

Elijah's Dejection
(1 Kgs 18-19)

1. The Thrill of Victory – 1 Kgs 18:41-46

A. Elijah has gone from three years of being fugitive to victorious reemergence among the people.

1. The prophets of Baal have been vanquished.
2. God's existence has been dramatically demonstrated before the people.
3. God answers his prayer for rain to fall again (cf. Jas 5:18).
4. God infuses him with miraculous energy to outrun Ahab back to Jezreel.

B. But life teaches us that the gloss and glitter of victory is often short-lived. Elijah's highest of highs is now to be followed by the lowest of lows. We must be especially careful when we have had great triumph, for we are very vulnerable.

2. The Agony of Defeat – 1 Kgs 19:1-10

A. Jezebel's wrath – 19:1-2. Like Pharaoh, she is hardened by the defeat of her gods. She still has enough resource, power to threaten Elijah.

B. Elijah's solution: Run! – 19:3-10. Not in fear but dejection.

1. To Beersheba, leaves servant, then a day into the desert (3-4). His prayer: *"It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers!"* After all Elijah has done, he feels like a failure. Life sometimes does this to us. He could not anticipate standing one day with Moses talking to God's Son!
2. Fed by angel twice/sleep – 19:5-7. Angel: *"... because the journey is too great for you."* God knows our limits and will supply what we need to get through the greatest challenges. On to Horeb (Mt. Sinai) – v 8. Elijah wanders through the same wilderness as Moses/Israel, 40 days instead of years. God cares for him.
3. In a cave; God inquires of Elijah's purposes in coming (9). Elijah's frame of mind: dejected, lonely, frustrated, indignant over sins of Israel. He feels failure.

C. We all have times of frustration and emptiness. Perhaps our children have disappointed us. Perhaps we feel others really don't care about God. Perhaps the world seems so strong in evil to make a difference. We can reach a state of exhaustion.

We want to get away from it all!

3. God's Measured Response – 1 Kgs 19:11-18

A. The still small voice (11-12).

1. Note that Moses and Elijah were on the same mountain beholding the glory of God (Sinai); they will later be together on the mount of transfiguration.
2. God displays the wonders of nature: wind, earthquake and fire – but He is not in them. Then, a gentle breeze, a delicate whisper.
3. The point: God does not always work via some grand display or glorious production. Elijah thought a public victory would vindicate him and God. Not so. *We must remember this!* God accomplishes most of His designs by people quietly going about their business of faithful service.

B. Elijah's continued complaint (13-14). Note the emphasis on "I." Elijah is too self-absorbed. He has forgotten that God is in control; he seems to feel that God has not vindicated Himself properly or supported Elijah in his efforts. He has also forgotten about Obadiah, who had faithfully hidden the prophets.

C. Time to work (15-18). God has given Elijah time, food, vent – he now needs to *distract himself from himself* by work and purpose.

1. In anointing Hazael and Jehu (which Elijah did not do *personally*, but via Elisha), God is preparing for Israel's punishment and especially Ahab's house.
2. In the anointing of Elisha (16) God is acknowledging that Elijah's life is indeed winding down and God will take him in His own time. But He will not leave the people without spiritual leadership.
3. *One final reminder: "Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him" (18). **God** is in control, not us. He does not need us; we merely work with Him. This sense of spiritual loneliness can easily become pride and self-righteousness. No one serves God **like me**. We must be careful not to become despondent.*

Conclusion: Truly Elijah was "*a man with a nature like ours*" (5:17). He did not find it easy to serve God, but he committed himself to the work God assigned him. He stood up to kings, rejected idolatry, praised and honored God in all. And God cared for him, as He will for us.