

From Triumph to Defeat - Elijah - Part 5

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Introduction:

Last night I followed a difficult act, and tonight I speak after a great meal, which is making many of you soporific already. This pulpit intrigues me, the plow reminds me of the man who heard God say PC and he thought is meant preach Christ, though it really meant plow corn. This week has been one of personal enrichment to me. I pray the Holy Spirit will bring the truth to our minds and translate that truth to our experience.

Our greatest need at the seminary is spiritual, especially for our graduates. We feel that unless the Spirit moves on the hearts of our graduates we are teaching in vain. This year has the greatest number of graduates heading for the mission field than ever.

I. Why is there so much failure recorded in the Scripture? Failure tells me two things.

A. God wrote this book, not man because man whitewashes his failures, but God paints man warts and all.

1. I wish we could have concluded our study of Elijah after his high point of success.
2. But I appreciate the realism of this chapter where Elijah falls into defeat.
3. Elijah is not only a model of success; he is a warning of impending failure.
4. God is a God of grace, however, who wants me to profit from Elijah's experience.
5. These facts of failure are like warning lights to get our attention.

B. Victory makes us vulnerable.

1. Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he falls. (1 Corinthians 10:12)
2. When we think we are strong we are vulnerable.
3. The devil is a master of sneaking up on our blind sides to make us stumble after a great victory.
4. Elijah is called the pendulum prophet.

C. There are two complains to which believers are addicted but to which God provides a remedy.

1. I am not appreciated. (1 Kings 19:1-4)
 - a. Have you ever heard that?
 - b. Have you ever uttered it?

c. Jezebel waited for Ahab anxiously, but after the rain began to fall she must have thought they were successful.

d. After Ahab explained the victory of Elijah she became livid.

1. Elijah had slain all the prophets with the sword.

2. Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah threatening to take his life within 24 hours.

3. In light of the success of Elijah she holds back from acting impetuously but gives him time to think of her power to hurt him.

4. This works as Elijah rises and runs for his life to Beersheba 120 miles from Jezreel, leaving his servant there to flee further to into the wilderness and sit under a Juniper tree to pray for death. (1 Kings 9:4)

e. Study the Scriptures to find unanswered prayer.

1. Elijah's prayer is unanswered.

2. I was a youth pastor where a woman told me God wanted me to marry her daughter, yet the Lord never told me.

3. Elijah had prayed fervently just a little while ago yet now he feels he is through.

4. He fell into the trap of feeling unappreciated.

5. We get so used to being patted on the back that we can't take a bad result.

f. Two things contributed to Elijah's failure.

1. He was looking at his circumstances.

i. Up till now he had no threats.

ii. He was called to tell the king of no rain.

iii. He was commanded to hide himself.

iv. He was told to trust God by the brook.

v. He faced the dead widow's son in faith.

vi. He faced the prophets of Baal in courage.

vii. Now he feared for his life.

viii. He knew nothing was too hard for the Lord, but now he seems to have gotten his eyes off God and focused on Jezebel.

ix. From Genesis to Revelation our strength and courage and wisdom comes only from the Lord.

x. The Christian life is an impossible, supernatural life.

xi. To try to live the Christian life is futile; we need to trust God to release his power through us.

2. He was emotionally drained.

i. He has been through a tremendous experience.

ii. He was depressed due to the let down after the victory.

iii. I operate under a principle not to make a spiritual decision when I'm tired or when I have a headache; a good night's sleep can restore your spiritual perspective.

iv. We are body, soul, and spirit, and no part of the human condition can be ignored.

v. Sometimes a good night's sleep is better than reading the Bible.

v. When we minister in exhaustion we often get poor responses from those we minister to.

vi. I recognized that after a good Sunday service I often became irritated.

vii. Some Christians are like porcupines; they have good points but they're hard to get close to.

viii. I discovered that after an effective spiritual ministry the devil would challenge me.

ix. This is why Christian fellowship is essential as a means to the end of mutual encouragement for ministry in a lost world.

x. Fellowship includes restoring a fallen brother. (Galatians 6:1)

xi. To restore means to heal, as a fractured bone.

2. Elijah also complained that he was indispensable. (1 Kings 19:9)

a. God asked, What are you doing here? indicating that God never called him to go there.

- b. Elijah's prepared speech reveals that he is not considering God but himself.
- c. The whole nation was moving back to God but Elijah was too distraught to see it.
- d. Elijah's thought that the nation was after him was not true.
- e. The theophany God sent to Elijah consisted of the strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire, then the still small voice. (1 Kings 19:11-12)
 - 1. Again God asks, What are you doing here? emphasizing this time not the place, but the person.
 - 2. Elijah again gives his prepared speech about how zealous he had been for God.
 - 3. In his speech Elijah refers to himself often, but before he had been focused on Jehovah.
 - 4. God never answers the speech of the prophet, but sends him on his way to anoint Hazael king over Aram, Jehu king over Israel, and Elisha as a prophet in Elijah's place.
 - 5. We should never consider ourselves as indispensable.
 - 6. A well known pastor refused to step down in his old age and broke the spirit of the church.
 - 7. A Jewish work founded by a man with vision clung to his organization so tightly that the organization fell apart.
 - 8. Overestimating ourselves is a virus that infects many servants.
 - 9. When you feel indispensable it is a sign you are not.
 - 10. Moses once struck a rock and forfeited his right to enter the Promised Land.
 - 11. What seems small to us may not be small to God.
 - 12. We are left with a warning not to feel indispensable and unappreciated in our work for the Lord.
 - 13. We are never indispensable and our reward of appreciation will come when the Lord says, "Well done good and faithful servant."