

BE EVER SO ENCOURAGED

I. 1 Kings 19:1-18

A. In 1835 a man visited a doctor in Florence, Italy. He was filled with anxiety and exhausted from lack of sleep. He couldn't eat and he avoided his friends. The physician examined him and found him in prime physical condition. The doctor concluded his patient just needed to have a good time. So the doc told him about a circus in town and its star performer, a clown named Grimaldi. The doc exclaimed, "*Night after night he has the people rolling in the aisles! Grimaldi is the world's funniest clown! He'll make you laugh and cure your sadness!*" But through sad eyes the despairing man said, "*No, he can't help me doctor; you see, I am Grimaldi!*" Today we encounter a prophet who's also in a very low place.

B. Elijah has just publicly disgraced all the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel...

1) After taunting the pagan priests and watching them fail, the LORD put fire on Elijah's water-drenched sacrifice and even the stones were consumed.

2) Elijah then executed all the prophets of Baal, 450 in total.

3) After 3 years of drought, Elijah prayed and it rained hard on the land.

4) But now, Elijah who's been on the mountaintop, is in a spiritually dark valley. He's depleted, disillusioned, and discouraged. He's in need of a better mountain...

C. 1 Kings 19:1-18 (ESV) tells the story...

1) **V1-2:** *1 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow."* (Jezebel, more witch than queen, is enraged and vows to kill Elijah. So how does the prophet respond?)

2) **V3-4:** *3 Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. (120+ miles south!) 4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers."* (Elijah succumbs to fear. He cowers in the face of evil. How could this happen? How could he be emboldened for one challenge and flee another? It would be like David slaying Goliath and then running from a dwarf. But Elijah's listened to the wrong message and messenger. Therefore, God will send His own.)

3) **V5-8:** *5 And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel (aggelos; "messenger") touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." 6 And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. 7 And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." 8 And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God. (Mt Horeb, a.k.a. Mt Sinai; where Moses was given the Ten Commandments; where Israel had first turned to idol worship i.e. the golden calf. Elijah would have grasped the significance of this destination.)*

4) **V9-10:** *9 There he came to a cave and lodged in it. (Remember Moses had hidden in a cleft there when God passed by. Could it be the same spot?) And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10 He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away."* (God had done amazing miracles through Elijah but right now his perspective is way off. He's only seeing how awful Israel is and how hopeless he presently feels. He's not considering God's perspective nor factoring in God's unlimited power and total control. But God's not done talking yet...)

5) **V11-18:** *11 And He said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. 12 And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper (i.e. a thin silence.) 13 And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (Same question!) 14 He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and killed*

Your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away.” (Sadly, the same answer!) **15** And the LORD said to him, “Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazeal to be king over Syria. **16** And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. **17** And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazeal shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. **18** Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

D. Elijah is depleted, disillusioned, and discouraged in a cave on God's mountain.

1) God sends a fierce windstorm, but God's not in the windstorm...

2) God sends a powerful earthquake, but God's not in the earthquake...

3) God rains down fire on the mountain, but God's not in the fire...

4) Then comes a gentle whisper. Elijah covers his face as he knows God is in that still small voice, even on that mountain where the Two Tablets were inscribed, and Moses' face glowed with glory...

5) Then Elijah learns he's really not alone. God has 7,000 other followers...

E. On Mt. Carmel, the fireworks were spectacular as God made a mockery of Baal and his worshipers. Elijah's bull-sacrifice, including the altar, were consumed by fire. But there would be a Better Sacrifice on a better mountain...

F. On Mt Sinai God gave His Ten Commandments. But His people rarely kept them because essentially they couldn't. God showed His glory there to Moses and now again to Elijah but these were fallible men before an infallible God. A better Man and better mountain would prove necessary. Hebrews 7:18-19, 22, 25 (NIV) affirms: 18 The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless 19 (for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God... 22 Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant... 25 Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them. Yes, there'd be a better Man and a better mountain...

G. Moses and Elijah would eventually appear together on yet another mountain, this time with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter, James, & John would get a glimpse of both Christ's pre-incarnate glory as well as the glory to come. Peter wanted to setup camp there. But Jesus still had to die for Elijah and Moses' sins, and for Peter, James, & John's sins, and for your sins and mine! It'll take a better mountain...

H. So now we come to Mount Calvary, a hill called *Golgotha, the place of the skull*. Here a better Sacrifice would be offered. On the altar of a Roman cross the King of all glory, the perfect spotless Lamb of God, the Righteous One, God the Son, would be impaled. By His wounds we would be healed. Because of His death we'd be granted life forevermore. Have you embraced His atoning sacrifice for you?!

I. Though Satan, sin, and death still effect us, their days truly are numbered. They have been judged and sentenced and await their final disposal in the lake of fire. While we sometimes stand victorious over them, other times they seem to chase us south, causing us to collapse under broom trees, hide out in caves, become depleted, disillusioned, and discouraged. Don't believe me? Just ask Martin Luther, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Spurgeon, William Carey, or many other stalwart men of God. They all had their bouts with dark nights of the soul.

J. King David had such a time long before Elijah. Hear his anguish in Psalm 55:1-8 (NIV) 1 Listen to my prayer, O God, do not ignore my plea; 2 hear me and answer me. My thoughts trouble me and I am distraught 3 because of what my enemy is saying, because of the threats of the wicked; for they bring down suffering on me and assail me in their anger. 4 My heart is in anguish within me; the terrors of death have fallen on me. 5 Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me. 6 I said, "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest. 7 I would flee far away and stay in the desert; 8 I would hurry to my place of shelter, far from the tempest and storm." (Elijah owned that Psalm! Has that Psalm ever been owned by you?!)

K. Listen again to those timeless lyrics from *It is Well with My Soul*: "Though Satan may buffet, though trials may come, let this blessed assurance control, that Christ has regarded my helpless estate, and has shed His own blood for my soul." That's why we not only need the Gospel on the day of our salvation, but every day that follows. Sometimes God speaks in a soft whisper and we have to lean in close to hear Him. Often it's through the illumination of Scripture. Sometimes it's through the anointed encouragement of a wise friend (or even a stranger). Sometimes it's through the inner voice of the Holy Spirit that lifts our gaze to Him who called us. May you hear Him whisper, even if it's ever so softly! He's there. He loves you. Wait for Him. Trust Him. Obey Him. Keep your torches lit. Keep your gaze upward. Keep eyes clear and your hearts open wide. Be ever so encouraged! * Close with Prayer...

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

1 Kings 19:1-18 (ESV) 1 Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." 3 Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. 4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he asked that he might die, saying, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life, for I am no better than my fathers." 5 And he lay down and slept under a broom tree. And behold, an angel touched him and said to him, "Arise and eat." 6 And he looked, and behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. And he ate and drank and lay down again. 7 And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you." 8 And he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God. 9 There he came to a cave and lodged in it. And behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10 He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." 11 And He said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. 12 And after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. 13 And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 14 He said, "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, thrown down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away." 15 And the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. 16 And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. 17 And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death. 18 Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

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Psalms 55:1-8 (NIV)

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Grimaldi, the World's Funniest Clown

In 1835 a man visited a doctor in Florence, Italy. He was filled with anxiety and exhausted from lack of sleep. He couldn't eat and he avoided his friends. The physician examined him and found him in prime physical condition. The doctor concluded his patient just needed to have a good time. So the doc told him about a circus in town and its star performer, a clown named Grimaldi. The doc exclaimed, "*Night after night he has the people rolling in the aisles! Grimaldi is the world's funniest clown! He'll make you laugh and cure your sadness!*" But through sad eyes the despairing man said, "*No, he can't help me doctor; you see, I am Grimaldi!*" - Unknown

Film Clips & Article Links

Hope for the Depressed and Discouraged - John Piper
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9aMWPCwPUJ>

For Pastors Discouraged in Ministry - Ligonier Panel
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtrlWlgluec>

Bonus Stuff

Psalm 3:1-5 (ESV)

1 O LORD, how many are my foes! Many are rising against me; **2** many are saying of my soul, "There is no salvation for him in God." *Selah* **3** But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. **4** I cried aloud to the LORD, and He answered me from His holy hill. *Selah* **5** I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the LORD sustained me.

Psalm 34:4-8 (ESV)

4 I sought the LORD, and He answered me and delivered me from all my fears. **5** Those who look to Him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed. **6** This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles. **7** The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them. **8** Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

Psalm 40:1-3 (ESV)

1 I waited patiently for the LORD; He inclined to me and heard my cry. **2** He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. **3** He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.

Psalm 42:1-5 (ESV)

1 As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for You, O God. **2** My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? **3** My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?" **4** These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival. **5** Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my salvation and my God.

Psalm 103:11-14 (ESV)

11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him; **12** as far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us. **13** As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear Him. **14** For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.

Psalm 139:11-12 (ESV)

11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," **12** even the darkness is not dark to You; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with You.

Isaiah 43:2-3a (ESV)

2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. **3a** For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

Colossians 1:9-14 (ESV)

9 And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **10** so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; **11** being strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; **12** giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. **13** He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, **14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Romans 15:1-7 (ESV)

1 We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. **2** Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up. **3** For Christ did not please Himself, but as it is written, "*The reproaches of those who reproached you fell on Me.*" **4** For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope. **5** May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ

Jesus, **6** that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. **7** Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

1 Peter 5:6-7 (ESV)

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, **7** casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.

Lincoln and Depression

Many years ago a young Midwestern lawyer suffered from such deep depression that his friends thought it best to keep all knives and razors out of his reach. He questioned his life's calling and the prudence of even attempting to follow it through. During this time he wrote, "I am now the most miserable man living. Whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell. I awfully forebode I shall not." But somehow, from somewhere, Abraham Lincoln received the encouragement he needed, and the achievements of his life thoroughly vindicated his bout with discouragement.

- *Today in the Word*, MBI, December, 1989, p. 20.

A Young Lad & Babe Ruth

Babe Ruth had hit 714 home runs during his baseball career and was playing one of his last full major league games. It was the Braves versus the Reds in Cincinnati. But the great Ruth was no longer as agile as he had once been. He fumbled the ball and threw badly, and in one inning alone his errors were responsible for most of the five runs scored by Cincinnati. As the Babe walked off the field after the third out and headed toward the dugout, a crescendo of yelling and booing reached his ears. Just then a boy jumped over the railing onto the playing field. With tears streaming down his face, he threw his arms around the legs of his hero. Ruth didn't hesitate for one second. He picked up the boy, hugged him, and set him down on his feet, patting his head gently. The noise from the stands came to an abrupt halt. Suddenly there was no more booing. In fact, hush fell over the entire park. In those brief moments, the fans saw two heroes: Ruth, who in spite of his dismal day on the field could still care about a little boy; and the small lad, who cared about the feelings of another human being. Both had melted the hearts of the crowd.

- Ted W. Engstrom, *The Pursuit of Excellence*, 1982, Zondervan, p.p. 66-67.

James Quick Tillis Conquers Chicago

Former heavy-weight boxer James (Quick) Tillis is a cowboy from Oklahoma who fought out of Chicago in the early 1980s. He still remembers his first day in the Windy City after his arrival from Tulsa. "I got off the bus with two cardboard suitcases under my arms in downtown Chicago and stopped in front of the Sears Tower. I put my suitcases down, and I looked up at the Tower and I said to myself, 'I'm going to conquer Chicago.'" "When I looked down, the suitcases were gone."

- *Today in the Word*, September 10, 1992.