

Singin' The Mt. Horeb Blues.

INTRODUCTION:

Think You Are Having A Bad Day?

The average cost of rehabilitating a seal after the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Alaska was \$8,000. At a special ceremony, two of the most expensively saved animals were released back into the wild amid cheers and applause from onlookers. A minute later, in full view, a killer whale ate them both.

A woman came home to find her husband in the kitchen, shaking frantically with what looked like a wire running from his waist towards the electric kettle. Intending to jolt him away from the deadly current she whacked him with a handy plank of wood by the back door, breaking his arm in two places. Until that moment he had been happily listening to his Walkman.

Two animal rights protesters were protesting at the cruelty of sending pigs to a slaughterhouse in Bonn Germany. Suddenly the pigs, all two thousand of them, escaped through a broken fence and stampeded, trampling the two hapless protesters to death.

And finally.....

Iraqi terrorist, Khay Rahnajet, didn't pay enough postage on a letter bomb. It came back with "return to sender" stamped on it. Forgetting it was the bomb, he opened it and was blown to bits.

Discouragement: We've all battled it at one time or another.

One of England's finest preachers was C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892). Frequently during his ministry he was plunged into severe depression, due in part to gout but also for other reasons. In a biography of the "prince of preachers", Arnold Dallimore wrote, "What he suffered in those times of darkness we may not know...even his desperate calling on God brought no relief. *'There are dungeons'*, he said, *'beneath the castles of despair.'*"

How do we handle those situations when it seems like hope is lost?

Passage: I Kings 19:1-18

I) ELIJAH WAS DISCOURAGED.

A) He was under attack.

- 1) *Vs. 1-2, "Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 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."*
- 2) **His obedience to God had brought intense warfare.**
 - a) He had confronted the false prophets on Mt Carmel.

- a) 900 prophets
 - † 450 Baal
 - † 450 Asherah
- b) He prayed and God sent fire down.
- b) He had destroyed the false prophets.
 - a) He had the false prophets put to death.
 - b) The people supported him in this.
- c) Jezebel had determined to kill him
 - a) She ignored the demonstration of God's power.
 - b) Instead of repenting, it merely fueled her anger.
- 3) Satan fights hardest when God is working the greatest.**
 - a) Spiritual warfare often manifests itself physically.
 - a) He fights through actions and attitudes of others.
 - b) He fights through circumstances.
 - c) He fights through thoughts and emotions.
 - b) *Ephesians 6:12, "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."*
- 4) We don't determine the battle.**
 - a) We can't help what others do
 - i) Whether or not someone else obeys God ultimately has nothing to do with you.
 - b) We often can't control our circumstances.
 - i) You can choose how to respond to those circumstances.
 - c) We can't control our emotions.
 - a) We can influence them.
 - † What we fill our minds with.
 - † Who we associate with.
 - † What we dwell on.

B) He began to feel sorry for himself.

- 1) *Vs. 3-4, "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.""*
 - a) Can't you hear the devil taunting him?
 - † "Some servant of God you are!"
 - † "After all God has done – and you run from some wicked woman!"
 - † "And you call yourself a prophet of God!"
 - † "You'd be better off if God just took you on to heaven!"
- 2) Emotions in themselves are not sin.**
 - a) Jesus demonstrated many emotions.
 - † Anger – The money changers in the temple.
 - † Grief – At Lazarus' tomb.
 - † Discouragement – The multitudes left him. He turned to the disciples and said, "Will you too, leave me.?"
- 3) Sin derives when our emotions influence us to act in a way that is displeasing to God or contrary to God's will.**
 - a) We begin to focus on ourselves.

- a) "Poor me."
- b) "Look what has been done to me."
- c) "I don't deserve this."
- b) When your eyes are on yourself, they cannot be on God.
- c) Selfishness is the root of all sin.

C) He started to complain.

- 1) *Vs. 10, "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.'"*
- 2) **Complaining is futile.**
 - a) It does not change the situation.
 - b) It adds fuel to the fire of negativity.
 - c) Again, the focus is on self.
 - d) It is a tool of the enemy.
 - e) It offends God.
 - a) It is an attempt to justify your bad attitude.
 - b) It is an attempt to cover up your lack of faith.

II) ELIJAH WAS WEAK.

A) He was tired.

- 1) *Vs. 5, "Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep."*
- 2) **He needed rest.**
 - a) He had been engaged in intense ministry – fighting false prophets.
- 3) **We have to take time to sharpen our axe.**
 - a) Pastor friends of mine that have no time for anything but church work.
 - a) It is a good way to burn out.
 - b) It is a sign that you are trying to operate on your own strength.

B) He was hungry.

- 1) **After running for his life, he had gone a day's journey into the desert without food.**
- 2) **We need daily spiritual food.**
 - a) We don't provide that – God does.
 - i) If we don't let Him strengthen us, why are we surprised when we fail?

C) He was a prime target for the enemy.

- 1) **Satan looks for any opportunity to attack.**

III) ELIJAH WAS WHERE GOD WANTED HIM.

A) He was alone.

- 1) **God's desire is for us to trust fully in Him.**
 - a) He will remove anything that keeps us from doing that.
 - a) Sometimes we don't realize that **He is all we need** until **He is all we have**.
- 2) **God's desire is for us to intimately know Him.**
 - a) Sometimes God wants to get us alone so He can reveal Himself more fully.
 - b) We don't really know ourselves until we walked with God in isolation.

B) He was quiet.

- 1) *Vs. 12b-13, "...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."*
- 2) **God speaks to those who listen.**
 - a) Sometimes God has to shut us up before we will hear His voice.
 - b) **ILL:** A woman went to Andrew Murray with the problem of feeling she couldn't pray. He said, *"Why then, do you not try this? As you go to your inner chamber, however cold and dark your heart may be, do not try in your own might to force yourself into the right attitude. Bow before Him, and tell Him that He sees in what a sad state you are, and that your only hope is in Him. Trust Him, with a childlike trust, to have mercy upon you, and wait upon Him. In such a trust you are in a right relationship to Him. You have nothing -- He has everything."*

C) He was focused.

- 1) **He was listening and looking for God.**
- 2) **God's reality is often different from perceived reality.**
 - a) The Disciple's perceived reality – "The storm is going to kill us!" / God's reality – "I am here. Peace. Be still."
 - b) Daniel's perceived reality – "These lions are going to eat me!" / God's reality – "I am here. They aren't hungry."
 - c) Elijah's Perceived reality – "I am alone." / God's reality – I'm with you, as well as 7000 others."
 - i) *Vs. 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.""*
- 3) With God, all things are possible.
 - a) *Matthew 19:26, "Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.""*

IV) GOD WAS FAITHFUL

A) God Gave Direction.

- 1) *Vs. 15, "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."*
- 2) **God's is able to give clear directions.**
 - a) If you don't know what to do, seek God and wait until He makes it clear.
 - b) *1 Corinthians 14:33, "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace..."*

B) God Gave Encouragement.

- 1) *Vs. 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.""*
- 2) **Elijah would have missed this if he had not had this time with God.**

C) God Gave Victory.

- 1) *2 Kings 9:30-37, "Now when Jehu had come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she put paint on her eyes and adorned her head, and looked through a window. ³¹ Then, as Jehu entered at the gate, she said, "Is it peace, Zimri, murderer of your master?" ³² And he looked up at the window, and said, "Who is on my side? Who?" So two or three eunuchs looked out at him. ³³ Then he said, "Throw her down." So they threw her down, and some of her blood splattered on the wall and on the horses; and he*

trampled her underfoot.³⁴ And when he had gone in, he ate and drank. Then he said, "Go now, see to this accursed woman, and bury her, for she was a king's daughter."³⁵ So they went to bury her, but they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands.³⁶ Therefore they came back and told him. And he said, "This is the word of the LORD, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "On the plot of ground at Jezreel dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel;³⁷ and the corpse of Jezebel shall be as refuse on the surface of the field, in the plot at Jezreel, so that they shall not say, "Here lies Jezebel."'"

2) The Battle is the Lord's

a) Too often, our discouragement comes from trying to fight God's battles.

3) He will fight it if we let Him.

CONCLUSION:

William Ward. - *"Discouragement is dissatisfaction with the past, distaste for the present, and distrust of the future. It is ingratitude for the blessings of yesterday, indifference to the opportunities of today, and insecurity regarding strength for tomorrow. It is unawareness of the presence of beauty, unconcern for the needs of our fellowman, and unbelief in the promises of old. It is impatience with time, immaturity of thought, and impoliteness to God."*

*Where our Captain bids us go,
'Tis not ours to murmur no;
He that gives the sword and shield
Chooses too the battlefield*

Trust in what God is doing.

Wait on Him to do what He needs to do.

Rest in Him.

Be content in Him.

HOME COMING

There's a story about an elderly missionary returning to the United States to retire. He and his wife had spent over 40 years serving in Africa. But now he was alone. His wife and two children had long since found their final resting place in the soil of Africa. As he got off the plane he saw a great crowd of people waiting at the gate. Some were holding signs, others were waving banners, and he could even hear sounds of music above the shouting voices. For a few seconds he thought, "Can it be? After more than 40 years of service, all of these people have actually come out to welcome me home?"

But no, that was not the case. On his plane was a politician returning from a visit to Africa. During his visit he had been catered to, waited upon, and all his needs had been met. And now he was being welcomed back with all the ceremony his nation could provide.

As the missionary waited & waited at the airport, the contrast was almost more than he could bear. For a moment he began feeling sorry for himself, and started to pray. *"Father in Heaven, why? I've served You faithfully for so long, and look. I don't expect much. But is it wrong to desire that there be some kind of a welcome home?"*

Then, almost as if God had spoken out loud, the old missionary heard Him say, *"But my son, you're not home yet."*