



INTRODUCTION

We humans so easily vacillate to extremes—highs turn to lows, confidence turns to cowardice, and vice versa. Today we will see Elijah suffer such a crisis of faith after God's great victory over the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel. Can you think of any other similar examples from Scripture? What comfort and insight do these give us?

ELIJAH FLEES TO HOREB

1 Kings 19:1-9 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. ² So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them."

³ Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, ⁴ while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." ⁵ Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." ⁶ He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

⁷ The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." ⁸ So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. ⁹ There he went into a cave and spent the night.

1.) In his explanation of the Sixth Petition, Martin Luther includes despair along with "other great and shameful sins." While all sins are equal in God's sight, why do you think he so singled out despair? Where does despair come from? What makes it so dangerous?

The Sixth Petition: Lead us not into temptation. (*What does this mean?*) God surely tempts no one to sin, but we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our own flesh may not deceive us or lead us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins; and though we are tempted by them, we pray that we may overcome and win the victory.

2.) How might Elijah's sinful nature have twisted his circumstances into a "credible" reason to despair?

3.) When despair strikes it needs to be immediately countered with God's true, eternal, unfailing Word. What Bible passages or phrases might be effective in counteracting this temptation and lie of Satan?

4.) What was the LORD teaching Elijah through the miraculous meal and burst of endurance that followed?

THE LORD APPEARS TO ELIJAH

1 Kings 19:9-18 And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰ He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." ¹¹ The LORD said, "Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by."

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. ¹³ When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁴ He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too."

¹⁵ The LORD said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. ¹⁶ Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. ¹⁷ Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. ¹⁸ Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and all whose mouths have not kissed him."

1.) When Elijah reached Mount Horeb, or Sinai, where God had given Moses the Ten Commandments, he twice asks his prophet the same question. What is that implying?

2.) Twice Elijah makes the same reply. Why would that be even more incredible the second time? What does this tell us about despair? Where was Elijah's focus?

3.) The Lord of all the universe, who knows everything and has all the answers was willing to listen to Elijah. He is also willing to listen to us as we cast our frustrations, pains, fears, anxieties, hopes, and dreams upon him in prayer. This teaches us that it is important to listen to a friend who is down. What principles can we keep in mind to help us be better listeners?

4.) Provide some Scriptural examples of the Almighty God hiding his power in weakness.

5.) What is “the gentle whisper” through which God spoke to Elijah and speaks to us?

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

2 Timothy 3:15-17 From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

6.) What encouraging directives did the LORD use to break Elijah out of his funk?

7.) Luther said that when things are going well, don’t get too proud, for you will experience difficult times again. And when you are having difficulties, don’t despair, for the Lord can bring out good times. How was this true in Elijah’s case? How have you seen it in your own life? How is the best yet to come?

1 Peter 3:3-5 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

8.) Surely Elijah could have never imagined that there were thousands in Israel who were true to the LORD. This is God revealing the existence of the “invisible church.” What is the “invisible church” and what comfort does it give us in these last days?

PRAYER