

Turning Point - Part 4

1 Kings 18-19

INTRODUCTION: For the past 4 weeks we have been looking intently at one of the greatest public miracles in all of scripture - Elijah calling down fire from heaven upon a water saturated altar.

- This event was followed by a sweeping religious reform and revival in the nation - 450 false prophets were put to death in keeping with the Mosaic mandate in Deuteronomy 13.
- The curse of a three year drought was lifted from the land.

TEXT: 1 Kings 18

⁴¹ And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of the rushing of rain." ⁴² So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Mount Carmel. And he bowed himself down on the earth and put his face between his knees. ⁴³ And he said to his servant, "Go up now, look toward the sea." And he went up and looked and said, "There is nothing." And he said, "Go again," seven times. ⁴⁴ And at the seventh time he said, "Behold, a little cloud like a man's hand is rising from the sea."

And he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Prepare your chariot and go down, lest the rain stop you.'" ⁴⁵ And in a little while the heavens grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. ⁴⁶ And the hand of the Lord was on Elijah, and he gathered up his garment and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

The blessing of God was mightily restored to the land. What do you expect to happen next logically in the story? I imagine a scene like those at the end of Star Wars, Elijah and his servant standing on the Palace steps, each being awarded a medallion of honor. Perhaps an edict of the King calling for a statue of Elijah to be erected in the Capital city as a perpetual reminder of his faithful service to Yaweh. But none of those things happened. In fact the very opposite occurred.

1 Kings 19

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."

A bounty is placed on the head of Elijah.

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.

That phrase, “and left his servant there” is significant. One commentator suggested this was Elijah’s formal resignation from the ministry.

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 slips into what Spurgeon called, “the dark night of the soul”. Have you been there? The modern world would call it - depression. If so, you are in good company.

ILLUSTRATION: 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.

- Israel’s first king, **King Saul** battled with fits of depression.
- **King David**, a man after God’s own heart had a significant bout with depression.
- His son **King Solomon** was the poster child for depression toward the end of his life - read Ecclesiastes.

And here in our text the preeminent Prophet of the Old Testament is depressed to the point of wanting to die. He understood God’s sovereignty over life enough not to dare take his own life, but he wasn’t above asking God to take it for him.

For Elijah it seemed to be the state that resulted from an emotional rollercoaster that had lasted over three years.

It seems that nothing happened the way Elijah expected.

Proverbs 13:12 (ESV) ¹² Hope deferred makes the heart sick,
but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

Depression can be born in the gap between expectation and reality.

- A man has a certain expectation for his career path, but things don’t go his way and he is left jaded, confused.
- A woman discovers that the man of her dreams has dreams of his own that don’t include her.
- A couple prays for children, but when the children are grown they despise the God who created them in the first place.

Depression can be born in the gap between expectation and reality.

This is why a **biblical world view** is so vitally important. Scripture serves as a sobering reminder that no matter how good things might be, the principle of sin is still at work in the world, people die, people disappoint, things don't always go as we hope and pray they will.

Scripture also tells us that people are remarkably complex creatures. The bible does not allow us to reduce everything to simple answers.

Three approaches to depression:

- **It's only a Chemical Problem** - The solution? Take a pill... fix the chemistry. The fact is, sometimes there are physical and chemical causes for depression that can be helped with medical treatment. But to reduce a person to a chemistry experiment is not only foolish, it's very, very dangerous.
- **It's only a Moral Problem** - This has been the response of the church to depression and it can be just as dangerous as the previous approach.

This is the person who gets out the Spiritual Checklist to diagnose you:

Have you prayed in faith?
 Have you confessed all known sin?
 Have you claimed the promises?
 Have you rebuked the Devil?
 Have you pleaded the Blood?

Depression can have a spiritual dimension, but it's reductionistic to believe that it's always the case.

- **It's only a Psychological Problem**- You just need to talk. It's how you were raised.

Scripture is not reductionistic - he created you body, soul, and spirit and he is in the process of redeeming all three.

Notice how God ministers to Elijah -

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.

Now what do you expect the Angel of the Lord to do?
 Rebuke Elijah? Correct Elijah? No, he cook him a meal and lets him rest.

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,

The Angel of the Lord meets Elijah where he is at and meets the need of the moment.

Sometimes, the most important need you have is sleep.

Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is take a nap.

Sometimes you need physical affection - touch.

Sometimes you need a really good book.

Sometimes you need to hear an amazing concert.

Humans aren't equations - they are multi demential beings. This Angel knew that and responded accordingly.

8b. and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to **Horeb, the mount of God.**

You may not recognize the name of that Mountain. It went by another name in Old Testament - Mt. Horeb, AKA Mt. Sinai.

There is a reason it's called the Mount of God - this is where Moses received the law. This is the most significant place in all of Jewish History. Without this mountain, there would be no David Kingdom, no holy temple, no Messiah - this is where God met with people.

Elijah strengthened himself in the Lord.

Friend, I don't mean this to sound mundane or trite - but when you find yourself depressed - run to the Lord. Get in his word. Feast on it. Are the words of Christ not called the words of life?

It is important that we study passages like this for a number of reasons.

1. **We are responsible for ourselves** - you are your chief advocate. Learn yourself. Recognize when you tend to wrestle emotionally.

Generally - our emotions are up and down in proportion. They tend to desire balance. If we go through an event that drives us UP emotionally, it will typically be followed by an emotional valley. One of the goals of maturity is learning how to level out the roller coaster. Keep our highs in check and our lows in check.

2. **Learn how to effectively minister to others** - Sometimes we are in the position of the Angel of the Lord. If you are a parent, learning how to manage the emotional state of your children is one of the great secrets.

It takes about 18 years to figure out, then they are gone.

Can I tell you one of the most important four words a parent can say?

You need a nap.

Don't argue, don't try to convince, don't try to cheer up an exhausted child.

Don't argue, don't try to convince, don't try to cheer up an exhausted spouse either.

One of the best things you can do for your husband or wife is to help them manage their emotional state. Do you know when your wife is getting overworked? Do you know when your husband is getting burnt out?

3. **We as a church, are uniquely called to be place for soul health.**

This is where I need to say a few words about vision. When it comes to vision there are a couple of categories we need to understand:

a. Universal Vision - There are something things that have universal application to every church or every generation, no matter where or when it exists. These include a proclamation of the gospel, exposition of the scripture, organization under the authority of Christ, and replication of disciples and ministries here and throughout the world.

b. Particular Vision - This is the unique personality and calling of each particular church. A Pastor must ask, "why has God called these particular people together at this particular point in history?", and "what are the unique problems we face that we are uniquely equipped to solve"?

Here is what I want to suggest - We are a vibrant, growing church in a resort community. People visit here, and move here in order to find rest and refreshment. They find our culture therapeutic. They find our island inspiring.

What would it look like to cooperate with this as a church. To do for the SPIRIT what our community does for the Body and Spirit.

ILLUSTRATION: This past week I was able to take 23 of our people on a tour of Israel. In the midst of tour we visited a place called, "en gedi" it was an oasis in the middle of the Judaeen wilderness, next to the dead sea.

Everywhere you look, there's dessert - life is unsustainable. There is a sea, but it's mineral content is so high that nothing can live there, it does not quench your thirst, it fact it would kill you to drink the water.

But there in the midst of the dessert is **En Gedi** - it's a natural spring, creating a number of fresh water, waterfalls. Trees flourish, animals scurry around.

It was at En Gedi that David hid as he fled from King Saul. En Gedi's waters refreshed and sustained David and his mighty men.

I believe that First Baptist Church can become an En Gedi, an Oasis for the Kingdom.

2020 Vision

1. Coaching - The Preaching and Teaching of our Church.

- A. **Conferences** - What Amelia Island is for the mind and body, our church will be for the spirit. In the coming years we will seek to provide conferences and workshops for Christians to come, grow and learn - and go back refreshed to make a difference in their communities. On October 20th we will host a **Senior Adult Conference** with special guest Phil Waldrep.
- B. **Building** - Prior to my arrival the long term plan of the FBC campus was to include the construction of an **additional building** on the north side of our campus to accommodate a mid-size (200-300 people) gathering space and additional small group rooms. I am asking our Deacon body to select a team to begin the initial research to determine the scope of the project as well as the cost that will be incurred. They will report back to the church their findings as well as a recommendation on how we ought to proceed.

2. Community - The small groups of our Church

- A. **FPU** - More families fall apart over finances than any other issue. This year we are hosting Dave Ramsey's **Financial Peace University** to strengthen our families and give us a firm foundation for future generosity.
- B. **Celebrate Recovery** - Substance abuse is a growing danger in our community. We will seek to develop a **Celebrate Recovery** style program to provide a safe exit ramp to those who find themselves on a dangerous and destructive path.

3. Commission - The Personalized Missions of our Church.

- A. **GIC** - This year our bi-annual **Global Impact Celebration**, where we bring in our missionaries from around the world to celebrate the wonderful work they are accomplishing. Mark your calendar for Sept. 23-27 and find out how you can be a part of this awesome event.
- B. **Missionary Partnership**- I am pleased to announce today that **Daniel and Jessalyn Fox** are joining our Church and partnering with us to continue their incredible work of making disciples among the deaf community around the world.

CLOSING ILLUSTRATION;

There is an army of men and women who like Elijah haven't seen the world respond the way they expected. Their reality not lived up to their expectations. You church are in the place of the Angel - you have the power, the position, and the skill set to minister to

them. I am asking God to send them to us, will you be ready?