

# Portraits of a Prophet 8

11.5.23

1 Kings 18:40–19:10 (CSB)

<sup>40</sup>Then Elijah ordered them, "Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let even one of them escape." So they seized them, and Elijah brought them down to the Wadi Kishon and slaughtered them there. <sup>41</sup>Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a rainstorm."

<sup>42</sup>So Ahab went to eat and drink, but Elijah went up to the summit of Carmel. He bent down on the ground and put his face between his knees.

<sup>43</sup>Then he said to his servant, "Go up and look toward the sea."

So he went up, looked, and said, "There's nothing."

Seven times Elijah said, "Go back."

<sup>44</sup>On the seventh time, he reported, "There's a cloud as small as a man's hand coming up from the sea."

Then Elijah said, "Go and tell Ahab, 'Get your chariot ready and go down so the rain doesn't stop you.' "

<sup>45</sup>In a little while, the sky grew dark with clouds and wind, and there was a downpour. So Ahab got in his chariot and went to Jezreel. <sup>46</sup>The power of the LORD was on Elijah, and he tucked his mantle under his belt and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

**ELIJAH'S JOURNEY TO HOREB**

**19** Ahab told Jezebel everything that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup>So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "May the gods punish me and do so severely if I don't make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow!"

<sup>3</sup>Then Elijah became afraid<sup>7</sup> and immediately ran for his life. When he came to Beer-sheba that belonged to Judah, he left his servant there, <sup>4</sup>but he went on a day's journey into the wilderness. He sat down under a broom tree and prayed that he might die. He said, "I have had enough! LORD, take my life, for I'm no better than my ancestors." <sup>5</sup>Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree.

Suddenly, an angel touched him. The angel told him, "Get up and eat."<sup>6</sup> Then he looked, and there at his head was a loaf of bread baked over hot stones, and a jug of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again.<sup>7</sup> Then the angel of the LORD returned for a second time and touched him. He said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too much for you."<sup>8</sup> So he got up, ate, and drank. Then on the strength from that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.<sup>9</sup> He entered a cave there and spent the night.

Suddenly, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

1 Kings 19:10 (CSB)

<sup>10</sup>He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of Armies, but the Israelites have abandoned your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are looking for me to take my life."

### Introduction to Text:

#### A. The fire of God has fallen.

1. The altar, the sacrifice, the stones, and the water all disappear in a moment of God's glory.
2. Where Baal had failed to deliver, the God of Israel exceeded expectations.

#### B. A lot of preparation had taken place before this moment.

1. Before the fire fell, the people had to return to God.
2. The Altar was restored, promises remembered, sacrifices made, and offerings given.
3. I can only imagine what it must have been like to experience God's divine fire.

#### C. The immediate response of God's people was the declaration that God was who He claimed to be.

1. For a few moments at least, there were no unbelievers or doubters.
2. All who had seen the fire and felt the flame knew that God had declared HIS presence and power.
3. As I prepared for this series of sermons, I came across some incredibly smart Bible scholars who don't believe this story actually happened.
  - a. Some say that this was nothing more than a legend told by later Jews.
  - b. Others said that IF Elijah was real, then he had somehow used naphtha gas,<sup>i</sup> which was common from oil deposits, instead of water and had tricked the people.
  - c. It amazes me how far people will go to explain away the reality of God.
4. There are always doubters of the miraculous.
  - a. Some see but do not believe.
  - b. Some hear but do not understand.
  - c. Many Christians doubt the miraculous power of God.
5. Elijah certainly believed in God's power.

## 1. Elijah takes part in Three victories after the fire falls.

### A. First, the prophets of Baal are killed.

1. This may seem to be weird, but the original audience wasn't surprised.
  - a. False prophets were killed.
  - b. This seems crazy and cruel, and I'm glad we don't do that today.
  - c. But if Baal had proven right, Elijah would have been killed.

2. In that day and time, the corrupting voices of the false prophets couldn't be left to sow confusion.

a. They had influenced the Israelite leadership and people to follow false gods.

b. That idolatry resulted in a great tragedy among people that God loved.

c. They couldn't be allowed to remain.

3. What about our day?

a. Are there not plenty of voices leading people astray?

b. Of course there are, so why doesn't God do something?

c. The answer to that is God is doing something.

d. As we look at the wrath and judgment that is to come, Scripture shows us that God deals with those who cause people to stumble, fall, and lead astray.

4. The same God who didn't tolerate false prophecies, lying, and deceit in Elijah's day still does not tolerate false prophecy today.

B. The next victory is the relief of the drought.

1. The Fire wasn't the main attraction!

a. The fire from heaven was the initial evidence that God was real and in control.

b. The same God that can send down fire from heaven is the same that can hold back the rains or send the rains at His command.

2. Now, it is time for Elijah to go up to the top of the mountain and begin to pray for rain.

a. This wasn't on Elijah's initiative.

b. Elijah didn't conjure this, manifest this, or declare this on his own.

c. He prayed in response to what God had said He was going to do.

d. He prayed, in faith, for the rain.

**e. Even though God had promised this, Elijah still had to pray and accept God's word by faith.**

3. **To pray in faith means:**

a. **God is Good**

b. **God is faithful**

c. **God keeps His Word**

4. If God isn't good, then we cannot depend upon His character.

a. If God isn't good, then God isn't faithful and can lie, cheat, steal, or change regardless of what He has said or promised.

b. If God isn't good and isn't faithful, then He won't be faithful to His Word.

c. The ancients expected their gods, like Baal, to lie, cheat, steal, and rape

d. But Elijah knew that God was good and faithful to his word.

a. Elijah may not always remember this truth, but he knew it in this moment,

b. So he prays for rain, according to God's Word.

C. Lastly, after the promise of rain is seen in the sky, Elijah outruns the chariot of King Ahab.

1. The ancient kings actually had runners that would run before the chariots as a kind of advanced guard.

2. But here, we see supernatural empowerment as the older, mature prophet outruns the horses, the professionals, and everyone else to arrive back at Jezreel first.

## 2. Then comes the crash.

**19:1** Ahab told Jezebel everything that Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup>So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "May the gods punish me and do so severely if I don't make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow!" <sup>3</sup>Then Elijah became afraid, and immediately ran for his life. When he came to Beer-sheba that belonged to Judah, he left his servant there, <sup>4</sup>but he went on a day's journey into the wilderness. He sat down under a broom tree and prayed that he might die.

A. When we read biblical stories, we don't expect this kind of response.

1. If we wrote the story, Elijah would march into the palace and deal with Ahab and Jezebel.

2. What happens next, in my mind, is some combination of the movies *Princesses Bride* and *Tombstone*.

a. "My name is Elijah the Prophet; you killed my people, prepare to die."

b. Jezebel counters with, "You and what army?"

c. Hebrew אני האקלברי שלך

d. Elijah, in Hebrew, of course, says, "I'm your huckleberry," and then she dies.

3. But that isn't how it happens.

B. Instead, the Man of God hears the threats, takes them to heart, and panics.

1. Before we are too hard on Elijah, this response is normal to humanity.

2. We are most vulnerable after great victories.

3. We are hungry, exhausted, and vulnerable.

a. Elijah is exhausted physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

b. And this threat from Jezebel was more than he could handle.

C. **Historically, men and women of God struggle the most after great spiritual victories.**

1. Locally, pastors and preachers are exhausted on Sunday afternoon, and many want to quit on Monday because they are spiritually and emotionally drained.

2. Globally, the leaders of great revivals often struggle after the great moves of God.

a. William Seymour, Evan Roberts, and countless others struggled after the spiritual victories they encountered.

b. Many of you have heard of the Brownsville revival.

1. One of my professors was the pastor who came after the revival ended.

2. In 2012, he did an article with Charisma magazine detailing the aftermath.

3. After the greatest revival in American history, The church owed 11.5 million dollars after the revival, and many of the buildings were exhausted, not to mention the people.<sup>1</sup>

3. Biblically, great men like Moses, David, and Elijah struggled after their greatest victories.

a. Moses gripes and complains.

b. After David's most successful season of life, he has an affair.

c. Elijah runs away and wants to die.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.charismanews.com/us/33270-brownsville-revival-church-in-debt-struggling-to-survive>

4. And I know that for many in this room, you were prepared for the battles but not for the aftermath.

- a. You've been battling, winning, and overcoming.
- b. You've been standing your ground.
- c. And then, what feels like out of nowhere, you struggle...hard.

D. The solution, as we will talk about more next week, is God's Divine Peace/rest, Divine Provision, and Divine Presence.

1. Today, I want to share with you three lies Elijah believed that made Elijah's exhaustion almost deadly.

2. Before I address these three lies Elijah believed, I want to share what I am sensing about our church and why I believe this message is very timely.

- a. From my perspective, here is what I see as your pastor.
- b. Since August of 2022, this church has seen some wonderful wins and victories.

1. We paid off all the property and debt a year ago.

2. Starting last August, we saw over 200 people in average attendance for months at a time.

3. For many months, we witnessed a strong move of the Spirit and an incredible response among teenagers and adults in the altars.

4. In the background, we were hearing stories of families being mended, addictions broken, and financial miracles.

5. And I'm thankful for what God has done, and I'm proud of you for the spiritual growth I have seen in so many of you.

- c. I am also sensing that this amazing season has given way to a season of weariness, struggle and distraction.



1. Perhaps Julie and I felt it first, which is why we hit the pause button and took time away.

a. We didn't want our exhaustion and weariness to become deadly to our marriage or our ministry.

b. May be you have entered into a season where:

1. It seems your prayers are going nowhere.

2. The desire and fire you had is not there.

3. It feels as if you are under constant spiritual attack, and you are becoming weary, worn, and weak.

2. What did Elijah feel after his intense time of spiritual warfare?

a. Remember, this did not begin the day before at the altars.

b. This spiritual warfare had been constant for three and a half years.

3. What does it feel like to win spiritual battles and engage in spiritual warfare?

#1. Elijah felt Exhausted

a. Physical exhaustion is probably the easiest to deal with.

b. A day off and some sleep might fix that.

c. But the spiritual, emotional, and mental exhaustion is hard to shake.

d. That feeling is what led Elijah to despair.

#2. Elijah felt Frustrated

a. He had been part of all of these great victories, but now a threat sends him off the edge.

b. Elijah is frustrated at God and himself for being in this situation.

### #3. Elijah felt Scared

a. The reality was that Jezebel didn't have to announce her desire to kill Elijah.

b. She could have just as easily ordered him assassinated and be done.

c. But she wanted to intimidate him and ruin his reputation, and she succeeded for a time.

d. The Enemy loves to work through intimidation.

### #4. Elijah felt Isolated

a. Elijah felt alone and exposed.

b. And that feeling led him to want to escape and hide.

### #5. Disappointed.

a. Don't you think Elijah dreamed of the day he would pray again and see it rain?

b. He probably dreamed of feeling the water flow down his head and face.

c. Maybe he pictured the kids playing in mud puddles and the women putting clothes out on the line to be washed.

d. But no, instead of enjoying the victory, he ran in fear, dread, exhaustion, and frustration.

Although many of these feelings are normal and expected, I see three lies that Elijah believed that made these feelings worse and potentially deadly.

## 4. Three lies Elijah believed that led to his burnout:

### #1. Jezebel was mightier than God.

a. When we are tired or overwhelmed, it is easy to forget what God has just done.

1. All through the Gospels, we see the disciples do the same thing.

2. One moment, they see a miracle, and the next moment they are doubting that Jesus can save them.

b. One thing we can do is to prepare ourselves for the aftermath of battle.

1. Consider this example: You are gaining victory over a life-controlling addiction.

1. You are also going to church.

2. You are reading your Bible.

2. Then, one week, it all seems to come apart.

3. And you lapse, your streak of Bible reading is broken, and everything feels hard.

c. A few ways to prepare for yourself AFTER spiritual warfare and victories:

1. Don't neglect prayer, worship, and fasting.

a. The very practices that sustained you through the fight will carry you through the aftermath.

b. The Spiritual Disciplines are lifelines in good and bad times.

c. And, at times, they will feel like a discipline when you don't want to pray, worship, read Scripture, or fast.

d. But don't neglect these essential elements.

2. Don't forget the Lord's Sabbath.

a. We were not created to run all day, every day, for an unlimited amount of time.

b. We were created for rhythms of working, resting, feasting, and celebrating.

c. So don't neglect time celebrating, enjoying, and sleeping.

d. Don't feel ashamed when you take a nap, because Jesus napped.

d. Don't make altars for Jezebels.

1. Because altars are places of reflection, celebration, and encounter, it makes sense that you and I should only reflect, celebrate, and encounter God and what he has done.

2. So why is it that, after God has given us a victory, we so easily spend our time thinking about all that went wrong or is wrong instead of worshipping the God who gives us victory?

a. Why is it that many of us can't tell you what went right this week, but we can replay everything that went wrong?

b. We remember and memorialize our defeats and mistakes instead of remembering and meditating upon the victories.

e. I'm afraid that, in our text, Elijah quickly forgot what God had done.

1. He forgot that the same God that brought down fire could control Jezebel.

2. Or the God who was sending rain could quiet his enemies.

3. Or the God who fed him from ravens and widows could ensure his safety once again.

4. No, he quickly forgot what God had done and believed that Jezebel was stronger than God.

5. When we are tired, we forget what is possible with God.

## **#2. Elijah believed he could not escape the past.**

Vs. 4 He sat down under a broom tree and prayed that he might die. He said, "I have had enough! LORD, take my life, for I'm no better than my ancestors."

a. Maybe Elijah was thinking of Jonah, who had asked to die instead of prophesying to Nineveh.

1. Maybe Elijah was thinking of his heritage, a heritage of people that, in spite of God's miraculous signs and wonders, was unable to complete what God had for them.

2. Regardless, Elijah felt trapped by the inadequacy and failures of his ancestors.

3. This thinking led Elijah to focus on his inefficiency instead of God's power.

b. **When we believe the lie that everything depends on us, we set ourselves up for a crash.**

1. It is good for us to view ourselves with a godly perspective.

2. Without God's help, we are no better than our ancestors.

3. Without God's help, we are all prone to sin and failure.

4. But thankfully, through Jesus, we can be empowered and strengthened and overcome the pull of our past and family dynamics.

c. Are you giving your past too much of a hold?

1. Are you forgetting what God is doing?

2. Are you believing the lie that you cannot escape your past?

## **#3. He believed he was the only one.**

## 1 Kings 19:10 (CSB)

<sup>10</sup>He replied, "I have been very zealous for the LORD God of Armies, but the Israelites have abandoned your covenant, torn down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are looking for me to take my life."

a. Elijah believed everything depended upon him and that he was the only one who was faithful.

1. This wasn't true, as God had preserved 7,000 who had not worshipped Baal.

2. But when you are in the middle, it easily feels like you are the only one.

b. Elijah even went a step further and isolated himself even more by dismissing his servant for a time.

1. This servant has been in the background the whole time.

2. He has been faithful and diligent, but Elijah goes off alone.

c. Solitude is healthy and needed, but isolation is dangerous.

1. We need family, both blood and church, to make it.

2. Too often, I have seen people struggle and walk away from the very people they need.

3. But this doesn't have to be you,

Prayer: A time of strengthening, empowering, and renewal.

A. As we enter into a time of prayer, I want to pray for you:

a. I want you to be strengthened, empowered, and renewed.

b. I want to read two scriptures over you and then pray.

c. And if you are need of a strength, empowerment, and renewal, I want to invite you to come to the altar.

## 2 Corinthians 4:16–18 (CSB)

<sup>16</sup>Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup>For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. <sup>18</sup>So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

Psalm 103:1-5 (CSB)

<sup>1</sup>My soul, bless the LORD,  
and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

<sup>2</sup>My soul, bless the LORD,  
and do not forget all his benefits.

<sup>3</sup>He forgives all your iniquity;  
he heals all your diseases.

<sup>4</sup>He redeems your life from the Pit;  
he crowns you with faithful love and compassion.

<sup>5</sup>He satisfies you with good things;  
your youth is renewed like the eagle.

PRAYER.

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<sup>i</sup> The book of [II Maccabees](#) (2nd cent. BC) tells how a "thick water" was put on a sacrifice at the time of [Nehemiah](#) and when the sun shone it caught fire. It adds that "those around Nehemiah termed this 'Nephthar', which means Purification, but it is called Nephthaei by the many."<sup>[6]</sup> This same substance is mentioned in the [Mishnah](#) as one of the generally permitted oils for lamps on [Shabbat](#), although [Rabbi Tarfon](#) permits only [olive oil](#) (Mishnah Shabbat 2).

In Ancient Greek, it was used to refer to any sort of [petroleum](#) or [pitch](#). The Greek word [νάφθα](#) designates one of the materials used to stoke the fiery furnace in the [Song of the Three Children](#) (possibly 1st or 2nd cent. BC). The translation of Charles Brenton renders this as "[rosin](#)."

The [naptha](#) of antiquity is explained to be a "highly flammable light [fraction](#) of petroleum, an extremely volatile, strong-smelling, gaseous liquid, common in oil deposits of the Near East"; it was a chief ingredient in incendiary devices described by Latin authors of the Roman period.<sup>[7]</sup>