

Are you discouraged?

1 Kings 19:1-18, 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."

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.

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.

And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

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."

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?"

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."

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."

At certain times we are all discouraged. We may be disappointed in people. Perhaps a promise has been broken. Some one has forgotten all about us. We may have lost employment. Or we have lost a loved-one. Relationship with a friend has been broken.

Perhaps a task assigned to us is too difficult to execute. There are many reasons we are discouraged from time to time. In the Bible in the Book of 1 Kings Chapter 19 we notice that the prophet Elijah was very much discouraged. In verse 3 we note that Elijah was not only discouraged, he was also afraid and ran for his life.

What had happened? Elijah had killed all the false prophets of Baal and now the wife of King Ahab had vowed to kill Elijah by tomorrow. She was greatly upset and angry with Elijah for killing the prophets. Jezebel herself was also a worshipper of Baal and was greatly offended at the actions of the prophet of God. Elijah was so discouraged that he prayed to God, not for protection but that he might die. "I have had enough Lord", he said. "Take my life..." (Verse 3) Then he fell asleep hoping he would die in his sleep!

But God did not answer the prophet's prayer. God sent an angel who baked some bread for him and gave him water to drink. It was not time to die but time to work! God had a task for Elijah to carry out. He had to anoint two kings and also appoint his successor, Elisha. So Elijah ate and drank for the strength needed to travel for 40 days. He arrived at Mount Horeb, went into a cave and spent the night. Again the word of the Lord came to Elijah,

“what are you doing here, Elijah?” So Elijah started to complain, “I am the only one left, the people have rejected your commandments, your prophets have all been killed and now they are trying to kill me too”. After the Lord gave the description of Elijah’s task He said in verse 18, “Yet I have reserved 7000 in Israel who have not bowed down to Baal”. No doubt Elijah was greatly encouraged by this information from the Lord.

We can learn several lessons from this Reading:

1. Be encouraged! God protects and provides. God protected and provided for Elijah. God sent an angel to provide for Elijah’s physical needs. The safest place in the entire world is in the center of the will of God. He has promised to never leave or forsake us. He is with us always. With God we are a majority. He is all-powerful. With Him nothing is impossible (Mark 10:27). Often I hear that the believers in Jesus Christ are a minority. But this is not quite correct. Because believers have Christ living in them and Christ is never a minority! You may be the only real believer at your place of work. Never forget that Christ lives in you and that He wants to live His resurrected life in and through you in the power of the Holy Spirit. We may say with the Apostle Paul, “For me to live is Christ...”

(Philippians 1:21)

2. God has a job for us to do. God had an important task for Elijah. God has an important assignment for all of us. As believers we have all been commanded to go into the entire world and share the Gospel with all men, women, boys and girls. God has a wonderful plan for all people everywhere. This plan is explained in 2 Peter 3:9 and 1 Timothy 2:4. God wants no one in the world to perish but he desires for all people to be repent and be saved. We may be part of God’s plan and tell our friends and neighbors how they can be saved, how they can have their sins forgiven and be prepared to enter heaven when they die.

How about you? Are you discouraged? Are you afraid? Are you disappointed? I have learned that being discouraged, disappointed and afraid is basically being selfish and feeling sorry for myself. The Lord always reminds me of the task He has assigned to me. This job is to go and share the Good News with young and old. We are all commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ to be a witness for the Lord Jesus wherever we live and work. What an honor and privilege to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ and ‘report for duty’. It is our duty to go.

Why did the Lord Jesus say “Go!” Because very seldom people come to us. In my 46 years of serving the Lord Jesus in over 70 countries there are actually only 2 people who ever came to me and asked how they could become a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. One of these was the head of the security in a factory in Calcutta, India. He knocked at the door of my hotel room one evening and asked if I was an evangelist and if so, could I help him? I said, “yes” and “what can I do for you?” He went on to explain that he was a Buddhist from Nepal and had come to India for work. In his factory there were some believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who had joy and peace and did not return evil for evil! He said that he wanted to become like these believers. It was my privilege to pray with him and lead him to the Lord Jesus Christ. However the believers in his factory were the important instruments God used to bring Salvation this Nepali Buddhist. To lead a consistent life before the non-believers is an important part of being a witness for Christ. People may even ask the reason for your joy and peace!

I have had to go to the villages, towns and cities. I had to go to the school auditoriums, to the apartments and to houses big and small. I have had to go to the many nations as well as to my neighbors. The command of the Lord Jesus to you is also to go.

So I encourage you to also to obey the command of the Lord Jesus Christ and go daily telling the Good News of the Gospel to those God allows you to meet in your neighborhood. When we start thinking about others we take our eyes off our own difficulties and ourselves.

As you go God is with you and He will never leave you. This is a promise and God never breaks His word! It is my experience that the most difficult part of going is actually making the decision to go and actually start going! Once I am on my way the going is easy. The Lord is our strength, our guide and He even tells us the words to speak. May God use you in a wonderful way as you obey and go. When we are busy serving the Lord the discouragement will not be there anymore. Being busy serving the Lord is the best medicine against discouragement.