

1 Kings 19

Elijah and the Cave

In this session I want to address several things out of this story.

We are regaining our sense of being spokesman and women for God. WE are bearers of the Word of the Lord to our society and our churches. I also want to address and combat the rejection that often comes on those who are called to the service of God.

WE all face that because by and large our culture does not embrace our mission.

Read the passage:

¹ *When Ahab got home, he told Jezebel everything Elijah had done, including the way he had killed all the prophets of Baal. ² So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah: "May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you just as you killed them."*

³ *Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. ⁴ Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died."*

⁵ *Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!" ⁶ He looked around and there beside his head was some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again.*

⁷ *Then the angel of the LORD came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat some more, or the journey ahead will be too much for you."*

⁸ *So he got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength to travel forty days and forty nights to Mount Sinai the mountain of God. ⁹ There he came to a cave, where he spent the night.*

The LORD Speaks to Elijah

But the LORD said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁰ *Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the LORD God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."*

¹¹ *"Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the LORD told him. And as Elijah stood there, the LORD passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. ¹² And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. ¹³*

When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And a voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

¹⁴ He replied again, "I have zealously served the LORD God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

¹⁵ Then the LORD told him, "Go back the same way you came, and travel to the wilderness of Damascus. When you arrive there, anoint Hazael to be king of Aram. ¹⁶ Then anoint Jehu son of Nimshi to be king of Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from the town of Abel-meholah to replace you as my prophet. ¹⁷ Anyone who escapes from Hazael will be killed by Jehu, and those who escape Jehu will be killed by Elisha! ¹⁸ Yet I will preserve 7,000 others in Israel who have never bowed down to Baal or kissed him!"

I want to talk about the problem of loneliness. Elijah was a physically and spiritually strong man. He wasn't afraid of the king but walked right in before him. He lived in the wilderness. He was a bold man and yet he fell into loneliness.

Loneliness is a common problem in our world. Senior citizens are often lonely. (ABC Secret Millionaire show. Lady passing out hugs when delivering meals)

It is a problem with many single folks. Sometimes it is a problem with many people that are married. Often they think their spouse doesn't really care for them. It's a problem in the ministry.

Many people that are in ministry feel very isolated from those they lead.

Loneliness is mental social isolation and has very little to do with whether people are around you. There are some people that can be quite content and never have people around them. They have their thoughts and silence and they love it. Not every single person is lonely.

There are other people that are in a crowd and surrounded by others yet they are overwhelmed by loneliness. Loneliness is common in the ministry.

Elijah was Isolated in his thinking

In the movie *Cast Away*, Chuck Noland was the lone survivor of a plane crash in the Pacific Ocean. He learned how to survive by eating raw fish and coconuts, motivated only by his desire to return home to be with his would-be fiancé. For over four years, he was totally alone, without any human interaction.

There was no one on this island with him. His only friend was a volleyball that had washed up on shore with him in the wreckage. His volleyball—Wilson—rarely left his side and always seemed to answer Chuck with some friendly sarcasm, even though he never spoke a word. When Chuck decided to build a raft and escape the island with the hope of finding his long-lost love, he took little supplies and his best friend Wilson.

Unfortunately, there are times when our loneliness is so powerful that we find ourselves isolated from even those closest to us. Let's watch a clip from this movie and think about what it must be like for those who find themselves totally alone.

Video: Cast Away --- Where's Wilson?

When you are dealing with people that just want to do what they want to do and you have been called to tell them God wants them to do something else yet they do what they want to do you can begin to feel very alone.

Some of the great servants of God have felt this loneliness. Moses felt it and fled his people and spent many years in the wilderness alone. Paul said once from prison, "Everybody has forsaken me."

Jesus felt it on the cross. Not only had his disciples run away but He cried out, "My God, my God why have You forsaken me."

Elijah suffered this problem. He was the messenger of God but he felt alone. He was alone at the brook Kerith. He was in Zarephath but you could say he was "not of" Zarephath. If you have ever traveled abroad you will understand what Elijah felt. There was nothing about this culture that he identified with.

In chapter 18, he gives us a clue to where he was in his mind. He said, "I and I alone am the only one left." The fact is he wasn't alone but he was convinced he was alone.

Here's another thing:

After great meetings you are often the most vulnerable. Think about this moment in his life. He had just stood as the lone figure before all Israel and the fire had fallen and everybody said the Lord He is God. He had poured out for three and a half years his emotions and prayers and he had waited before God and now the moment was over. He had to be experiencing an emotional and even physical let down. (Sunday afternoon)

The enemy will often come at us when we are waiting for someone to say you did right. You did a good thing. He had expended himself. He was alone.

Elijah was feeling rejection

He was isolated but he also faced real rejection. The first three verses tell us about it but let me set this up a little better by taking you back to chapter 18 for a moment.

⁴¹ Then Elijah said to Ahab, "Go get something to eat and drink, for I hear a mighty rainstorm coming!" ⁴² So Ahab went to eat and drink. But Elijah climbed to the top of Mount Carmel and bowed low to the ground and prayed with his face between his knees.

⁴³ Then he said to his servant, "Go and look out toward the sea." The servant went and looked, then returned to Elijah and said, "I didn't see anything." Seven times Elijah told him to go and look. ⁴⁴ Finally the seventh time, his servant told him, "I saw a little cloud about the size of a man's hand rising from the sea."

Then Elijah shouted, "Hurry to Ahab and tell him, 'Climb into your chariot and go back home. If you don't hurry, the rain will stop you!'" ⁴⁵ And soon the sky was black with clouds. A heavy wind brought a terrific rainstorm, and Ahab left quickly for Jezreel. ⁴⁶ Then the LORD gave special strength to Elijah. He tucked his cloak into his belt^[f] and ran ahead of Ahab's chariot all the way to the entrance of Jezreel.

When the meeting was over he told Ahab to go back to Jezreel. The servant went seven times and finally saw a cloud the size of a man's hand. The Spirit of God came on Elijah and he outran Ahab's chariot back to town.

That alone would leave you a little winded. He was still moving in the anointing of the meeting. When you and I experience the anointing of God it is for the time of the job and when the job is over the anointing of God will lift and sometimes you will feel very vulnerable.

It didn't leave him after the fire

It didn't leave him after the rain came.

It didn't leave him while he was running those miles back to Jezreel. (15-10 miles)

The irony of this story is that Jezreel is where Ahab and Jezebel lived. I don't think he would have gone there if for a minute he thought that they were going to try to kill him. I believe, in my opinion, that he might have thought that even Ahab and Jezebel were going to change. He had just been a part of launching a nation-wide revival in his mind. He was up and I do mean up. He had waited for three years. He had rebuilt the altar of God in front of all the people. They had shouted that the "Lord, He is God." They had worshipped and praised and were beside themselves. He had destroyed some 450 false prophets. He had cleaned house. God was first. God was standing up and showing himself strong and Elijah was right in the middle of it all.

How many of you know that had to be the biggest thing that had ever happened in his life?

¹ When Ahab got home, he told Jezebel everything Elijah had done, including the way he had killed all the prophets of Baal. ² So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah: "May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you just as you killed them."

³ Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there.

Message: You're going to be dead in 24 hours!

Elijah this manly man got afraid!

He had just killed 450 false prophets
He had just called down fire from heaven
He had just started the rain again. He was in touch with God so why did he run?

Elijah started feeling that he was expendable

He had given them everything they needed and they probably didn't need him anymore.

When you are going to face the enemy you have to have a reason. Maybe he didn't see any more reason to do what he was doing. Maybe he lost a heart for the ministry anymore.

I can't explain that but we have all seen that happened in people's lives and ministries. They just quit or they do something that they have to know is self-destructive and you think the only reason they do those things is to get out.

Here is why I believe that Elijah ran: **Somewhere along the way he became the issue.**

He became the issue in his own mind and in the mind of the people. When you bring God's message to the people you are going to be the issue in their minds but God help us if we ever become the issue in our own minds.

When he first came on the scene he wasn't the issue. He took his life in his own hands and delivered the message to Ahab without fear.

Along the brook he wasn't the issue. At the widow's house he wasn't the issue although we see a little of it when her son died.

He was tired. He was put out. He was exhausted from three years of waiting before God. He had been abused and threatened and even while he was in hiding he knew if Ahab found him he would be more than likely killed. The injustice of it all started to effect him and after a while he became the issue.

The people always knew he was the issue. He stopped the rain. He killed the prophets. They were looking for him because in their minds he was the issue. Ahab said, "you are the troublemaker."

The ministry of the word of God and the church will always be the issue in people's minds but God help us if we ever start thinking that we are the issue. The issue was sinfulness; the issue was idolatry and wickedness. But until they were ready to repent they didn't want to face those things.

You are not the only one that knows God and serves Him.

You are not alone. God is the issue. He is not depending on you. You are depending on Him!!

God is the issue. Righteousness is the issue and I can lay my life down for it. When I am the issue I can't go very far without giving up. Men and women from all over the world have given their lives for the issue. They have willingly surrendered their very lives to death. But God has to be the issue.

We will lose our will to stand when we become the issue. When God appeared to Joshua with the drawn sword Joshua cried out, "are you for us or against us?" Do you remember what God said? He said, "Neither one, I am the Captain." Joshua you're not the issue. I am the issue. You are here to serve me! God is the issue!

Let God arise and his enemies be scattered.

All this stuff we bog down in is not the issue. It's not about house churches versus church buildings or hymnbooks versus projectors, or contemporary versus traditional.

God is the issue. Jesus Christ is the issue.

Elijah experienced the power of personal rejection

When you set yourself up to be the issue you will run into personal rejection. Jezebel was an evil woman with a wicked tongue. We have all felt rejection.

3 weeks in a row. 3 comments. The enemy will magnify it in ways that are over the top.

Have you ever felt like running? That feeling comes over you and you know it's not right but it is real.

Elijah ran about sixty miles to Beersheba. The servant left him.

Use the Bible here.

He went out to the dessert where you can die without trying. Lord, I've done all you asked me to do. I can't do anymore. I just want to die.

"They'll find my body out here in the wilderness someday and maybe they will appreciate what they had." They'll realize what they did to the servant of God. When you come to my funeral you will miss me.

He was buried in pity. He went to sleep. An angel woke him and that indicates that God knew where he was. God always knows where you are. He's a good father and sometimes He lets you go into it for your own good for awhile to teach us a lesson.

The angel woke him up and he wasn't impressed! That tells you how far gone he was. You've seen one angel you've seen them all.

Verse 7 "The journey is too hard if you get your prospective off. You can't do it without a sense of his power and his purpose. IT will be too hard for you. Sometimes you need a hibernating experience.

Sorrow endures for the night but joy comes in the morning.

This old prophet had done it all. He had seen it all. He found the cave and he went to the back of the cave. It was just him and his thoughts. I'm the only one. I did what God wanted and now there trying to kill me. God doesn't really care.

What are you doing in there Elijah?

But the LORD said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" ¹⁰ Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the LORD God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

Go back to scripture. He was no longer standing before God he was squatting in the back of the cave.

Wind

Earthquake

Fire

Sometimes we are thrilled with God and sometimes we don't feel a thing.

Gentle voice! He heard a familiar voice.

For the first time he took a step back in the right direction.

He gets up goes to the entrance. Gets the same question from God. Gives the same answer.

Notice this: God doesn't try to psychoanalyze him. That would have just affirmed that he was the issue. He didn't mother him.

God just said, "I have more work for you to do." "You're not through!"

God was reaching for something that was buried. His commitment to the will of God. That's what we are all called to do. All of us have heard his call and we committed to it.

By the way you're not the only one.

God's the issue

You are not alone. There are still others in the race.

God is not finished with me.

Simpsons son.