

# When the Dark Days Come

*1 Kings 19:1-18*

- We pick back up with Elijah's story this morning, and we will really see that Elijah is a man just like us.
- Last time we looked at his life, we saw Elijah pray and God send fire from heaven, turn the nation back to Himself, and confirm Elijah as the prophet of the one true God. The people killed 450 prophets of Baal and seemed like they were back on track.
- Right after that, God sent rain, breaking the three-year drought.
- Sounds like everything is going great, doesn't it? God has clearly demonstrated His power, the people are worshiping Him, and Elijah is on top of his game.
  
- Unfortunately, the mountain-top experience on Mt. Carmel didn't last long.
- We are going to see that Elijah gets some bad news and sinks into a deep depression, to the point that he is almost suicidal.
- In this section, we will see God come alongside Elijah at his weakest moments and show great grace.
- As we will see, one truth comes out loud and clear: **when the dark days come, seek God's presence more than His power.**
- Read with me **1 Kings 19:1-4.**
- Do you see the predicament Elijah is in? The wicked queen is mad that Elijah ordered the death of her prophets. She is furious with him...Alice in Wonderland Queen of Hearts kind of furious...off with his head!
- We are told we have two basic responses to threats we face: fight or flight.

- I will give you one guess as to which one kicked in here with Elijah...look back at **verses 3-4**.
- Elijah throws in the towel. In spite of having seen God demonstrate His power in a historic, incredibly amazing way, he is just done.
- And that is exactly where God meets him. In that moment, Elijah discovered that he needed God's presence more than he needed God's power.
- By the way, I acknowledge that strictly speaking, this may seem like splitting hairs...God's presence and power are closely related.
- However, practically, you and I may be very aware of the difference.
- Whenever we think of God's power, we think of the Mt. Carmel-type experiences; times when God does something supernatural that makes everyone stand back and go, "Wow!"
- That's what we want when we get depressed, isn't it? We want God to do something to kick us out of this funk. We want Him to supernaturally intervene and make our problem go away.
- That isn't how God normally works, though, as we will see in Elijah's life.
- Instead of seeking God's power in those dark moments, we need to first seek His presence.
- Why? Because, as we will see in this passage, God's presence brings three gifts.
- **We seek God's presence first because He gives us:**

## 1) Comfort

- Let's look at what happens next. Read **verses 5-8**.
- I love how this unfolds.
- Depressed and exhausted, Elijah falls asleep under a tree.

- When he wakes up, he finds something incredible: an angel has fixed him a hot meal.
- This isn't just any angel, though. How is He described in **verse 7?** *"The angel of the Lord"*
- Anybody remember what we have said about that phrase before?
- The angel of the Lord is how Jesus is described before He comes to earth as a baby.
- It wasn't just an angel baking bread; it was God Himself!
- Elijah was running scared, which meant he didn't think God could take care of him and protect him from Jezebel.
- So, when Jesus shows up, the first gift He gives Elijah is comfort.
- It is interesting to notice here that God didn't rebuke Elijah at first or confront his wrong beliefs.
- Elijah shouldn't have been afraid of Jezebel. Sure, she had killed other prophets, but Elijah had just seen God demonstrate His power on Mt. Carmel.
- God shows His grace and mercy here, though, by comforting His servant.
- Look again at **verses 5-6...**
- God simply tells him to get up and get something to eat.
- There is no command here; simply a gracious provision for a weary soul.
- Isn't that what Jesus promises those who come to Him?  
*"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*  
*(Matthew 11:28-30, NASB95)*

- Even before Jesus came, King David had that same understanding:
 

*Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4, NASB95)*
- One of the gifts God gives when we know He is present is His comfort.
- When the Apostle Paul looked at all the hardships he endured in his life spent serving the Lord, he had this to say:
 

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. (2 Corinthians 1:3-5, NASB95)*
- When dark days come, when everything seems to be closing in, we don't need God's power, we need His presence to bring comfort.
- However, as we see in Elijah's life, God's presence brings at least two more gifts with it.
- After feeding Elijah a second time, Jesus leaves and Elijah sets out on a long, meandering walk.
- He ends up on Mount Horeb, which is another name for Mount Sinai—the mountain where God first gave the 10 Commandments and the Law to Israel.
- There, we find God giving Elijah two additional gifts.
- **The next gift of God's presence is...**

## 2) Correction

- Pick up with me in **verse 9-15**.

- Did you notice that familiar phrase again? "*...the word of the Lord came to him...*"
  - Once again, God is speaking to His prophet.
  - This time, however, there is a twist: God didn't tell him to come hide in a cave. That may be why Elijah a simple question – "*What are you doing here, Elijah?*"
  - Elijah's response is frustrated, discouraged, and hopeless.
  - "Sure, God, you have done all these things, but for what? The nation is still evil, and they are going to kill me if I go back there."
  - This prophet who stood so strong and believed God's Word so fully has faltered.
- 
- God has already given Him comfort and sustained him. Now, it is time for God to offer correction.
  - Elijah was wrong. God hadn't abandoned him, God's plan wasn't failing, and Elijah wasn't the only one left.
  - However, the next phase of God's activity wasn't going to look exactly like what Elijah had seen previously, so God corrected his wrong ideas.
- 
- How? By demonstrating His power, but not putting His presence with it.
  - Elijah had seen God's power clearly and boldly displayed in fire and the rains that followed. He had shown His power through Elijah in flashy, dramatic ways.
  - Now, God sends a strong, supernaturally powerful wind, but not His presence.
  - He sends an earthquake that shakes the ground underneath and around him, but not His presence.
  - He sends a fire, just like on Carmel, but this time, He doesn't send His presence.

- Finally, there is a sound of a gentle whisper, or as some versions translate it, a still, small voice.
- This time, Elijah recognizes God's presence and goes out to meet Him.
- We don't know exactly why God did things this way. We do know that this event marks a turning point in Elijah's ministry, and the way God works through him from this point forward isn't nearly as outwardly dramatic as before.
- Perhaps Elijah was disillusioned with the fact that Jezebel was still alive and there were still people worshiping Baal. God hadn't wiped them off the face of the earth yet.
- Maybe Elijah made the mistake we make from time to time: we think God's presence and activity will always look flashy and dramatic and that everything will look the way we expect.
- Perhaps today you need to stop looking for God to kill the Jezebels in your life and start listening harder for His voice in the midst of your situation.
- Could it be that you're looking for the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, when God isn't interested in showing Himself that way in your life right now?
- This morning may be the gentle correction you need: Stop looking for His power to destroy every situation you hate and start listening for the still, small voice His presence.
- You may think He isn't keeping His end of the bargain, so you are running somewhere God never told you to go. Stop—what are you doing here?
- "But Sean, He feels so far away" – Don't rely on your feelings; rely on what He has said!

- In His final instructions to us before He went back to heaven, Jesus reminded us:
 

*...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.  
(Matthew 28:20, NASB95)*
- Nothing in the world can separate you from His love!
 

*For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38–39, NASB95)*
- Remember that He is with you and He is able to accomplish His plan, even when it doesn't seem like it.
- **That leads us to the third and final gift we see of God's presence:**

### 3) Clarity

- Pick up again in **verse 14**.
  - Elijah repeats his previous statement.
  - How does God respond? Read **verse 15-18**
  - When God responds, He gives Elijah clarity about what is going on in his life.
  - Elijah finds out what his next steps are as well as the fact that one of his key statements, that he was the only one left, isn't true.
  - When God draws near and speaks, He shows Elijah His perspective.
- 
- Isn't that what you and I need? Our field of view is so narrow...we see so little of what is going on around us.
  - Not only that, but we are completely clueless as to what our future holds. We can make plans and projections based off

what we see, but ultimately, God is the only one who knows with certainty what is going to happen.

- So what do you do when the dark days come and you scratch your head in confusion?
  - Seek His presence.
  - God's presence has a clarifying effect on our souls, bringing peace and direction when all we see is chaos and confusion.
  - He knows what is happening, why, and what He desires to see next.
- 
- Notice, though, that the clarity God gives doesn't always answer every question.
  - Did God say anything about Jezebel directly here?
  - Did He say how He was going to keep Elijah safe as he traveled back all the way through Israel into Syria?
  - No—but He clearly showed that He was in charge, that He was keeping His word, and that He had a plan for it all.
- 
- Are you facing dark days? Do you feel like God isn't hearing your prayers? Perhaps you aren't listening for the right thing.
  - Maybe you're looking for power when God wants to give you His presence first.
  - You're looking for the wind to change the direction of your trouble or the earthquake that will bring your problem crashing to the ground or the fire that will destroy that situation that has you distraught.
  - Don't give up.
  - Look for His presence to bring comfort. He may challenge you to think rightly about what He is doing, but He does it because He loves you. When He shows up, ask Him to give whatever clarity He sees fit to you in your situation.

- Truly, Elijah was a man just like us. When faced with an enemy who wanted to kill him, he ran and hid.
- Don't you wish he had stayed strong? What could God have done had Elijah not run?
- He didn't perfectly obey, so Elijah leaves us wanting more.
- There was another servant of God who would face death for us: Jesus.
- He didn't run from those who tried to kill Him, even though He was completely innocent.
- In fact, He leaned into it. Jesus said
 

*"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father." (John 10:17-18, NASB95)*
- Elijah experienced the comforting presence of God in his darkest days, and Jesus experienced the wrath and abandonment of God in His.
- Yet He did it for us; so that we could be near and experience His presence.