

Elijah was not the only man in the OT who struggled with depression. He wasn't depressed his whole life, but depression came to him occasionally. We must realise something about these great OT men. They were people like us. Someone translates James 5:17 something like this. 'Remember Elijah. He was a man like us.'

There was a period of 400 years between the Old Testament and the New Testament. At this time, people thought that Elijah had many strange qualities. They did not think that he was part of our world. To them, he was certainly not 'a man like us'. But James says that he was just like us. James thinks that it is an important fact. Elijah's experiences were the same as ours. He had difficulties. He had tests. He knew what depression was like.

Read 1 Kings 19.

### **Our enemy, the devil, uses depression**

He does this to make us less able than we usually are. If the devil gets us depressed, he wins a major success. I completely refuse to please the devil by being depressed. The devil can use all sorts of tests and troubles. He uses them to make us feel depressed. Peter calls them 'different kinds of troubles'. (Read 1 Peter 1:6.) The word that he uses means 'many colors'.

Our tests are of various kinds and 'shades'. But there is something great. It will encourage us. God's grace is always sufficient. Grace means kindness. God gives us what we do not deserve. He saves us. He helps us. Peter writes about 'different kinds' of troubles. But he also writes about 'different kinds' of grace. (Read 1 Peter 4:10.) Remember Paul's words too. God says: 'My grace is all that you need' (2 Corinthians 12:9). Notice 3 things about depression.

### **It often comes:**

#### **1. When we feel extremely tired**

The devil knows the right time to attack us with depression. We are especially weak when our bodies feel very tired. It was certainly like this for Elijah. He sat down under a tree and wanted to die. He had no physical energy at the time (1 Kings 18:46). First, he had run nearly 20 miles to a place called Jezreel. Then he heard bad news in the city. So, he ran for more than another 80 miles. He was certainly very tired. It is no surprise to read that he felt depressed.

This may be the main cause for your depression. Perhaps you do far too much in a day. You do not take care of your body. Please do not forget something. If you are God's child, your body is the special house of the Holy Spirit. (Read 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17 and 6:19, 20) Do not be careless about your physical needs. This brings dishonor to God. Dishonor is the opposite of honor.

Perhaps you do not have enough rest and sleep. Perhaps you do not make enough time for leisure. Perhaps you need to relax with some activity. Perhaps you do not have meals at regular times. All these things are very important. They have spiritual as well as physical importance. There are times when it is easier to become depressed. The devil will try to use them. These times are when our health is weak.

### **QUESTION:**

1. Are there physical stresses in your life that could be causing depression?

2. What can you do to correct them? i.e. relax, time of, etc.

## **2. When we have had great spiritual benefits**

This was how it was for Elijah. He had had a great experience on the mountain. (Read 1 Kings 18:16-39.) What a great success it had been! God had showed his power and greatness. Elijah must have felt great excitement. He was so happy. Then it came ... depression!

It often happens like that in our lives. There is no natural reason for it. God has just given us a great benefit. But the reason should be plain. The devil wants to steal from us. He wants to take away our joy and peace in God. To make us feel depressed is the easiest way. The devil can use just a minor event in our lives. He tries to make us forget about God. Then we become very depressed.

### **QUESTION:**

1. Have you ever been “depressed” after a spiritual high?
2. How do you combat this?

## **3. When we least expect it**

This is the time when the devil comes to attack us. He attacks with ‘the arrows of depression’. Elijah left the place where he had been successful. He had astonished all the people. Then he rushed off to Jezreel. He was going to tell people about God’s great success. But he was soon a very different man. He was so afraid and depressed. His tears seemed to show that Jezreel had won.

Depression often comes when we do not expect it. It just appears in our lives. Remember Paul’s words to Christians at Corinth. They warn us all. ‘The person who thinks that he is standing strong should be careful. He might fall.’ (The words are in 1 Corinthians 10:12.)

## **Depression does something bad to us**

It tends to rob us of many good qualities. They are qualities that God has given us already. This is all part of the devil’s plot. It is vital for us to recognise this.

Usually, Elijah was a very brave man. His courage was extraordinary. He was a hero. ‘He prayed that it would not rain’ (James 5:17). His prayer was sincere. His great desire was that his nation would return to God. Remember something about when he prayed. God was going to provide food and water for him in a special way. But he had no idea about this. He just knew about the spiritual life of his own people. No rain for a long time meant that there would be no food or water. Some of them might return to the God who loved them. So Elijah was ready to die with them. That is true courage!

How brave he was when he marched into Ahab’s palace. He announced that God’s punishment was coming (1 Kings 17:1). Then God told Elijah that he would provide for his needs. (Read 1 Kings 17:2-16.) There is something else. All that time, Ahab was hunting Elijah (1 Kings 18:10). Soldiers were searching for him. They would kill him if they found him. It was at this time that God sent him to Sidon. This was the country of Jezreel, the wicked queen. Then he went to speak to Ahab, the evil king. (Read 1 Kings 18:15-18.) This was while the soldiers were hunting him. What a brave man!

So much happened at Carmel too. Elijah needed to be very brave there. (Read 1 Kings 18:19-40.) He was not at all weak; that is certain. After all this, Elijah felt great physical weakness. Then depression followed. He had none of his former strength. He ran to save his life.

### **QUESTION:**

1. Does depression come more when you are doing good for the Lord or nothing for the Lord?
2. What qualities or characteristics does depression attack?

### **Maybe Elijah let a little pride affect his spiritual life**

We cannot be sure about this; but it is possible. 1 Kings 18:36-37 may represent two prayers of Elijah. The first prayer has 'I' at the centre. Then, the reason for his prayer changes (18:37). Now he wants the people to honour God. 'Show these people that you, Lord, are God.'

Remember that Elijah is 'a man like us'. Maybe he had the problem of pride too. There may be another sign of this in 1 Kings 19:4. 'Lord', he says, 'take away my life'. Then he says: 'because I am not better than my fathers were.' Nobody said that he was! God did give him a special job to do. He knew that God was using him. So maybe this gave him a feeling of spiritual importance.

But one thing is certain. Depression often comes to those who only think about themselves. We must think seriously about something. Perhaps some periods of our depression are for this cause. We want life to go completely our own way, not God's way.

#### QUESTION:

1. Does pride have a hold on your life?
2. In what areas does God want to humble your life?

### **Depression always makes us unable to see the facts as they are**

There is humor in 1 Kings 19:4. Elijah asks the Lord to take away his life. If this was what he really wanted, he should have stayed where he was. He need not have had such a long, tiring journey! Jezebel promised to kill him in the next 24 hours. But poor Elijah did not look at the true situation. We are like that too, sometimes.

So, you should avoid making important decisions when you feel depressed. You are not seeing things as they really are. There will be a day when you will feel much happier. That would be a better time to make a decision.

Notice something else about Elijah. His wrong opinion of the situation appears again. You can read about it in 1 Kings 19:10, 14. Like our own sad accounts of trouble, it went on and on. He repeated the same thing. It was not an accurate account either. He almost forgets the great events on Mt. Carmel. His sad words are not even true! He says, 'I am the only one left.' God says that there are 7000 people who love him (1 Kings 19:18)!

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Has your perception ever been clouded by depression?
2. Have you ever made stupid decisions because of this?

### **There are physical reasons for much depression**

We have already mentioned this. But 1 Kings 19 reminds us about its importance. Notice 19:5-7. We read about the first things that God did for Elijah. They were things that he should have done for himself. God made him sleep. God gave him food.

The same thing happens today. There are good, sincere Christian workers. Many of them suffer from depression at times. They too neglect these 2 essential things in life. God gave Elijah two long periods of good sleep. He also gave him 2 meals. Then he allowed Elijah to continue his journey.

### **In depression, find some quiet place. Prepare yourself to meet with God**

God knew where Elijah was going (19:7). It was the place where God gave the Law to Moses. Elijah feared that people no longer appreciated God's law. So it was natural for him to go there. It was also the place where God talked to Moses. (Read Exodus 34:29.) There God showed what he wanted for his people. (Read Deuteronomy chapter 5.) Perhaps Elijah hoped that God would talk to him too. This is just what did happen! In your \*depression, God will do the same for you. Find some quiet place to meet with him. Your mind may be full of doubts. You may even feel that it will be of no practical use. Just do it. Go to him and be still.

### **We can discover again what is most important**

We do this when we meet with God.

#### **1. He comes to us when all is quiet**

(Read 1 Kings 19:11-12.) It speaks about 'a quiet, gentle voice'. Another way of saying it is 'the soft whisper of a voice'. We must all learn to be completely quiet at times. (Read Psalm 46:10 and Isaiah 30:15.)

#### **2. He gives us something new to do**

(Read 1 Kings 19:15-17.) So much depression comes from only thinking about ourselves. This type of attitude is not healthy. Service for other people can be God's way for us to escape.

#### **3. He helps us to see our life as it really is**

(Read 1 Kings 19:18.) There needs to be communication with God. Then we will be free from our wrong ideas. They just make us more and more depressed.

#### **4. He provides the help and friendship of other Christians**

Elisha is an example of this. (Read 1 Kings 19:19-21.) God gave him to Elijah. Later, there is a beautiful description of him. He 'poured water on the hands of Elijah' (2 Kings 3:11). This is picture language. It means that he served Elijah.

God is very good to us too. He usually sends someone into our lives. That one will 'pour water' over our dirty, tired hands. He or she will help and encourage us. When this happens to you, there is something for you to avoid. Do not give yet another account of your troubles! Ask God for his help to start life again. He is sufficient, whatever your needs may be.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. How can you begin to hear God more? (see #1 above)
2. What has God called you to do for Him?
3. Who has God called you to (or to you)?
4. How can depression rob all of the above questions?

*The Notes below are from the weekend message.*

1 Kings 16-19 NLT

"El" – an abbreviation for **ELOHIM**

"jah" – for **JEHOVAH**

"I" – the small word in between "El" and "jah", "my" or "mine"

"My God is Jehovah"

### **5 Things That Can Put You Under The Juniper Bush**

1. Not thinking clearly or realistically
2. Separating yourself from strengthening relationships
3. Not being mindful of a great victory
4. Being exhausted and emotionally spent
5. Getting lost in self-pity

### **The 3 Things God Can Do To Help You**

1. He will give you rest and refresh you
2. He will communicate wisely with you
3. He will give you a personal friend