

Hope  
July 17, 2022  
Allen Power

1 Kings 19:9-18

We've all experienced it -- the BIG LET DOWN. The long-planned wedding day has come and gone. The fun week at summer camp is over and the new friends scatter for home. The Christmas celebration with all the family is done and there's nothing left but boxes, trash bags, and --- the BIG LET DOWN. It's that natural human feeling that yesterday was glorious and today is just "meh!" Those let downs usually pass quickly. Some let downs are much bigger and last longer.

We refer to the wonderful, blessed times in life as "mountaintop experiences." The climb up was hard but the moment at the top was sweet and the view was fabulous! The reality of "mountaintop" experiences is you can't stay on the mountain forever and you can't go to another mountaintop without first coming down to go through the valley.

When we last saw God's Prophet Elijah he was coming down from Mount Carmel. Elijah was used by God to defeat the false prophets of Baal in a dramatic display of God's supernatural power. On God's orders, Elijah executed the 850 false prophets. Then he prayed for rain and God ended three plus years of drought and famine. The victory for God was sweet but evil Queen Jezebel was enraged! "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."*<sup>3</sup> *Elijah was afraid and fled for his life.*<sup>4</sup>

Last week I read from the book of James chapter five verse seventeen: *"<sup>17</sup> Elijah was as human as we are..."*<sup>ii</sup> Now, we get to see just HOW human Elijah was.

**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...

Elijah had just come off one of the most exhilarating spiritual victories in history and yet, he was exhausted, discouraged, burned-out, and felt abandoned by everyone including God --- the same God Who had shown Himself faithful and powerful over and over to His prophet. How soon even prophets forget!

Here's the point: God's most sanctified servants can become discouraged to the point of despair. What's a despairing disciple to do? I'll put it in the words of Susan Power. Countless times when I have been discouraged she would say, *"God has never 'slam-dunked' you in the past and he won't in the future."*

Even in our discouragement, we must remember God has a purpose for each of us. When we focus on His purpose instead of our predicament, we have HOPE.

- God sent an angel to care for Elijah with rest, bread, and water.
- Then for forty days and 250 miles the Prophet walked and fasted.
- First there was rest, then nutrition, then exercise and time alone with God fasting, praying, and recovering. A good prescription for the big “let down.”
- Forty days of fasting and walking all the way to Mount Sinai.

**9** There he came to a cave, where he spent the night. 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.”

- God asked, “*What are you doing?*” Ever asked that of your kids?
- “*What are you doing hiding in this cave?*” **What was God really asking?**
- It’s like God was saying to Elijah: “*Have I ever let you down? Have I ever ‘slam-dunked’ you?*” (Susan Power translation.)
- Elijah answered: “*I’m the only prophet left, God. It’s all on me. Woe is me.*”
- His response was akin to the children’s song: “*Nobody likes me, everybody hates me, I think I’ll go eat worms!*”<sup>iii</sup>
- We’ll see in a few verses that this was an exaggeration. Have you noticed when we’re down in the dumps we tend to exaggerate the situation?
- God needed to remind His prophet just WHO is really in charge.

**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.

- **Why do you think God showed Elijah all that power?**
- **Why do you think God only spoke in the “gentle whisper?”**
- Ever calmed your upset child by saying, “Take a breath.” We can’t reassure them until they get quiet enough to hear us. (See Ps. 46:10)
- **What do you think the lesson is for us when we’re discouraged?**

**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.”

- Elijah still didn't seem to get it. He's singing the same sad song.
- So, God took the next step in shaking Elijah out of his slump.
- God ended the "pity party" and told him to get up and get back to work!

**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 grandson 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!

- God used Hazael and Elisha to "clean up" what was left of Baal worship.
- Then God set the record straight on Elijah's exaggeration. *"You're not the only one doing my work Elijah! I always have a plan and a 'remnant.'"*

**18** Yet I will preserve 7,000 others in Israel who have never bowed down to Baal or kissed him!"

- What happened to Elijah? He climbed out of his "valley of despair" and went on to complete his mission for God. Jezebel didn't kill him. In fact he never died, he was taken up to Heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:1-11.)
- Search the New Testament you'll find Elijah's influence over and over.
- Jesus spoke of Elijah and Elijah was with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Elijah was even mentioned by the spectators at Calvary.
- Though "human like us," Elijah recovered and completed his mission.
- We might wonder how God's great servant could be so filled with despair.
- Warren Wiersbe said, *"When God's servants get out of God's will, they're liable to do all sorts of foolish things and fail in their strongest points."*<sup>iv</sup>
  - Abraham fled to Egypt...he failed in his faith. (Gen. 12:10)
  - We know about David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11-12)
  - Moses lost his temper and missed the Promised Land (Num. 20)
  - Peter's courage failed and he denied Christ (Mark 14:66-72.)
- We put Bible "characters" on a pedestal forgetting they were humans like us. God uses flawed, human "jars of clay" that have "cracks." (2 Cor. 4:7)
- I know what you're thinking and the dots you are connecting between that last point and recent events. FYI: We're not going there in class tomorrow.
- I needed to make that last point but I'm going somewhere else. Here it is: If Elijah can slide off the mountain into the valley of despair so can we.
- What's the application for us when we're in that situation? What does this lesson teach us about physical self-care? What does it prescribe for us spiritually when we're in despair? Other thoughts? Here's a great verse:

**Psalm 43:5 (NLT) — 5** Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Savior and my God!

So, What's the Takeaway?

- God's most sanctified servants can become discouraged to the point of despair. When God said to Elijah "*What are you doing hiding in this cave?*" He was really saying, "*Have I ever let you down? Have I ever 'slam-dunked' you?*" (Susan Power translation.)
- I believe God shows us the flaws of his servants in scripture so we don't lose hope because of our own human flaws. If the great Elijah got discouraged, fearful, and depressed then OF COURSE we can too!
- This passage has very practical advice about physical self-care when we're depressed (rest, nutrition, exercise). Sometimes we need medical attention and that is not an indication of failure. God created medicine!
- This passage also has very practical advice about spiritual self-care. Times of despair call for times of fasting, praying, and seeking God.
- This passage reminds us that though God is all-powerful, He generally speaks to us in the "gentle whisper" of His word and His Spirit. We need to get quiet enough to hear Him before He can reassure us of His love.
- After a time of healing, God calls us to get up and get back to His work.
- We can't go from mountaintop to mountaintop without going through valleys. When we're in those valleys we need to remember that God has a purpose for each of us and He's never 'slam dunked' us in the past.
- When we focus on His purpose instead of our predicament, we WILL have HOPE!
- As the gospel song says, "The God on the mountain is STILL God in the valley!"<sup>v</sup>

---

<sup>i</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (1 Ki 19:2–3). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>ii</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Jas 5:17). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>iii</sup> <https://genius.com/Children-songs-nobody-likes-me-guess-ill-go-eat-worms-lyrics>

<sup>iv</sup> THE WIERSBE BIBLE COMMENTARY: OLD TESTAMENT © 2007 Warren W. Wiersbe

<sup>v</sup> Title: God On The Mountain Written By: Tracey Dartt