

**1st Kings 19: 7-14 – “The Still Small Voice of God”, Message # 10 in the series –
“Lessons from the Life of Elijah”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
August 8th, 2021, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

How did God minister to Elijah when he became discouraged and fled from Jezebel? How does he minister to us today? Let's see how He did this with Elijah, and then apply it to ourselves who are living in New Testament times. 1st of all, God ministered to Elijah through the strength of physical food. 2nd – He ministered to him through showing him acts of power which do not change the heart. And 3rd – He ministered to him through speaking to him in a still small voice. I want you to see that God still ministers to His people in these same ways today.

1st of all – God ministered to Elijah through the strength of physical food and by asking Him a pertinent question. (verses 9 and 10)

“And the angel of the Lord came back the second time, and touched him, and said, ‘Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.’ “So he arose and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.” We have seen in our past study of Elijah's life, that he was mightily used by God to confront the prophets of Baal. He called down fire from heaven when He prayed to God. And they couldn't do a thing to prove that their god was real or living. Afterwards, Elijah thought that Jezebel and Ahab would repent and use their authority to destroy the false worship of Baal. But, it was just the opposite! Jezebel sought his life. And so, the man who had been fearless in the confrontation with 450 false prophets, now fled at the voice of the queen.

Ah, outward results do not change hearts necessarily; not unless God would have it so. Elijah went a day's journey into the wilderness and he came and he sat down under a juniper tree, it says in verse 4. And he prayed that he might die. “It is enough!”, he said. Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers! So Elijah was discouraged. And we must ask – What caused this discouragement? I wonder if you understand that sometimes when a person hasn't eaten a good meal for some time, or he hasn't been able to get enough sleep, that it can lead to discouragement? Perhaps he forgot to pray and hold communion with God in his heart.

Perhaps he forgot that it was God who gave him the ability to have the spiritual and bodily strength to accomplish the things that he did. And so God sent an angel to talk to him and give him some food. He built a fire and he baked a cake on the coals. He placed a jar of water near Elijah. It was because of this food, made up by this angel, that Elijah was able to go on the strength of it for forty days and nights, as far as Horeb the mountain of God. Yes, we see that. But still the principle is true for us as well; not only for a minister of the word, but also for all Christians. Look with me at 1st Timothy 4: 16. “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine.” “Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.”

Now, when Paul tells Timothy to take heed to himself, he surely means that he should take heed to his spiritual life, his doctrine and his works in relation to Biblical truth. But I think that we can also reasonably conclude that he is implying here, that he needed to take heed to the state of his physical strength; that is, the strength of his physical body. At any given time, a person needs to reflect upon whether they are adequately providing for the needs of their body; both food and sleep. And they must consciously seek to find rest for both soul and body. I want you to see that God wasn't going to let Elijah fail physically at this time. He was going to lift him up and strengthen him. He was also going to teach him how he should take heed to himself.

You and I need to take heed that we do not get run down and thus become ineffective in the Lord's work. But let us take notice of the fact that there was a very tangible reason that Elijah had become weak in his body and his spirit. In verse 9 it says that he went into a cave, and he spent the night there at Mt. Horeb. And behold the word of the Lord came to him, and He said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’ And Elijah said – I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed

Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life. This was the reason for Elijah's discouragement. This was why he fled. And we should therefore ask ourselves whether this might be the reason for our own discouragement in some situations? Discouragement in the work of the Lord is something that can happen to the most godly of people. But we need to understand and remember that God is the best of teachers, and He is the best of friends to His people, if they will only know it; if they will only believe it.

Turn with me over to Psalm 103, verses 11-14 – “For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.” “As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear Him.” “For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.” Now, perhaps you have not seen the results that you were looking for, from the most zealous of your actions. But will you not believe that God still loves you as His child? He has forgiven you of all of your sins! He has removed them as far as the east is from the west. He pities you. He remembers that you are but dust. You are strengthened by taking heed to what He would teach you.

God knows that you may have some sinful weaknesses and even sins of infirmity; sins of weakness which you want to deal with. He knows that the way that you will deal with them is by seeing His strength to give you wisdom and grace and power to turn away from all sins and to pursue righteousness. You should remember that His mercy is as great and high as the heavens. Perhaps you are discouraged for the same reason that Elijah was discouraged. You have worked hard to communicate the truth of the Bible to people around you, and they not only have not received it, but they believe that you are foolish to believe the way that you do. They will not only not receive the truth, but they are now speaking against you, the person who has cared for them.

It may be possible that you have fallen into a subtle form of self-justifying pride and unbelief. You may think – If I have done these zealous things, then why doesn't God hear my prayers and honor the efforts that I have put forth? Why doesn't He grant the results that I am looking for? Elijah thought that things should have worked out in the way that he had expected; that the king and queen of Israel would repent. And they did not. And why not? One of the reasons, behind the scenes, was that God wanted to show Elijah His ways and purposes; both with individual people and with nations, that they were higher than his.

It is not anything that we can do that can change the hearts of people around us. We can preach and we should, and we can pray, and we should, but the results are always what the Lord purposes when all is said and done. The most important thing for you to do, dear Christian, is to strive to be faithful to God and to be faithful to the end. Live your life by faith in Him in this regard. Will you not remember that it is God's purpose to teach you His ways, and in teaching you His ways, He would have you to rejoice because of the greatness of the grace and power that He gives to you, to live the Christian life and to face oppositions of various sorts. Matthew 5, verses 11-13. “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.” “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?” “It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”

But Elijah could not rejoice, when the results were not so good. These people did not repent, and even worse, they went on to perpetrate more sins of false worship. And some of them were still thinking that they wanted to kill him. When Elijah saw this, he temporarily gave up trying; he began to lean upon his own understanding. This was something that was not from the Spirit. It was from his flesh. And God knew it. God knew that Elijah should have been rejoicing. And He knew that if he remained in that state that he would be like salt which had lost its savor. But Elijah and all of God's dear people who desire to do His will at every point, God will care for them. He will strengthen them. He will encourage them. But there was a further lesson that Elijah had to learn.

And so we see 2^{ndly}, that God ministered to Elijah through showing him physical acts of His power which do not change the heart. (verse 11)

God knew that He was going to have to teach Elijah something more of His ways in order to pull him up out of this discouragement, so that he would not lean upon his own understanding in this matter. In verse 9 God asks him – Elijah, what are you doing here? He was saying in effect – Elijah, is it right for you to be in this state of mind, and to be in this place so far away from where you should be? Should you, a man who has been so zealous for Me, find himself having to run away to this mountain to seek the answers that you need to your questions? What are you doing here? Why do you think that you have to leave off doing what I have called you to do? Sometimes God will speak to our hearts, as Christians, in the same way.

Is it right for you to be discouraged? Is it right that you are disappointed in Me because things have not turned out the way that you wanted them to? Perhaps you and I need to remind ourselves that God is able to change any situation and make it better. And so, God told him to go out and stand on the mountain before Him. And it says that the Lord passed by him, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and it broke the rocks in pieces before the Lord. But, it says, the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And then after the earthquake a fire, it says. But the Lord was not in the fire. But after the fire, Elijah heard a still small voice.”

And it says that when Elijah heard this still small voice, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and he went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And suddenly, once again a voice came to him, and said to him – What are you doing here, Elijah? And this was his answer. He said, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword.’ “I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.” How does the Lord respond to these statements? He shows him His acts of power. The Lord tells Elijah to go out and stand on the mountain before Him. And as the Lord passed by him, He caused a great and strong wind to tear into the mountains and break the rocks in pieces before the Lord.

Now, I want you to notice that it says in verses 11 and 12 that the Lord was not “in” the wind. Neither was He “in” the earthquake. Neither was He “in” the fire. Now what does this mean? I believe that it simply means that the Lord was not “in” these acts of power in order to effect a change in any person’s heart by their display. These acts did not change Elijah’s heart. He saw God’s power displayed, but he still felt the same way – Disappointed and discouraged. And these acts of power took place “before” the Lord; that is, according to His sovereign will and power. But still, God did not choose to use them to effect any other result than that they were acts great acts of His power. He had not purposed any further effect to be made by them. They showed forth the majesty of His holiness and the greatness of His power in accordance with His will, but they could not change a single heart unless He willed for it to be so.

I want to show you, in this regard, that these acts of power show us the difference between the law and the gospel. The law was given here in this same mountain; Mount Horeb, which is the same as Mt. Sinai. Here, you will remember, God revealed Himself to Moses in a bush which was burning and it was not consumed. Here the Ten Commandments were later given to Moses, and God caused the earth to tremble. And it was here that He demonstrated thunderings, and lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking. And the people did not want the Lord to speak to them directly. (Exodus 20: 19) And Moses said to the people, ‘Do not fear; for God has come to test you, and that His fear may be before you, so that you may not sin.’”

But what we find confirmed for us here, is that not one heart can be changed by the law. The law demonstrates God’s majestic holiness and His righteous expectations. He can justly punish unbelieving men for their sins, their failures, and their short-comings. But He can also save people through His word which is as a hammer to break the hard heart. And He can make His words in the heart of His prophet to be like a burning fire. He can make His words in the mouth of His

prophet to be like a fire which will change disobedient people. And He can also make the wind blow where it wishes, and so it will be for everyone who is born of the Spirit. The simple demonstration of power cannot save, but the gospel will, by the working of His Spirit.

3rd – God ministered to Elijah through speaking to him in a still small voice.

In verse 12b of our text, we find that it says – “After the fire came a still small voice”. In other words, the Lord was “in” the still, small voice”. For, we see that when Elijah heard this still small voice, he wrapped his face in his mantle and he went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. He wanted to know what God thought. And it seems now, he was no longer afraid to listen to what God would say to him. By this still small voice, God was saying to Elijah – I will change your heart, I will change your mind; through my dealing with you gently, and not by simply forcing you to the right conclusion.

This is what God always does when He saves a soul. But this is also what He does when He wants to convince one of His people that His way of doing things is always right. I hope that you will understand that God can act in this wonderful way because of Christ. He can deal gently with His people when they are trusting in Jesus. He can not only forgive the sin of unbelief, but He can also speak peace to His people; telling them that He will teach them. He will lead them and He will guide them. As David says in Psalm 18: 35 – “You have given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great.” “You enlarged my path under me, so my feet did not slip.” This is what He was doing for Elijah.

He was speaking peace to his heart by His still small voice. He was whispering peace to him, and He was calming him in regard to all of his fleshly discouragements and disappointments. What He would teach Elijah, Elijah would now receive. Let me ask you now, whether you will you receive the counsel of God’s still small voice? If you will, it will bring you true joy. You see this in the wording of Psalm 89: 15-18. “Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound!” “They walk, O LORD, in the light of Your countenance.” “In Your name they rejoice all day long, and in Your righteousness they are exalted.” “For You are the glory of their strength, and in Your favor our horn is exalted.” “For our shield belongs to the LORD (KJV – The Lord is our Defense), and our king to the Holy One of Israel.” (KJV – The Holy One of Israel is our king)

These verses picture so well what Elijah needed to know and to remember. And it is what we ourselves need to know and remember. When you go through discouragement, remember that the Lord sees you as you really are. He sees what you really need. He would have you remember that He has a mighty arm, and strong is His hand, and high is His right hand. He has the power to all things. And yet He is also righteous and just in all of His ways. He rules over everything perfectly. He rules over everything righteously, and He knows how to rule well. Mercy and truth go before His face.

Isn’t that good? That is how He is with His people. And that is why it says – “Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound, O Lord, they walk in the light of Your countenance. That is, God’s countenance of favor is upon them, and His blessing is upon them for Jesus sake. It was for the sake of all that Christ has done, that God could show great mercy to Elijah, in dealing so gently with him. When Elijah was at his lowest point, when his faith was almost non-existent, God could minister to him. He would have him walk in the light of His countenance, rejoicing all day long. He would have him know, and He would have us to know, that it is in Christ’s righteousness, that we are exalted.

It is Christ who is the glory of our strength. That is, it is by God’s favor that our horn is exalted. It is by His favor that we are lifted up, and made strong, and we are brought out of our discouragements. The Lord is defending us. Verse 18 says – “For our shield belongs to the Lord, and our king to the Holy one of Israel.” Now, that is really something to take heart at; when you realize that it is the Lord who is the One who will be your shield at the time of your greatest discouragements.

