

## Throwing in the Towel

I Kings 18:41-19:19

### Introduction

William Carey, the pioneering missionary to India, seems an unlikely candidate for depression. Known as the “Father of Modern Missions,” we have discovered, written in his diary, these words, “I am defective in all my duties, in prayer I wander and am too formal . . . I soon tire; devotion languishes and I do not walk with God.”

These are surprising words from a saint! The truth is, however, even the best can become depressed and downhearted. In fact, I happen to believe that we have the recipe for discouragement built into the fabric of our culture.

Listen to this editorial.

*The world is too big for us. Too much is going on, too many crimes, too much violence and excitement. Try as you will, you get behind in the race, in spite of yourself. It's an incessant strain to keep pace and still, you lose ground. Science empties its discoveries on you so fast that you stagger beneath them in hopeless bewilderment. The political world is news seen so rapidly you're out of breath trying to keep pace with who's in and who's out. Everything is high pressure. Human nature can't endure much more.*

So reads the editorial in the *Atlantic Journal*, of June 16th, 1833.

Hopefully, as we bathe our minds and hearts in the fresh water of the word, we will understand a little better why the word of God most often refers to the Christian experience as a walk, and never as a mad dash.

If I were to ask you to choose a character in the Bible who went through the pain of despair and depression, not many of us would think of Elijah, the prophet of fire and miracle. In fact, if I were to ask you to choose a chapter in the Bible that provides counsel for overcoming deep despair, not many of us would select I Kings, chapter 19.

### Review – Elijah’s miracle

I invite your attention to that biblical location today. However, before we take a closer look at the therapy of divine counsel for this depressed patient of God’s, we need to understand what led Elijah to the edge of despair.

In chapter 18, you may remember our observation of some incredible miracles. Elijah was literally having fun, as he mocked the false prophets of Baal. He suggested that Baal was not answering their prayer to ignite their sacrifice with fire from heaven because, well, he was sleeping, or on a journey, or maybe in the powder room. Then, Elijah prayed, in verse 37,

***Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that You, O Lord, are God, and that You have turned their heart back again.***

We are given the result in verses 38 and 39.

***Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God.”***

Can you imagine being Elijah at this moment? He has been praying for years that revival would occur;

that Baal would be overthrown. This is the most exciting victory in his entire life! “Oh Lord, it’s wonderful to be Your prophet!”

## Fresh Rain From Heaven

### Elijah’s ears of faith

Now, notice verse 41 of I Kings, chapter 18.

*Now Elijah said to Ahab, “Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower.”*

“There is? Where? There’s not a cloud in the sky! It hasn’t rained for three and a half years and no black clouds are anywhere to be seen! How do you hear the sound of a downpour?”

Elijah is hearing with the ears of faith. The ears of faith are never dependant upon experience and circumstances, but upon the word of God.

Go back to verse 1 of chapter 18.

*Now it happened after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, “Go, show yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the face of the earth.”*

Most Christians would have said, “I’ll believe it when I see it,” but Elijah reaches for his umbrella. As Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 1, says,

*... faith is ... the conviction of things not seen.*

Oh, that we were more like Elijah!

### Elijah’s expectation of the future

Now, notice Elijah’s actions. He begins to pray rather intensely, in verse 42.

*So Ahab went up to eat and drink. But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth and put his face between his knees.*

Then, after prayer, evidently, in verse 43a,

*He said to his servant, “Go up now, look toward the sea.” ...*

This is the Mediterranean Sea that they could see from their perspective on Mount Carmel. Continue to verse 43b.

*... So he went up and looked and said, “There is nothing.” And he said, “Go back” seven times.*

Now, look at verse 44.

*It came about at the seventh time, that he said, “Behold, a cloud as small as a man’s hand is coming up from the sea.” And he said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you.’”*

There is a cloud about the size of a nickel and Elijah is telling Ahab, “You’d better go down before you get stopped by the heavy shower.”

I love this man’s faith!

Continue to verses 45 and 46.

*In a little while the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel.*

This is yet another miracle. Jezreel is approximately twenty miles away. This old prophet runs the whole way in front of the chariot with his camel hair cloak tucked into his belt. Can you imagine? I think all the way there, God was communicating, among other things, to Ahab, “Elijah is My man. Listen to him.”

Now, as Elijah is running, what do you think he is thinking? I just kicked my feet back on the desk and tried to imagine what this must have been like and what he must have been reasoning as he ran. I believe he is probably thinking, although we do not know and I could be completely wrong, based on his reaction later, “Now from the fact that fire fell from heaven, surely Jezebel needs nothing more to prove that Israel’s God is the one true God. Surely that great fireball and now, the sound of rain and this pouring, drenching downpour will be enough proof to make that woman bow before the one true God.”

He may even be thinking, “I can see Bible studies taking place in the palace! Maybe they’ll appoint me chaplain of the king’s court!”

He is already working on his three point sermon for the next day.

I can just imagine that he is so excited at what God has done and so full of expectations.

## Fearful Threats from Jezebel

Now, back at the palace, Queen Jezebel has been waiting all day. And she has been wondering, “What has happened to Ahab? Why has it taken so long?”

The downpour of rain then began. When Ahab arrived, Jezebel probably met him right away, to say, “Ahab, you’re dripping wet. Don’t bring that water into the house!”

Ahab probably had to take his goulashes off at the door. As he finally gets in, Jezebel says, “Isn’t Baal great! Look at the rain! The prophets of Baal must have won!”

Before Jezebel goes too far, however, Ahab interrupts with a “reality check”. Look at chapter 19, verse 1.

***Now Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword.***

Now, talk about “letting the air out of your sails”! Continue to verse 2.

***Then Jezebel sent a message to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.”***

“Never mind about fire from heaven, Elijah. Never mind about this downpour coming at *your* request from *your* God. Now you’re going to answer to me!”

It is interesting, according to the text, that Jezebel does not send her soldiers to immediately arrest and execute Elijah. Why? We are not told. Undoubtedly, had she done that, however, it would not have been very smart, as it would have made a martyr out of Elijah. The people are already rumbling in their excitement over what God has done.

So, Jezebel tries a different tactic. It is a tactic that, up to this point in Elijah’s life, did not necessarily work very well. This tactic is to somehow, scare Elijah into running for his life. If she can get him out of the country, his heroic status as the prophet of God will be diminished before the people. Also, the coming revival will be diminished as well. So, she tells Elijah, in effect, “You have twenty four hours to get out of town. If you don’t, you’re dead.”

Unfortunately, it worked.

I learned something this week. Do you know why a lion roars? Among other things, to paralyze his victims with fear.

Peter tells us, in I Peter, chapter 5, verse 8b, that,

***. . . Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to . . .***

(. . . intimidate?),

***. . . devour.***

By the way, the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, adds a phrase to Jezebel’s warning. She says, “As surely as your name is Elijah and my name is Jezebel . . .”

She is playing off the fact that the meaning of Elijah’s name refers to “Yahweh as God” and the meaning of her name “Izybel,” or Jezebel, refers to Baal is the Prince. In other words, “Just as you say Yahweh is your God, well, I’ve got news for you, Baal is my prince.”

The battle is not over. This is round one and the battle is going to continue.

### Elijah’s downward spiral

Continue to verse 3, of I Kings, chapter 19.

***And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.***

Many believe Elijah’s servant was the widow’s son.

Verse 4a.

***But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; . . .***

A juniper tree grows to a height of about ten feet and has spreading branches with big leaves. Continue in verse 4.

***. . . and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, “It is enough; now, O Lord, take my life . . .***

In only a few hours, Elijah has gone from the victory of Mount Carmel to the slough of despond. He says, “Now, Lord, it’s enough; take my life.”

This is like the manager of a boxer who is taking a beating. The manager knows that his boxer will never be able to pull out of the fight, so he takes his

towel and throws it into the ring and thus, automatically ends the bout and signals defeat.

Elijah, the boxer of Baal, throws his towel in and signals defeat. He says, “Lord, I can’t pull out of this one. That’s it, Lord, I’ve had it. I quit.”

Can you hear the pathos in his voice? He is ninety miles from nowhere and alone in the wilderness. In the last part of verse 4, he says,

*. . . It is enough; now, O Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers.*

How many of you hear have done the same? How many of you have said, “Lord, that’s all I can take. It is enough. I give in.”?

Well, the master Physician has already told us, in I Corinthians, chapter 10, verse 13,

*. . . God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to . . .*

(. . . get away from it?),

*endure it.*

We have misinterpreted this verse in our Christian experience, to believe that God is going to make a way of escape and, by doing so, allowing us to say, “I’m out of here,” and to leave the problems behind. No. He will provide a way of escape and, by doing so, will give us the grace to endure the test.

The word “endure,” means, “to bear up under”. Peter used the same Greek word, in I Peter, chapter 2, verse 19, when he talked about,

*. . . a person bears up under sorrows when suffering . . .*

Jesus Christ did not promise the believer an inoculation from sorrow. He did promise His personal involvement in the midst of it.

## **Faithful Counsel from God**

Now, notice how the great Physician handles a man who wants to end it all. Look at verses 5 and 6, of I Kings, chapter 19.

*He lay down and slept under a juniper tree; and behold, there was an angel touching him, and he said to him, “Arise, eat.” Then he looked and behold, there was at his head a bread cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again.*

Imagine this angelic room service!

## **Diagnosis**

Notice that God does nothing about Elijah’s request to die. He does not storm up to him and say, “Now listen here, Elijah, that’s the most selfish thing I’ve ever heard. You think life is hard; you think the world is corrupt, you should view it from up here!”

No! He just said, “Sleep, Elijah.”

Aren’t you glad that God does not answer all of our prayers?! Think of what Elijah would have missed if God had answered his prayer. He would have missed:

- riding to heaven in a whirlwind, while being carried in a chariot of fire;
- founding the school of the prophets that produced more than a hundred faithful men for a special time in redemptive history;
- meeting and commissioning Elisha; and
- hearing that still small voice that he is going to hear as soon as he wakes up!

God did not answer his prayer. In fact, He did not respond with anything other than the provision of a long, much needed rest for one tired prophet.

Elijah, according to the word, was a man just like us. That leads me to believe that nearly everyone comes to the Lord with the same complaint, “Lord, that’s enough. Is this how You allow Your friends to be treated? No wonder You don’t have more!”

Now if that sounds sacrilegious, it is strictly intentional, because, when you find yourself under the juniper tree, you do not feel very spiritual!

What some of you need to do is stop and rest. One author said, “There are times that the best thing you can do for your spiritual walk is to eat some dinner and ‘hit the sack’.”

Isn’t that good advice? This afternoon, the best thing some of you could do for your spiritual growth and maturity is to take a nap. I plan to, if no one calls me!

You might say, “But I’ve got a kid whose climbing the walls.”

Well, give them a large dose of Benadryl. I did not say that!

I love the answer a little kid gave when he was asked, "Son, if your mother could have anything in the world, what is the one thing she'd like the most."

He said, "She'd like to go back to bed."

When you are tired, like Elijah, you tend to look for juniper trees and you despair. You also tend to jump to conclusions. Elijah thought that God had lost; that the situation was hopeless. So now, he is dictating to God what he thinks ought to be done

This is praying prayers like an executive dictates letters to his secretary, "Lord, do this and that. This is what I've concluded I really need, and here's the deadline. Make sure you meet the deadline! Have a nice day. Sincerely, Stephen."

The Lord does more than allow Elijah protected sleep, He also prepares food for him to eat. It is personally delivered by an angel.

Why is the food delivered by an angel? Perhaps it is a reminder to Elijah that, "Elijah, there are a lot of things going on that you can't see. Do you remember those ears of faith that allow you to hear things that have yet to fall from heaven? Well, there are things that you can't see that are going on in the heavens."

I happen to think it amusing that Elijah is so exhausted and in despair that he hardly notices the angel. Did you note that? The angel wakes him. There are stones, out of nowhere, with a hot cake of bread on them, as well as a jar of water. Elijah sort of rumbles awake, eats the food, and then, he rolls over and goes back to sleep. He has just had an angel deliver food to him and he did not even know it!

Continue to verses 7 and 8.

*The angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise, eat, because the journey is too great for you. So he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food . . .*

(that special angel food),

*. . . forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.*

I love what happens next.

God, the master Counselor, will give Elijah an opportunity to talk. Look at verse 9.

*Then he came there to a cave and lodged there; and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah."*

It is another way of saying, "Would you tell me how you feel? What brought you to this point?"

Have you ever sat at the feet of a counselor and they asked that of you? "Tell me, what brought you here?"

That is what God is doing with Elijah. So, as if He did not know, He asks, "Elijah, what brought you here? Tell me what led up to this point in your life that you are discouraged and under a juniper tree. Tell me how you feel."

In response to God, Elijah "cuts loose"! Look at verse 10,

*He said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away."*

"Thank you, Elijah, for telling us how you feel."

### **Re-constructive surgery**

Now God begins spiritual re-constructive surgery on his patient.

### **Refreshing a frail memory**

The first thing that God is going to do is to deal with Elijah's memory, which is failing. With three very powerful displays, He reminds Elijah that He is still sovereign. Look at verses 11 through 12a.

*So He said, "Go forth and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord was passing by! And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the Lord; . . .*

(most interpret this to be a tornado),

*. . . but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; . . .*

I have learned, as I have asked a few questions this week, that when a person is treated for amnesia, or loss of memory, that names, people, places, and situations will be brought up before the suffering person in order to help refresh their memory. These dramatic displays of power were designed to remind

Elijah that God is the one who rides the wind, not Baal; God is the one who designs the lightning flashes to hit the planet earth, not Baal.

God said, "I need to remind you of some things, Elijah."

I think Elijah got the picture.

### Restoring a loss of heart

Now God wants to deepen Elijah's understanding of who God is. Did you notice that He chose not to reveal Himself in those mighty acts? These verses repeatedly said,

*. . . but the Lord was not in [it] . . .*

Elijah had come to the point in his life, and understandably so, where he had come to depend upon dramatic expressions of power to know that, in fact, God was there. He had seen everything from the resurrection of a dead boy to a jar of oil continually filling, to a meal appearing mysteriously and miraculously, and to, of course, a great fire ball coming from heaven and completely consuming an altar and revealing God to Elijah. God is surely in that!

If we asked, "Elijah, how do you know God is alive?"

He would probably respond, "Well, let me tell you about the fire! Let me tell you about raising the dead!"

God wants to deepen Elijah's understanding. He wanted Elijah to know that He is also there in a very still small voice. Look at verse 12b.

*. . . and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing.*

Continue to verse 13.

*When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"*

David Roper has helped explain this point, to some degree. I have found it helpful, so let me read it to you. He writes,

*You never know about God. He may appear in extraordinary ways; in hurricanes and fire, but that is not His typical style. He seems to prefer much less obvious methods. He works in quietness; in silence.*

Then he writes, and take note of this phrase,

*God's best efforts are rarely seen.*

The problem with Elijah is that he had unrealistic expectations of God. He expected a repeat performance of Mount Carmel. Perhaps God would make "short work" of Jezebel and blast her off of the face of the earth with a fireball. Instead of a lightning bolt, however, Jezebel lives and Elijah has a contract on his life.

God's way of correcting Elijah was to bring him to the place of revelation that it is in the quiet place where we can hear God's voice, as well.

### Restoring a loss of vision

Now the divine Physician, as He operates in this re-constructive surgery, will restore Elijah's vision.

You probably noticed Elijah's limited eyesight. Look at verse 14b again. Elijah said,

*. . . And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.*

Now, look at the Lord's gentle rebuke, in verse 18. Skip to that verse.

*Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him.*

In other words, "Elijah, you say you're the only one left. Well, your math skills need some serious work. You think you're the only one. No wonder you're discouraged. Do you think you're the only one working for Me? No wonder you're tired."

Elijah had to learn, at this juncture, that he was *not* indispensable, *not* the only one. But, if you have the impression that you are the only one, no wonder you are worn out.

I love the way Dorothy Hodgins writes about this. Tongue-in-cheek, she writes,

*I'm tired. Yes, I'm tired. For several years, I've been blaming it on middle age, iron poor blood, lack of vitamins, air pollution, saccharin, dieting, and a dozen other maladies that make you wonder if life is really worth living. But now I find out it isn't really that at all. I've finally figured out why I'm so tired.*

*The population of this country is 250,000,000. Of those, 114,000,000 are retired. That leaves 136,000,000 to do the*

work. There are 95,000,000 in school, which leaves only 41,000,000. Of this total, there are 22,000,000 employed by the government, and they're not doing anything. That leaves 19,000,000 to do the work. 4,000,000 are in the armed forces, which leaves 15,000,000 to do the work. Take from that total the 14,800,000 people who work for the state and city government and that leaves 200,000 people to do the work. There are 188,000 in hospitals. So that leaves 12,000 to do the work. And there are 11,998 people in prison. That leaves 2 people to do the work – you and me. And you're just sitting there reading this. No wonder I'm tired!

Elijah had reached the conclusion, "Lord, I'm the only one. And, may I remind You, if something happens to me, which I'm praying for, there won't be anyone left."

What a pity party!

The divine Mathematician comes back and says, "Let's correct your figures, Elijah. There are 7,000 who haven't bowed to Baal. And I know every one of their names, even though you don't."

Do you realize, by now in your Christian experience, that you are encouraged the most by people who suffer in the same way you do?

I spent some time recently in the home of a couple where the lady is suffering with cancer. She told me that through the very difficult chemotherapy treatments, the most encouraging moments she has had have been when other people who have or have had cancer, talk to her.

That is the kind of counsel that God is giving to Elijah in these verses. He says, "Elijah, you're not alone. There are 7,000 people who are enduring blasphemy against My name. There are 7,000 people with character, who, though persecuted, have refused to bow their knee to Baal. They won't do it."

What an encouragement that must have been to Elijah. In fact, that is the last thing that the divine Physician informs Elijah of, before He sends him back into the battle. As the divine Physician is patching up this wounded heart, He, with that very small, still voice, whispers to Elijah, "You're not alone. There are literally, hundreds of people who are going through what you are going through, and you haven't even met any of them yet. But, you can't meet any of

them under the juniper tree; you can't be helped in a cave. You have to leave."

Now, go back to verse 13b and notice that God asks Elijah the same question a second time,

*... What are you doing here, Elijah?*

Then Elijah repeats himself in verse 14. It does not seem that a lot of progress has been made. But, I think, while the language is the same, the tone is completely different. The reason for that is based on what follows. Notice the command that God gives to Elijah, in verses 15 and 16.

*The Lord said to him, "Go return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus, and when you have arrived, you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram; and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place."*

Now, something different happened. There are no more miracles; no more displays; no more flashes of revelation, but there is a command to go. Evidently God's message got through. Elijah is ready for a fresh commission.

Let me try to explain it this way. God says, "Elijah, tell Me how you are feeling." The first time, Elijah spoke in verse 10 and said, "Lord, I have represented You, as Your prophet, to no avail. They have killed the godly prophets and the country has turned to idolatry. Now they are trying to take my life. I quit!"

The second time, Elijah spoke in verse 14 and said, "Lord, I have represented You, as Your prophet, to no avail. They have killed the godly prophets and the country has turned to idolatry. Now they are trying to take my life. What do You want me to do now? What's next?"

Therefore God can tell Elijah, in verses 15 and 16, to go.

One of the things that Elijah learned is that what God has done is not all that God is going to do. In other words, "Lord, I do not understand Your plans that have unfolded for me yesterday or today, but I will believe that You have tomorrow to unfold in Your sovereign will."

As you study history, this perspective is wonderful. In 1809, the entire focus of western civilization was not on Britain, and it certainly was

not on young America, it was on Austria. The centerpiece of world news was a little dictator named Napoleon. He swept through Europe claiming one nation after another as just one more jewel in his kingdom. He was out to rule the world. Everyone was focused on Napoleon. Surely what God had planned for the world was going to end with him.

In 1809, however, when Austria fell to Napoleon, when people must have thought the end of the world had come, William Gladstone was born in England. That same year, Alfred Tennyson was born in England. And, in young America, in a rustic log cabin in Hardin County, Kentucky, an illiterate farmer and his wife heard the cries of their newborn son, named Abraham Lincoln. If you were a slave in America in 1809, you would have struggled with the fact that God had done all that He was going to do. Yet, the emancipator of slaves had just been born.

God is not bound in what He plans to one day; to one generation; to one nation. That is the lesson that Elijah is in the process of learning and is going to learn. Let me tell you why. Jehu, the man that Elijah was sent to anoint as king of Israel, will eradicate Baalism from Israel after Elijah has died. Elisha, the young associate prophet that Elijah has yet to even meet, sees the roots of revival take place in developing the turn back to God in the soil of Israel's life. So, God says, "Elijah, don't stop here. I want you to go. You can't understand today; you won't understand tomorrow, but just go."

## Application

The discouraging, lonely experiences of life can create one of two kinds of people. The circumstances of life can create:

Dependency (upon God)	Despair
Awareness (of what God is doing)	Anxiety
Compassion (for the people of God)	Consternation
(committed) Service	Standstill

### Steps to ensure hard experiences create the right kind of person in you

How do you take the proper steps to ensure that you arrive on the proper side of dependency and service? Let me give some steps from a book that I read entitled, *Guidelines for Disciples*.

### Since there is no sin in being lonely, do not add additional guilt to your problems

1. Since there is no sin in being lonely, do not add additional guilt to your problems.

Elijah was never condemned for being lonely or for being discouraged.

### Do not depreciate yourself; if God has accepted you, then accept His evaluation of you

2. Secondly, do not depreciate yourself; if God has accepted you, then accept His evaluation of you.

The exciting thing to me is that God does not say to Elijah, "Elijah, I'm disappointed in you. You've sat under this juniper tree and now you're in this cave. I just want to show you that I am in control, so you just stay here and I'll take it from here."

That is the mystery of divine will that He would choose to pick Elijah back up, brush him off, and say, "Elijah, I want you to go and continue representing Me to your pagan world."

### Learn to live with some unsolved problems

3. Thirdly, learn to live with some unsolved problems.

I know these steps are all difficult, but they are the truth. In fact, Jesus told Peter, "Peter, you don't understand what I'm doing right now, but you will later."

Can you live with some unsolved problems? This is not necessarily a fatalistic point of view that never seeks to pursue solutions. Instead, it is living with the sense that God will not give solutions to us for everything. There are some things that are unsolved in life.

### Abandon self-pity

4. Fourthly, abandon self-pity.

Sanders calls it "that dismal fungus". He goes on to say,

*To be sorry for oneself perpetually is a one-way ticket to deeper loneliness. Focusing our thoughts on ourselves only fuels the fires of despair.*

**Share feelings, struggles, and failures with your understanding Lord**

5. Fifthly, share your feelings, struggles, and failures with your understanding Lord.

Simply tell God how you feel. You may not understand, but you can count on the fact that He does.

**If outward circumstances cannot be changed, inward attitudes should be**

6. Lastly, if outward circumstances cannot be changed, inward attitudes should be.

George MacDonald wrote,

*God will carry us in His arms until we are able to walk and He will carry us in His arms when we cannot walk, but He will not carry us if we refuse to walk.*

This step is hard, but it can lead a person out from underneath a juniper tree into new fresh service, if it is taken.

It is interesting to me that God never asks Elijah, "Elijah, do you feel better now?"

He never says, "Elijah, I'd like you to change your mood."

No. He says, "Elijah, I'd like for you to exercise your will. I'd like for you to get up and, in light of what I have taught you about Myself, and in light of what you have learned about yourself, I want you to go."

Verse 19, of I Kings, chapter 19, says it all. Look at that verse.

*So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, while he was plowing with twelve pairs of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth.*

Ladies and gentlemen, in this biography of Elijah that we have been studying, this has been the most severe test that he has had to deal with. On the strength of God's word alone, Elijah has gone forward. His hopes have been dashed. His expectations have been lost to the wind. His plan and prayer for a national revival will never be seen by him. But, on the basis of God's word that says, "Go, Elijah," he gets up and goes back into battle.

James said, in chapter 5, verse 17a,

*Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, . . .*

Oh, that the word would say, "We have a nature just like Elijah's."

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