

Wicked

Intimidation

1 Kings 19:1-21

July 15, 2018 am

HDBC

Today we continue our examination of one of the really *bad couples* of the Bible; Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab was the 8th king of Israel and Jezebel was his wife. The simple testimony of scripture about Ahab is that he was **more evil** than all the kings who had come before him. He and Jezebel led the people into immorality and idolatry. They appeared to have no moral compass or conscience. But God refused to leave the people without a positive voice.

He raised up a courageous prophet named Elijah, who would confront this wicked couple and call upon them to forsake their idolatry and return to the true God. God was so serious about this that He caused a three-year drought. This was announced by Elijah to Ahab. For three years the people suffered because of the obstinance of Ahab and Jezebel.

At the end of the three years, God orchestrated a showdown between Elijah and Ahab. On Mt. Carmel, He proved that He and He alone is God. In a powerful demonstration of fire, He exposed the lies of Baal while proving He was God.

In the immediate aftermath, the people acknowledged God, the prophets of Baal were killed and the rains returned. All of that is found in 1 Kings 18. Great chapter, revealing a great event in Israel's history. So . . . what would we find in chapter 19? I would expect to read about the repentance of Ahab and Jezebel, the promotion of Elijah as a spokesman of the true God, and the beginning of a time of great prosperity in Israel. That is **NOT** what we find in chapter 19.

Instead we read about a bully and her Intimidation. Ahab, and Jezebel refused to be impacted by the truth. She already had her mind made up about God and nothing would change it. Rather than turning to God, she determined to eliminate His spokesman. She would kill Elijah and that would put an end to talk about worship of God, rather than Baal.

1. Jezebel's Threat (1-2)

Jezebel was not a happy camper. Not only did Elijah embarrass her by defeating her gods, but he also destroyed her prophets. OK for her to kill prophets of God, but not for Elijah to kill prophets of Baal. Jezebel made a threat and it was not an idle one. Some people make subtle threats.

My wishes are a humble dwelling with a thatched roof, a good bed, good food, flowers at my windows, and some fine trees before my door. And if the good God wants to make me completely happy he will grant me the joy of seeing six or seven of my enemies hanging from the trees.

There was nothing subtle about Jezebel. Her desire for revenge was neither secretive, nor dependent upon God. She would handle it herself. We've all felt the paralyzing effects of intimidation. How would Elijah react?

2. Elijah's Reaction (3-4)

Three things are noted in verses 3-4. Fear, Flight, Fatalism.

1) Fear

An emotional foreboding or dread of impending distress or misfortune.

Elijah is scared out of his wits. While on Mt. Carmel he had confidence that enabled him to mock the prophets of Baal. But now, just the threat of Jezebel has frightened him to the core. She was intimidating!

2) Flight

What do you do when you are scared? RUN! He headed south and determined to get as far away from Jezebel as he could. He **ran for his life and came to Beersheba**. He left his servant there, then went a day's journey into the wilderness. **On Carmel** he was willing to fight. Now, it was all about flight. We'll consider some reasons in a moment. But first note a third aspect of his reaction.

3) Fatalism (4)

He has lost the will to live. Not suicidal, but he was considering how much better it might be to be in Heaven rather than on earth. He did not try to take his life, but simply expressed his feelings to God.

In his mind, there was nothing else that he could do. This is pretty shocking, considering the courage and boldness he exhibited on Mt. Carmel. But he is not the first to think this way. **Moses** invited God to kill him. **Job** wished he had never been born. **Jeremiah** cursed the day of his birth. These men longed for death, but were not suicidal. There is a difference. They were expressing their feelings but were leaving the outcome to God.

What caused this reaction by Elijah?

1) He underestimated the enemy

He thought victory in one battle meant the end of the war. He had just experienced a great victory and may have assumed that this one victory would bring an end to the war. He failed to realize the enemy never gives up. One victory does not mean the end of the war. **The modern warfare that we are experiencing in the world today is a good illustration. We may defeat one terrorist plot, but that will not end the war.**

Elijah underestimated the enemy of God and of his people. Satan is relentless. Until he is forever banished he will continue to fight. So, be carefully about relaxing after a great spiritual victory. You can't let your guard down. He will continue to attack.

2) He became physically exhausted

Verse 5 points out that he was hungry and tired. He needed food and sleep. We are susceptible to fear and depression when we are physically and mentally exhausted. When we are tired things look different. Perspective gets blurred. Practical advice: Get the rest you need.

3) He thought he was fighting alone.

He believed no one else was on his side. He was lonely. Look at verse 10. He honestly felt that he was the only one who was doing the right thing. That can wear on you. If you think you are going it alone, it can be difficult.

We've seen **Jezebel's Threat** and we've seen **Elijah's Reaction**. Now . . .

3. God's Compassion (5-21)

God does three things that show his compassion.

1) He Came (5-8)

God did not wait until Elijah made it all the way to Mount Horeb. While Elijah was moving in the direction of the Mountain of God, the angels were sent to minister to him. God moved toward Elijah.

2) He Counseled (9-13)

How did he counsel?

a. He listened patiently (9-10)

Note that God asked a question, then patiently listened. This happened twice. He did not need to listen in order to gain information. He knows everything. But, he listened carefully to Elijah. He allowed him to share his perspective.

b. He spoke compassionately (11-13)

The Lord not in the whirlwind, earthquake or the fire, but in the gentle breeze. God can speak through powerful displays of his might. He can speak loudly and with great fanfare.

But He can also speak quietly, gently. That is how he chose to speak to Elijah. No lecturing, no fussing. Just gentle voice. God wanted Elijah to know that there was more of his character than fire, wind and earthquakes.

The phrase, *low whisper* is used in only two other places in the Bible. Job and Psalms. Both places it is in context of rest and refreshment in the midst of pain, distress and fear.

What does God say? Once again he asks Elijah why he is there. He was encouraging Elijah to do some **self-evaluation**. Once again Elijah reverted back to his previous statement. He condemns the people of Israel and elevates his own importance. Pride is creeping into Elijah's heart.

3) He Restored (14-21)

He knew that Elijah needed to get back into the game. He did not need to hide from Jezebel. He had a calling and could not fulfill it while hiding in a cave or on a mountain. So, three things God communicated to Elijah to restore him to his ministry.

a. Get Busy (15-16)

Elijah was instructed to anoint new leaders for Syria and Israel, as well as a new spiritual leader who would work alongside Elijah and actually succeed him. This was a hint to Elijah that the battle over idolatry would extend beyond one victory on Mt. Carmel. It would extend even beyond the currently leadership. Elijah's job was not simply to fight well in his lifetime, but to prepare future leaders.

A new assignment was important to get Elijah out of his fearful depression. He had work to do. There were things that he needed to be doing.

b. Keep Trusting (17-18)

In these verses, God offers assurance to Elijah. The bad guys are going to lose (17). I still have 7,000 people who are worshipping and trusting me. You are not alone. Things are not nearly as bad as you think. There is a future for Israel.

c. Enlist a Partner (19-21)

These verses related the call of God upon Elisha through Elijah, and Elisha's response. He answered the call and began to serve alongside and under the mentoring of Elijah. Elijah needed a companion and God provided one.

This was a dark time in Elijah's life. Surprisingly, it came right after a great spiritual victory. Such is life in a Genesis 3 world. Life can be very much like a roller coaster ride. Up and down, with twists and turns. Highs and bring us great joy and lows that can suck the life out of us.

The enemy will threaten and intimidate you.

His goal is to cause you to be on the defensive and ineffective.

You may react in fear and flight.

This is often our initial reaction. Based on emotions rather than truth.

God will compassionately . . .

Come . . . Counsel . . . Restore

Don't be intimidated by bullies!

1. See them as broken people who desperately need Jesus.
2. See them as tools in the hand of God to shape, refine and mature you.
3. See them as enemies of God, not you. They attack you because they cannot attack Him.
4. See them as temporary villains whom God will one day deal with.
5. See them as instruments who will be used to bring glory to God.