

Hearing God's Voice: Elijah I Kings 19:4-18 FBC Canton Sunday am August 17, 2025

Introduction: Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. Romans 10:14-17

¹⁴ How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written:

"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace,
Who bring glad tidings of good things!"

¹⁶ But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?" ¹⁷ So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.



So then faith comes
by hearing, and
hearing by the word
of God.
Romans 10:17

Hearing from God is critical to our Faithwalk!

So, we need to learn to tune into God's voice by reading the accounts of how God spoke to his children in the scriptures.

Hearing his voice is the great because He is great.

In Character he is flawless, so what he says to us and about us is also flawless.
In what his word creates...strength, wisdom, grace, clarity, hope
Because he is our designer, he is the only one who can satisfy us!

God's voice came to Elijah when he needed it.

Won the war with the prophets of baal.

iii. Elijah perhaps thought that the dramatic display of power at Mount Carmel would turn the nation around. Or perhaps he thought that the radical display of God's judgment against the priests of Baal following the vindication at Mount Carmel would change the hearts of the nation. Neither of these worked. This example is important for Christian ministers today, especially preachers. It shows that displays of power and preaching God's anger don't necessarily change hearts. Instead, the still

small voice of God speaking to the human heart is actually more powerful than outward displays of power or displays of God's judgment.

Ran 24 plus miles to Jezreel, saw the rain that had been delayed for 3.5 years.
Being threatened by the worst woman...Jezebel.
Ran to wilderness to save his life...100 miles in a day.

Today I want us to look into the account of Elijah, and how God spoke to him, and learn how he speaks to us today.

I. The character of God's voice.

a. Completely transportable. V. 4-7, 8-14 Psalm 139

2 different locations in these verses, spread out by hundreds of miles, and completely remote...yet God never was stressed about getting the message to his servant.

b. Doesn't respond to foolish prayers. V. 4 *God is too wise to listen to foolish prayers.*

Because he knows how weary victory can make us.

- i. The very fact that Elijah had run for his life from Jezebel proves he was trying to stay alive!
- ii. Even the greatest of the people of God need grace every day.

c. Points out His provision, even when we are full of fear. V. 5-8, Philippians 4:19.

God will provide everything we need to do or become all that he has called us to do.

- i. Elijah was divinely fed 2x and sent to mount Horeb.

God was providing the physical sustenance to ensure Elijah would survive to hear his theological sustenance.

d. Asks us direct, clear questions. V. 9-10, Acts 9:4

- i. What are you doing here? 2x.
 1. Elijah answers the same 2x.
 - a. Elijah's answer was a complaint. God does not respond.
 - b. Elijah's answer was exaggeration. God does not respond.
 - c. Elijah's answer is not from faith, but fear and weariness. God does not respond.
 2. Acts 9:4: "Why are you persecuting me?"
 - i. Job was asked a lot of questions, none of which he could even understand.
 - ii. Jesus asked the 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus...what things?

iii. Jesus asked Mary and Martha...where have you laid him?

e. Gets our attention, He never misses. V. 11-12

- i. From the cave to the mountain.
 - 1. Great and strong wind tore
 - a. Broke the rocks in pieces.
 - 2. Earthquake.
 - 3. Fire.

f. God's word is directed to our soul, not our senses. V. 13-14

- i. Still small voice. Wrap his face in his mantle...a symbol of his office of prophet.

g. Declares we still have a future. V. 15-17, I John 3:20

God was not done with Elijah. He gives specific tasks for his future ministry.

- i. He was not done with the disciples, with the woman at the well, the woman caught in the act, Paul, Peter...
- ii. And he is not done with you.
 - 1. We must learn that past successes are no guarantee of future successes.
 - 2. We must learn that past failures do not condemn us.

EVEN IF OUR HEARTS
CONDEMN US, GOD IS
GREATER THAN OUR
HEARTS. AND HE KNOWS
ALL THINGS.
- 1 JOHN 3:20

a. Challenges our perspective. V. 18 He was not the only one...7 k left.

All the people had not turned away...it only felt like it.

iii. God doesn't always make sense to us, but he is always correct.

Luke 24 Emmaus road disciples

iv. Getting us to live by faith, not by feeling. Romans 1:16-17

b. Puts us back to work. V. 18, Matthew 28:16-20

Conclusion: How do we learn to hear God's voice?

Go to where he has spoken before=Word of God.

Stay in the target rich environment.

Moses heard from God on Horeb too.

Prioritize your day, go early.

Prioritize your attention, go without distractions.

Faith will lead you to act on what He says. V. 19-21

Click [here](#) to view listing below for [1Ki 19:4](#)

GOD ENCOURAGES DISCOURAGED ELIJAH

A. Elijah flees to the wilderness.

1. ([1 Kings 19:1-3](#)) Jezebel's threat.

And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So let the gods do [to me](#), and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.” And when he saw [that](#), he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which [belongs](#) to Judah, and left his servant there.

a. [Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done](#): The report came as a great shock to this champion of Baal and Astarte worship in Israel. She thought so much of these priests that she supported them from the royal treasury, and now they were dead at the hand of Elijah.

b. [So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time](#): Jezebel heard about [all that Elijah had done](#), encompassing the great confrontation at Mount Carmel. Yet her response was [not](#) to say, “The silence of Baal and the fire from Yahweh proves that I am wrong and Yahweh is God.” Instead, she responded with a vow to kill within 24 hours the man who [exposed](#) the lie of Baal worship and [displayed](#) the glory of Yahweh.

i. “He probably thought that the miracle at Carmel would have been the means of effecting the conversion of the whole court and of the country, but, finding himself mistaken, he is greatly discouraged.” (Clarke)

c. [When he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba](#): We cannot say for certain if this was led of God or not. It is clear that God wanted to protect Elijah, but we cannot say if God wanted to protect him at Jezreel or protect him by getting him out of Jezreel. Nevertheless, Elijah went about 80 miles south to Beersheba.

i. “Probably Elijah had played into Jezebel's hand. Had she really wanted Elijah dead, she surely would have seized him without warning and slain him. What she desired was that Elijah and his God be discredited before the new converts what had aided Elijah by executing the prophets of Baal.” (Patterson and Austel)

ii. “Elijah failed in the very point at which he was strongest, and that is where most men fail. In Scripture, it is the wisest man who proves himself to be the greatest fool; just as the meekest man, Moses, spoke hasty and bitter words. Abraham failed in his faith, and Job in his patience; so, he who was the most courageous of all men, fled from an angry woman.” (Spurgeon)

2. (1 Kings 19:4) Elijah’s depression.

But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, “It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!”

a. **He himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness:** Beyond the distant city of Beersheba, Elijah secluded himself even more.

b. **And he prayed that he might die:** This mighty man of prayer — mighty enough to make the rain and the dew stop for three and a half years, and then mighty enough to make it start again at his prayer — now **he prayed that he might die.**

i. Thankfully, this was a prayer not answered for Elijah. In fact, Elijah was one of the few men in the Bible to never die. We can imagine that as he was caught up into heaven, he smiled and thought of this prayer — and the blessed no that answered his prayer. To receive a no answer from God can be better than receiving a yes answer.

c. **It is enough:** We sense that Elijah meant, “I can’t do this anymore, LORD.” The work was stressful, exhausting, and seemed to accomplish nothing. The great work on Mount Carmel did not result in a lasting national revival or return to the LORD.

i. Perhaps Elijah had especially hoped that the events on Mount Carmel would turn around Ahab and Jezebel and the leadership of Israel in general. If so, Elijah forgot that people reject God despite the evidence, not because of the evidence.

ii. “Elijah said, ‘It is enough,’ yet it was not enough even for his own enjoyment, for the Lord had more blessings in store for him... It was so with Elijah, for he was to have that wonderful revelation of God on Mount Horeb. He had more to enjoy, and the later life of Elijah appears to have been one of calm communion with his God; he seems never to have had another fainting fit, but to the end his sun shone brightly without a cloud. So it was not enough; how could he know that it was? It is God alone who knows when we have done enough, and enjoyed enough; but we do not know.” (Spurgeon)

d. **Now, LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers:** When Elijah examined the apparent failure of his work, he instinctively set the blame on his own unworthiness. It was because he was a sinner as the rest of his ancestors that the work seemed to fail.

B. God’s ministry to the despairing Elijah.

1. (1 Kings 19:5-8) God ministers to the physical needs of Elijah.

Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, “Arise and eat.” Then he looked, and there by his head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. 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 ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

a. **As he lay and slept under a broom tree**: This was the mercy of God extended to Elijah. Physically speaking, he needed rest and replenishment. God gave him rest **under a broom tree**, and provided miraculous food for the replenishment.

- i. God first ministered to Elijah’s physical needs. This is not always His order, but physical needs are important. Sometimes the most spiritual thing a person can do is get enough rest and replenishment.
- ii. “And how many are there at this day that sit under Elias’s juniper, willing and wishing to lay down that heavy burden imposed upon them by the Almighty!” (Trapp)

b. **So he ate and drank, and lay down again**: Elijah received this rest and replenishment repeatedly from the LORD. One quick nap and one quick meal wasn’t enough.

- i. “Before entering into that communion with him which was for the correction of his false attitude of fear, He commanded him to eat, thus ministering to his physical weakness.” (Morgan)
- ii. “The spirit needs to be fed, and the body needs feeding also. Do not forget these matters; it may seem to some people that I ought not to mention such small things as food and rest, but these may be the very first elements in really helping a poor depressed servant of God.” (Spurgeon)
- iii. “It was very gracious for God to deal this with his servant. We might have expected rebuke or remonstrance, chiding or chastisement; but we would hardly have expected such loving, gentle treatment as this.” (Meyer)

c. **Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you**: God set Elijah on a 200-mile, 40-day trip to Mount **Horeb**, also known as Mount Sinai. This shows that God did not demand an immediate recovery from Elijah. He allowed the prophet time to recover from his spiritual depression.

- i. “Elijah’s forty-day journey is not without significance. Indeed, a straight trip from Beersheba would require little more than a quarter of that time. Therefore the period is designedly symbolic. As the children of Israel had a notable spiritual failure and so were to wander forty years in the wilderness, so a defeated Elijah was to spend forty days in the desert.” (Patterson and Austel)

2. **(1 Kings 19:9-10) God allows Elijah to vent his frustrations.**

And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” So he 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.”

a. **He went into a cave**: Literally, the Hebrew is definite describing *the cave*. “*The cave* may well have been the specific ‘cleft of the rock’ where God appeared to Moses (av, [Exodus 33:22](#)) rather than the ‘cave-region’ generally.” (Wiseman)

i. “Perhaps no spot on earth is more associated with the manifested presence of God than that sacred mount.” (Meyer)

b. **What are you doing here, Elijah**: God knew the answer to this question, but it was good for Elijah to speak to the LORD freely and to unburden his heart.

i. “God has ways of teaching all of us in our bones and in our flesh, but he specially knows how to do this with those upon whom he puts any honor in his service. You must not marvel, if God should be pleased to bless you to the conversion of souls, that he should also make you sometimes smart.” (Spurgeon)

c. **I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts**: Elijah protested to God, “I have faithfully served You and now look at the danger I am in.” To Elijah — and many servants of God since — it seemed unfair that a faithful servant of God should be made to suffer.

d. **I alone am left**: This was not *accurate*, but it reflected how Elijah felt. Even back at the confrontation at Mount Carmel, Elijah said *I alone am left a prophet of the LORD* ([1 Kings 18:22](#)). Discouraging times make God’s servants feel more isolated and alone than they are.

d. **I alone am left; and they seek to take my life**: Strangely, the reasons Elijah provided were actually important reasons for him to remain alive. If he really was the last prophet or believer alive, should not he seek to live as long as possible? If the enemies of God like Jezebel wanted him dead, should he not seek to defeat her wicked will? Elijah, here, powerfully showed the *unreasonable nature* of unbelief and fear.

3. ([1 Kings 19:11-12](#)) God reveals Himself to Elijah.

Then He said, “Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.” And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, *but* the LORD *was* not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, *but* the LORD *was* not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice.

a. **Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD**: God knew what the depressed and discouraged Elijah needed. He needed a *personal encounter with God*. There was nothing fundamentally wrong with Elijah’s *theology*, but at the time there was something lacking in his experience.

b. **Behold, the LORD passed by**: God brought His presence before Elijah, but first, to show *where He was not*. The LORD was **not in the wind**; He was **not in the earthquake**; He was **not in the fire**. Like

many others, Elijah probably only looked for God in dramatic manifestations. Certainly, God sometimes appears in such ways, but He often appears in less dramatic surroundings.

i. “This same lesson has to be learned over and over by us all: let us repeat it, ‘Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.’ It is to be lamented that the most of professors obstinately cling to the fatal error of looking for displays of power of one kind or another. I hear that a certain church is seeking for a very clever man: she thinks that God is in the wind... That still small voice will be hushed and silent, while the boastings of your wisdom resound like a howling wind or a thunder unaccompanied by rain.” (Spurgeon)

c. **After the fire a still small voice**: This final phenomenon was a marked contrast to the previous manifestations. God actually met Elijah in the quiet whisper of a voice, instead of the earth-shaking phenomenon that had gone before.

i. Wiseman called the **still small voice** a *gentle whisper*.

ii. “And now the thunder ceased, and the lightning was gone, and the earth was still, and the wind was hushed, and there was a dead calm, and out of the midst of the still air there came what the Hebrew calls ‘a voice of gentle silence,’ as if silence had become audible. There is nothing more terrible than an awful stillness after a dread uproar.” (Spurgeon)

iii. Elijah perhaps thought that the dramatic display of power at Mount Carmel would turn the nation around. Or perhaps he thought that the radical display of God’s judgment against the priests of Baal following the vindication at Mount Carmel would change the hearts of the nation. Neither of these worked. This example is important for Christian ministers today, especially preachers. It shows that *displays of power* and *preaching God’s anger* don’t necessarily change hearts. Instead, the **still small voice** of God speaking to the human heart is actually more powerful than outward displays of power or displays of God’s judgment.

iv. “Because the success of Carmel melted like the morning mist, he thought that his career had been a failure all along, and that he had brought no one to reverence Jehovah; but he was reading with the eyes of unbelief, and his imagination was leading him rather than the facts of the case. Here are seven thousand people scattered up and down the country to whom God has blessed Elijah’s testimony. If he had not blessed his big things as he had desired, yet his little things had prospered greatly. It was Elijah’s daily conduct rather than his miracles which had impressed these seven thousand and led them to hold fast their integrity.” (Spurgeon)

4. **(1 Kings 19:13-15)** After this ministry, God gives Elijah work to do.

So it was, when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly a voice *came* to him, and said, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” And 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.” Then the LORD said to him: “Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael *as* king over Syria.

a. **He wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave:**

Immediately, Elijah sensed that God was present in the *still small voice* in a way that He was not in the previous, more dramatic phenomena. Because he sensed the special presence of God, Elijah immediately humbled himself when he **wrapped his face in his mantle**.

i. “Through horror and dread of God’s presence, being sensible that he was neither worthy nor able to endure the sight of God with open face.” (Poole)

ii. “He first wrapped his mantle about his face — he became subdued and awe-stricken — full of reverence. Oh! it is a great thing when a sinner is willing to wrap his face when he is confounded, and say, ‘I cannot defend my course; I am guilty.’ We know that if at our judgment-seat a man pleads guilty, he is punished; but at the judgment-seat of the gospel whoever pleads guilty is forgiven. Wrap your face.” (Spurgeon)

b. **What are you doing here, Elijah:** God asked Elijah the same question — and received the same response — as in [1 Kings 19:9-10](#). There was something helpful for Elijah in this question-and-answer process.

c. **Go, return on your way... anoint Hazael as king over Syria:** God gave Elijah *something to do*. He needed a task to focus on so he could avoid excessive introspection. He needed to stop looking at himself and his own (admittedly difficult) circumstances. He needed to get on with what God wanted him to do.

i. “Then the Lord did what perhaps was best of all for Elijah, *he gave him some more work to do*. He sent him off about his Master’s business again; and I warrant you that, when Elijah went back over that road, it was with a very different step from that which brought him down to Beersheba. He had come along terrified and distressed; but now he goes back with the majesty that belongs to the Tishbite, he is afraid of no Jezebel now.” (Spurgeon)

5. ([1 Kings 19:16-18](#)) Further assurance to Elijah.

“Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi *as* king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint *as* prophet in your place. It shall be *that* whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.”

a. **You shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel:** God had more work for Elijah to do. He would also demonstrate God’s choice of **Jehu** to be the king to succeed the corrupt Ahab and his wife Jezebel.

b. **Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place**: God gave something else to the discouraged and depressed prophet, beyond work to do. He also gave him *a friend* and a *successor*.

- i. Elijah needed a *friend*; the core of his complaint before God was that he was alone. God let him know that there was a man ready to learn from the great prophet and be his disciple and companion.
- ii. Elijah also needed *hope*, and since Elisha would be raised up as a successor to Elijah's prophetic office, Elijah then knew that his work would continue even after his death.

c. **It shall be that whoever escapes the sword of Hazeal, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill**: This was another source of encouragement to Elijah. With this promise he knew that ultimately justice would be done, and God would not allow the institutionalized persecution and promotion of idolatry to go unpunished.

d. **Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal**: This was a final encouragement to Elijah. He repeatedly bemoaned that he was alone among the true followers of God ([1 Kings 18:22](#), [19:10](#), and [19:14](#)). This both assured Elijah that he was not alone and that his work as a prophet had indeed been fruitful.

- i. This showed Elijah that his *quiet ministry* over the years actually bore more fruit than the *spectacular ministry* at Mount Carmel. "Yet, all the while that vile idolatry was spreading in Israel, the worship of the true God was being retained by seven thousand faithful souls, though Elijah did not know that there was even one beside himself. How were they won to Jehovah? Certainly not by Elijah's impressive demonstration on the top of Carmel, for they were loyal to the Lord before that... The still small voice had been doing for Israel what Elijah could not do" (Spurgeon).

6. ([1 Kings 19:19-21](#)) The call of Elisha.

So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him. And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." And he said to him, "Go back again, for what have I done to you?" So Elisha turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant.

- a. **He departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat**: Elijah did what the *still small voice* of God told him to do. He happened to do it in reverse order than God described to him in the previous passage. Perhaps Elijah believed that he *first* needed a friend and apprentice.
- b. **Who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him**: Elijah found Elisha and commissioned him to ministry when Elisha was at work.
- c. **Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him**: The mantle was the symbol of Elijah's prophetic authority. This was a dramatic symbol that said, "I call upon you to join in my work as a prophet."

i. "The *mantle*, or *pallium*, was the peculiar garb of the prophet, as we may learn from [Zechariah 13:4](#); and this was probably made of *skin dressed with the hair on*. See also [2 Kings 1:8](#)." (Clarke)

d. **What have I done to you**: This question "Could mean, 'Go back, but remember what I have done to you.' It might be a rebuke at any delay in following." (Wiseman)

i. "Elijah's reply indicates that he himself had not called Elisha; it was God's call. Whether Elisha would follow that call was his own decision." (Patterson and Austel)

e. **Took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen's equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate**: This demonstrated Elisha's complete commitment to following Elijah. He destroyed the tools of his trade in a going-away party for his family and friends.

i. "Elisha must have had a considerable estate, when he kept *twelve* yoke of oxen to till the ground. If, therefore, he obeyed the prophetic call, he did it to considerable secular loss." (Clarke)

ii. "Hereby he showed how willingly and joyfully he forsook all his friends, that he might serve God in that high and honourable employment." (Poole)

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Chapter 19

We left Elijah at the entrance of Jezreel, still appearing publicly, and all the people's eyes upon him. In this chapter we have him again absconding, and driven into obscurity, at a time when he could ill be spared; but we are to look upon it as a punishment to Israel for the insincerity and inconstancy of their reformation. When people will not learn it is just with God to remove their teachers into corners. Now observe,

- I. How he was driven into banishment by the malice of Jezebel his sworn enemy ([v. 1-3](#)).
- II. How he was met, in his banishment, by the favour of God, his covenant-friend.
 - 1. How God fed him ([v. 4-8](#)).
 - 2. How he conversed with him, and manifested himself to him ([v. 9](#), [11-13](#)), heard his complaint ([v. 10-14](#)), directed him what to do ([v. 15-17](#)), and encouraged him ([v. 18](#)).
- III. How his hands were strengthened, at his return out of banishment, by the joining of Elisha with him ([v. 19-21](#)).

Chapter 19 Chuck Smith

So Ahab told his wife Jezebel the whole story of what had happened, what Elijah did, and how he killed all of her prophets with the sword. And Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, and she said, So let the gods do to me, and even more also, if I don't make your life like the life of those prophets by to morrow this time. And when he got the message from Jezebel, he got up, and he began to run for his life, and he came all the way to Beersheba, [which is about eighty miles, eighty-five miles south from this area,] and he left his servant there ([1Ki 19:1-3](#)).

Probably so bushed he couldn't go on any further.

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, he came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested that he might die; he said, It is enough; now, O LORD, [I've had it] take away my life, slay me, I'm through ([1Ki 19:4](#)).

Now this is, you know, out of a distraught condition. You're all upset. And it's interesting how that when we are so upset, we oftentimes say things we don't really mean. You know, you get real upset and you just say things you don't really mean. Afterwards you're even sorry that you said them many times. But I was just upset so I just you know didn't really engage my brain. I just let my mouth run and I said these things. But I really didn't mean them. You know a lot of times we say things that we don't really mean. We ought to be really more careful with our speech. You know, you say to your child, "Get back in this house or I'll knock your head off." You really don't mean that.

The prophet is saying, "Lord, slay me, I've had it. I'm through. Just kill me, Lord. I don't want to go any further." If he wanted to die, he didn't have to run. He could have stayed right back there in Jezreel and Jezebel would have taken care of it very gladly. So the very fact that he was running showed that he wanted to survive. That was the whole purpose of the flight is to get away from the threat of Jezebel to kill him.

And so he went to sleep and when he woke up, the angel was there, [had prepared a meal for him,] and said, Come on and eat ([1Ki 19:5](#)).

Because you're going to go a long way on this food. So he had angel's food and it lasted for forty days. Good stuff. Very nutritious. He went forty days on the strength of that meat.

And he came to Horeb the mountain of God ([1Ki 19:8](#)).

Down in the Sinai, way down. Man, he's really fleeing from her. Down in the barren wilderness, Mount Sinai or Mount Horeb, both names given to this mount, the mountain where Moses met God and received the Lord.

And he came to a cave, and he stayed there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him [there in the cave], and said unto him, What are you doing here, Elijah? ([1Ki 19:9](#))

Now Elijah didn't really understand the question. The question was, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" And Elijah answered why he was there, not what he was doing there, but why he was there.

He said, I've been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because Israel has really turned against God, they have forsaken His covenant, they have broken down His altars, they have slain His prophets; and I'm the only one left; and they're even looking for me to kill me ([1Ki 19:10](#)).

How bad can things get? The nation Israel in total apostasy. They have forsaken the Lord, broken down His altars, killed His prophets. Only one prophet left and they're looking for him. Now that is Elijah's overstatement of the case because he is so upset and discouraged.

And that's one thing about discouragement and despair, it causes you to overstate the case so it actually looks worse than it really is. You know, we get so discouraged and so despondent, we don't want anyone to cheer us up. I just want sympathy at this point. This is so bad. No one's ever had it this bad, you know, and we always are overstating then the case, as Elijah was actually overstating the case of the problems in Israel. They've killed all of Your prophets and I, only I am left, and they're looking for me to kill me. "God, You don't have a single one left in Israel." That isn't quite right, Elijah, but you're upset and I understand, you know. You get so down that you just can't see any glimmer of hope, any light.

The Lord said, Elijah, come on out here and stand here on the mount. [So Elijah came out the entrance of the cave and he stood there] and there came this fierce wind whipping through there, tearing rocks loose, [rolling down the hillside]; but God wasn't in the wind: Then there came this earthquake, [just shook the whole place]; God wasn't in the earthquake: then there came a fire just raging through, God wasn't in the fire: then there came a still small voice ([1Ki 19:11-12](#)).

You know, quite often we miss the voice of God because we are anticipating God to speak in such, you know, great thunderous tones or in such a mystic way. I say, "Well, the Lord spoke to me."

"Oh, how did He speak?" My, the voice of God must really rumble like thunder or something, you know. And we think that when God is leading us that there must be something almost like a trance experience where I become, you know, almost in this trance and I hear a little sign saying, "Beep, beep, beep, beep, turn right. Beep, beep, beep, beep, go forward," you know. "Beep, beep, stop." And that some kind of a mystic thing where I'm walking around in a trance. God is leading me. I'm being led by the Spirit. Not so. In fact, when God is leading your life He does it in such natural ways that generally, you're not even aware that God is leading you because it just seems such a natural thing.

Years ago I was driving up to Ventura to have services in a church up there where I grew up. And they had invited me back to speak on a Sunday evening. So I decided to go up on Saturday, take a leisure drive, stay with my aunt in Santa Barbara Saturday night and then drive back to Ventura on Sunday and speak there on Sunday evening. And so I had started up to Ventura and I was in Hollywood and I came to Sunset Boulevard and it just flashed to me, I had a convertible, flashed on me, What a beautiful day. Why not just flip the top down, drive down Sunset Boulevard to Pacific Coast and go up past Malibu. I love that drive up the coast through Malibu and Point Mugu and on in that way. Such a beautiful day, you know, I thought. Just put the top down and take a drive up the coast.

So I started winding down Sunset Boulevard, winds all the way through until it finally drops you there in Santa Monica at the Pacific Coast Highway. And as I was coming down, the skies were so blue, so clear and it was just such a beautiful day, spring day. And there was a couple who were hitchhiking. And oh, well, I'm all by myself, might as well pick them up and so I picked them up and I started asking them questions. Found out they were from Montana.

I said, "Well, what are you doing here in California?"

They said, "Oh, we're looking for work."

I said, "What kind of work do you do?"

"I'm a farmer." And he said, "I haven't been able to find anything in Los Angeles."

I said, "Where are you going?"

They said, "Well, we're going to San Francisco."

I said, "There are no farms in San Francisco." I said, "It's the same as Los Angeles, it's just a big city."

I said, "Now between here and San Francisco there's a lot of farm country. In fact," I said, "I'm going through Ventura." I said, "There's a lot of farms around Ventura. There's a lot of ranches and all." And I said, "If you want to really get farm work, you better stop in one of these communities between here and San Francisco, Salinas or somewhere, you're never going to get a job on a farm up there."

Poor kids, they didn't know anything about California. They just heard that it was sunny and all and they were tired of the snow in Montana and just newly married and decided to move to California and get a job. Then I started witnessing to them about the Lord. And when we got to Ventura, they decided that they would stay and look for work there. And I drove them by the church where I would be the next evening, invited them to come and meet me at the church the next evening. And we had prayer with them, they both accepted Christ. And so I bid them farewell and went on up to Santa Barbara to stay with my aunt and never really expected to see them again.

When I got to Santa Barbara my aunt was making enchiladas and she was the greatest enchilada maker in the world. And the phone rang and it was my mother. And there were problems at our home in Santa Ana. I had an alcoholic uncle that I kicked out and he came back while I was gone and my mother was quite desperate. She couldn't take him. It was my dad's brother and she said, "It's either him or me."

And so I had to drive right on back to Santa Ana that night and deal with my uncle and get him out of there for my mother's sake. So my whole trip to Santa Barbara was sort of in vain anyhow, I thought. But then I drove up the next night to Ventura, spoke at the church. We gave an invitation for those at the end who would like to receive Christ to come forward. And this couple who I never expected to see again came forward.

And so there were several people that came forward that evening and I went down and prayed with many of them. And I went up to this young couple and I told them how great it was to see them and how thrilled I was that they were there. And they were just beaming all over, telling me just how glorious it was that they had accepted the Lord and how happy they were.

And they said, "This man who came to pray with us, I knew him, his name was Mr. Jenkins. I grew up in Ventura and I knew him quite well. And he was a foreman at the Del Mar Liminary Ranch." And so he came forward, prayed with them, and they shared what the situation was.

So he said, "Hey, I got an opening out in the ranch right now." And he hired them and they had a job and housing and everything else. And God just put the whole thing together.

Then I got to thinking, it must have been the Lord that put into my mind, "Why don't you flip the top down and go up the coast?" You know it seemed like so me because I love the ocean and all. It seemed like such a natural thought that I really wasn't aware at that moment in Hollywood that it was actually the Spirit of God speaking to me and directing me to this couple that were really searching for the Lord, as much as anything else, because they were wide open to receive the witness and all. And yet I realized, "Hey, God was directing me, because though I love the coast, being that well along on my way in the inland route, I don't like Sunset Boulevard and all the signals going up to the coast." And yet suddenly I realized it was the Lord. Now it wasn't something mystical and there wasn't thunder and lightning and great winds and earthquakes or anything else. It was just a very natural way. And what the Scripture is saying is that God usually speaks to us in very natural ways.

Don't expect God to speak in some earthquake, or in fact, it's awfully hard to hear God many times when our earth is shaking around us. It's awfully hard to hear God in the midst of the tempest and the storms of life. It's hard to hear God when it seems like everything around us is being consumed. Many times we need to get our hearts very quiet before God. We need to get away from the tempest. We need to get away from the shaking and the things around us to get alone to where I can really hear that still, small voice of God within as He guides me, as He assures me of His love, as He assures me of His purpose. And I get the strength and the help from God when He speaks to me. And it's that still, small voice within. So natural that it seems like it comes maybe even from your own heart or your own mind. But in reality, it is God speaking to you. It's always an exciting experience when I come to the realization that that thought didn't come out of my own subconsciousness, that thought came to me from God. God planted that thought in my mind, that still, small voice. It was God speaking to me. And it's beautiful. It's a glorious experience to hear the still, small voice.

The Lord said, repeated the same question, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" And Elijah still didn't understand the question. He answered the Lord the same way.

I've been very jealous for You: for Israel has forsaken the covenant, they've broken down your altars, they've slain your prophets; I, only I am left; and they're looking for me to take my life
([1Ki 19:14](#)).

Now the question was, "What are you doing here?" Not "Why are you here?" So the Lord got then to specifics with this upset prophet because in reality, he was doing nothing. He was hiding. Doing nothing. He had put himself out of service. He was out of commission. He wasn't. There was no one to witness to down there. There was no work for God to be done in that barren wilderness. So he was doing nothing. God doesn't like for us to do nothing. And so the Lord re-commissioned him.

He said, Now look, get out of here, and get on up to Damascus: and when you get there, anoint Hazael to be the king over Syria: And then get down and anoint Jehu to be the king over Samaria: and then anoint Elisha to take your place and all ([1Ki 19:15-16](#)).

God put him back to work. God got him away from this place of hiding in a cave, of doing nothing and commissioned him back into service for the Lord. Even as God wants to get you off your duff and get you back doing something that's worthwhile for Him.

And then the Lord sort of puts a little thing on the end. "Elijah, you were exaggerating."

For I have seven thousand men in Israel, whose knees have not bowed to Baal, whose lips have not kissed his image ([1Ki 19:18](#)).

"I, only I am left." No, no, you're not alone. "I've got seven thousand." God knew them. God had been observing.

So he departed from there, and he found Elisha, and Elisha was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, [actually there were ten before him and he had the twelve beside him]: and as Elijah passed by, he took his mantle and he threw it on him. And Elisha left his oxen there, and came running after Elijah, and he said, Wait a minute, I pray you, let me go back and kiss my father and mother goodbye, and I will follow you. And he said, Go on back to your oxen: what have I done to you? But he returned back and he took a yoke of oxen, and he killed them, and he boiled their flesh, and he gave it to the people, and he ate. And he arose, and went after Elijah, and became the servant of Elijah ([1Ki 19:19-21](#)).

Alexander MacLaren :: Elijah's Weakness, and Its Cure (1 Kings 19:1-18)

References for 1Ki 19:4 — [1](#) [2](#)

ELIJAH'S WEAKNESS, AND ITS CURE

'And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. 2. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time. 3. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. 4. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough: now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. 5. And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then, an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. 6. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. 7. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. 8. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb

the mount of God. 9. And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there, and, behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? 10. And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left: and they seek my life, to take it away. 11. And He said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: 12. And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. 13. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him and said, What doest then here, Elijah! 14. And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. 15. And the Lord said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: 16. And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. 17. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. 18. Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.'—[1 Kings 19:1-18](#).

The miracle on Carmel cowed, if it did not convince, Ahab, so that he did not oppose the slaughter of the Baal prophets; but Jezebel was made of sterner stuff, and her passionate idolatry was proof against even a sign from heaven. Obstinacy in error is often a rebuke to tremulous faith in God. She fiercely puts her back to the wall, and defies Elijah and his God. Her threat to the prophet has a certain audacity of frankness almost approaching generosity. She will give her victim fair play. This woman is 'magnificent in sin.' The Septuagint prefixes to her oath, 'As surely as thou art Elijah and I Jezebel,' which adds force to it. It also reads, by a very slight change in the Hebrew, in [verse 3](#), 'he was afraid,' for 'he saw,'—which is possibly right, as giving his motive for escape more distinctly.

1. We may note, first, the prophet's flight ([verses 3-8](#)). Beersheba, on the southern border of the kingdom of Judah, was eloquent of memories of the patriarchs, but though it was nearly a hundred miles from Jezreel, Jezebel's arm was long enough to reach the fugitive there, and therefore he plunged deeper into the dreary southern desert. He left behind him his servant, his 'young man,' as the original has it, whom Rabbinical tradition identified with the miraculously resuscitated son of the widow of Zarephath, and supposed to become afterwards the prophet Jonah. Thus alone but for the company of his own gloomy thoughts, and wearied with toilsome travel in the sun-smitten waste, he took shelter under the shadow of a solitary shrub (the Hebrew emphatically calls it 'one juniper,' or rather 'broom-plant'), and there the waves of depression went over him.

His complaint is not to be wondered at, though it was wrong. The very overstrain of the scene on Carmel brought reaction. The height of the crest of one wave measures the depth of the trough of the next, and no mortal spirit can keep itself at the sublime elevation reached by Elijah when alone he fronted and converted a nation. The supposed necessity for flight, coming so immediately after apparent victory, showed him how

hollow the change in the people was. What had become of all the fervency of their shout, 'The Lord, He is the God!' if they could leave Jezebel the power to carry out her threat? Solitude and the awful desert increased his gloom. The strong man had become weak, and it was ebb-tide with him. His prayer was petulant, impatient, presumptuous. What right had he to settle what was 'enough'? If he really wished to die, he could have found death at Jezreel, and had no need to travel a hundred miles to seek a grave. He was weary of his work, and profoundly disappointed by what he hastily concluded was its failure, and in a fit of faithless despondency he forgot reverence, submission, and obedience.

If Elijah can become weak, and his courage die out, and his zeal become torpid apathy and cowardly wish to shuffle off responsibility and shirk work, who shall stand? The lessons of self-distrust, of the nearness to one another of the most opposite emotions in our weak natures, of the depth of gloom into which the boldest and brightest servant of God may fall as soon as he loses hold of God's hand, never had a more striking instance to point them than that mighty prophet, sitting huddled together in utter despondency below the solitary retem bush, praying his foolish prayer for death.

The meal to which an angel twice waked him was God's answer to his prayer, telling him both that his life was still needful and that God cared for him. Perhaps one of Elijah's reasons for taking to the desert was the thought that he might starve there, and so find death. At all events, God for the third time miraculously provides his food. The ravens, the widow of Zarephath, an angel, were his caterers; and, instead of taking away his life, God Himself sends the bread and water to preserve it. The revelation of a watchful, tender Providence often rebukes gloomy unbelief and shames us back to faith. We are not told whether the journey to Horeb was commanded, or, like the flight from Jezreel, was Elijah's own doing; but, in any case, he must have wandered in the desert, to have taken forty days to reach it.

2. The second stage is the vision at Horeb ([verses 9-14](#)). The history of Israel has never touched Horeb since Moses left it, and it is not without significance that we are once more on that sacred ground. The parallel between Moses and Elijah is very real. These two names stand out above all others in the history of the theocracy, the one as its founder, the other as its restorer; both distinguished by special revelations, both endowed with exceptional force of character and power of the Spirit; the one the lawgiver, the other the head of the prophetic order; both having something peculiar in their departure, and both standing together, in witness of their supremacy in the past, and of their inferiority in the future, by Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. The associations of the place are marked by the use of the definite article, which is missed in the Authorised Version,—'the cave,' that same cleft in the rock where Moses had stood. Note, too, that the word rendered 'lodged' is literally 'passed the night,' and that therefore we may suppose that the vision came to Elijah in the darkness.

That question, 'What doest thou here?' can scarcely be freed from a tone of rebuke; but, like Christ's to the travellers to Emmaus, and many another interrogation from God, it is also put in order to allow of the loaded heart's relieving itself by pouring out all its griefs. God's questions are the assurance of His listening ear and

sympathising heart. This one is like a little key which opens a great sluice. Out gushes a full stream. His forty days' solitude have done little for him. A true answer would have been, 'I was afraid of Jezebel.' He takes credit for zeal, and seems to insinuate that he had been more zealous for God than God had been for Himself. He forgets the national acknowledgment of Jehovah at Carmel, and the hundred prophets protected by good Obadiah. Despondency has the knack of picking its facts. It is colour-blind, and can only see dark tints. He accuses his countrymen, as if he would stir up God to take vengeance.

How different this weak and sinful wail over his solitude from the heroic mention of it on Carmel, when it only nerved his courage I ([verse 22](#)). The divine manifestation which followed is evidently meant to recall that granted to Moses on the same spot. 'The Lord passed by' is all but verbally quoted from [Exodus 34:6](#), and the truth that had been proclaimed in words to Moses was enforced by symbol to Elijah. If the vision was in the night, as [verse 9](#) suggests, it becomes still more impressive. The fierce wind that roared among the savage peaks, the shock that made the mountains reel, and the flashing flames that lighted up the wild landscape, were all phenomena of one kind, and at once expressed God's lordship over all destructive agencies of nature, and symbolised the more vehement and disturbing forms of energy, used by Him for the furtherance of His purposes in the field of history or of revelation. Elijah's ministry was of such a sort, and he had now to learn the limitations of his work, and the superiority of another type, represented by the 'sound of gentle stillness.'

It is the same lesson which Moses learned there, when he heard that the Lord is 'a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth.' It was exemplified in the gentle Elisha, the successor of Elijah. It reached far beyond the time then present, and was indeed a Messianic prophecy, declaring the inmost character of Him in whom 'the Lord is,' in an altogether special sense. Elijah as a prophet brought no new knowledge, and uttered no far-reaching predictions; but he received one of the deepest and clearest prophecies of the gentleness of God's highest Messenger, and on Horeb saw afar off what he saw fulfilled on the Mountain of Transfiguration. Nor is his vision exhausted by its Messianic reference. It contains an eternal truth for all God's servants. Storm, earthquake, and fire may be God's precursors, and needed sometimes to prepare His way; but gentleness is 'the habitation of His throne,' and they serve Him best, and are nearest Him whom they serve, who are meek in heart and gentle among enemies, 'as a nurse cherisheth her children.' Love is the victor, and the sharpest weapons of the Christian are love and lowliness.

The lesson was not at first grasped by Elijah, as his repetition of his complaint, word for word, with almost dogged obstinacy, shows. The best of us are slow to learn God's lessons, and a habit of faithless gloom is not soon overcome. It is much easier to get down into the pit than to struggle out of it.

3. The commission for further service, which closes the scene, is a further rebuke to the prophet. He is bidden to retrace his way and to take refuge in the desert lying to the south and east of Damascus, where he would be safe from Jezebel, and still not far from the scene of his activity. The instructions given to anoint a king of

Syria and one of Israel were not fulfilled by Elijah, but by his successor; and we have to suppose that further commands were given to him on that subject. The third injunction, to anoint his successor, was obeyed at once on his journey, though Ahelmeholah, on Gilboa, was dangerously near Jezreel. The designation of these future instruments of God's purpose was at once a sign to Elijah that his own task was drawing to a close (having reached its climax on Carmel), and that God had great designs beyond him and his service. The true conception of our work is that we are only links in a chain, and that we can be done without. 'God removes the workers and carries on the work.' To anoint our successor is often a bitter pill; but self-importance needs to be taken down, and it is blessed to lose ourselves in gazing into the future of God's work, when we are gone from the field.

Further, the commissions met Elijah's despondency in another way; for they assured him of the divine judgments on the house of Ahab, and of the use of the Syrian king as a rod to chastise Israel. He had thought God too slow in avenging His dishonoured name, and had been taught the might of gentleness; but now he also learns the certainty of punishment, while the enigmatical promise that Elisha should 'slay' those who escaped the swords of Hazael and Jehu dimly points to the merciful energy of that prophet's word, his only sword, which shall slay but to revive, and wound to heal. 'I have hewed them by the ... words of my mouth.'

Finally, the revelation of the seven thousand—a round number, which expresses the sacredness as well as the numerousness of the elect, hidden ones—rebukes the hasty assumption of his being left alone, 'faithful among the faithless.' God has more servants than we know of. Let us beware of feeding either our self-righteousness or our narrowness or our faint-heartedness with the fancy that we have a monopoly of faithfulness, or are left alone to witness for God.

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