickedness would be coming to an end. Verse 17 gives him the promise that his enemies will perish as they deserve to. In the end, he and his message will be vindicated and all the events and trials that have taxed Elijah's physical, spiritual and mentally are coming to an end. This is God's promise to Elijah that he will outlast his battles!

We need to hear that we too can outlast our battles! You might be walking through some very difficult and deep valleys. But, I am glad that I can tell you that they will not last forever! Thank God, there will come a day, just as sure as there is a God in heaven, when you will walk out of that valley with your head held high! God is faithful and He will see you through the difficult days you face as you go through this world. Yes, there will be valleys. Yes, there will be trials. Yes, there will be struggles and problems. But, the God we serve is greater than all those things and He will give the victory!

As David reminded us in Psalm 23:4, even though we may walk through the deepest, darkest valley imaginable, God will go with us, to comfort us, to protect and to see us through. You can count on God to do that for you!

God Gives Elijah Comfort and Awareness He is Not Alone



Twice Elijah had complained that he was all alone in his devotion to the Lord. Yet God reminds him that there are 7,000 others who have not worshiped Baal. Elijah is not alone! There are others who will stand with him. He is given hope and encouragement.

You aren't alone either today! Whether its discouragement, depression, sin, or anything else you may name, others have been through it and are going through it as well. Even if no human comfort can be found, the Lord knows what you are going through and is ever present to help you through any crisis you might face in life.



God Gives Elijah a Reminder of a Knowledgeable Savior

Elijah is reminded again that he is serving a big God. The Lord's words merely confirmed what Elijah already knew: God is in the know! It seems to me that Elijah had forgotten that God knew all about him, his problems, his enemies and where the solutions were. It must have comforted the prophet's heart to be reminded that God knows all about, before we ever tell Him about it.

For those that go through the deep dark valleys of life to remember this truth as well! God knows where you are, and He knows what is happening in your life. Not even the smallest of details misses His gaze. Too often, we are like the children of Israel sizing up the inhabitants of Canaan – afraid of the giants in the land. Or like Saul sizing up David when Goliath was standing there. Or like the disciples overwhelmed by the size of the crowd the Lord asked them to feed.

In all of our figuring, we fail to calculate the Lord into our circumstances. He knows the situation we are in and has brought us to the place we find ourselves in today. He knows where we are, what we face and He has the provisions already in place to meet our needs and get us out of the valley. It all comes down to our coming to the place that we can simply trust Him to be all we need, all the time.

Thirdly, God Provides Elijah a New Companion

When Elijah went into the wilderness, he left his servant behind in Beersheba. Now he was all alone. God knew this was not good and He gave him a man named Elisha. Elisha was to be a companion to Elijah and would take Elijah's place when his ministry came to an end. God gave him a man who was like-minded. Elisha was a man with whom Elijah could fellowship. They both shared a common call from God and they both wanted to see the Lord honored and glorified. These were men who could fellowship together.

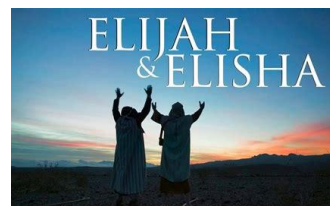


I really don't think any of us know just how desperately we need one another. Far too many Christians want to be like the "Lone Ranger", forgetting that even he had a "Tonto". My friends, God has not called to ride the range alone! He called us to be active in His work, seeking fellowship with His people.

I read of a story this week about a newly converted alcoholic that should cause the church to consider how important this matter of fellowship really is. He said, *"You know, the only thing I miss is the fellowship I used to have with all the guys down at the tavern. We used to sit around, laugh, and drink a pitcher of beer, tell stories, and let our hair down. I can't find fellowship like that with Christians."* Every person in this room ought to take it upon themselves, as if it were their sole responsibility, and reach out to every person who walks through the door of this church. No one should ever come to Spilman and leave without having several people welcoming them and making them feel at home. People crave fellowship, and church is the place they should be able to find it!



They Enjoyed Friendship

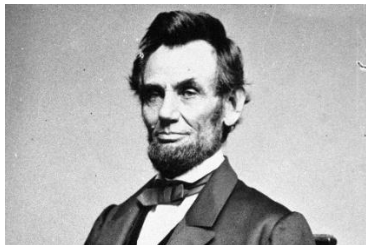


I like the concluding words of this chapter, *"and Elisha arose and followed Elijah and became his servant."* God knew that the burdens Elijah carried were too heavy for him to bear alone, so He gave him a confidant, a friend, a peer. He gave him one to walk beside him through the valleys and through the difficulties. Notice that God told

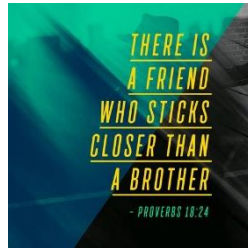
Elijah to meet three people. Notice that Elisha is the first one Elijah meets. God puts this man into the prophet's life to help him along his way! The word servant implies one that will be a kind friend and helper to Elijah. Elisha filled a void in the life of the man of God and helped Elijah fulfill his task and calling.

Whether we will admit it or not, we all need that kind of personal ministry from time to time! Proverbs 27:17 says, "*Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.*" We do not need to cut ourselves off from other people. We need friends and companions as we go through this life. What a blessing to have someone to confide in. To have a friend who hurts with you, who will help you bear life's loads, who will pray with you, cry with you, and even when they don't understand you, they will still love you!

Certainly, we have that kind of ministry in the Person of the Holy Spirit. We also have the Lord Jesus, Who is "*a friend that sticks closer than a brother.*" (Proverbs 18:24). However, we still need human interaction! Let us resolve to ask God to put someone into our life who will help us be accountable to the Lord in all we do as we go through life.



The following story from the Civil War illustrates the value of a friend. "During the worst days of the Civil War, an old friend of Abraham Lincoln's, a Springfield, Illinois, shopkeeper named Billy



Brown, decided he'd travel to Washington to see his old friend, the President of the United States.

An aide to the president asked him if he had an appointment. "No, sir," replied Billy. "I ain't, and it ain't necessary. Maybe it's all right and fitting ... to have appointments, but I reckon Mr. Lincoln's old friends don't need them, so you just trot along ... and tell him Billy Brown's here, and see what he says."

The aide frowned, but went. In about two minutes, the door popped open and out came Mr. Lincoln, face aglow. "Billy," he said, pumping his friend's hand, "now I am glad to see you. Come right in. You're going to stay to supper with Mary and me."

As soon as Mr. Lincoln could discharge his immediate responsibilities, the two men went to the back of the house and sat down on the stoop and, as Billy later put it, "talked and talked. He asked me about pretty nigh everybody in Springfield. I just let loose and told him about the weddings and the births and funerals and the buildings, and I guess there wasn't a yarn I'd heard in the three and a half years he'd been away that I didn't spin for him. Laugh—you'd ought to hear him laugh—just did my heart good, for I could see what they'd been doing to him. Always was a thin man, but Lordy, he was thinner than ever now, and his face was kind of drawn and gray—enough to make you cry."

Late that evening, Billy said goodbye. The President tried to get him to stay the night, but Billy, not wanting to impose, declined. As they parted, Lincoln said, "Billy, what did you come down here for?" "I came to see you, Mr. Lincoln."

“But you ain’t asked me for anything, Billy. What is it? Out with it.”

“No, Mr. Lincoln, just wanted to see you—felt kind of lonesome—been so long since I’d seen you, and I was afraid I’d forget some of them yarns if I didn’t unload them soon.”

Lincoln gazed into his friend’s eyes.

“Do you mean to tell me you came all the way from Springfield, Illinois, just to have a visit with me; that you ain’t got no complaints in your pockets or advice up your sleeve?”

“Yes, sir. That’s about it.”

Tears came into Lincoln’s eyes and ran down his cheeks.

“I’m homesick, Billy, just plumb homesick, and it seems as if this war would never be over. Many a night I can see the boys dying of the fields and can hear their mothers crying for them at home, and I can’t help it, Billy.... You’ll never know just what good you’ve done me.”

If we were honest, how many would have to admit that we have, or are, walking in Elijah’s shoes? The fact is, we all find ourselves in these places from time to time!

Now, here is the lesson we need to learn: Do not think that you are above having episodes of discouragement and depression. It can happen to you! If you have recognized a tendency in your own life to be depressed and discouraged, let me invite you to bring your need to the Lord Jesus. He wants and waits to help you.



Remember what He said:

“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28)

“I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” (Hebrews. 13:5)

“Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7)



I will leave you with this thought, your depression is not a sin, and it may not always be the result of sin! If you see signs of depression in your life seek the help you need.

There are some people who do not believe that Christians can become depressed. They will say things like, *“Just snap out of it.”*; *“Where is your faith?”*; *“Just get over it!”*; *“If you trusted God like you should you wouldn’t feel like you do.”*

I think talk like that is foolish! I want you to know that Jesus Christ promised to save those who trusted in Him from Hell. However, He never promised to save us from discouragement and depression. He did promise to help us, to be with us, to sustain us and to bring us safely home when our journey is ended.

So, here is the invitation:

If you’re like Ahab and have never been saved and feel the Lord is calling you to come to Him, then you come and be saved today.

If you are depressed and discouraged and need God's help with a matter, then you come and we will pray about it.

If the Lord is calling you to come to Him today for whatever reason, then you come right now. I will be at the front of the church to pray with you.

LET US PRAY

Notes:

¹ Mikey's Funnies – A Fishing Funny – July 30, 2012

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