

THE HAZY PICTURE

1 Kings 16:29 – 34

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION

Introduction:

1 John 1:5 “God is light and in Him is no darkness at all” His glory is like the brightness of the sun on a clear day. However there are times when the morning fog shuts out the brightness of the sun.

There are times when the sins of a generation, birthed in the darkness of rejection and rebellion, screen out the light and blessings of God.

This is the condition of Israel during the life and ministry of Elijah. There were some brief moments when a ray of light seemed to break through, but the overall picture is one of the darkest times in the history of Israel.

[I] THE COURSE OF INIQUITY

Eight years has passed since the kingdom was divided; forming the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. During this period of time seven kings has reigned in the Northern Kingdom {Israel}. All seven of these kings were wicked men. Israel did not fall into such an evil condition overnight. It was a gradual decline led by these seven evil kings.

1. JEROBOAM

1 Kings 12:28 – 13:4

Jeroboam was the first. He led the way by setting up golden calves for worship.

- A. He instigated a form of corrupt worship** 12:29
- B. He set up idols in the golden calves** 12:29
- C. His sin was instantaneous** 12:30
- D. He installed a system of wrong sacrifices** 12:31 – 33

2. NADAB

1 Kings 14:21 – 15:24

Nadab was the son of Jeroboam and walked in the way of his father, causing Israel to sin.

- A. The reign of an Idolatrous King** 14:21 – 31
 - There was an escalation of sin 14:21 – 24
 - Also note the effects of sin 14:25 – 31
- B. The reign of an Insurgent King** 15:1 – 8
 - See his wickedness 15:1 – 5
 - Also his warfare 15: 6 – 8
- C. The reign of an Intrepid King** 15:9 – 24

Now comes the judgment of God against such wickedness and corruption.

[II] THE CURSE OF IDOLATRY

Nothing is mentioned, in the Bible, as to idol worship, prior to the great flood. But soon after the flood idolatry gained a footing and soon became acceptable to many cultures of that day. Joshua 24:2

Romans 1 speaks directly to that period of time in history { the days of Nimrod } It was to this awful sin of idolatry that God called out the prophets to be witnesses for the true God.

As awful as idolatry had been; it appears that it only grew worse under the direction of Ahab and Jezebel. How could Israel embrace such false gods?

How is it that people who know God can embrace such idols today?

1. The worldly compromises that precede idolatry. 1 Kings 16:31a
It was strictly forbidden for Israel to intermarry with the people of Phoenicia. The Phoenicians were of the old race of Caanan, and Jezebel was a Phoenician.
This marriage between Ahab and Jezebel could only result in disaster. In a short period of time all traces of pure worship of Jehovah vanished from the land and gross idolatry became rampant.
2. The willful changes that pursue idolatry 1 Kings 16:31 – 33
Jezebel's wicked influence cannot be overlooked in this situation. Ahab's sin went far beyond the sin of Jeroboam. Jeroboam did not draw Israel away to worship other gods; the images that he made were intended to be symbols of Jehovah. Under Jeroboam the true object of worship was worshipped in a false way. King Ahab has replaced Jehovah with false gods. The question comes to mind – Which is worse – True worship of a false god – or false worship of the true God? Changes have taken place in Israel's worship!
3. The wicked characteristics that promote idolatry 16:33
Baal was the chief god of the Phoenicians and represented the 'sun' along with Ashteroth who represented the 'moon'. The false worship of the Phoenicians was firmly established in Israel. And a majority of the people either adopted it as their own or, adapted to it by accepting it as the norm.

4. **The wrong conduct that brought punishment** 16:34
The condition of the nation is horrible; now comes the curse on Jericho. God had given instructions that Jericho was to never be rebuilt. And here under Ahab, Jericho is rebuilt.
Open rebellion has now erupted in Israel. And this sort of conduct will not be overlooked by The Lord God of Israel.

[III] THE CASE OF INSENSITIVITY

Prophets of Baal are abundant now in the land of Israel, while the prophets of Jehovah has declined or either they are in hiding! The courts of Jehovah have been left uncared for and His house is forsaken.

1. **The people became insensitive to their own Physician**
The sin sickness of Israel is so obvious; except possibly to them. They have pushed aside God's directions concerning Jericho. Joshua 6:26 The rebuilding of Jericho was open defiance of God.
2. **The people became insensitive to their own predicament**
Apathy has developed; cold – calloused hearted people usually never realize the true state of their own condition. There seems to be a complete numbness of consciousness pertaining to their true condition.
3. **The people became insensitive to their own people**
Following next is their unconcern for their own people. Sin sick people have little regard for the sin sickness of their country and or own people. Followers of God are no doubt an undesirable element of society here in Israel at this time.
This same condition looms over America today; A time of insensitivity to the lostness and spiritual darkness that hovers over our land.
The course of iniquity, the curse of idolatry, and the case of insensitivity definitely presents a hazy picture of the time in which we live.
The great need is that we get beyond the fog and haze and become conscious of **THE LORD GOD WHO LIVES!!**

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION

THE HEALTHY PROPHET

1 Kings 17:1

The worst of times calls for the best of men. And the best of man comes out during the worst of times. Elijah was only one man; but he seemed to be in good, sound, and vigorous spiritual health. This was the kind of man God needed for this time.

What is it that produced a spiritually healthy prophet at this time?

[I] PREPARATION CONDITIONS

The Profession of A Man of God

It has often been said, 'A call to ministry is a call to prepare'. Absolutely nothing is revealed concerning Elijah's parent, his upbringing as a child, or his lifestyle. However we can draw some ideas.....

1. PREPARATION AND SCHOOLING

Although we don't have a record of his life; we are informed that he was a 'Tishbite', who was of the inhabitants of Gilead. From history we know that Gilead was east of Jordan and know for its rugged mountain terrain. Also we know that Gilead was allotted to the tribes of Gad and Manesseh. Elijah would probably have come from one of these tribes.

A. He was trained in Gilead's seclusion

He would have been shut away in the obscurity of the mountain region; possibly learning as did Moses, John the Baptist, and Paul, as they spent time alone with God.

B. He was taught in God's Scriptures

Obviously he had been taught some things about God and faith in God. This would explain why he could stand face to face with Ahab and pray that it not rain. Surely this background gave him a spiritual health.

2. PASSIONS AND SIMILARTIES

Never conclude that Elijah was some super human. He was a Common Man; just like us.

A. His home

Having come from Gilead; His home would probably not have been extremely impressive to most folks.

B. His humanity

He was no different from the rest of us.

a. The facts of his humanity are recorded James 5:17

b. The failures of his humanity are revealed

Although there are many accomplishments revealed about Elijah's ministry; there are also weaknesses and blemishes included in the divine account. We can see his limitations.

3. PURSUING AND SEEKING

Another strong point for his spiritual health is his pursuit of God.

1 Kings 19:10a and 14a illustrate this truth.

A. He Defied a Foolish Ruler and Pursued the Person of Righteousness /

God Himself was Elijah's goal. His desire; to know Him!

B. He Denounced a False Religion and Pursued the Practice of Righteousness

That is how he confronted Ahab. He loved God and desired to live his life accordingly.

4. PRAYERS AND SUPPLICATIONS

Another quality found in Elijah is his life style of prayer. He recognized his helplessness apart from God.

A. He offered many prayers to God

He prayed earnestly – believing – without doubt!

B. He offered mighty prayers to God

He prayed that it not rain and God shut up the heavens!

5. PERCEPTION AND SENSITIVITY

Elijah was a man of trust. He had a knowledge of God and he simply knew God would not let him down!

A. His knowledge of God is seen in the expression

“The Lord God Lives”

B. His knowledge of God is sealed in its effectiveness

His ministry was effective because he knew God and trusted Him.

[II] PERSONAL CONVICTIONS

The Position of A Man of God

Preparation is great; but it must be accompanied with Principles.

1. PRINCIPLES AND CONVICTIONS

Elijah was spiritually healthy because of his principles and deep convictions. Two stand out..... Faith and Obedience!

Trust and Obey for there is no other way!

A. These principles governed the style of his life

He acted the way he did because he believed the way he did! He was probably labeled as out of style with the world.

B. These principles guided the steps of his life

He walked with God. He was not on an ego trip – nor a power struggled trip; he simply wanted to please God.

2. POWER AND STRENGTH

His name means “Jehovah is my Strength” He knew where courage came from. He was committed to God and knew that God was his strength to stand and speak.

A. This strength was displayed in the miracles of his life

Elijah experienced some amazing miracles during his ministry. We need to remember God is the same God today!

B. This strength was demonstrated in the ministry of his life

Not much is recorded of his sayings. His ministry was not so much in speaking and in doing! And he did not need any pick me up pills to perform.

3. POSITION AND SERVICE

Its as though Elijah had a firm grasp on his position.

A. He understood the concept of servant

He was willing to simply be a servant of God.

B. He undertook the concept of service

He knew what God had called him to do and he did it!

[III] PROPER CONFIDENCE

The Prediction of A Man of God

Elijah was a confident man. Confidence placed in God is never misplaced.

When it looked like darkness would overtake the land; Elijah steps into that darkness with a confidence in God – probably like no other!

He did this because he is a man whose heart is possessed with God. He is a spiritually healthy prophet because he has a heart possessed of God!

1. Acquainted With God’s Person

Elijah was intimately acquainted with God. In a time when most people only had a vague knowledge of God; Elijah was living a relationship that is very personal and powerful with the Most High!

A. Elijah was acquainted with God in relationship to His Names!

He uses two names here; First “LORD” this is the name for Jehovah. This was the covenant name for God. Second “GOD” This was the creator name for God. The Hebrew word is Elohim, and has to do with unlimited power.

B. Elijah was acquainted with God in regard to His Nature

The Lord God “LIVES” He did not say feels – sees – But Lives!

2. Associated With God’s People

Elijah did not refer to God as his God alone, but as the Lord God of Israel. His God was the God of Israel. In other words he takes God’s people into consideration; even though they may be living afar off from God.

A. Elijah associated with a distinct people

Israel is known as the chosen people of Jehovah. They are a distinct people in their relationship with God.

B. Elijah associated with a divided people

The twelve tribes are divided into two kingdoms at this time. Ten in the northern and two in the southern. The southern are referred to as Judah; while the northern is called Israel. But Elijah refers to them as ONE “Israel”

3. Aware of God’s Presence

Elijah said “before whom I stand” Yet he is literally standing before Ahab; but he recognizes God.

A. He was aware of the overseeing presence of God

He is sensitive to God’s presence. He seemed to overlook Ahab. When we are aware of God’s presence; others fade into the background.

B. He was aware of the Omnipresence of God

He knows God is present, even in the courts of the wicked Ahab and Jezebel. Elijah is aware that God is present everywhere.

4. Aligned With God’s Plan

He understands God and has an awareness of God’s plan as well as His presence.

A. God’s plan involved a verdict

God has never condoned sin – and here a verdict is announced; “No Rain” It’s judgment time for Israel!

B. God’s plan included a vessel

Not only God’s verdict – Judgment – But also God send forth His vessel with His Message! The prophet of Courage and Confrontation stand and shares that message!

THAT MESSAGE IS “THE LORD GOD LIVETH”

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION

THE HIDING PLACE

1 Kings 17:2 – 7

This phase illustrates to us that we must be shut up to God before we speak up for Him. If we expect a successful public ministry there must be a private place with Him. It's the example of going into the closet before we go before the congregation.

[I] THE PLACE GOD ORDAINED IS THE PLACE OF SAFETY

The safest place in the world is the place God ordains for us.

1. The Name of The Place Cherith – means to cut off / cut down.
It is here that Elijah finds the protection and provision of God.
2. The Nature of the Place God says “hide thyself”
 - A. Elijah finds safety from the rulers of the people here.
He is safe here from Ahab and Jezebel. They would have eliminated him in a heart beat; all they needed was opportunity.
 - B. Elijah finds safety from the retaliation of the people
The people would be upset with Elijah and blame his for all of their current problems; namely the drought! Their concept was probably “If it wasn't for Elijah, we would not have this trouble”
1 Kings 18:17b Today we also can come under attack of people who don't understand the operations of God.
 - C. The Necessity for the Place
There was a need for a specific place of hiding for Elijah and this is the place. It was the only place that would provide safety for the prophet!

[II] THE PROMISE GOD OFFERED IS THE PROMISE OF SECRECY

The promise of God was the provision of a place of secrecy; and we do not have any record of what takes place during this period of time he spent alone there with God.

1. It did Involve Advance Planning
Before the need ever arose; God had the place prepared for Elijah!
God had formed the brook before the need. God had prepared the ravens before the need arose.
2. It also Involved Amazing Provision

This is so amazing because ravens are scavengers. They feed on the flesh of the dead. Yet here God uses them to sustain the life of Elijah. Question comes to mind “Where did they get the food?”

Would it not be just like God; if the food came from Ahab’s table?

3. It also Included Abundant Peace

Notice verse # 6. Consider two things....

A. Elijah experienced these blessed arrangements of the Lord!

The Lord handled all of the arrangements. Elijah had to only trust and obey. God is still in the business of making the same type of arrangements for us!

B. Elijah enjoyed being alone with the Lord!

It is true that he was shut off from everyone else; but he was never shut off from God! God is always available to us.

How wonderful to realize that we don’t have to fit in some particular format to experience the protection and provision of God. Nor do we have to fit in everyone else’s patterns to enjoy the presence of God!

[III] THE PLAN GOD ORDERED WAS THE PLAN OF SUFFICIENCY

God is in complete control of the situation. We would possibly, be wringing our hands in fear and frustration; But not Elijah. This plan that God had was completely sufficient for the safety of Elijah.

1. This was a Sovereign Plan

The brook continued to provide water as long as Elijah was to remain there. The ravens continued to bring food for the period of time God ordained. God’s plans are in place and they are intact.

2. This was also a Submissive Plan

Verse 5 says “He went and dwelt by the brook”. This means he went to live at the brook. He knew that in order to experience the benefits of God, he had to be submissive to God and His plan. No matter what His plan may appear to be; we too can rest assured that it is the best pathway for our life.

3. And then this was a Sufficient Plan

When his stay at the brook ended; he did not appear to have spent that time in some refuge camp. Elijah was as healthy as the day he stood before Ahab.

A. Elijah’s sufficiency involved the sure provisions of the Lord!

The ravens came on schedule every day; morning and again in the evening. They were always on time! Never early but never late.

- B. Elijah's sufficiency included the strange provisions of the Lord.
This providing from the Lord was strange in its delivery
Ravens are among the abominable birds, thus considered
unclean. Leviticus 11:15
However God chose to use that which was considered unclean
to provide for His chosen vessel.
The provisions were strange in their diet
Possibly the raven brought what be considered Gentile food to
Elijah each day. One of the few places food would be plentiful
was the house of Ahab. And since Ahab was married to Jezebel;
probably the diet of Ahab's house centered around Gentile
dishes. Or as someone has suggested; possibly the food came
directly from God Himself!**

**[IV] THE PROBLEM ORCHESTRATED WAS A PROBLEM THAT BROUGHT
SATISFACTION Verse 7**

**God allowed the brook to dry up? And the question comes to mind "WHY"
Three possibilities come to mind...**

- 1. To Test the Faith of Elijah / A Dry Brook would do this!
Has he come to place his confidence in the brook and the birds?
Does he trust in the conditions and circumstances more than in
God Himself? If we are not careful we can begin to trust in these
things more than in God! As the days passed; the brook probably
grew smaller and smaller. Then one day it was completely gone! As
those days passed; we would probably have begun to think about
what we could do to take care of ourselves, just in case.**
 - A. The God who provides the water can also withhold the water!
God is in control. He has charge of everything. Elijah is about to
discover that God has another place for him to go. When God
dries up one brook; He already has another place prepared for
us to go.**
 - B. A dried up brook is not always a sign of God's displeasure!
Sometimes God does use circumstances to chastise us for our
disobedience and etc. However that is not always the case.
There are times when God simply allows our brook to dry up for
His own purposes in our lives. These are times when we must
trust God and simply be obedient.**
- 2. To Turn the Focus back to God Himself.
We have considered the Dry Brook; now think about The
Devastated Prophet.**

Can we imagine how Elijah must have felt as that brook dries up day by day before his eyes? Did he feel abandoned by the Lord? Did he wonder why God is letting him down? There are times in the life of God's people, and especially in the life of His chosen servants when the brook dries up.

It is in these times that we must remember some important things.

A. God has not forgotten about us

God knows exactly where we are and what is going on in our life.

B. God has not forsaken us

God not only knows where we are and what is happening; but he is also available to us where we are no matter what is taking place. God does not forsake His children.

With us as the case is here with Elijah; God is still working in the life of Elijah and He is working in our life also.

C. God has not finished with us

Just as God had more for Elijah; God has more for all of us, and when He is finished with us, He will take us home. Therefore since we are still here, we can rest assured that God has more for us to accomplish.

Now as God used this dry brook to test Elijah's Faith; and to Turn his Focus; God also used the dry brook to

3. Tune him up for the future

In the very next chapter Elijah will discover that God was simply preparing him for the future of confronting the false prophets.

So a dry brook that probably brought about a devastated prophet ends with a dynamic situation due to two things that would have brought satisfaction into the situation

A. Answered Prayer **James 5:17 – 18**

James shares with us that God answered prayer in this situation. It is encouraging as we realize that from the midst of misery; God answers prayer.

B. Fulfilled Prophecy **1 Kings 17:1**

There can be no doubt now that God had spoken through Elijah in verse 1 of Chapter 17. Just as Elijah had predicted.

By the Brook; What a Fellowship with God. What a Fullness from God
What a Fortress of God! ITS BECAUSE THE LORD GOD LIVES!

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION**THE HUMBLE PATH****1 Kings 17:7 – 16**

The life of Elijah appears to be filled with great “Highs” and deep “Lows”. He experienced two great mountain concepts; My Carmel and Mt Horeb in the Old Testament; and also on the Mt of Transfiguration in the New Testament. Some also believe that Elijah will be one of the two witnesses on My Zion in the tribulation period. These all exalt the prophet. And yet there are also many experiences of deep “Lows” in his life. With God many times the way up is the way down! Before Elijah goes to Mt Carmel, he must go down to Zarephath. Here he finds the lesson of the empty barrel.

[I] A FAILED PLACE IS THE PLACE OF DIVINE INTERRUPTION V 7

Sometimes God interrupts our plans and steps into our positions of comfort. He always has a purpose for His interruptions. This interruption in the life of Elijah came

1. Through the ministry of the brook Verse 7
The brook dried up. The brook speaks to us of The Holy Spirit!
 - A. The running water speak of the moving of the Spirit
 - B. The brook also speaks of the hidden source for strength
 - C. Refreshing water is our portion in the Spirit
 - D. And the Holy Spirit stand along side us to help us
2. The time of the interruption also involved The Mystery of The Birds!
Suddenly the ravens stopped coming! One would not expect the ravens to keep coming when Elijah is gone. When God stops sending the provisions; possibly He is saying “Time to Move On!”

Sometimes God’s people need to be interrupted in their place of leisure!

[II] A FRESH PATH IS THE PATH FROM DIVINE INSTRUCTIONS

As the place by the brook fails; God has a fresh path laid out for Elijah.

1. The Call From God V 8
As Elijah sat by the dried up brook; it must have felt as though God had forgotten him and forsaken him and left him there to die. But the dried brook in his life is just God’s way of moving him farther along within His will.

Genuine faith waits for God to reveal His plans. Where we get in trouble is when we have the tendency to run ahead of God and take matters into our own hands. God does not move on our schedules.

2. The Command From God

V 9a

When God does speak to Elijah; It is a command to go to Zarephath. This would be a strange command in Elijah's understanding. The city of Zarephath is in a Gentile nation. It is the country of Jezebel. It is a land filled with idolatry; a wicked place. Yet this is where God says go. This journey is about 100 miles through territory ruled by Ahab and Jezebel; and they are out to destroy Elijah. Often the life of faith will lead through difficult paths.

A disturbing Command to travel a difficult and dangerous path that in his mind could easily lead to destruction. This will require Faith!

3. The Challenge

V 9b

Again Elijah is instructed to dwell there. The challenge comes from the thought that "I have commanded a widow woman to sustain you" A gentile woman is to sustain a Jew – a prophet of God!

A. The instructions were definite ones

It must have been difficult for Elijah to accept these instructions, considering where he is to go and who it is that would sustain him once he gets there. Added to this is the danger of the trail.

B. The instructions are definitely different

Travel 100 miles to an unknown place – one that is unfamiliar to him and depend on someone he has never met to take care of him. Zarephath means "smelting furnace". How could he travel this distance and not be seen? How could he avoid the enemy? Jezebel's father was the king of the Sidonians and surely some of these people would see him! Capture him! Kill him!

4. The Comfort

V 10 – 11

Elijah does not hesitate; he simply obeys. Upon arrival he sees the widow picking up sticks. This must have been encouraging. Surely God was working in his life.

A. The prophet of God had to receive some form of impression from God as to who she is.

B. The place where she is gathering sticks is strange

The gate area was usually the cleanest place in town. Why is it that she would choose to come here seeking sticks for a fire.

God is in control on both ends of the situation!

It is important that we recognize the truth of God's interventions. Just as God interrupts us; He also intervenes for us!

[III] A FANTASTIC PROMISE CARRIES DIVINE IMPOSITIONS

The widow must have been startled and surprised at the appearing of Elijah. The results of this encounter brings out some important lessons.

1. A Doubt comes into the picture V 10 – 12
It seems that Elijah is almost rude to her. 10 – 11
God had already spoken to her in verse 9. Evidently she knew something about God! Yet there would have been the probability of some doubt in her mind; after all she does not have enough for her own needs. This would impose on her....
 - A. God imposed on her food supply
This was to be her last meal for herself and her son V 12
 - B. God imposed on her family situation
At times God seems to impose hardship on His children.
2. A Demand is seen here V 13 – 14
After hearing her story of despair; one might think that this demand of Elijah is a cold, selfish, and hard hearted demand. On the surface it appears to be harsh and cruel; but as we look into it, it is in fact a plea for faith and submission to the will of God
 - A. It involves encouragement
 - B. It involves enlightenment
 - C. It involves excitement

The truth is that God's demands on our lives may seem to be difficult and hard to understand; however they are most times accompanied by a clear promise of blessings.

3. A Decision is made V 15a
She goes and does as she is asked. This is the place God wants to bring all of us; to a place of trusting and obeying even when it is hard and the way appears to be very difficult.

[IV] A FABULOUS PROVISION FROM A DIVINE INTERVENTION

God works according to His own purpose and plans. As God interrupts Elijah's place of comfort, at the brook by drying it up; and as God gives instructions to move on; as God impresses the widow to follow His direction; as God imposes upon her and her situation; God now intervenes in the circumstances and provides for both Elijah and the widow. What a fabulous illustration for us today!

1. The Grace Of It

Because of their obedience to God and His Word; God now provides for them to enjoy plenty, while others are starving all around them. The distinction is that they are living by faith and being supplied by the hand of God. God honors faith because Faith honors God!

A. The miracle of grace in this intervention

Only God could have fed them for so many days with a handful of meal and a little oil.

B. The ministry of grace in this intervention

The two sticks could remind us of the cross

The meal could remind us of the “offering” of Christ

The oil certainly reminds us of the Holy Spirit

2. The Greatness of it

For years; until the rain came, every meal was a miracle. God worked a great miracle in the barrel and in the jar every single day. He took nothing and made it last as long as it was needed. We serve a God who delights in doing the impossible for us. When things look hopeless to us; It is at those times God intervenes and does great and mighty things that we know not. He can take the smallest of things and people and do the greatest; and man can only look on in amazement as God intervenes in the ever day affairs of life.

3. The Glory of it

The glory of it rests in the fact that the barrel of meal and jar of oil were never full! Elijah and the widow had to trust God on a day by day basis. Nothing is ever mentioned of them being full. I believe that every day she scraped the meal from the bottom of the barrel; just enough to bake a cake of bread; and every day she poured the last of the oil in order to bake that bread; then the next day there was enough meal in the barrel and enough oil in the jar to do it all over again!

As the days passed, they would begin to realize that God was sufficient for all their needs!

**May that same reality settles into our hearts. Because
THE LORD GOD LIVES!**

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION

THE HOPEFUL PATTERN

1 Kings 17:17 – 24

With the death of her son; the widow faces a time of despair

- 1. Her family hopes are gone.
No one to carry on the family name**
- 2. Her financial hopes are gone.
No one to earn money for bills**
- 3. Her future hopes are gone
No one to care for her in her old age**

Dreams and hopes are gone and she probably feels as though no reason to live. She will discover that the living God is a God of hope!

[I] TRAGEDY – AND HOPE COMMENCES IN STRUGGLE

17 – 18

Many times hope is born in the midst of severe struggles and tragedies. This widow faces serious tragedy and her response is the key..

- 1. A Dead Person**
Her son had been so miraculously cared for by the divine hand of God; but suddenly he is taken in death. Many questions must have entered her mind over this tragedy. Tragedies never make sense to the logic of reasoning.
- 2. A Distraught Parent**
It is quite easy to understand how she can become distraught at such a time as this. Evidently this was her only child. All of her hopes were centered in him.
 - A. First there is the struggle taking place in her bosom**
She was struggling over some type of past sin 17:18b
The word used here is always associated with idolatry. Now she is reminded of her past. Satan is a great reminder of one's past.
 - B. Second there is a struggle taking place without her body 19b**
It appears as though she is clinging to her son's body. She just could not bear to let him go.
She is trying to hold on to a dead hope. One that cannot survive!
Yet she clings to that one possible ray of hope.
- 3. A Discouraged Prophet**

Surely most people in Elijah's position, would become discouraged with this situation. He has given the widow his promise and assurance that all will be ok, if she will just trust God. And now her son is dead in her arms. What an effect this must be having on him. He has trusted God at the brook; trusted God for the meal and oil; and now he is facing a more serious situation than both of these. Her son is dead and she points her finger at him. One is never more vulnerable than during a period of discouragement. But we can never discount what God is doing. God has a plan and as long as we are submissive to His plan we are going to be fine!

[II] TACTICS – HOPE CONTINUES IN SOLITUDE

V 19

Again we come to a secluded place in the life of Elijah; a God conscious place for him. In this midst of discouragement and what would appear to be defeat; Elijah steps up in faith!

1. There is an ascent seen here

He had to go "up" to get to his room. Instead of looking back along with the widow to what could have been and as to what had been; instead of looking down on her for her current lack of trust; he looked up! Hope doesn't look back and hope doesn't look down – Hope looks up! The pattern of hope involves an upward motion of the heart. Hope ascends to the God of Hope!

2. There is an attitude seen here

Elijah did not take the child to just any place; It was not just any ole room will do attitude. It was to his own private room. To his own personal room. It was a familiar place to Elijah. It was the place where Elijah had probably spent hours praying and consulting God. It was the place of personal communion with God; apart from all the hustle and bustle of the day.

3. There is an ability discovered here

It is not what the widow could do; and it's not even what Elijah can accomplish. Elijah is merely the instrument. God is the ability to take care of this situation. He is the one and the only one who can handle this situation. And it's to this person that Elijah takes the child. It's not so much the place as the person that makes all the difference here.

[III] TRUST – HOPE CRIES OUT IN SUPPLICATION

V 20 – 22

Prior to this Elijah has just moved as instructed; waited on God; trusted God and allowed God to work. Now Elijah must get involved himself with the situation.

1. **Elijah's Calmness is evident** **V 19**
Even though he is confronting death; he does not seem to fall apart; one might say "he kept his cool". He doesn't lash out at the widow when she accuses him of being responsible. He does not attack her nor does he blame God. He doesn't defend himself. He simply moves to action.
2. **Elijah's Compassion is evident** **V 20 – 21**
It is obvious that Elijah was touched by her pain. He has observed her growth in faith and now he senses her frustration. He has enjoyed her hospitality and he is moved by her need. This compassion is seen in
 - A. **His Prayer**
First hear the cry of a desperate supplication **17:20**
In desperation, he seeks the help of God. How desperate are we?
Second hear the cry of a determined supplication **17:20 – 21**
Twice we read that Elijah cried out unto the Lord. He would not give up; he was determined to keep on keeping on with his cry to God for assistance in this situation.
Genuine hope keeps on crying out to God for help!
 - B. **His Position**
He humbled himself before God. Surely he knew the law about touching a dead body that would defile him. **Numbers 19:10**
Elijah was willing to humiliate and humble himself to reach out to another.
 - C. **His Petition** **21**
Elijah is asking God to do something that he has never seen God do before. As a matter of fact there is no record of a dead person being brought back to life before this incident. Elijah is trusting God for "the impossible". How much are we trusting God for?
3. **Elijah's Conquest can also be seen here** **V 22**
Here we find the triumphant news; He watched as God raised up the lad by restoring life!
 - A. **Elijah persevered in praying**
He would not give up; so he kept praying
 - B. **Elijah prevailed in prayer**
He saw an answer to his prayer that was simply amazing

[IV] TESTIMONY – HOPE CLIMAXES IN SALVATION 17:23– 24

Elijah's hopeful actions represent the condescending touch of sincerity. Hope risks contamination to enjoy celebration.

Elijah's hopeful actions reveal the condescending thoroughness of sincerity. He stretched himself on the child three times. The number three speaks of resurrection.

1. God's man is Vindicated

The widow expresses her firm conviction that Elijah is who he claimed to be. Possibly both Elijah and the widow needed this time of assurance and encouragement. When God's people trust God completely; He will see them through their trials. God doesn't abandon hope. Faith, Hope, and Love Abide these three!

2. God's message is Validated

The widow not only expresses her conviction that Elijah is who he claimed to be; but she also expresses her confidence in the Word of God. As she experiences the outworking of faith through Elijah, she understands that God possesses all power and that He is true to perform His Word.

A. In this account the miracle of the returned soul tells of God's great salvation. 17:22 The child was dead; but the hope miraculously brings life back to the boy.

B. The movement of the revived son testifies of God's great salvation. Not only did his soul return, but he was revived. The glow of life revived itself in his face. The gleam of life returned to his eyes.

C. God's method is Victorious

As the widow takes her son in her arms; squeezes him; holds him close, and probably weeps with joy; she says to Elijah; "Now by this I know thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth"

Certainly, allowing a child to die and be resurrected from the dead would never have crossed the mind of most people. It is probably not what we would have planned. But God's ways are not our ways! God's plan is accomplished

A. The widow is encouraged in her faith

The widow is strengthened in her faith.

B. The prophet is enabled

Elijah is now ready for battles that lie ahead

This is because THE LORD GOD LIVES!

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION

THE HEAVY PRESSURES

1 Kings 18:1 – 15

As the potter fashions the clay; the vessel must withstand the heat of the furnace, neither cracking nor breaking. Then that vessel must withstand the tests of ever day use. So it is with the servant of God. He must survive the pressures of life in his service to God!

Elijah has not yet been put to the test under heavy pressure; but he is about to be. We must also realize that these pressures come in various forms and at unexpected times.

[I] THE SORE FAMINE

There are thirteen famines mentioned in the Bible; usually these were caused by

[1] the trying purposes of God OR [2] the tragic sins of people

Behind this particular famine are the terrible sins of idolatry and immorality. God is judging the wickedness of the people, and that judgment is being felt by everyone.

- 1. The lofty Authorities were influenced by the famine
Ahab has divided the territory into two sections; he has gone one way and sent Obadiah the other way trying to locate water and find some relief for himself and hopefully the people. The officials are feeling the consequences of God's judgment.**
- 2. The land areas were involved in the famine
God's judgment extended throughout the entire territory. No one had been spared the effects of this famine. The drought has left the land dry and parched.**
- 3. The lowly animals are even included in the famine 18:5
The judgment of God was being felt by the animals as well as all the people.
Similarly we live in an era of spiritual famine. More than anything we need we need the Lord!**

Where is Elijah during this time?

Submitted in Service

A. Commander

Elijah is still serving God; through all the difficulties and trials, he is still standing true to his commitment to serve the Lord.

B. Command

The command comes from God to come out of hiding and present himself to Ahab. This will take courage to confront Ahab again.

C. Comfort

Although Elijah may not know all the details, he seems to be aware that God is still in control.

D. Compliance

Elijah did not have all the details; yet he obeys God and moves out to reveal himself to Ahab.

[II] THE SOVEREIGN FATHER

Living under the current pressures seems to be enough – however there is an even greater pressure awaiting Elijah. He is now under the pressure of God's demands upon his life! And unknown to Elijah Mt Carmel awaits.

1. Elijah is under individual pressure

While everyone has been affected by the family; only Elijah has been appointed by the Lord. Others had their responsibilities; but only Elijah has received a revelation from God. Others had their time of worry; but Elijah has a Word from God. He has been chosen!

2. Elijah was under indispensable pressure

He must leave his place of hiding; his place of safety and "GO". He now must move on to his next assignment from God.

3. Elijah was under indescribable pressure

He has been instructed to go present himself to Ahab! Ahab is not just anyone; he is the most wicked king ever; and he holds the authority of life or death. Elijah is called upon to put his life on the line.

And yet with all this pressure upon him; Elijah is still standing true to God. The thought comes to mind.... What would we do under such extreme pressure today? Would we throw in the towel? Would we just walk away? OR would we as Elijah, move forward to be obedient to the Lord; simply trusting God to take care of everything?

[III] THE SPECIAL FRIEND

Obadiah is usually thought of as a compromiser, a coward, or a culprit. He did not measure up to the standard of an Elijah; but neither do most of us.

Obadiah was a secret believer! 18:3 And as he meets with Elijah and Elijah says “go tell Ahab – Elijah is here” Obidah’s response brings yet another pressure upon Elijah.

- 1. Elijah was confronted with Obadiah’s delicate life 18:9 – 12**
Obadiah is under the authority of king Ahab. Elijah is sold out to the Lord, but Obadiah has Ahab as his ruler; and he is the governor of Ahab’s house Verse 3. Verse 8 “go tell thy Lord” Obadiah may be a silent believer, but he living the life of a compromiser. He has been keeping quiet for personal position and gain.
If we were to be completely honest; how many of us life similar to Obadiah? How many of us place personal positions and profit before the Lord?

- 2. Elijah was constrained with his friend’s devoted love 18:12-13**
The love of Obadiah for the prophets of God must have impressed Elijah.

A. Obadiah’s Secret

His position in the court of Ahab required trust and faithfulness; but Obadiah had a secret, actually two secrets. And if Ahab had known these two things about him; Ahab would have had him put to death.

a. His Devotion

Somehow he has managed to be a silent believer; devoted to the Lord and yet keep it a secret to Ahab. Jezebel has been busy eliminating the prophets of God and right under her nose Obadiah has been lending assistance to them. Possibly God has had something to do with this all along. It is a lesson for us; that all is not always as it appears to be!

b. His Deeds

Obadiah took 100 prophets and hid them in caves; this took great courage on his part. This also required effort and expense. If Jezebel or Ahab had discovered what he was doing, he would certainly have been killed.

Many missionaries of today have to be sort of silent believers; working under the titles of different positions in order to serve in whatever way they can.

B. His Service v 5 – 6

Obadiah is actively involved in service to Ahab. Two things come to mind here

- a. He is employed by the wrong people**

He is in a position that forces him to compromise his beliefs to some extent or allow himself to be exposed as a believer.

b. He is engaged in a wrong activity

He is working with Ahab to locate water and grass for their animals. What about the people? The kings of Israel were not supposed to keep horses. Deuteronomy 17:16

Obadiah is busy searching for grass to save a bunch of nags

Elijah is busy looking for God to save a nation

3. Elijah was compelled with his friend's diligent labors

The famine had not sidetracked Elijah; neither would a friendship with Obadiah sidetrack him from being obedient to the Lord.

A. Obadiah's Identification of Elijah V 7

In whatever way it was; Obadiah recognized Elijah. Obadiah is quick to show reverence to Elijah, but no one else is around to see this. How many people today – Agree with and befriend whoever they are around? What will they do when several people are together? They usually keep quiet at those times!

B. Obadiah's Indictment of Elijah V 8 – 9

He is also quick to point his finger at Elijah and accuse him of "trying to get me killed!" It appears that his reverence in V 7 is not actually genuine. The accusation of V 9 reveals his true character. His respect for Elijah and for God seems to be limited to convenience. Could this be true of many people today?

C. Obadiah's Indifference toward Elijah V 9 – 14

He begins to make excuses as to why he cannot do what asked? These verse reveal the hypocrisy hiding in his heart.

a. His personal fears 9,12,14 He is simply afraid!

b. His pathetic faithlessness 10-12 Lack of Faith!

c. His past fruit V 13 – he sort of indicates that what he has done in the past is sufficient. He may think this job is below him.

D. Obadiah's Indulgence of Elijah 15 – 16

Reluctantly he agrees to go find Ahab and give him the message. Obadiah is never heard of again. We are not told what happened to him. Possibly he just faded into the background.

We must exercise caution in dealing with the Obadiah's of our time. One cannot determine what they will do. One time it appears that they are right there with us and the next moment they cannot be found! We must be careful!

But never forget THE LORD GOD LIVES!

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION**THE HIGH POSITION****1 Kings 18:17 – 29**

God has brought Elijah through training, trials, troubles, testing, and into a relationship of trusting in order to use him and show the lost nation that Jehovah, not Baal, is truly Lord of all. All the preparation has led to this time. For Elijah, this will be an event that requires great faith and courage. It is time to confirm that he is who they say he is [the man of God]

Things in the spiritual sense are terrible! It was so bad that the king and queen of Israel are promoting the worship of these false gods. However God has not forgotten His investment in His people. He has not forgotten how He chose them out of all other nations. He has not forgotten how He brought them out of Egypt, through the wilderness, and into the promised land; and He will not forsake them now.

Mt Carmel was not an out – of – the – way place in Elijah’s life. All the paths of his life converged here. Now the time has come for him to truly experience Mt Carmel.

[I] A VISION THAT IS SPECIAL

This is The Challenge of all Challenges!

This will not be due to any natural ability, as often is experienced in the human realm. This is a special awareness coming from the revelation of God Himself.

And Here Elijah Challenges the Earthly Potentate {King Ahab}

This meeting between Elijah and Ahab had to take place. Ahab has led the people away from God and into Idolatry; Elijah must confirm or prove to them who the Lord God of Heaven really is.

1. The cause of declension is revealed

This is a Confrontation

Ahab accuses Elijah of being the one “troubling Israel”. This refers to one who stirs up a disturbance. But the prophet turns the table to Ahab! 18:17 – 18 Elijah exposes Ahab as the troublesome one!

The term used is equivalent to Ahab calling Elijah “a snake in the grass”. Ahab cannot understand that Elijah is the best hope there is for the future of Israel. God’s spokesman is what is needed!

2. The certainty of division is recognized

This is a Condemnation V 18 – 19

Elijah condemns Ahab and his actions. There has always been two sides; but now the difference becomes clear. Lines of distinction are clearly drawn. This is your fault Ahab! Elijah is not the trouble maker; he is simply the trouble shooter.

Why is it that God's people forget that there is a price for sin? Sin has consequences! Why are we surprised when God chastises us?

3. The crucible of decision is realized

This is the Challenge V 21

The people and the prophets have gathered. Elijah ignores the prophets of Baal and turns his attention to the people.

A. A Question is presented "how long".....

It appears this has been going on for quite some time

This is an excellent question for our churches today!

B. A Quandary is put forth A contradiction exists!

Their real problem surfaces. They cannot serve two gods.

Just as these people wanted the most of both worlds; so it appears that this is the case many times today.

C. A Qualifying is next presented

They must decide – It's either Jehovah or Baal. But not both!

The qualifying concept is; They must make a decision to follow Jehovah or they will fail and receive further judgment

D. A Quietness is found from the people

Evidently they are not ready to commit!

And for us, as we catch a glimpse of just how critical this situation is, we are confronted with the same decision for us!

There may be times when one can walk in the middle and survive; but sooner or later there will come the time when one must make a decision and not remain silent.

Someone has said "silence is golden" But sometimes silence is dangerous and cowardice.

They will decide once and for all which God is to be worshipped in Israel. It is sad that this decision did not remain intact throughout their history!

Elijah spoke eight times during this event and each time he speaks, he gives a command. Amazingly no one even tries to stop him. Possibly as long as one is in the center of God's will; he is invincible until the Lord finishes with him!

[II] A VALOR THAT IS SPIRITUAL

Here Elijah Challenges the Prophets

Courage is usually considered as an outgrowth of self – confidence. There is a divinely given strength and courage that enables God’s servants to measure up to any battle at hand.

1. This is a place for spiritual manifestation
There has been no word from the prophet for these three and a half years. He has been in God’s schooling process! But not on Mt Carmel it is time for a word from the Lord. It is time for the people to be put to the test; but first Elijah must deal with the false prophets.
2. This is a plan for spiritual magnification
The Lord God of Israel must be magnified before the people and the prophets of Baal must be exposed as false. 18:24b
God will provide the power for exposing and dealing with them.
3. This is for the purpose of spiritual ministrations
Elijah administers the complete affair on Mt Carmel. He chooses the procedure and gives the instructions; it is interesting that no one questions his leadership. He even allows the prophets of Baal to make the first move.

Elijah Challenges The Prophets of Baal V 22 – 24

A. The Teams V 22

Elijah is only one prophet against 450 prophets of Baal; yet he is willing to stand against them for God. This is truly faith and courage on his part. Elijah has chosen his path and he will not waver. He stands firm! There may be times when we too will have to stand alone; but God will not desert us.

B. The Terms V 23 – 24a

Elijah lays out the challenge to the prophets; they will offer a bull and pray. The God who answers by sending fire from heaven will be accepted and acknowledged as the one true God. This challenge was accepted by the prophets of Baal; after all Baal was their god of life. He was a fertility god who was seen in the rain and in the sun. Known in some realms as the sun god. Evidently they really believed Baal would answer their plea and send down fire from above.

C. The Tragedy V 24b

The worst tragedy is that the people of God would ever consider such a contest. They should have remembered the burning bush of Moses; the fire on the altar in the temple; the pillar of fire in the wilderness; the consuming of a crowd with fire. O’ How

quickly we tend to forget once we take our eyes away from God and His purpose for our lives. How quickly they have forgotten or either chose to ignore.

[III] A VICTORY THAT IS SUBSTANTIAL

Elijah also challenged the people. Only an answer from heaven will be enough to impress them. The prophets of Baal receive no answer. Elijah mocks them. 18:26 – 28 How sad that these prophets would go to such extreme measures in their effort to cling to a false god. The question comes to mind; Which is worse “true worship of a false god” Or “false worship of the true God”? Elijah’s position on Mt Carmel is one of conquest. Victory! As the prophets of Baal fail; Elijah makes his move.

We will look at that in detail in our next study; for now consider briefly –

1. Real Victory is anchored in the Word of God

This contest on Mt Carmel was not Elijah’s idea. The instructions he gave were not his own making. The actions he took were not of his own choice. 18:36 confirms this when he says “I have done all these things at Thy Word”.

We cannot trust our feelings or look to our accomplishments for victory. This will only lead to an experience of defeat.

2. Real Victory is associated with the Ways of God

Repairing a broken altar, using twelve stones, digging a trench, pouring water on the sacrifice seem to be unnecessary. Possibly he is getting the attention of all the people. Probably they stand and wonder “What is he doing now”?

3. Real Victory is accompanied by the witness of God

The fire fell! This was proof of God’s acceptance of the sacrifice. Elijah needed fire and that is what we need today; The Fire Of God! This is the witness of the Lord God of Heaven!

We live in a day much like this time was; A time of half – hearted service, when people serve the gods of self, materialism, and pleasure more than the God of heaven. God is trying to call His people back to the basics of serving Him.

THE LORD GOD LIVES!

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION

THE HEAVENLY PURSUIT

1 Kings 18:30 – 40

For six hours the prophets of Baal labored fervently; but to no avail. The futility of their frantic and fanatical efforts to prove the validity of their worship ended in total failure.

A. Their Ministry

From early morning till noon these prophets prayed, cried, and tried to reach Baal; but there was no god to be reached!

B. Their Mockery

Elijah mocked them and encouraged them to cry louder. 18:27
He was rather hard on these prophets; and how pitiful they are –
Reminder! How much like so many today; working hard and very serious – but to no avail.

C. Their Misery

Elijah's mockery sent the false prophets into a tizzy 18:28 – 29
They tried even harder; it appears they were determined to prove that their god not only could but would answer.

[I] THE SUFFICIENT PREPARATION

18:30 – 35

After the pitiful spectacle of Baal's prophets, the faithful prophet of the Lord { Elijah } steps forward. He is ready to begin the preparation.....

1. Old Landmarks

In a heavenly pursuit there is a single desire to please the Lord. One will seek to fulfill Matthew 6:33 by seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. Nothing else will matter!

A. Elijah repaired that which was broken 30 – 32

The altar had probably been erected for the entire Mt Carmel incident; but it was in need of repair. The altar had been defiled by the idol worship.

a. He called the people to draw near V 30

True faith will bring us near to God and the things of God.
This type of faith has nothing to hide – therefore Elijah invites the people to come close and observe everything.

b. He rebuilds the altar that had fallen V 30 – 32

B. Elijah raise that which was blessed V 31

Elijah takes twelve stones and built an altar in the Name of the Lord. God's name had been defiled. Elijah raises that name up!
We too need to lift up His name!

2. Orderly Lines

There are definite lines drawn involved in setting things in order. God has given specific instructions on "how to".

A. There was an orderly form of preparation V 32

In preparing the sacrifice, Elijah follows the priestly form of old. In accordance to Leviticus 1:7 The prophet was careful to arrange everything exactly as directed by the Lord.

B. There was a orderly fashion of presentation V 33

Just as Elijah was careful in preparation of the Altar; so he is also careful in the presentation of the sacrifice. Leviticus 1:8.....
Everything had to be presented accurately!

3. Offered Life

The death and offering of the bullock gives us a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ 1 Peter 3:18

A. The sacrifice must be available for the altar

Nothing could be offered that was not first made available. Before it could be burnt of the altar; it must be brought to the altar.

B. The sacrifice must be acceptable for the altar

Not just any ole sacrifice would be accepted. From the cattle; it had to be a male, without blemish. There could be no defect in a sacrifice offered to God.

4. Optimistic Link V 33 – 35

Elijah's faith was so strong that he believed God would actually do the impossible. He trusted God to do what man though to be totally impossible.

A. The altar was soaked with water V 33

And if there was any doubt about it being soaked – he had it repeated two more times. Question comes to mind – Where did the water come from; and why did not one object?

B. The altar was surrounded with water V 35

Elijah made sure it was fixed so that only a Miracle could consume the sacrifice. May we too expect our God to perform miracles today that will bring honor to His Name! When our goal is that His name be honored and glorified; we too will see God move in a marvelous and miraculous manner.

[II] A SIMPLE PRAYER

This is an overcoming prayer of victory; but not a lengthy or pious prayer. It is quite simple and short. The prophets of Baal had prayed at least six hours and accomplished nothing. Elijah steps forward and prays a 63 word prayer and the fire of God falls! His prayer is constructed in a manner to accomplish three things

- a. That God be Glorified**
- b. That the prophet be vindicated**
- c. That the people be revived**

Elijah could have prayed for rain; but he did not. He knew that as badly as rain was needed; the people needed Revival more! This was the heart of Elijah – Revival for the people of God!

1. The Overwhelming Prayer

This prayer is overwhelming in its entire concept.

A. The Spirit of Prayer V 36a “Lord God of....”

The Spirit in which we pray is vitally important. And also we must remember that the Spirit intercedes for us even in our prayers.

B. The Surety of Prayer V 36b “You are....”

We must believe that God is and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him. We can rest assured that HE IS!

C. The Submission of Prayer V 36c “I AM.....”

Elijah says I am just your servant Lord. It’s not about me; It is all about you and you alone!

D. The Service in Prayer V 36d “I have done all.....”

Everything that Elijah has done, has been at the Word of the Lord. May this be our service to Him also.

E. The Scope of Prayer V 37

Elijah prays that God will intervene in the life of these people. Prayer is the key that unlocks the door to the resources of Heaven. And God’s resource room is filled to capacity and is available to His children!

We must never underestimate the power of prayer coming from a dedicated child of God!

When the fire fell it fell on the sacrifice and not one the sinners. This is truly a picture of Jesus Christ; On the cross of Calvary our sin fell on Him and He bore it all. He absorbed the wrath of God so that we could be free from wrath, death, and hell!

At the time of the evening sacrifice, Elijah had begun his prayer. He mentioned the covenant of God with Israel; then he mentions his concern for these people. He wanted God's name to be exalted before the people. He desired that God would make known His power.

1. The Overcoming Lord

It is all on the line; It's now or never! If God doesn't come through, Elijah is done for. But God never lets His obedient servant down!
God overcomes in every area here.

A. He overcame the difficulties made by the prophet V 38

The fire fell and consumed the entire sacrifice; even the stones. Sacrifices had been consumed before on altars, but never before had there been a greater display of the power of God at an altar. Our God is a consuming fire!

B. He overcame the disobedience manifested by the people V 39

With the people on their faces in humility, confessing their condition and acknowledging the Lordship of God, we are reminded that this is what is needed today. This is truly Revival. The people are revived; Elijah is vindicated and God is honored!
What more could there be?

2. The Obvious Lessons V 38 – 40

There has been a crisis in the land and it is about to end... But first; Before the rain comes take note of the lessons.

A. The Repentance of a Wayward People

The people have their proof; all the proof they will get. They should have never questioned or disobeyed the Lord. But they did and He has brought them to the point of

a. Conviction

Before there can be a true change, there must be conviction. God has provided the opportunity for their response and finally they fall on their faces before Him.

b. Confession

They express the truth that they have known in their hearts all the while { or at least should have known }

The Lord He is God! The Lord He is God!

B. The Removal of The Wicked Prophets V 40

The false prophets must be dealt with if we are to experience true Revival. **THE LORD GOD LIVES!**

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION

THE HEAVENLY PIPELINE

1 Kings 18:41 – 46

The scene was one of glorious triumph! The fire had fallen from heaven. The God who deals with sin has validated His holiness. The God who speaks the truth has verified His word. The God who calls and sends His vessels has validated the ministry of His servant. However it's not over yet. There is still a drought – there has been no rain!

[I] PRECIOUS PROMISES OF THE PROMISE CLAIMER 18:41

Elijah knew rain was coming; because the ear of faith hears what the eye of flesh cannot see.

Rain pouring out of the heavenly pipeline on a dry, thirsty land certainly portrays spiritual revival. But before the rain could fall; the fire had to fall on the sacrifice, and the people had to humble themselves before the Lord. When this happens, God moves!

1. **Elijah had confidence in the Precious Word of God 18:1**
This is an example of God – given faith. Elijah's proclaiming "rain is coming" was not based on some self – propelled, positive thinking, humanistic faith. It was not that he had created something in his mind and now trying to get God to back it up. He had a Word from God and he trusted that Word.
2. **Elijah had confidence in the Perfect Will of God 17:1**
He has been God's instrument in bringing the drought; now he will be God's instrument in bringing the refreshing rain. The drought had been sent because of the idolatry of the people; now Baal's prophets are dead and the people have repented and confessed the Lord, therefore here comes the rain. In a time when so many thrive on the spectacular, may we remember that when God speaks it is not necessary to fabricate some far fetched idea to try and defend what God has said. Our responsibility is to believe God and declare His truth; not to question and endeavor to try and find so way to defend what God has said.
3. **Elijah had confidence in the Prior Work of God**
Elijah knew he could trust God to send the rain because of all that he had already seen the Lord do. He has already witnessed the faithfulness of God at the brook, in the barrel, with the boy, in the

bull, and over Baal. He has seen God do so many things in the past; Why question Him now? Elijah is simply trusting God and cooperating with Him in bringing about His divine will. He is merely cooperating with what God is doing! May we learn to join God in what He is doing in our day. What God has done in the past; He can still do today!

[II] PERSISTENT PRAYER OF THE PRAYER WARRIOR

18:42 – 45

In a study of the life of Elijah, one is made aware of the role of prayer in the life of a believer. His prayer on Mt Carmel stands out as large as the mountain itself. He prayed for the fire to fall; and it did! And according to James 5:18 he prayed again and the heaven gave rain.

Also in these verses we notice a contrast between Elijah the prophet and Ahab the potentate [king] Their actions and reactions in the aftermath of the events on Mt Carmel reveal some interesting conditions of their hearts.

1. Ahab goes to his feast 18:41 – 42a

As soon as this powerful manifestation of God is conducted, Ahab goes up to eat and drink. There appears to be no conviction over his sins; no concern for the dead prophets of Baal; and no compassion for the people he rules over. Ahab is concerned only about Ahab

A. The Flesh

It seems that Ahab is interested only in fulfilling the desires of the flesh. He is weak and now allows Elijah to give him orders and follows them. He is controlled by his flesh!

B. His Focus

His focus is on feeding the flesh. This reveals the true condition of his heart. Instead of bowing before the Lord in repentance and sorrow for his wickedness; he simply walk away to feed his flesh. How much is this like people today? They may sit in church on Sunday; but their focus is a million miles away, and as quickly as possible they are gone to feed their own personal selfish desires all week.

C. His Folly

How sad, Ahab was so close and yet so far away. Such a sad state of affairs; when one compares his opportunity to the outcome of his life. He heard; he saw; and he walked away from the greatest opportunity ever extended.

2. Elijah went to his Father

As Ahab goes out to feed his flesh; Elijah goes to the top of the mountain to meet with the Father. Even though the prophets of Baal are gone; even though the people have responded favorably toward God; even though the true colors have Ahab have been revealed; there is still work to be done for the Lord.

A. Elijah Prayed Earnestly

He ascended to the top of the mountain to be alone with God. 42 With deep reverence, he approached the Lord God of heaven with his face to the ground. He does not take God for granted; even though he knows God is available and will listen. Elijah draws near to God in submission to God!

B. Elijah Prayed Expectantly v 43

He is expecting God to move and send rain. Just because there is no immediate sign of rain does not mean that God is not listening. The servant's sight of "nothing" does not stop Elijah. He kept on praying and kept on sending. Elijah was expecting God to send rain and he will not give up until the Lord moves. This reminds us of Jacob at Bethel. This should encourage us to keep on keeping on!

C. Elijah Prayed Effectually v 44

Seven is the number of completion or perfection. And although it did not happen immediately; the rain does come and it comes in a great abundance. How many times have we prayed and looked; then seeing nothing we gave up; how many times have we missed out on God's blessings by quitting?

a. Elijah was humble

What a great lesson for us in our prayer ministry. The man who stood so tall as the fire fell, now bows so low as he asks God for rain. God honors humility!

b. He was specific

Gideon gives us an example of specific praying. Elijah prays specific according to James 5:17 – 18. He did not waste time. Many times we spend more time "informing God" that in actual praying to God.

c. He was persistent v 43

Seven times there is nothing; but on the eighth! Eight is the number for a new beginning. Elijah was persistent and this is a good lesson for us in our prayer ministry.

d. He was Answered v 44

On the eighth trip, the servant saw a small cloud rising out of the sea. That was all it took; possibly for many they would have continued to pray until the drops of rain began to fall. But for Elijah it was all he needed. Rain is on its way!

[III] PLENTIFUL PROVISIONS AND THE POWER RUNNER 45 – 46

After the king has been informed, the weather changes dramatically. That little cloud, the size of a man's hand turns into a large black hovering storm type cloud. The stillness and quiet of the day is invaded by the strong winds and heavy rain. Ahab leaves and goes to Jezebel. After three and a half years of drought, a gulley washer is coming; a frog strangler is on its way! As Ahab rushes to Jezebel in his iron wheeled Chariot; Elijah passes him on foot!

1. There is an abundant Provision of Showers for the Land 45

Instead of a slow pitter – patter of rain drops; the windows of heaven were opened and there is a great rain. Divine provisions are abundantly flowing from God's heavenly pipeline! The springs, creeks, and rivers will soon be flowing full and fast. The desert will blossom and shine. This is how it is when a true refreshing time of revival comes. The mighty rushing wind of the Holy Spirit begins to blow! The flood tides of heaven are released! Rivers of living water begin to rush forth through the lives of God's people! It is an abundant provision of showers for the land and the people!

2. There is abundant Provision of Strength from the Lord

As Ahab travels to Jezebel; Elijah runs ahead! V 46

Running 18 miles from Mt Carmel to where Jezebel resides cannot be attributed to Elijah's super human ability. The hand of the Lord was upon him! He was supernaturally empowered, enabled, and equipped for the journey!

A. The Source of this power

It's not Elijah! It is the divine power of an Almighty God at work in the life of an obedient servant. Phil 4:13 comes to mind.... While Ahab depends on his iron wheeled chariot; Elijah depends on the One and Only God of heaven!

B. The Secret of his Preparation

This fits so well with Hebrews 12:1 – 2 We too must make preparation for our journey of victory in the Lord!

Because THE LORD GOD LIVES!

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF ELIJAH # 10

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION

THE HUMAN PERPLEXITIES 1 Kings 19:1 – 4

From Mt Carmel to Jezreel, Elijah is on a spiritual high. He was at his best. But when one is at their best; Beware! From that high point Elijah slips to a situation of human perplexity that probably surpassed any previous experiences. Here we see the prophet at his worst.

The Word of God exposes human failures and limitations so that we may be aware of the possibilities that these problems haunt us also. Throughout the scriptures we find one after another of God's chosen servants facing such human perplexities. Elijah has witnessed the power of God on a personal level as well as on the national level. We have observed him as **THE STUDENT SERVANT** and **THE CHAMPION SOLDIER!** Now we see him as **THE DEPRESSED SAINT!** In chapter 17 see his humility – in chapter 18 see his heroism – and here in chapter 19 see his humanity. In essence here is a servant who has pushed himself to the limit. He faces a period of deep depression! It is surprising to some that Elijah could fall so fast from such a high; however we too are just as vulnerable as Elijah!

[I] A LIVELY JEZEBEL ELIJAH IS RATIONALIZING V 1 – 3

After the great events on Mt Carmel, Ahab returns to Jezebel; she is probably waiting to hear the details of how the prophets of Baal wrought a great victory and that Elijah is a thing of the past. She may have even saw the fire as it fell from heaven; believing it to be in answer to the prayers of the false prophets. As Ahab shares with her the events of the day note....

1. Her temper is enraged toward the prophet
Ahab gives all the credit to Elijah; completely ignoring the fact that it was the God of Elijah who sent the fire. 19:1
Jezebel had never liked Elijah and now she has more reason than ever to hate him. He has gotten rid of all her prophets, killing them by the sword. Vengeance is kindled within her.
 - A. Jealousy
She is jealous that Elijah has succeeded where the prophets of Baal had failed.
 - B. Envy

She is envious of the fame that will spread about Elijah. She cannot stand anyone else in her spotlight.

2. Her threats are echoed to the prophet 19:2

Word of Jezebel's threat reaches Elijah and fear grips his heart. How quickly Elijah forgets how God has provided for him in all the phases involved in his life up to this point. From the highest spiritual point of his life to the lowest, he falls in one instant. It does not take a long period of time to fail! Ahab and Jezebel completely ignore God; all they can think about is getting rid of Elijah. Evidently they believe that if Elijah is gone, all of their problems will vanish with him. Nothing has influenced them to turn to God!

Elijah doesn't just leave Jezreel; he goes due south almost 125 miles to the southern border of Judah. He goes as far as he can to avoid the reach of Jezebel and Ahab. His behavior is irrational; but this is the effect of depression. It brings sorrow and suffering beyond the concepts of being rational. Yet to Elijah this probably seems like the best thing to do.

[II] A LENGTHY JOURNEY ELIJAH IS RUNNING V 3 – 4a

Having determined that his only hope is to get as far away as possible; Elijah begins a lengthy journey to escape. Traveling was not something new to him; he has traveled long distances before. He has traveled from Gilead to Jezreel; to Cherith; to Zarephath; to t Carmel; he has outrun the chariot of Ahab; and now he is off again. But this journey is not the same.

1. This trip was most different for the prophet 19:3a

It appears that for the first time in his travels, he is walking by sight and not be faith. He is occupied with the fury of Jezebel and her threats. Trust in God through faith seems to be distant and dim. He is running for his life! Previously he had run for God now it's for his life.

A. Fear

Elijah is running because of fear. He is literally scared to death of Jezebel and her threats.

B. Frustration

Once our faith grows dim; and fear takes over; life becomes filled with frustration. Depression and frustration go together!

If this great prophet melts before the fires of adversity, certainly the possibility confronts us also. Only by faith can we endure in the face of severe adversity and opposition.

2. **This tour was more distant for the prophet**
From Jezreel to Beersheba, the distance is about 100 to 105 miles at most. Then Elijah goes another days journey into the wilderness. From there he travels forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God.

Beersheba is an interesting place. It was a significant landmark in the history of Israel. Abraham had called it Beersheba which means “well of the oath” because of his covenant with Abimelech.

Gen 21:31

Also it was the location where he communed with God and made his residence Genesis 21:33. Later Isaac met the Lord here and built an altar; dug a well and pitched his tent there. Jacob offered sacrifices here and received revelations from God. Elijah would have been familiar with the history of this place. Yet it did not seem to register with him; because he leaves his servant there and moves on. In a state of failure we had rather dwell in the wilderness than remain close to the place of God’s provision and protection because our sight is on our perplexities instead of on God.

[III] A LONELY JUNIPER ELIJAH IS REFLECTING

There is not much doubt that Elijah is sitting under the Juniper Bush, reflecting on his life and pitching a pity party. Here he sits praying to die. It’s as though he says death is desired more that this perplexing situation.

FIRST: Some characteristics we notice in his life

1. **Elijah cuts himself off from others V 3**
He is all alone – But remember there were 7,000 who had not bowed to Baal. Verse 18. Elijah is never seen seeking out those 7,000. When faith grows dim, we forget the need of supporting each other. Too many times we fail to reach out to others for support.
2. **Elijah takes his eyes off God and focuses on the situation**
When we leave God out and focus on the secular; we are in serious trouble. We must learn to lean on one another; BUT we must first learn to lean on God.
3. **He claimed that he wanted to die.**
His response is “I have had it! I am done! I quit! How many times have we been in this spot ourselves?”

Could it be that Elijah had begun to enjoy the spotlight and even come to the place of feeling proud? Could it be that he had begun to believe that it was he who had accomplished great things? Possibly we too can begin to think too highly of ourselves if we aren't careful! However it comes about Elijah is facing a serious failure in his life as he deals with these human perplexities.

As we consider the great ministry enjoyed by this prophet; we might ask "How did he get to this place"? Probably many reasons could be involved in this – however for the present time look at three

1. Exhausted Physically

Think of the activity on Mt Carmel. The pressure was tremendous. Anyone in ministry faces tremendous pressure on a daily basis.

A. Physically Exhausted

Notice the Lord did not rebuke Elijah for sleeping. Every servant of God must recognize the need for physical rest.

How many great servants of God have burned out simply due to being physically exhausted? One must come aside for a period of rest and refreshment.

B. Exasperated Emotionally

The emotional stress is overwhelming in ministry. The emotional strain on the minister and on his family is tremendous. The divorce rate is just as high with ministers as any other group. The emotional strain takes its toll and the price is high.

C. Extended Spiritually

Extended to his fullest capacity; Elijah has served under the pressure of being physically exhausted and emotionally drained. Many of God's servants throughout the Bible experienced these same perplexities or ones very similar to these. Many of the modern day servants have experienced these also.

One can only imagine that Elijah may have been aware of these problems in ministry; even aware of them in his own personal life; and just as many are aware today; BUT Elijah had a burning desire in his heart to serve God; as do many servants today; and even with the knowledge of burn – out they keep going. Hoping to make it a little farther; Saying tomorrow I will stop long enough to rest a while; But tomorrow doesn't seem to come easy. May we all be cautious as we serve God to remember we are vulnerable and we must beware of our facing human perplexities. May we all serve as best we can because... **THE LORD GOD LIVES!**

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION

THE HEALING PROCESS 1 Kings 19:5 – 8

Elijah has gone as far as he can go. He has experienced a time of humility; heroism; and humanity. He experienced [a] Circumstances that crippled him; 19:1 – 4

He saw the wrong things – v 3; he sought the wrong things – v 3b – 4a; and he said the wrong things v 4b; now we notice that He also experienced [b] Compassion that calmed him 19:5 – 8

In 19:1 – 4 we find The Misery of the Prophet In 19: 5 – 8 we find The Ministry of the Prophet. [a] A Ministry of Consideration; and this involved Rest V 5 – 8 / Refreshment V 5 – 8. [b] Then A Ministry of Compassion which involved Gentleness V 5 – 7 / Grace V 7 – 8.

God's Presence

God's Provisions

God's Patience

Sooner or later we all find ourselves in a “juniper tree” setting!

[I] A TOUCH FOR THE WEARY 19:5

Actually the Lord touched him twice. The discouraged prophet received a double touch from the Lord.

1. The touch of the Lord was one of intervention.
God is coming to the aid of His servant in the wilderness. God did not send some other messenger; nor one of the other prophets; He came Himself!
2. The touch of the Lord was one of inspiration.
The visit from the Lord would have been inspiring; the voice he heard surely was one of deep compassion.
3. The touch of the Lord was one of instruction.
The Lord provided direction and guidance to the prophet. While Elijah was going in his own direction, he has no interest in the Lord's pathway. But, now having come to the end of the road, he is willing to listen to God.

[II] A TABLE FOR THE WILDERNESS 19:8 – 9

On three different occasions Elijah was fed miraculously; first by the ravens; second from the barrel that never ran empty; and here from the hand of God Himself.

1. How convincing are the provisions of God!

Only God could have set such a table in the midst of nowhere. Nothing grew there. Adverse conditions do not hinder God in His providing for His own.

2. How considerate are the provisions of God!

God knew exactly what the prophet needed. God always knows where His servants are, and He knows exactly what they need. Notice the Lord had already made the provisions for Elijah.

3. How complete are the provisions of God!

God had made complete provision for Elijah. Not only bread but water also. He is the bread of life; He is the water that once drank, we will never thirst again.

[III] A TRUTH FOR THE WILLING

From the beginning of chapter 19; As Elijah Took a Turn for the worse; to the Touch for the Weary; to a Table in the Wilderness; to The Truth for the Willing; Elijah finds that God is available even in the wilderness.

The truth of that still small voice reveals that.....

1. The voice of God is more powerful than any Perplexities

Elijah is in a state of mass confusion. He is confused over the things that are happening to him. He is probably wondering “Why” “What is going on” “Where do I go now”

A. There has been a touch from God; But he also needed to hear from God. We too need a word from God in our lives.

B. There was a table in his life; But he needed the voice of God to give assurance for his life now. In the midst of failure; fear; and fatigue Elijah needed that assurance of God’s voice.

C. There was a triumph in his life; But he needed the voice of God. Certainly Elijah had experienced great triumphant victory at Mt Carmel; But that is in the past; he needs to hear from God in the present.

2. The voice of God is more powerful that any Phenomena

Conditions and circumstances may look impossible to overcome. Elijah is overwhelmed with these; But the voice of God is greater than any conditions or circumstances. God’s voice is greater than

A. The blowing wind of verse 11

B. The breaking earthquake of verse 11 – 12

C. The burning fire of verse 12

3. The voice of God is more powerful that any passive elements.

A word from God can accomplish more than any passive concepts from any other source.

A. The voice of God approached him

Elijah may have been unaware of everything else around him; but he heard the voice of God. When nothing else can reach the heart of a discouraged servant of God; the voice of God can break through. God came to where Elijah was!

B. The voice of God aroused him

When nothing else stirs our hearts; the voice of God can stir our fearful hearts and bring peace to the troubled spirit of man. Nothing can stir our hearts like the voice of our Lord!

C. The voice of God addressed him

God not only came to Elijah where he was; but God had a word for only Elijah. God deals with His servants in a very personal manner. God not only comforts His servants; but God also confronts His servants.

[IV] A TURNING FOR THE WAYWARD

Elijah has failed. He has run away, but God does not forsake His own. And now God extends to Elijah, the opportunity to Turn back and serve Him!

1. There is acknowledgment from Elijah

Elijah must face his failure and fear. He must acknowledge where he is in his spiritual walk with God. He must acknowledge his

A. Failure

The first step to recovery is admitting one's personal failure in life. God extends to us His grace, but we must acknowledge our failures.

B. Frustration

Also Elijah must deal with his personal frustration over Jezebel and face the reality that this is his own fault. God has not forsaken him and left him alone. Elijah must acknowledge this.

C. Frailty

Then also Elijah must acknowledge his own frailty and inability to handle the situation. Jezebel is more than he can cope with all alone; he needs the assistance of God!

2. There is acceptance involved here

Elijah hears the voice of God; but he must also accept the directions given to him from God.

A. He must trust God's Word.

It is one thing to hear God and yet another to place trust in His Word!

B. He must also trust God's Way

Elijah must accept God's Word and he also must accept God's Way. God has His own way for doing things and we must follow His directions not only in what we do but also in how we do it.

C. God's Will also must be accepted

God has His own way of doing things and the things that He desires for us to do are those within His will for our lives.

3. Then Acceptance for action

Elijah must now put action into that acknowledgment and acceptance. Without the final step of action; his acknowledgment and acceptance will not finalize his instructions from God. We too must fulfill God's Word to us; His will for us; In His way, by putting it into action.

[V] A TRIP FOR THE WANDERER

God reassigns his weary, worn servant.

1. The patience of God is greater than our failures

God did not give up on Elijah and he does not give up on us even in the midst of our failures. God is acquainted with all our ways; He is faithful and patient with His own.

2. The purposes of God are greater than all our fears

None of us go through life and never experience failure. Nor do we make it without many fears. Fear grips our hearts and overwhelms us. God has not finished with Elijah and therefore He has a purpose for him and that purpose overrides Elijah's fears.

3. The power of God is greater than all our frailties

The journey is too great for Elijah himself. The physical demands, spiritual pressures, and emotional requirements are simply greater than Elijah can handle; However God can! The Lord will be his tower of power in the midst of his journey. 19:8

The power of God not only can but will take us through the pitfalls, the failures, the fears and our frailties and carry us to the end of our journey

BECAUSE THE LORD GOD LIVES!

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION

THE HOREB PERSPECTIVE 1 Kings 19:9 – 18

Strengthened by a meal from the Heavenly Father; Elijah sets out on his long journey across the desert. He traveled for forty days in the strength of that one meal. This journey was approximately 400 miles. The number forty makes interesting study; by studying the forty day experiences of Noah, Joseph, Moses, Ezekiel, Jonah, and others, including the Lord Jesus Christ; it becomes apparent that forty is the number for testing and probation. As Elijah is being tested; it is evident that his perspective proved to be faulty. Although he is far away from the juniper tree; the juniper tree experience remains close to him. 19:9a

It was here on this same mountain that Moses perspective toward God's service was changed. Elijah's feelings about God's purposes are greatly altered as God met with him here.

[I] GOD'S PERSONAL VISIT

Elijah's Confrontation with The Lord.

1. The Cave v 9

Possibly this is the same cave, or cleft of a rock where Moses was hidden when the Lord passed by him and proclaimed His Name. Exodus 33:22 Now as Elijah sits in the cave, perhaps with his head in his hands, staring down at the ground, wondering if God would ever use him again; that God speaks to him again. How quickly he forgets God's visit in the wilderness. But there is no place on earth so lonely, no cave so deep and dark, that the Word of God cannot penetrate and speak to us.

2. The Challenge v 10

God usually comes to extend His challenge to us. He desires that we be obedient and follow His Word; His Will and His Way.

A. God's visits are flavored with Compassion

We have already covered this in verse 5 – 8.

B. God's visits are full of confrontation

God manifested Himself to the prophet and confronts him with the question 19:9c.

[a] God confronted his actions v 9

God had not called Elijah to live in a cave but to stand up for the Lord. God has not called us to be discouraged and defeated but to experience His peace and His joy.

[b] God confronted his attitude v 11 – 13

Elijah seemingly liked the spectacular and miraculous; it appears that he had difficulty dealing with the norm. Too often God's people get defeated when they don't experience the big overwhelming things of God.

[c] God confronted his assumptions

Assuming can be very dangerous in service to God. Elijah apparently made two foolish assumptions and experienced defeat as a result

[1] Elijah assumed that he was forsaken and all alone

God reminded him of 7,000 who had not bowed to Baal.

[2] Elijah assumed that he was finished and would never serve again.

He thought his ministry was over, and he was ready to die.

The question comes to mind; Are we where we are supposed to be? Are we doing what God has instructed us to do.

C. God's visits are followed by confession 19:10

The words of the prophet have been interpreted many ways. Whether he is evading the issue, just being honest, or being accusative, at least he is talking with the Lord.

[II] GOD'S POWERFUL VOICE

The Commissioning by The Lord

After explaining his presence in the cave; Elijah witnessed three great events. 19:11b – 12 Without a doubt there are many so – called winds, earthquakes, and fires in religious circles today that God is not in; just as he was not in these. Loud noise and Movement does not mean its all of God. Just because its unusual and impressive does not mean it is of God

1. The Command v 11a

The truth is that unless God is involved and is sharing; it is of no lasting value. Too many times we try to work something up; create an atmosphere; help God out; and simply end up with little to nothing to show for our efforts. We need the command of God from the Word of God!

- A. Elijah was impressed with the excellence of God's voice
Possibly Elijah thought that the people could only be restored to the Lord through great and mighty events. Up to now his ministry could be described as filled with wind, earthquake, and fire type events. But he is being made aware that there is a greater power, the compelling force of the Divine Voice of God!
 - B. Elijah was introduced to the essence of God's voice
Softly and tenderly God is calling! It was not the sound of a mighty rushing wind.
 - C. Elijah was influenced by the efficiency of God's voice
The wind, earthquake, and fire did not arouse Elijah; but that still small voice of God was effective and efficient.
2. The Conditions
New conditions come into the life of Elijah at this point.
It is move out from your hiding place and into the real world. We too must move from our comfort zone and into the place of service that God has chosen for us. Failure on our part can only lead to problems and difficulties in our effort to serve God.

Blessed are the saints who learn the limitations of the flesh and discover the quickening power of that still small voice.

[III] GOD'S PURPOSEFUL VESSELS

The Correction of The Lord

19:13 – 18

Elijah seems to either be slow or stubborn in learning the lesson God has for him. V 13b. It seems that at this point; God has had enough. There was work to be done and Elijah must get on with the task at hand. 15a

- 1. A New Commission
Elijah is to return to Israel through Syria. There he is to anoint 2 kings and a prophet. He receives his marching orders! In order for Elijah to be successful he had to go through some sort of change....
 - A. Elijah was restored in God's truths.
Elijah felt that Israel's sins had gone unpunished. But God had not forgotten to judge righteously. Elijah is commissioned to anoint Hazael and Jehu as two vessels the Lord would use either directly or indirectly in the humbling and destruction of the house of Ahab. It is as though God says "I have had enough with you Elijah" If you will not follow completely, then I will call up

two kings and use them to accomplish my will and fulfill my purposes. God's truth is this: If we will not; then someone else will or He can even use the rocks to cry out!

B. Elijah was replaced in God's time

God will also call up another vessel and use him. Elisha will be called up! God is serious about His business and He will not always fool around with His servants. He will simply move on to another vessel; Elisha. And God still operates in this same manner today when necessary. God will use other individuals and or churches!

C. Elijah was reestablished in God's triumph

Evil would not prevail! To Elijah it may have appeared hopeless, but the work of God would carry on. Things are not always as they appear; especially in our perspective. But things look totally different when we see them through God's perspective.

2. A New Comfort

As we travel the pathway that God has laid out for us; it would do us good to remember that God is still in control and that we do have to answer to Him for our attitudes and actions.

What a thrilling thought that God provides us with comfort along the journey.

A. The comfort of a kindred spirit v 10 & 14

Twice Elijah has complained that he was all alone in his devotion to the Lord. However God tells him that there are 7,000 others who have not worshipped Baal. Elijah is not alone. There are others who will stand with him. This should give us courage and comfort; that we are not alone. There are many others who are standing with us in service to God.

B. The Comfort of a knowledgeable Saviour

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! Elijah seemed to forget that God knew all about him, his problems, his enemies, and where the solutions were. This surely must have comforted Elijah's heart.

It would do all of us good to remember these truths as we travel through the valley experiences here. Not even the smallest details go unnoticed by our Lord! The valley experiences cannot consume us

BECAUSE THE LORD GOD LIVES!

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION

THE HARVEST PRIVILEGES 1 Kings 19:19 – 21

The laws of God's harvest are sometimes difficult to understand. Probably because His ways are above our ways. At least we are privileged to share in that harvest. Some sow; some water; but God gives the increase.

Elisha is nothing like Elijah; everything about him is different. His training, his personality, and his ministry are all different. God uses people as the person they are. Yet with all their differences, there is a divine strength manifested. The Lord took this pair and formed a complete ministry. Elijah was fierce, furious, and stern; Elisha was somewhat more gentle, calm, and peaceful.

There is a Call to Destiny found here. Also a Call to Decisiveness seen as well as a Call to Discipleship. God's call comes to Elisha where he is; as he is; to become what God has called him to be. Before we look more closely at Elisha; Consider Elijah and Elisha!

[1] They enjoyed Fellowship

They both shared a common call from God to serve. These two could fellowship with one another. Thanks God for good Christian fellowship.

[2] They enjoyed Friendship

They supported each other and complimented each other in ministry. We all need the friendship of fellow Christians as we minister to others; we need someone to minister to us.

[I] THE MINISTRY BATTLE

It is quite obvious that Elisha goes through the common battle over being involved in ministry. Fear of failure; frustration over lack of preparation; consideration of his present life style; interruption of his comfortable routines in life; thoughts of the loss of regular connection with family and friends.

1. The Call of God

Elisha must respond only to God's call and not the call of Elijah. One cannot help but wonder if there are not many today who have responded to the call of others etc instead of a call from God.

- A. **Clear Call**
Elisha has to be certain that this is a clear call from God.
 - B. **Capacity of the call**
To what degree or in what area is God calling. To what extent is he being called to serve.
 - C. **Cause for the call**
Why is God calling him? How he can he be of service to God?
2. **The Cost Involved** **There is a price to pay!**
Elisha must be certain of God's call and also he must consider the cost.
- A. **Realization**
First comes the realization that God is calling him and closely connected is the thought of the cost involved.
 - B. **Then Recognition**
To recognize just what that cost could be. For Elisha it can cost him his family connection; friendships; financial loss; Elisha is the son of a wealthy farmer and he stands to lose all of that.
 - C. **Regrets**
He will never make it in his ministry for God if he starts out with regrets for agreeing to begin with. He must put all of these things behind him and press forth in the call of God.
3. **Commitment**
Then there is the actual commitment process. Realizing that God is calling him; Elisha counts the cost and now must decide if he can make the final commitment to follow God's call on his life.
- A. **Failure to Follow**
Elisha has to recognize that failure to follow will actually cost more than simple obedience.
 - B. **Folly of Failure**
Elisha has to realize that he may experience some areas of failure in his ministry. After all he is human! Failures come but they can never be the final chapter in our lives. God forgives!
 - C. **Following Faithfully**
God calls; Elisha counts the cost and make the commitment; .
And in doing so pledges himself to follow faithfully the call of God on his life.
4. **Compensation**
Surely Elisha must have though of the compensation involved in this commitment to follow God. That compensation covers three areas.

A. Presence of the Master

Elijah has experienced the presence of God throughout his career; but Elisha will experience that same presence throughout his ministry also.

B. Power of the Spirit

Elisha will have the power of God actively working in his life and if God is with him; empowering him in ministry.

C. Performance of Miracles

Elisha will do twice as much as Elijah! God will use him in a great and mighty manner to perform miracles throughout his ministry.

[II] THE MANTEL BESTOWMENTS

Traveling from Horeb to Damascus, Elijah probably went through the plain of Jordan. Crossing the Jordan River in the midlands of the plain; he would have come to the rich fertile fields near the town of Abel – meholah. There he finds Elisha plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him and he with the twelfth. Passing by Elijah simply cast his mantel upon Elisha.

Evidently there was some sort of symbolism expressed in this gesture.

1. Elisha sensed the call of God in the mantle.

In his willingness to follow Elijah; Elisha was evidently aware of what this gesture meant. Elisha would never have met most of our credential requirements of today. He had no experience, no formal training that we are aware of; he was not familiar with the manner of ministry as far as we can tell.

2. Elisha saw the comfort of God in the mantle.

Obviously he felt the call of God on his life as Elijah walked by and cast the garment. Probably he wondered Why would the God of Elijah ever consider me? The mantle was used in many ways; Comfort from the cold; pillow for resting the head; protection in a sand storm and etc. It was a constant companion and not to be discarded lightly. It portrays a picture of the Holy Spirit; our comfort.

[III] THE MORTAL BENEFITS

Life shares much with us. The kindness of the Lord can be seen in every place and in every thing associated with our service. Sometimes we may fail to see those benefits; but that does not mean they are not present.

Elisha accepts the call and moves forward into God's service.

- 1. His field – labor granted him a means of discipline.**
Born into the home of a farmer; Elisha had been taught to work. He was not too good to plough in the fields along with the servants. God calls those who are willing to labor in the fields of harvest. And He says the fields are white unto harvest; but the laborers are few; we should pray that the Lord send forth laborers unto the harvest.
- 2. His family – life gave him a measure of direction.**
One would suppose that Elisha's parents were probably fairly well off materially. They have a farm and several servants are busy plowing the fields. Elisha seems to have a good relationship with his family; he asks to go and kiss them good bye 19:20a
And we would suppose that Elisha has been taught some things about God. Evidently he had a God consciousness. This would most likely have come from his parents.

[IV] THE MINISTERIAL BLESSINGS

Elijah responds to Elisha's request in what could be rendered as a little harsh. 19:20b He would not force Elisha to follow. One must accept the call of God obediently and willingly.

- 1. His schooling could not have been more helpful.**
As we give our best to God: God gives His best to us. Elijah had been taught from the hand of God himself and now Elisha has the privilege of sitting at the feet of Elijah and learning the ways of God.
- 2. His service could not have been more honorable.**
Elisha not only went after Elijah; not only sat and learned; but he also ministered to Elijah.
God has called us into a harvest that is plentiful, and in which the laborers are few. However there are many privileges and many great opportunities for service and for gathering of the harvest.

Therefore we must consider God's Call in our life; count the cost; make the commitment; look forward to the compensation of God's blessings and benefits; recognizing that God has bestowed to us this great and might opportunity to serve Him.

BECAUSE THE LORD GOD LIVES!

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF ELIJAH # 14

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION

THE HEATHEN PLOT 1 Kings 21

AFTER ELIJAH RETURNED to the land from his sojourn in the wilderness, some time passed before he again came into the spotlight. At least two, maybe three or more years went by. We deduce this from several situations in Scripture. First, in our chapter a vineyard is thriving in Jezreel which means the effects of the three and a half year drought have been overcome. This would take at least a year or two to occur. Second, after Elijah's return to the land, Israel had several wars with Syria which occurred before the events of this chapter. These wars lasted over a period of at least two different years (1 Kings 20).

That which brings Elijah on the scene again was the criminal conduct of Ahab, the most wicked king Israel had experienced up to that time, and of Jezebel his extremely wicked wife.

A. THE PROPOSITION OF AHAB

Ahab wanted a vineyard which was right next to the palace grounds. This vineyard belonged to a man by the name of Naboth. Naboth had obviously taken good care of his vineyard and this would arrest the eye of his royal neighbor, Ahab.

One day Ahab went to Naboth and made an offer to buy the vineyard.

1. A Reasonable Offer Verse 2

On the surface this offer looks fair and square. And it was very generous, too; for it offered Naboth a "better" vineyard in return if he did not want to take money for it. The terms were certainly reasonable. In fact, we are surprised that wicked Ahab would offer such an equitable deal. But when Jezebel was not influencing him, it seems Ahab could act rather decent at times.

2. A Rejected Offer Verse 3

Naboth flatly rejected Ahab's offer. And he did it with a finality that stopped Ahab from further negotiation.

- A. The cause of the rejection. Numbers 36:7 Naboth would not sell his vineyard, for God's Word forbade it. "The LORD forbid me," (v. 3) he said. God's law given to Moses centuries before would not allow him to sell the vineyard.
- B. The conquering in the rejection.

Some lessons concerning temptation

[1] First, the dignity of temptation.

Not everyone has a king come knocking with such an offer. Ahab was a person of prestige and would have impressed most.

[2] The dividends of temptation.

Temptation usually offers the concept of “something better” Ahab offers profit and that would tempt most.

[3] The defeat of temptation.

Naboth was the victor due to his knowledge of God’s Word and his commitment to be obedient to that Word.

Ahab is devastated and this is seen by his response which was immature. He responds as a pouting childish person. His response reveals his true character and it prepares his heart for even greater evil.

B. THE PLOT OF JEZEBEL Verse 5

1. The Contempt in the Plot Verse 5 – 7

Jezebel’s contempt was twofold. She had contempt for godliness and for government. She did not care for the rules of righteousness nor for the responsibilities of royalty.

2. The Craftiness of the Plot Verse 8 – 10

Jezebel was a wicked wizard. Her plot, though terribly evil, would be craftily disguised so it would appear she was honoring both Jehovah and justice, both the Lord and the law, both the religion of the people and the rules of the nation.

3. The Compliance With the Plot Verse 11

Jezebel obtained ready compliance with her murderous plot. Not only did wicked men go along with Jezebel, but what bothers many is that it appears God went along with Jezebel, too. God did not stop her plot.

However we must consider.....

- A. The sovereignty of God.**
- B. The wisdom of God.**
- C. The compensation of God.**

4. The Cruelty of the Plot

Though Jezebel’s plot appeared to honor the Lord and the law, yet it was a very, very, cruel plot. The cruelty of Jezebel’s plot was threefold. The plot involved slandering, stoning, and stealing.

C. THE PROCLAMATION OF ELIJAH Verses 17 – 19

The evil proceedings in Jezreel, though orchestrated with clever deceptive precision, did not escape the eye of the Almighty! He will now enter the scene and in a most discomfoting way so that the fruits of sin will be impossible to enjoy. No matter how promising sin appears, it will not be without the Divine intrusion which will end its pleasures and replace the pleasures with judgment.

Elijah is summoned to take a message to Ahab that will announce extremely unpleasant news for the royal family. Verse 20

1. The Details of the Proclamation

Elijah's message on God's wrath concerned six things.

- A. The discovering of Ahab. "I have found thee" (v. 20). It was surely an unpleasant shock for Ahab to look up and suddenly see and hear Elijah and know that his evil had been found out. No one can sin without being discovered sooner or later.
- B. The deeds of Ahab. The terrible crime against Naboth was attributed to Ahab by God when He said, "Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?" (v. 19). Although Ahab did not actually cast the stones; He is guilty due to the following.....
 - [1] Promoting evil. Ahab has promoted this evil deed. He encouraged it.
 - [2] Prohibiting evil. He did nothing to stop the process of this evil deed.
 - [3] Profiting from evil. He gladly and willingly seized the opportunity to profit from this evil.
 - [4] Punishing evil. Guilty, because he did not punish the evil doers, though he had the authority to do so.
- C. The death of Ahab. The third thing Elijah's message spoke about was Ahab's death which was part of Ahab's judgment for his evil in Naboth's injustice. Verse 19
- D. The deal of Ahab It was a deal which was deadly. Verse 20
- E. The dynasty of Ahab Included his children etc. Verse 21 – 22
- F. The dame of Ahab. Lastly, the proclamation of God's wrath spoke about Ahab's wicked wife Jezebel. It predicted her terrible, dishonorable death. Verse 23 / 2 Kings 9:30 – 37

What a terrible woman Jezebel was for Ahab to have as a wife. She was such a wicked woman and was the one who stirred up Ahab to doing so much evil (v. 25).

2. The Effect of the Proclamation

The message of God's wrath spared no punches. It cut deeply. But it was needed, it was appropriate, and it had a good effect upon Ahab. V 27

Ahab had finally done something commendable! For once he gave some respect to what Elijah said regarding right and wrong. Later in Scripture, however, we will see that his repentance was not very deep.

Ahab's change of attitude was observed by God and resulted in the manifestation of God's grace. Verse 28, 29

God's grace delayed the execution of the sentence of judgment until the days of Ahab's sons. Apart from this grace, the house of Ahab would have been destroyed much sooner. How marvelous is God's grace. It takes notice of the slightest bit of repentance. It reaches even to the worst of sinners. In fact, He is much more ready to forgive than we are to repent. God is so ready to forgive, so ready to manifest His grace, that when He detects the slightest indication of repentance, as in Ahab's case, He immediately opens the door of grace.

That the message on the wrath of God resulted in a manifestation of the grace of God ought to help us think more kindly about such messages. God in mercy sends the severe message about His wrath in order to wake us up to repent so He can show grace. Sending the message on wrath is motivated by grace.

3. The Witnesses of the Proclamation

Elijah's message on the wrath of God was heard by more than just Ahab on that fateful day in the vineyard of Naboth. We learn from another text of Scripture that two men, Jehu and Bidkar (officers in Ahab's court), also heard the message. They had accompanied Ahab to the vineyard, and so they were there when Elijah delivered his proclamation to Ahab. Later Jehu remembered the message. When he killed Joram (sometimes rendered "Jehoram"), the son of Ahab, to pave the way for his (Jehu) becoming the king of Israel, Jehu told Bidkar (who had become Jehu's assistant), "Take up, and cast him [Joram] in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite; for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the LORD laid this burden [prophecy] upon him. Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the LORD. Now therefore take and cast him in the plat of ground, according to the word of the LORD" (2 Kings 9:25, 26).

It is too bad Jehu did not continue to remember what Elijah said to Ahab. It could have spared Jehu much trouble, prolonged and purified his reign over Israel. But like many, Jehu soon forgot the Word of God and departed from God's ways—much to his personal loss and much to the nation's loss, too.

HOWEVER – THE LORD GOD LIVES!

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION

The Humbling Providence 2 KINGS 1

ELIJAH'S EARTHLY SOJOURN is nearing its end; but before he leaves the earth, he will have one more dramatic face-to-face confrontation with the wicked house of Ahab. This time, however, it will not be with Ahab but with Ahab's son Ahaziah who has become king. Ahab died as he had lived – in rebellion against God. [1 Kings 22:38] Ahaziah was much like his father [1 Kings 22:52 – 53] He should have learned something from his father's experiences; but obviously he did not! God ordered Elijah on the scene to confront the wounded king about his evil.

In this study of the encounter of Elijah with the wounded king, we will consider the providence of events, the practice of unbelief, and the pronouncement of judgment.

A. THE PROVIDENCE OF EVENTS

Nothing happens by chance. God directs all. He works in nature, events, and history to bring about His purpose. But men often look the other way denying and mocking the idea of God's providential involvement. The working of Divine providence is most evident in the inflicting of Ahaziah and the intervening of Elijah into the case. Only the foolish leave God out and ignore His warnings. The wise recognize the operation of a Divine God in their life.

1. The Inflicting of Ahaziah

Ahaziah had been king about two years when he "fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria". No matter whether God moves quickly or slowly; He is at work and He will perform His purposes and His judgment will be carried out. He who has God for an enemy is never safe.

Elijah had predicted in Naboth's vineyard the complete destruction of Ahab's dynasty and family. God was at work vindicating righteousness and bringing due judgment upon wickedness.

2. The Intervening of Elijah

The meeting of Elijah and the servants of Ahaziah was not fate, luck, or happenstance. It was designed by God. His providence guided it all.

Evil cannot outwit the providence of God. But if you want providence in your corner, you must be in God's corner. Thus Divine providence became his curse. Evil men turn to the wrong for advise or assistance.

B. THE PRACTICE OF UNBELIEF Verse 6

The servants' report to Ahaziah was met with a hostile reaction, for Ahaziah did not believe the message of God. And in his unbelief, he attacked the speaker of the message of God which in this case was Elijah. Attacking Elijah is confirmation of the unbelief and rebellion toward God and the rejection of God's Word. To examine this attack upon Elijah, we note the ardent asking about Elijah, the attempted arrest of Elijah, and the awesome action by Elijah.

1. The Ardent Asking About Elijah

After the servants had delivered the message to Ahaziah, he immediately sought to know who the man was that gave the servants the message. His asking about the messenger was with evil intent. He wanted to know who the man was so he could seek him out to arrest and eliminate him.

2. The Attempted Arrest of Elijah Verse 9

There could only be one reason to send so many after only one man.

A. The aim of the arrest

Seems to indicate that the aim was destruction of Elijah. How soon the house of Ahab forgets the Words of God! Or possibly the aim was simply to have him arrested and out of commission.

B. The arrogance in the arrest

- First indication appears to be one of respect. "man of God"
- However – the next seems to indicate arrogance
- Then verse 11... Unbelief and demanding

3. The Awesome Action by Elijah

The attempted murderous arrest of Elijah was foiled by Elijah. God's warnings are ignored. A second group and then even a third group are sent out to bring Elijah in.

A. The response in the action

- The fire of God consumes both groups
- Unbelief can be persistent
- Finally the message gets through to the third group V 13
-

B. The reproach in the action

➤ The criticism from the crowd

First, the exoneration of Elijah. This is not personal vindication but proof of who is in charge and giving Elijah his orders.

Luke 9:55 – 56

(1) Accusation. The passage does not accuse Elijah of evil.

(2) Application. Elijah's life was in danger.

(3) Animation. Elijah was animated by honor for God.

(4) Approbation. The passage shows that it takes God's approval for fire to come. God did approve of the fire, and that approval indeed vindicates Elijah's action.

Second, the condemnation of the soldiers. They cooperated with a wicked king and shared in his punishment.

C. THE PRONOUNCEMENT OF JUDGMENT

The angel of the Lord told Elijah to go with the third group of soldiers. "Go down with him; be not afraid of him" (v. 15). As we noted earlier, the "be not afraid" implied the intended infliction of evil upon Elijah by the first two groups of soldiers. But the third group was different. They did not do evil to Elijah but escorted him safely to King Ahaziah.

When Elijah came to the king and confronted him regarding his sin, he repeated the message of judgment which he had given to Ahaziah's servants earlier. (v. 16).

This pronouncement of judgment was a courageous pronouncement, a needed pronouncement, but a disregarded pronouncement.

1. A Courageous Pronouncement

The truth is seldom easy to proclaim. And it is especially difficult to proclaim when the situation where you proclaim the truth is hostile. Elijah was back in the lion's den so to speak. He was back in Samaria where Ahab and Jezebel had ruled so wickedly and where Ahaziah, Ahab's wicked son, was now ruling. He had to face Ahaziah face to face and deliver the goods. It was a lot easier to tell the servants what to tell Ahaziah, but now he must tell Ahaziah the message from God right to his face. But Elijah did not fail. He spoke the same unwanted truth in the palace which he had also spoken out on the road to Ekron.

Anybody can speak boldly on the road to Ekron. But it takes a man of tremendous spiritual courage to faithfully speak the truth in the palace of Ahaziah.

2. A Needed Pronouncement

Ahaziah's going to Baal-zebub was a terrible deed. It was an act which did great dishonor to Jehovah the God of Israel. "The king's consultation of Baal-zebub, god of Ekron, is a complete and absolute denial of the Divinity of Jehovah. To consult a foreign oracle is equivalent to saying that the voice of God is wholly silent in one's own land". So Elijah's rebuking question to Ahaziah was, "Is it not because there is no God in Israel to inquire of his word?" (v. 16). "When a king of Israel sent to inquire of a heathen oracle he proclaimed to the Gentiles, as well as his own people, his lack of confidence in Jehovah: as if the only nation favored with the knowledge of the true God had been the only nation in which no god was known. This was peculiarly dishonorable and provoking to Jehovah." It was a most serious sin. The fact that the pronouncement against it is repeated word for word three times in the first chapter of II Kings (vv. 3, 5, 16) emphasizes that fact. This evil indeed needed the repeated pronouncement of God's message.

We need the same pronouncement repeated again and again today, for multitudes in our time do just like Ahaziah. When trouble comes they seek everything but God. How seldom do folk "inquire of his word" in such times. More likely they will seek the counsel of the world, such as an Ann Landers, psychiatrists and psychologists, who ignore God and His Word in favor of their Baal-zebub thinking; or even consult witches, and fortune tellers who tread in the cursed waters of demonism.

All of this is a gross dishonor of God; for it says He either does not exist or that His Word is unreliable and, therefore, unworthy of our trust. Such an attitude invites severe judgment from God, and our land is surely ripe for such judgment.

3. A Disregarded Pronouncement

"So he died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken" (v. 17). Ahaziah had ignored the warning of the judgment fire upon two companies of his soldiers, and here he continues to reject God's warnings, for the message of doom moved him not. Unlike his father Ahab, who when he heard the message of God in Naboth's vineyard "rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and wept softly" (1 Kings 21:27), Ahaziah is not recorded as showing any signs of repentance. If he had, God would have acted; for, as we noted earlier about Ahab, God is ever ready to forgive. The slightest effort at repentance does not go unnoticed with God. But Ahaziah, though young, was a hardened sinner. He had not learned from his father's experiences or from the drought or from the Mount Carmel manifestation or from any other demonstrations of Jehovah's might and power. He despised Jehovah-God; and, as a result, he ended up paying the great price of being cut down by God.

THE LORD GOD LIVES

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF ELIJAH # 16

THE PROPHET OF COURAGE AND CONFRONTATION

THE HOMEGOING PASSAGE 2 Kings 2:1 – 14

Waiting for the Whirlwind! Elijah's Time has come! His ministry is finished and its home going time. Even though he has had failures; even though he has experienced fear and fatigue throughout his service; God is not going to forsake him now!

His life has been a whirlwind of activity! From the moment he stepped out of nowhere to confront king Ahab, to his adventures of faith at the dry brook and the widow's house, to his great victory on Mt Carmel, to his fall and restoration from discouragement and defeat. 2 Kings 2:1 makes it clear that God is about to remove the prophet from this earth. He will leave here as he lived here; IN A WHIRLWIND: His passage to home going.

[I] IT WAS A TIME OF WATCHING V 1

Elijah spends this time watching for God. Watching for the sweeping away into the presence of God. Watching for.....

1. The Precious Event

According to v 1, Elijah knew the precious truth that he was going home without passing through death. Only one other person had enjoyed this privilege [Enoch] This is the precious event that Elijah was anticipating. This is an event that could happen to all of us! We too could go apart from experiencing death; The rapture!

2. The Promised Event

As we look at these verses, it quickly becomes apparent that everyone knew something was coming. Verses 3,5, & 7 indicates that the sons of the prophets were aware; Elisha knows something is coming v 2 – 6; and Elijah knew. This was obviously not a secret event; it was something people were aware of.

3. The Private Event

Even though the people had heard about this and were aware of it; no one knew when it would take place. Elijah knew God was coming for him, Elisha knew; but they did not know when. Therefore Elijah lived his last days; last hours in anticipation of this coming event. May we also live in anticipation of God's coming for us.

The only thing for us to do is make certain that we are prepared and that we are faithfully serving Him until that time comes!

[III] IT WAS A TIME FOR WALKING

The Bible tells us that Enoch walked with God and then was not for God took him. Elijah is about to experience the same type of departure from this world. Therefore it is a time for walking with God. If we truly believe that God could come back at almost anytime; then we too must be careful to walk with God as we wait for His return.

1. Walking with Purpose V 1 – 6

As Elijah anticipated his departure from this world, he continues to live as he always had. He continued to walk in humble obedience before the Lord. V 2, 4, and 6. If Elijah had been like many of us today, he would have spent his last days in retirement; living in the lap of luxury; simply waiting for God to take him out. He would have spent his last days doing all the things he wanted to do while he had been occupied in service. However he has learned that there is no higher call than the call to serve God.

2. Walking in Progress V 1 – 7

As the Lord led Elijah from place to place; God was bringing the prophet to that place from which He intended to remove him from the earth. And yet one cannot help but wonder what if! What if Elijah had not experienced those times of failure? But what if's are of no value in the end. For Elijah the places he went allowed him the opportunity to visit the schools of the prophets; to make new friends; to speak to others; to share God and God's blessings on those whom he came in contact with.

A. Gilgal V 1

Gilgal was the place of new beginnings. A Place of safety; preparation and communion with the Lord. How it all began!

B. Bethel V 2 – 3

Bethel was a holy place for the people of Israel. It was there that Jacob had met the Lord. Bethel signified the place of the altar and of total dependence upon the Lord. Bethel was the place of revelation. Once a person begins a New Beginning; the next thing is a Revealing of God and His Will.

C. Jericho V 4 – 5

Jericho represented the power of God in giving victory in the day of battle. This was the first place of major conquest in the taking of the promised land. Jericho was the place of victory through the power of God.

D. Jordan V 6 – 8

The river Jordan marked the end of the wilderness wanderings for Israel. It was a picture of death. It was the place where the pilgrimage ended. Jordan was the place of relief from a life of wilderness living.

For Elijah the significance of these places were:

Gilgal: Time for him to remember how it all began for him in his service to the Lord How the Lord had called him and filled him for service to the glory of God.

Bethel: The place to reflect upon all the altars he had experienced in his life. Of how his life had been lived in total dependence upon the Lord.

Jericho: To reflect back upon all the great things God had done in his life through the power of God. The ravens; the barrel; the resurrection of the child; the victory at Mt Carmel. A life of powerful victories.

Jordan: The place to remember all the ways he had died to self in order to live for God. To reflect that he had lived a selfless life; a life for the glory of God.

3. Walking with People V 2 – 11

As Elijah travels these last miles of his journey on earth; he does not attempt to travel them alone. These verses speak of fellowship and friendship along the pathway with God and others. As he completes his task on earth; he does not withdraw from others into seclusion; but reaches out to others around him. He knew that he needed others in his life.

[III] A TIME FOR WORSHIP

There is no indication that Elijah ever stopped worshipping the Lord God of Heaven. Three quick thoughts...

1. Sincerity in his worship

Certainly Elijah remained sincere in his worship of the Lord.

2. Spiritual

The worship of Elijah was surely an example of spiritual worship according to “worship in spirit and truth” He may have experienced some failures along with way; but he never ceased to extend to God the worship He deserved.

3. Satisfaction

Elijah found satisfaction in worship. One may go through failure, fear, fatigue; discouragement and even defeat; but there is a true satisfaction found in worship.

[IV] A TIME FOR WORKING V 2 – 11

Elijah did not spend his last days sitting on a pew watching others pick up the slack. He kept on keeping on! He stayed busy for the Lord. As he waits for the whirlwind; for his home going passage; he is busy

1. Trusting his Redeemer V 8

Even at the end of his life he is still walking by faith. When he and Elisha come to the river Jordan, they need to get across; so he does what he always did, he expected the impossible from God and received it by faith. He never came to a place when he considered God unable. He just kept on walking in faith and dependence until the end of the road.

2. Training the Replacement V 9 – 10

As they walk together, Elijah spends that time teaching Elisha about obedience and faithfulness in service to God. Elijah doesn't pat Elisha on the back; wish him God's speed; walk away and leave him. He knows that Elisha is to take his place and his desire is that Elisha be prepared. He believes that it is his responsibility to share all that he can with Elisha. The future depends on Elijah doing his duty today. He must pass on to the next generation every thing that he possibly can that will enable them to serve God. So it is with all of us today; we must pass the torch to the next generation; but we must also pass along every thing possible that will assist them in carrying that torch.

3. Traveling hid Road V 11

“As they went” “As they went on” These two phrases let us know that as they traveled their thoughts were not consumed with sadness; they travel together knowing there is no stopping place. Even though the end was near Elijah still went on. In fact it was as he was going that the Lord sent the chariot of fire to get him and bring him home! What a way to leave here!

ALL OF THIS IS BECAUSE THE LORD GOD LIVES!