

1 Kings 19 – The Cause and Cure for Discouragement - Thursday, December 17th, 2015

- As I'd mentioned last week, I've really been looking forward to teaching through this chapter as one of my favorites in the Bible.
- This because, it deals with discouragement and even despair after Elijah calls fire down from heaven in the contest with Baal.
- As such, we'll do something a little bit different for our study, such that, I've titled this, The Cause and Cure for Discouragement.

- By way of introduction, we have perhaps one of the most astonishing passages of scripture recorded in the pages of Holy Writ.
- The reason being is Elijah, who prayed that rain would not come down, and that fire would come down, is now himself, down.
- What's hard to wrap ones mind around is that this is Elijah we're talking about, the same one that slew 450 prophet's of Baal.

- Now, Elijah is running for his life with a contract on his life, and we find him under a broom tree, praying God would take his life.
- What in the world has happened to the great prophet Elijah who here-to-fore, has been so amazingly and mightily used of God?
- The answer; "he, like many of us have the propensity to become unspeakably discouraged and defeated in our walk with God.

- Let me hasten to say that Elijah's story isn't in our Bible's just to see how down he is, rather it's so we'll see how good God is.
- In a sense Elijah rises from the pages of scripture to show us the way it is and how it is to deal with discouragement in our lives.
- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the most often asked questions concerning our Christian lives, this would be it.

1. Keep your successes successfully (1 Kings 19:1)

1 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword.

- I would suggest to you that on the heels of Elijah's miraculous victories he has become the most vulnerable to spiritual defeat.
- The Elijah's amongst us are the most susceptible to discouragement when we've experienced the most successes spiritually.
- It seems Satan knows this, so he stalks us, while he's roaming around like a lion waiting for this optimum time to devour us.

2. Keep your situation in perspective (1 Kings 19:2)

2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time."

- Elijah loses perspective by exaggerating the threat when Jezebel sends him a messenger saying he'll be dead by the next day.
- One of the primary causes for discouragement, depression and even despair is when we manufacture our worst-case scenario.
- To do this is to give the enemy too much power over our lives; thus, we end up forgetting Who is really the Lord of our lives.

3. Keep yourself in fellowship (1 Kings 19:3)

3 And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.

- We're told that when Elijah is running for his life, he actually "leaves his servant behind," so he can be by all alone by himself.
- Of course there's going to be those times when we need to be alone to seek God but it's not what Elijah is actually doing here.
- He's cutting himself off from anyone and everyone who could be of immeasurable help for him, and also be a blessing to him.

4. Keep your focus on the Lord (1 Kings 19:4)

4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, "It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!"

- Elijah tells the Lord that he's "no better off than his father's." At first, he seems self-deprecating, but actually he is self-focused.
- Apparently what Elijah wanted for himself was that he would be known for being better than his all of his father's before him.
- While there's nothing wrong with wanting to be better, it is wrong when being better than others is the focus of our ministry.

5. Keep yourself healthy physically (1 Kings 19:5-8)

5 Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, "Arise and eat." 6 Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. 7 And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him, and said, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you." 8 So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

- Elijah is physically fatigued, and emotionally exhausted. Doubtless, he's very sleep deprived, and very unhealthy physically.
- He's so unhealthy that the Lord has to let him just eat and sleep so he will have enough strength for 40 days and 40 nights.
- I don't think this one cure can be overstated and, if the truth be known, is understated in being a major cause of depression.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his book; "Spiritual Depression, It's Causes and its Cure" had this to say; "Does someone hold the view that as long as you are a Christian it does not matter what the condition of your body is? Well, you will soon be disillusioned if you believe that. Physical conditions play their part in all this. ...temperament seems to some degree to be controlled by physical conditions and there are certain people who constitutionally, almost in a physical sense, are prone to this condition. In other words, there are certain physical ailments which tend to promote depression. ...when Elijah had that attack of spiritual depression after his heroic effort on Mount Carmel, he sat down under a juniper tree and felt sorry for himself. But the real thing he needed was sleep and food; and God gave him both! He gave him food and rest before He gave him spiritual help."

- In other words, when you're unhealthy in your body, you'll not be of a sound mind. We see an example of this in Psalms 42.

Psalm 42:11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God. KJV

- There's something here that can be easily missed; the Psalmist has stinken thinken and needs a check up from the neck up.
- Instead of disquieting, discouraging and depressing "self-talk," the Psalmist is having a "talk-to-self" and there's a difference.

Again, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes in his book "Spiritual Depression," saying; "Speak to your-self and say; away dull sloth and melancholy. Then stir up the gift, get up and do something."

6. Keep your expectations in check (1 Kings 19:9-10)

9 And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 10 So he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."

- This is where Elijah goes into a cave and the Lord asks him what he's doing there. Elijah is clearly disenchanted with God.
- Elijah tells God that he's done what was expected of him but it seems God has not done what Elijah expected He would do.
- Having expectations of what God will do, when He will do it, and even the way He should do it, will always sink us into despair.

Exodus 5:22-23 So Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Lord, why have You brought trouble on this people? Why is it You have sent me? 23 For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all." NKJV

7. Keep your windows open (1 Kings 19:11-14)

11 Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces 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 a still small voice. 13 So it was, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 14 And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life."

- Here, God now has Elijah go out and stand on the mountain before Him and then He passes by Elijah in a very dramatic way.
- First, it's by way of a great strong wind, then, an earthquake, then after that, it's a fire, but the Lord didn't come in any of these.
- However, the Lord was in "a still small voice" asking Elijah the same exact question, and Elijah gives the same exact answer.

- What on earth is going on here? I believe that the Lord knows how the Elijah's amongst us think God is only in the dramatic.
- God is only in the strong wind ministries that quake and shake the earth, churches that are on fire and hot, when you're not.
- Your service to the Lord is still in "Calvary Chapel of Still Smallsville," Take heart; God is still in that Still Smallsville ministry.

- God may not choose to come in the big earth-shaking door rather; He may instead wish to come in that still small window.
- We would do well to "keep our windows open, because small ministries can reach places and do things that big ones can't.
- By way of illustration, it's the small tools in our tool box that can reach places the big tools simply cannot by virtue of their size.

8. Keep moving and get going (1 Kings 19:15-21)

15 Then the LORD said to him: "Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria. 16 Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. 17 It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. 18 Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." 19 So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. 20 And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" 21 So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

- I find it interesting that the Lord's response to Elijah is one of get back up and get back to work. In other words, get going!
- Often times the best thing we can do when we're discouraged is to get moving forward instead of feeling sorry for yourself.
- I think we do err greatly when we allow ourselves to become paralyzed by our fretting and fear, and just keep on keeping on.

9. Keep your eyes on the prize (2 Kings 2:11)

- Here we're told that while Elijah is walking and talking he's suddenly caught up to heaven with horses and a chariot of fire.
- We see him again with Moses at the Mount of Transfiguration where we're told that they were actually talking with Jesus.
- By keeping my eye on the prize it's easier to get through what I'm going through because of what I have to look forward to.