

**1 Kings 19:1-18** Elijah: What Are You Doing Here?

Our studies thus far have shown Elijah to be a man of deep devotion, unquestioning obedience and daring faith. But then there comes a chapter describing breakdown, humiliating failure and defeat – **1 Kings 19**. A sad chapter – yet, so up-to-date and applicable to our own experience. “**A man just like ourselves!**” (**James 5:17**).

**1 Kings 19:3: “Then he was afraid, and he arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.”**

- Grammatical Usage: “**was afraid**” in the Hebrew “way·yar” meaning, “to see.”
- Literal Interpretation: Then he saw the circumstances and, frustrated, he got up and left and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there.
- Contextual/Comparison: God keeps His Word, God continually uses His Word. Elijah is not so much afraid for his life, but that his mission as spiritual guide is failing:

1. NOTICE THE DESPERATE CONDITION IN WHICH ELIJAH FOUND HIMSELF  
He was suddenly gripped mainly by spiritual frustration, manifesting in alarm. The better reading of the passage is not to emphasize his mortal fear, but rather to emphasize that he "saw", he saw and understood that despite his attempts to show the nation the true God, he's still failed. He was unable to bear the presence of his servant. **V. 3** tells us of Elijah's self-imposed isolation. When we are over-strained, even the presence of friends and loved ones can impact us as we prove embarrassed, slipping in their eyes.

- He was overwhelmed with depression, despondency and despair (**v. 4**). Poor Elijah! – sitting under a juniper tree! Have you been like that? Are you under the juniper tree now? Read **Psalms 42:11** and **43:5**.
- He was presumptuous and unwise in his praying (**v. 4**). He felt as the psalmist did in **Psalms 55:3-8**.
- He was filled with self-pity (**v. 4**). This is always a dangerous state.
- He had an unbalanced view of things (**vv. 10, 14, 18**). In times of overstrain and illness, everything gets out of perspective and little problems become greatly exaggerated in our minds.
- He felt he had failed God, questioning his life, ministry and worth.

There is little doubt that Elijah was experiencing a spiritual breakdown, manifesting itself in negative physical conditions. We are all subject, in a greater or lesser degree, to some or all of the above-mentioned reactions. When one is in a normal state of spiritual/physical health such experiences are only very temporary, but when they persist and all come together, as with Elijah, then we are in a bad way. Is there no deliverance from these disturbing experiences which, if not checked, will lead to a personal crisis? There certainly is, and it is most important that in this high-speed age we learn wise living, avoiding the emotional upsets which result from unwise living.

## 2. NOTICE HOW ELIJAH GOT INTO THIS CONDITION OF DEPRESSION AND BREAKDOWN

- He was MENTALLY overstrained. For 3 ½ years he had experienced terrific tension, culminating in the great victory on Mount Carmel and the slaughter of the priests (**1 Kings 18**). Is it to be wondered that he was exhausted mentally and nervously?
- He was PHYSICALLY exhausted. Not only had the experiences of the past years made heavy demands upon his body, but now he had just taken an 18-mile cross-country run!
- He was SPIRITUALLY out-of-touch. In **1 Kings 19:2-3** particularly notice the words “**when he saw that...**” – and compare **Matthew 14:30**. Elijah took his eyes off the Lord and looked at his circumstances – the threats of Jezebel; the perceived failure of the reinstatement of God as Ahab remains on the throne. If you want to be depressed, fearful, filled with self-pity etc., take your eyes off the Lord and look at your circumstances, the problems of this weary world.

These were the three reasons for Elijah’s collapse – he was sick mentally, physically and spiritually, and these must be considered together given their interplay.

## 3. NOTICE HOW ELIJAH WAS DEALT WITH BY THE DIVINE PHYSICIAN AND THE CURE THAT WAS PRESCRIBED FOR HIM THAT SET HIM ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

- Elijah was physically exhausted, so the Lord attended to the needs of his BODY (**Psalms 103:14**). God prescribed food, sleep and plenty of fresh air (**vv. 5-7**). He gave His servant a six-weeks’ holiday! It is essential that we pay attention to these three simple rules for bodily health: (1) nourishing food, regularly taken; (2) regular and sufficient sleep; (3) fresh air, exercise and relaxation.
- Elijah was mentally overstrained, so the Lord dealt with his MIND. His mental outlook was distorted and unbalanced, so after six weeks of rest and care, good feeding and fresh air, the Lord came to him and repeated His question (**vv. 9; 13**). His object was to cause Elijah to face realities – discern perception from reality.
- Elijah was out-of-touch spiritually, so the Lord dealt with his SOUL. He gave him a wonderful vision of His power, glory and tenderness (**vv. 11-12**; compare **Psalms 46:10**). Part of his spiritual revival came in **vv. 19-21** as Elijah better understands his role as catalyst...not the end-all...of God’s plan for Israel. What a renewal!

Notice God’s response to His troubled prophet: 1. Gives strength to flee (**vv. 5b-8**); 2. Speaks gently (**vv. 9-13**); 3. Listens to Elijah’s doubts (**v. 14**); 4. Gives Elijah tasks to do (**vv. 15-17**); 5. Encourages him (**v. 18**); 6. Gives him a companion (**vv. 19-21**); 7. Restores Elijah (**v. 15**). This is Biblical therapy for every believer who, in the midst of personal and cultural challenges and disappointments, suffers with perceived failure leading to doubt, self-worth and faith issues manifesting themselves physically.

- Conclusion: God is aware of our frailty – have you turned it over to Him?