

5/1/11

Elijah, Fear To Faith
1Kings 19:1-21

The prophet Elijah has just triumphed over 450 prophets of Baal, as God answered by fire and he has also executed all of them at the Brook Kishon.

It seemed that this triumph would have put an end to Baal worship, the corruption of Ahab and Jezebel, but such was not to be the case!

* At times when we have the greatest triumphs we are the most vulnerable for our greatest defeats, due to pride and trusting in ourselves.

I want to look at Elijah as he flees from Jezebel in fear of his life, which unfolds in three movements:

- I. Elijah went from triumph to defeat. vs. 1-4
- II. Elijah went from defeat to dependency. vs. 5-18
- III. Elijah went from dependency to directed service. vs. 19-21

I. Elijah went from triumph to defeat. vs. 1-4

- A. The news of Elijah killing Baal's prophets brought about the wrath of Jezebel. vs. 1-2
 - 1. Ahab had returned to Jezreel by the command of Elijah. 1Kings 18:44

- a. God had ended the drought judgment and brought a horrific rain-storm.
 - 1) All according to Elijah's words.
 - 2) When Elijah suddenly appeared in Samaria he declared to Ahab, "As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word." 1Kings 17:1
- b. Ahab raced back to Jezreel on his chariots, to not get stuck in the mud.
 - 1) But when he reached the gates of Jezreel, 15 miles south-east of Carmel, Elijah had arrived first, as God super-naturally enabled him to outrun his chariot. 1Kings 18:46
 - 2) Ahab must of feared, gripped by the power of God, through Elijah!
- 2. Ahab arrived at Jezreel and told Jezebel all that took place at Mount Carmel. vs. 1
 - a. He related all Elijah had done. vs. 1a
 - 1) The challenge to call on Baal to answer by fire and Yahweh.
 - 2) The conditions of the altars, but Elijah's was saturated with water, including a molt, all around it.
 - 3) The taunting and mockery of the prophets of Baal.
 - 4) The decisive moment when the God of Elijah answered by fire and devoured all, even the altar.

- b. He told Jezebel how Elijah had executed the prophets of Baal. vs. 1b
* All 450 prophets had been slain at the Brook Kishon. 1Kings 18:40
- 3. Elijah then received a message from Jezebel. vs. 2
 - a. Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying.” vs. 2a-b
 - 1) You wonder if Elijah was surprised by the messenger?
 - 2) We are not told where this took place, possibly the area of Carmel?
 - b. Jezebel swore by her gods Elijah was a dead man walking, “So let the gods do to me and more also, if I don not make your life as the life of one of them.” vs. 2c-d
 - 1) She was not like Ahab, a cowardly man who ran, but a controlling, vindictive, hateful and perverse woman. 1Kings 16:31, Rev. 2:20
 - 2) She swore by her own death at the hands of her gods, if she did not accomplish killing Elijah.
 - 3) Maybe Elijah thought Ahab would convince Jezebel to capitulate?
 - c. Jezebel even gave a precise time, “by tomorrow about this time.” vs. 2e
 - 1) The next day.
 - 2) Elijah had 24 hours to live!

- B. The threat message from Jezebel brought about absolute panic from Elijah. vs. 3-4
 - 1. Elijah headed off towards the desert, not the hills. vs. 3
 - a. Elijah hearing the message from the messenger was gripped with fear, “And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life.” vs. 3a
 - 1) The word saw “ra; ah”, means to consider, give attention, to discern.
 - 2) He got his eyes off God, leaning to his own understanding, so he was overcome by fear, then he responded in fear. Prov. 3:3-5
 - b. Elijah traveled to a town in Judah, “and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah.” vs. 3b-c
 - 1) Beersheba, the southernmost town of Judah.
 - 2) From Carmel to Beersheba is about 100 miles.
 - c. Elijah cared for his servant’s safety, “and left his servant there.” vs. 3d
 - 1) His fears caused him to isolate himself.
 - 2) His decision to run and leave his servant was not at the direction of God, as in the past.
 - 3) Fear will cripple you, it matter not how courageous you think you are.

2. Elijah continued further into the desert.
vs. 4
- a. Elijah then went a days journey further south, “But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree.” vs. 4a-b
- 1) About 20 miles into the wilderness towards the Negev, on foot. vs. 4a
 - a) Trying to get as much distance between him and Jezebel.
 - b) Trying to save his own life.
 - 2) He attempted to get some rest under a broom tree. vs. 4b
 - a) Being physically exhausted can cause us to not think properly and give in to fear much easier.
 - b) The broom tree is abundant in the desert, but it is not a tree, it is a shrub or bush, offering little shade.
- b. Elijah then prayed to God, “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!”
vs. 4c-i
- 1) His fears depressed him and prayed to God that he might die. vs. 4c
 - a) The direction of our spiritual condition will always be in a down-ward cycle when we get our eyes off God and on the problem!

- b) If he really wanted to die, why is he running from Jezebel, he could of stayed at Carmel?
 - c) Elijah did not go see a psychologist for therapeutic counseling or to relive his past and go through a twelve step program!
 - d) If Elijah or David would of been living in our day and age they would have been hospitalized and medicated, labeled bi-polar, manic-depressants with suicidal tendencies and recommended for ongoing counseling for years!
- 2) His fears brought a burden on himself that God did not intend, “and said, “It is enough!”. vs. 4d-e
- a) Elijah was able to handle the drought at the Brook Cherith, though Ahab was looking for him everywhere by depending on God.
 - b) Elijah was able to handle the famine conditions with the widow at Zarephath by obeying God.
 - c) Elijah was able to see the son of the widow raised, calling on God.
 - d) Elijah was not able to handle the threats of one woman, Jezebel, because he did not take the problem to God!

- c. His fears caused him to get his eyes on himself and be prideful, trusting in himself instead of God, “Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers.” vs. 4f-i
- 1) Elijah asked God a thing contrary to Scripture, “to take his life”.
 - 2) Elijah is feeling sorry for himself, saying he was a failure and was no better than his fathers.
 - 3) The truth of the matter is he was no better than his fathers when he was used to defeat Baal’s prophets!
 - 4) God never called him because he was better, just that he was willing to be sent.
 - 5) Failure in our lives can be used for good, if it causes us to think soberly about ourselves, to trust in God more.

Illustration

It’s the defeat more than anything else that hurts you! Defeat is always the hardest thing for you to stand, even in trifles. But don’t you know that we have to be defeated in order to succeed? Most of us spend half of our lives fighting for things that would only destroy us if we got them. A man who has never been defeated is usually a man who has been ruined. J. L. Allen #6133

Application

- Elijah failed to recognize the attack was spiritual.
1. Satan loves to instill fear in us that we might trust in ourselves and be ensnared.
 - a. The proverb tells us that the fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.. Prov. 29:25
 - b. In the fear of the LORD there is strong confidence, And His children will have a place of refuge. Prov. 14:26
 2. Satan is the god of this world. 2Cor. 4:4
 - 1) He is called the ruler of this world by Jesus. Jn. 12:31
 - a. He is called the prince and power of the air. Eph. 2:2
 - b. He is called a devourer who goes about as a lion, seeking whom he may devour. 1Pet. 5:8
 - c. He has an innumerable host of fallen angels that are at his command, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places. Eph. 6:13
 - * We must put on the whole armor of God!
 - d. We are to recognize that though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against

the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. 2Cor. 10:3-5

Elijah went from triumph to defeat instantly!

II. Elijah went from defeat to dependency. vs. 5-18

- A. God sent an angel to prepare Elijah for his meeting with God. vs. 5-8
1. The angel first appeared to make sure Elijah to recuperate his physical strength and emotional composure. vs. 5
 - a. Elijah was dead asleep from the long journey, “Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree.” vs. 5a
 - 1) The emotional drain of fear and anxiety wore him down, hearing the words of Jezebel.
 - 2) The physical exhaustion had overtaken him, moving as fast as he could to put the greatest distance between him and Jezebel.
 - b. Elijah awakened to an angel. vs. 5b-d
 - 1) The angel awoke Elijah, “suddenly an angel touched him.” vs. 5b
 - * It seems that Elijah was familiar with angels, for he is neither surprised or startled by the angel!

- 2) The angel gave Elijah a command, “and said to him, “Arise and eat.” vs. 5c-d
2. The prophet Elijah obeyed the angel. vs. 6
 - a. Elijah saw the food prepared by the angel, “Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water.” vs. 6a-b
 - 1) The cake would nourish him with the necessary energy for his body.
 - 2) The water would hydrate him to be able to think clearly.
 - b. Elijah partook of the food, “So he ate and drank.” vs. 6c
 - 1) His body began to be nourished.
 - 2) His body and mind began to shut down again.
 - c. Elijah went back to sleep, “and lay down again.” vs. 6d
 - * This sleep would revitalize Elijah.
 3. The angel appeared a second time to instruct Elijah. vs. 7
 - a. The angel awoke the prophet again, “And the angel of the LORD came back the second time, and touched him.” vs. 7a-b
 - 1) We are not told if the angel remained or left and came back?
 - 2) Possibly he remain watching over Elijah.

- b. The angel commanded Elijah to eat again, in view of the journey ahead, “and said, “Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.” vs. 7c-d
 - 1) The nourishment this time was for endurance of his long travel.
 - 2) Elijah once again is depending on God to feed him, as at the Brook Cherith and Zaraphath.
- 4. The prophet Elijah obeyed the angel again. vs. 8
 - a. Elijah took nourishment, “So he arose, and ate and drank.” vs. 8a-b
 - 1) He was strengthened.
 - 2) He was hydrated.
 - b. Elijah was then enabled supernaturally, “and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights.” as far as Horeb.” vs. 8c
 - 1) The number of days remind us of Moses at Horeb waiting on God.
 - 2) 40 speaks judgment, purification.
 - c. Elijah went to Mount Sinai, “as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.” vs. 8c-d
 - 1) The location of Horeb was in Median, in Arabia on the east side of the Gulf of Aqaba, due south of Edom, according to Paul the apostle and Moses, not the Sinai Peninsula, as your Bible maps indicate. Gal. 4:25, Ex. 2:15

- 2) The journey was about 170 miles from the Judean wilderness, 300 miles from Jezreel to Horeb!
- 3) Moses had met God and received the 10 Commandments and the law by the hands of angel. Gal. 3:19
- B. God met with Elijah to deal with his self-will and pride. vs. 9-14
 - 1. God revealed Himself and spoke to Elijah. vs. 9-10
 - a. Elijah went into a cave on Horeb and spent the night there. vs. 9a-b
 - 1) There must have been a dead silence, as he laid in the cave.
 - 2) Some believe it is the very cave Moses was at, due to the fact that the article is present, “The cave”. Ex. 33:21-33
 - b. Elijah as he laid in solitude heard the voice of God. vs. 9c-f
 - 1) It came without warning, “and behold, the word of the LORD came to him.” vs. 9c-d
 - 2) It was very specific, “and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” vs. 9e-f
 - * God had sent him to proclaim judgment against Ahab and Jezebel, he was not doing the work of God, but running away from it!

- c. Elijah recognized God's voice, but evaded the question and attempted to justify himself before God. vs. 10
- 1) He said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts." vs. 10a-b
* This was an accusation against God implying that Elijah had been defending God, while He, the Captain of the armies of heaven was doing nothing.
 - 2) He said, "for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword." vs. 10c-e
* Trying to justify his flight south!
 - 3) He said, "I alone am left; and they seek to take my life." vs. 10f-g
* He exposed his pride, caught up in his own importance and faithfulness, declaring he was the only prophet left, doing the work of God, the "Elijah complex"!
2. God spoke and revealed Himself to Elijah a second time. vs. 11-14
- a. God commanded Elijah, "Then He said, "Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD." vs. 11a-c

- b. God wanted to tune Elijah's ear to discern the voice of God from the external circumstances. vs. 11d-12c
- 1) First, "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." vs. 11d-g
 - 2) Second, "and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake." vs. 11h-i
 - 3) Third, "and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire." vs. 12a-b
* The natural phenomena is similar to the experience of Moses. Ex. 2:15-3:22, 24:11
 - 4) Fourth, "and after the fire a still small voice." vs. 12c
- c. Elijah discerned the voice of Yahweh and presented himself. vs. 13
- 1) Elijah now came out of the cave, "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." vs. 13a-c
 - 2) God asked the same question, to Elijah, "Suddenly a voice came to him, and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" vs. 13d-f

- d. Elijah answered the same, he did not get it, “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.” vs. 14
- 1) His perspective has not changed, though he discerned God’s voice.
 - 2) That was sufficient for God to work with Elijah.

C. God sent Elijah on his next mission, to get back to the work of God. 1king 19:15-18

1. First, “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.” vs. 15
 - a. He would travel all the way up north, probably by the Kings Highway, on the east side of the Jordan.
 - b. The King of Syrian was at war with Ahab, at this time.
 - c. Elijah had to backtrack to the north where he would have been, if he had not taken matters into his own hands.
2. Second, “Elijah was to anoint two people. vs. 16

- a. First, “Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel.” vs. 16a
 - * This would be fulfilled by Elisha, whose name means “God is salvation”. 2Kings 8:7-15, 9:1-13
 - b. Second, “And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah, as the prophet to take his place.” vs. 16b
 - * Elijah would soon be taken to heaven, without dying.
 - c. God would fulfill His judgment over the house of Ahab by these three, Hazael, Jehu and Elisha. vs. 17
3. Third, Elijah is rebuked by God for his arrogant pride, informing him he was not the only one doing God’s work. vs. 18
 - a. God had many faithful servants, “Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel.” vs. 18a
 - * Elijah interceded against Israel. Rom. 11:2
 - b. These had not paid the pagan homage of idolatry, “all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.” vs. 18b-c
 4. Elijah and Moses are no accidental parallel.
 - a. Moses represents the Law, Elijah the prophets.

- b. Moses led the Exodus, Elijah the return to God.
- c. Moses came before the First coming of Jesus, Elijah will come before the Second coming of Jesus.
- d. Moses heard the voice of God on Mount Horeb, now Elijah.
- e. Moses and Elijah were both present on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus.

Illustration

Success and suffering are vitally and organically linked. If you succeed without suffering, it is because someone else has suffered before you; if you suffer without succeeding, it is that someone else may succeed after you. **#6132**

* But it is not by might, not power, but by His Spirit! Zach. 4:6

Application

1. There are many things that can bring defeat to us when we act on our own, rather than looking and waiting on God.
 - a. Fear certainly can cripple me and cause me to do act like Elijah, regardless of who many triumphs God has accomplished through me.
 - b. If I do not take everything to God in prayer and depend on Him, the smallest of things can overcome me and make me a wreck.

- c. Attempting to forgive without depending on the grace and love of God is sure disaster.
 - 1) “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do **nothing**.” Jn. 15:5
 - 2) “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Phil. 4:6-7
 - 3) “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Phil. 4:13
- 2. The Lord Jesus will pursue us and deal with us when we are running away from what we are to be doing, but He will not force us.
 - a. It could be you decided to not serve in ministry on your own decision, like Elijah.
 - 1) I am always amazed when people tell me, “I believe God is calling me out or to step down”.
 - 2) How is it that we are so sensitive to hear the voice of God to quit, but not to start or continue?
 - b. We will have to spent time alone with God, just He and I, and He may ask me, “What are you doing here Xavier?”
 - 1) The question implies either that I am where I shouldn’t be nor sent me!

- 2) If I try to spiritualize it like Elijah, God will deal with me, in hope that I get it!
- c. Each person is responsible to hear the voice of God for their gifts and calling, that still small voice, no one else can hear it for you.
- 1) When we are not involved in the work of God, we fall into fear, despondency and hopelessness, not to mention get into trouble, but most of all it is **wasted time!**
- 2) Though we see so much unfaithfulness today by Pastors and Christians, we must always remember that God has His faithful, lest we get the Elijah complex, "I am the only one!"
- * Humility is to mark us, "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to **think** of himself more **highly** than he ought to **think**, but to **think** soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith." Rom. 12:3

Elijah went from defeat to dependency gradually!

III. Elijah went from dependency to directed service. vs. 19-21

- A. The invitation of Elisha by Elijah to be a prophet. vs. 19

1. Elijah left Horeb and headed out to the north, "So he departed from there." vs. 19a
- a. Again Elijah had to back-track from where he had been.
- b. Elijah traveled over 300 miles.
- c. Remember God told Elijah that Elisha was to be his successor. vs. 16b
2. Elijah came upon a man working in a field. vs. 19b-d
- a. The place was Abel-meholah in Gilead, near the road northward from Horeb to Damascus. vs. 16
- b. Elisha is identified by his family name, "and found Elisha the son of Shaphat." vs. 19b
- c. Elisha was a farmer, "who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth." vs. 19c-d
3. Elijah indicated he was calling Elisha to be a prophet, "Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him." vs. 19f
- a. This was symbolic of calling him to disciple him.
- b. This was a call to be a prophet, as his successor.

- B. The affirmation of Elisha to be a prophet. vs. 20

1. Elisha excepted the call to be a prophet by his actions, “And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah.” vs. 20a
 - a. Elisha forsook and abandoned the only thing he knew, the oxen to plow the fields.
 - 1) God had called Elisha, that is why God told Elijah to call him.
 - 2) Elisha merely confirmed his call by God, he did not call himself.
 - b. Elisha ran after Elijah.
 - 1) God’s will and God’s timing, are two different things.
 - 2) God is the one to bring them together.
2. Elisha verified the call by his words, “and said, “Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you.” vs. 20b-c
 - a. The request was not an excuse to delay his call, but a demonstration of his love and affection for his parents.
 - 1) His parents probably depended on him.
 - 2) We must believe God made sure they were cared for in some way.
 - * Jesus said, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who

- does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.”
Mk. 10:37-38
- b. The whole-hearted commitment of Elisha, then he would go with Elijah.
 - 1) A call to ministry is from God.
 - 2) The response to a call to ministry is of one’s own free-will.
 - 3) Not all who are called respond!
 - 4) The value of a free-will response is that it is motivated by obedience and love for God!
 3. Elijah excepted Elisha’s commitment, “And he said to him, “Go back again, for what have I done to you?” vs. 20d-f
 - a. The text seems say that Elijah rebukes Elisha, but it does not.
 - 1) The expression, “Go back again”, is simply, one of permission to bid his parents farewell.
 - 2) The actions of Elisha were honorable and appropriate.
 - b. The text in fact permits Elisha to bid his parent good-bye.
- C. The confirmation of Elisha’s call to be a prophet. vs. 21
1. Elisha made clear he was abandoning his old life by eliminating his livelihood. vs. 21a-c

- a. He killed the twelve oxen for a big meal, “So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh.” vs. 21a-b
- b. He fueled the fire, “using the oxen’s equipment.” vs. 21c
- 2. Elisha fed the local people, as a going away dinner, “and gave it to the people, and they ate.” vs. 21d-e
 - a. He was announcing his call by God to be a prophet.
 - b. He was celebrating his call to be a prophet.
- 3. Elisha began his apprenticeship of a prophet. vs. 21d-e
 - a. He left with Elijah, “Then he arose and followed Elijah.” vs. 21d
 - b. He assisted Elijah, “and became his servant.” vs. 21d-e

Illustration

A person expressed, “When I was in London I had a thrilling experience climbing up the 637 steps into the magnificent dome of St. Paul’s Cathedral. About nine-tenths of the way up, just at the base of the dome there is an exit that brings one outside onto a promenade with a marvelous view of the city. If a person is to climb to the apex of the dome of which the great golden cross is erected, he has to go back inside through a small door on which

there is a sign containing these word: “Go down, to go up.” Sunday-School Times #6134

Application

1. The most effective service is always directed service from God to the person.
 - a. God called Noah to preach and build an ark. Gen. 6
 - b. God called Moses to deliver the children of Israel from their bondage of Egypt. Ex. 3:10
 - c. God called Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem. Neh. 1
 - d. If God calls you to do something, He will enable you by His word, Holy Spirit and the necessary gifts!
 - * “But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. Gal. 6:4
2. Some people have a funny perspective about ministry.
 - a. Some think that now that they have ended their carrier and have all this life-experience, they can really be good in ministry.
 - b. Others thinks, since they have failed at everything else, might as well try ministry.
 - c. Then here are those who believe they are so talented and gifted they have to be in ministry.
 - d. Still others think anyone can do ministry, Pastors do nothing all week and then they only speak on mid-week and Sunday.

- e. All of these are a big mistake and do a disservice to the people of God.
 - * Paul said, “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.”
1Tim. 1:12-14

3. The basic principle to ministry is that even though God alone calls people, you always disciple people, to allow God to direct each person.

- a. You must always prepare people to take your place.
- b. You never have to worry about someone taking your ministry, they can't.
- c. You never become territorial or limit people as to what God can do through them.
 - * “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed-- always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also

may be manifested in our body.” 2Cor. 4:7-10

Elijah went from dependency to directed service effectively!

Conclusion

This is the account of Elijah, as he fled from Jezebel in fear of his life:

- I.** Elijah went from triumph to defeat instantly!
- II.** Elijah went from defeat to dependency gradually!
- III.** Elijah went from dependency to directed service effectively!