

A Disciple in Deep Depression

Scripture Reading: 1 Kings 19.1-18

Key Verse: *“There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’”* 1 Kings. 19: 9 NIV

It may seem amazing, but deep depression is often the experience of men and women of real and vibrant faith. There are times of testing when doubt and fear attack. They live not only on the mountain tops of faith, but their paths take them into the shadows of deep and dangerous valleys. This study is one of a series dealing with the prayer life of Elijah who was living by faith through taking God at His word. We can learn from this case study. There are various conditions of depression. This study deals with one.

First, Note the Symptoms which Indicated Depression.

He was gripped by fear and alarm v2&3. This man of faith and power turned to water at the threats of the Queen.
 He was unable to bear the presence of his servant v3. At times like this even our loved ones irritate us.
 He sought isolation to indulge his misery v4. He was now centered wholly on his distorted suicidal view.
 He displayed uncharacteristic lack of energy and a capacity to sleep. See also Jonah 4, with similar characteristics.
 His prayer was filled with self pity, and distorted self indulgence v4. He had lost his faith-relationship with God. He was not listening to His word. He had gone to pieces Isaiah 55.3, Hebrews 12.15

Second, Note the Conditions Which Induced Depression.

Looking back over chapters 17 & 18 we see a man living under extreme conditions and pressures. Many are classic conditions of inducing depression.
 He was a fugitive from the authorities of the day, he was wanted with a price on his head and confronting violent opposition.

He had just experienced a ‘High’ with the victory on Mount Carmel.
 He was isolated socially, had no or limited spiritual fellowship.
 He was working alone, making decisions unilaterally, supplying succor and counsel to the needy.
 He was living without material support, by faith, in a day of national economic crisis.
 He was inclined to be self pitying. Read 1 Kings 18.36, 19.10 and 19.14. It was his Achilles heel, and will be for us if we allow self interest to rule in our hearts.
 Accordingly find him here drained emotionally and exhausted physically. He was wheat in Satan’s sieve. Luke 22.31
 He took his eyes off the Lord, 1 Kings 19.2&3. V3 in the AV says, ‘when he *saw* that,’ not ‘heard’ Jezebel’s threat, and it is correct. The Hebrew is *ra’ah*, meaning to see, look at so as to understand. One of Satan’s strategies is to have us divert our eyes from God to the objects of his choosing. See also Genesis 3.6 and 1 John 2.16.

Third, Note the Precautions which Indisposed Depression.

Here we see Jehovah in His role as the Great Physician, one who understands our

condition perfectly, and will administer the correct therapy.

He came to Elijah in his need v5. Here is real evidence that God hears and answers our prayers, but not always in the way we ask. He was present with Elijah in his distress, even though at first Elijah was unaware of this, sleeping the sleep of the emotionally and physically drained.

He attended to Elijah’s physical needs first v6. He provided both fresh cooked food and water, food to which Elijah was accustomed.

He fell into step with Elijah in his flight without initial criticism or rebuke v7&8. The Lord understood that Elijah was not responsive to correction, so He fortified him and sent him on his way. It was a trip of forty days, an experience which burned up much of his resentment and fear. He found himself at Mount Horeb. He had run into the presence of God. See Exodus 3.1, 17.6, Deuteronomy 4.10 and Psalm 139.7

He challenged Elijah’s irresponsible actions v9&10. He did this by asking Elijah for information as if He were a man needing to know. Elijah was constrained to explain himself. His answer was a classic complaint of some of God’s servants who are idealistic, zealous, self sacrificing, but meet

We can learn two valuable lessons from this study. First, we ought to learn to recognise depression when it comes into our lives, and how to respond to it in a biblical way. Second we can be understanding and supportive of those who are depressed. These two things are easy to say, but require real maturity to perform with genuine grace. However, as ever, the Lord is our teacher and His word is our text book.

misunderstanding, criticism and opposition, “Lord, I have done all this for you, but you have done nothing for me!” Pastors, missionaries, evangelists and personal workers can easily feel like this.

He redirected Elijah’s gaze from this world back to the Lord and His word v11-13. God was not in the earthquake or the terrible wind as He was for the Israelites in Exodus, or speaking from a burning bush. Exodus 3.4;19.16-18, but the gentle whisper (NIV) or still small voice (AV) which followed. God spoke, as He often does in the quietness which follows strife.

He corrected Elijah’s mistaken assumptions v9&10 and 18. Elijah had made decisions based on his perceptions, not God’s instructions, which is why he got it so wrong. He is not the only one to do this. See Acts 1.6, Matthew 20.21. We often continue to do this today. We presume, and then we blame God.

He assigned him meaningful work to do. This work also told Elijah that God was still in control. (In fact only Elisha was recruited by Elijah, there is no record of an anointing, and the others, by delegation to Elisha. 2Kings 8.8-13 & 9.1-6) This move answered the needs of Elijah and set him back on the path of service. See also Luke 22.32, Mark 16.7 and John 21.15-19.

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Glen Park Gospel Church
 Lower Road, Eltham North
 Sundays 10.30 am

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