

PARADIGM SHIFTING - IV GROWING A HEALTHY CHURCH SERIES

Text: I Kings 19:1-21

Key Word: Shift

Key Thought: It Is Time for the Church to Grow Beyond Times of Prolonged Discouragements

Famous People

1. After Fred Astaire's first screen test, a 1933 memo from the MGM testing director said: "Can't act. Slightly bald. Can dance a little." Astaire kept that memo over the fireplace in his Beverly Hills home.
2. An expert said of famous football coach Vince Lombardi: "He possesses minimal football knowledge. Lacks motivation."
3. Louisa May Alcott, the author of Little Women, was advised by her family to find work as a servant or seamstress.
4. Beethoven handled the violin awkwardly and preferred playing his own compositions instead of improving his technique. His teacher called him hopeless as a composer.
5. The teacher of famous opera singer Enrico Caruso said Caruso had no voice at all and could not sing.
6. Walt Disney was fired by a newspaper for lacking ideas. He also went bankrupt several times before he built Disneyland.
7. Eighteen publishers turned down Richard Bach's 10,000 word story about a soaring seagull before Macmillan finally published it in 1970. By 1975, Jonathan Livingston Seagull had sold more than seven million copies in the US alone."

Written and compiled by Jack Canfield and Mark V. Hansen.

Taken from "Chicken Soup for the Soul:
101 Stories to Open the Heart and Rekindle the Spirit"

A Definition of Discouragement

"Discouragement is dissatisfaction with the past, distaste for the present, and distrust of the future. It is ingratitude for the blessings of yesterday, indifference to the opportunities of today, and insecurity regarding strength for tomorrow. It is unawareness of the presence of beauty, unconcern for the needs of our fellow man, and unbelief in the promises of old. It is impatience with time, immaturity of thought, and impoliteness to God."

William Ward.

"Today in the Word," April, 1989, p. 18

What Shifting Did Elijah Have to Do in Order to Overcome His Cast down Spirit?

I. DISCOURAGEMENT (19:1-5a)
II. DISSATISFACTION (19:6-14)
III. DIRECTION (19:15-21)

I. DISCOURAGEMENT (19:1-5a)

It is ironic to think that the hero of Mount Carmel is now presented as the coward at Jezreel. It proves the point that no miracle will stop the fury of our enemies. We must guard against having furious threats stopping us from going forward in the Lord. We must also prepare ourselves for dealing with our successes. Not everyone will agree with what we do for the Lord.

“Carnal hearts are hardened and enraged against God, by that which should convince and conquer them, and bring them into subjection to Him.”

Matthew Henry
“*Commentary on the Holy Bible: Genesis to Esther*”
Royal Publishers Inc. p. 302

These unfortunate circumstances brought Elijah to a point of discouragement and despair that hindered any further advancement for God’s kingdom. Here’s the man who just days before called down fire from heaven and broke a 3-year drought. Now he was running in fear for his life.

He journeyed south to Beersheba which was the southern most city in Judah. He continued on into the Sinai desert after leaving his servant at the edge of the desert. His journey brought him to a Broom plant or Juniper Tree. For a moment of time he accepted the relief that its shade would offer him. These were longed for and sought after in the wilderness. Yet no prophet of the Lord should set their desire on things below.

The prophet who was destined not to see death was requesting it. When we are dissatisfied with life and especially with what God does with our willingness to serve Him, we may initially choose death over life. He was in the same place as his ancestors both physically and emotionally. Left to himself he had to see that he would return to the ways of his forefathers - wandering in the desert.

I. DISCOURAGEMENT (19:1-5a) (Contd.)

*** Former heavy-weight boxer James (Quick) Tillis fought out of Chicago in the early 1980s. On his first day in the Windy City after his arrival from Tulsa. *“I got off the bus with two cardboard suitcases under my arms in downtown Chicago and stopped in front of the Sears Tower. I put my suitcases down, and I looked up at the Tower and I said to myself, ‘I’m going to conquer Chicago.’ “When I looked down, the suitcases were gone.”* ***

James (Quick) Tillis
“Today in the Word,” September 10, 1992

II. DISSATISFACTION (19:6-14)

The discouragement in Elijah’s heart led him into another spiral. He went from discouragement to dissatisfaction. The journey from Beersheba to Horeb was about 200 miles. Travelling by foot, he could have arrived in six to seven days. This was not a pilgrimage – it became a wandering. It took him 40 days to reach his destination. Being honest with ourselves during our life’s travelling can and will shorten this part of the journey.

The name **“Horeb”** means **“consecration.”** Could it be that God was searching out the prophet’s heart to see just how consecrated (devoted/dedicated) he really was? We all know that God knew his heart – **but did Elijah know his own heart?** He was being put through the wringer.

Instead of answering his prayer to die, God had him walk in the same wilderness that his forefathers wandered and died in. Aren’t you glad that God doesn’t always answer your prayers? He may not give us everything we ask for but thank God we don’t get everything we deserve.

Great men often fail at the very place they consider themselves the strongest. Elijah convinced himself that he was the only one left in Israel who would stand strong in the covenant that God had given the children of Israel. It seemed like the people would support him when he manifested the power of God but they were shrinking away when it no longer was witnessed.

God allowed Elijah to express himself. In expression there is often a temporary relief. Elijah’s spirit rose along with the tempest of the **storm/wind.** **The earthquake** shook the foundations of his security. **The fire** burnt away the dross of his pride and self-achievement. But it took the **still small voice of God** to fashion this prophet for the next stage of his ministry – multiplication.

II. DISSATISFACTION (19:6-14) (Contd.)

“When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak (mantel) over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave, then the voice said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah.’”

I Kings 19:13

God gave Elijah an opportunity to once again answer the same question that He had given before (see verse 9). He answered the question exactly as he had earlier. It proved he was totally dissatisfied with the people he served. He also made it clear that he didn't like being the only one standing for truth and righteousness. **There will always be something to be dissatisfied about.**

*** Two little teardrops were floating down the river of life. One said to the other, “*Who are you?*” Said the other, “*I’m a teardrop from a girl who loved a man and lost him. Who are you?*” “*Well, I am a teardrop of the girl who got him.*” ***

<http://www.bible.org/illus/d/d-74.htm#>

III. DIRECTION (19:15-21)

I really like what God did to the prophet. He didn't let him continue in his state of complaining. God pointed him in the right direction and gave him a job to do.

“The LORD said to him, ‘Go back the way you came, and go to the desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram.’”

I Kings 19:15

He was told to retrace his steps. Perhaps in the process he would have time to re-evaluate his attitude. Apparent defeat was truly showing itself as victory. **Apparent success** was in the shouts of Carmel. **Real success** was in the quieting fact that he had influenced and given a voice to the 7,000 others not to bow to Baal or any other idol.

Elijah had to learn that God's faithful are often God's hidden ones. The visible church is often scarcely visible. **The wheat is often lost in the chaff and the gold in the dross until the day of sifting, refining and separating takes place.** Don't get caught up in what you see.

III. DIRECTION (19:15-21) (Contd.)

What is success - crowded churches, full aisles, attentive congregations, approval of the religious world? **Is it not altered lives, obedient/humble hearts; unseen work which will be revealed and rewarded at the Judgement (Bema) Seat? Elijah had to plant his feet on reality not on the temporary jubilee that took place at Mount Carmel.**

God was not about to leave things undone as may be suggested by Elijah.

1. Anoint Hazael as king over Aram - In doing so God would use this king to judge the people of their idolatry (II Kings 7:12).

2. Anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel - In doing so God would use this king to completely destroy the house of Ahab that both set up and maintained idolatrous practices.

3. Anoint Elisha to succeed Elijah - While Elijah was still living he would be an encouragement; when Elijah died he would carry on the work of witnessing against the apostasy of Israel.

“Men who live in the past remind me of a toy I’m sure all of you have seen. The toy is a small wooden bird called the “Floogie Bird.” Around the Floogie Bird’s neck is a label reading, *“I fly backwards, I don’t care where I’m going. I just want to see where I’ve been.”*

The Words of Harry S. Truman
selected by Robert J. Donovan

God only focusses on our past to point us to our glorious future. We need to wrap ourselves in a mantel of silence and walk the road that God points us to. When we reach a place of destiny, do what God says until He guides your steps once again. Elijah crossed the same pathway as Moses and the children of Israel but was given a different purpose and result.

III. DIRECTION (19:15-21) (Contd.)

379 Parable From a Plane

*** Between an aeroplane and every other form of locomotion and transportation there is a great contrast. The horse and the wagon, the automobile, the bicycle, the locomotive, the speedboat, and the great battleship – all can come to a standstill without danger, and they can all reverse their engines, or their power and go back.

But there is no reverse about the engine of an aeroplane. It cannot back up. It dare not stand still. If it loses its momentum and forward drive, then it crashes. The only safety for the aeroplane is in its forward and upward motion. The only safe direction for the Christian to take is forward and upward. If he stops [without God's leading] or if he begins to slip and go backward, that moment he is in danger. ***

Paul Lee Tan
"Encyclopaedia of 7,700 Illustrations"
pp. 183-184

I've been a passenger on many planes over my adult life. Once all the passengers are boarded the plane is taxied from the gate to an area that the plane can thrust its engines enough to move slowly to the runway. It doesn't take very long once the air traffic controllers give the captain permission to give the engines a full forward thrust that the plane quickly become airborne.

During the landing, once the wheels are safely engaged to the landing strip, the crew place the engines in a reverse thrust to aid the braking system and taxi the plane to its gate to safely unload the passengers. The crew always thank you for choosing them to bring you to your destination.

What Shifting Does the Church Have to Do in Order to Overcome Its Cast down Spirit?

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Date: Jan 28/18

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: Faithful One - D, E

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