

Living With Power in Dark Times (Part 5)

Sunday, October 3, 2021

In this series we will consider the ways in which the lives of Elijah and Elisha show us how to live with power even in dark times

SERIES TEXTS

Matthew 5:13-16

13 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. **16 In the same way, let your light shine before others,** that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Acts 1:8

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Living with power in dark days means...

- TAKING A STAND for TRUTH.
- TRUSTING GOD for PROVISION
- PRAYING with PASSION and PERSISTENCE
- OPERATING with SIGNS and WONDERS
- CONFRONTING WICKEDNESS

There is another type of darkness that we must face with the power of God. In Part 5 we will see how Elijah **OVERCAME THE BATTLE WITHIN.**

1 Kings 19

Elijah Flees to Horeb

19 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. **2** So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, “May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.”

3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, **4** while he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.” **5** Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep.

All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” **6** He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

7 The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.” **8** So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. **9** There he went into a cave and spent the night.

The Lord Appears to Elijah

And the word of the Lord came to him: “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

10 He replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

11 The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. **12** After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. **13** When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

14 He replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

15 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. **16** Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. **17** Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. **18** Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.”

The Call of Elisha

19 So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. **20** Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. “Let me kiss my father and mother goodbye,” he said, “and then I will come with you.”

“Go back,” Elijah replied. “What have I done to you?”

21 So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant.

Elijah had been living with power in his dark times by...

- **TAKING A STAND** for TRUTH.
- **TRUSTING GOD** for PROVISION
- **PRAYING** with PASSION and PERSISTENCE
- **OPERATING** with SIGNS and WONDERS
- **CONFRONTING WICKEDNESS**

But living with power in dark times is not just about the things going on around us, but what happens inside us as well. As soon as Elijah received word that Jezebel was out to take his life a darkness began to descend upon him and the battle within began.

3 **Elijah was afraid and ran for his life.** (fear) When he came to Beersheba in Judah, **he left his servant there** (Isolation), **4** while he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it and **prayed that he might die.** “**I have had enough, Lord,**” he said. “Take my life; **I am no better than my ancestors.** (*self pity*)” **5** Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. (*Depression*)

I have always been fascinated by this story in Elijah's life; but in these last few weeks, God has been teaching me so much from this passage about **OVERCOMING THE BATTLE WITHIN.**

First, we need to understand the battle itself.

- **It can happen to anyone at anytime**
 - It happened quickly and unexpectedly (Like the storm on the Sea of Galilee... Suddenly, without warning)
 - Elijah was a man of God full of power and faith
 - This happened immediately following a great victory and demonstration of Gods power
 - Why is it we can so quickly forget what God has done?
 - There is an unbalanced ratio between the effects of positive comments or actions and negative comments or actions
- **It is important for us to identify the battle we are facing**
 - These are battles that are on the inside, thought them may be caused by what is happening on the outside.

11 The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.”

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. **12** After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. **13** When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Then a voice said to him, “**What are you doing here, Elijah?**”

- The wind, the earthquake and the fire represent what was happening on the inside of Elijah.
 - The wind represents circumstances that cause us to feel unsettled. Things are moving and, like the wind, are out of our control.
 - The earthquake represents stronger feelings of being unstable and shaken things crumbling and falling apart around us
 - The fire represents painful feelings that seek to consume and destroy us.
- What are you doing here?
 - How did you get here
 - How are you responding to these things at this moment
 - Why are you here instead of where I want you to be

- Can you imagine David trying to fight and unknown or invisible enemy. Put a name to it and begin to understand the battle you are fighting
 - Fear
 - Loneliness
 - Anger
 - Depression
 - Self-pity
 - Self-loathing
 - Self-doubt (lack of confidence)
 - Anxiety
 - Frustration
 - Doubt
 - Confusion
 - Sadness
 - Grief
 - Temptation
 - Hurt
 - Pain
 - Bitterness
 - Unforgiveness

Some of these battles are the very things that have been unleashed on our world during these past two years dealing with Covid-19

One headline states..."Covid has caused a tsunami of anxiety, depression and mental distress" - Dr Miriam Stoppard. And article after article describes the very same thing and its resulting consequences

In fact, one large study shows that fear is tied with obesity as the number 1 predictor of mortality once someone goes to the hospital. The spirit of fear is literally killing people

So how do we OVECOME THE BATTLES WITHIN?

1. FEED on the things of GOD

All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." **6** He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again.

7 The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.” 8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

Feast on the Word, Worship, Prayer, Testimonies, Teachings

Psalm 1:1-2

1 Blessed is the one... 2 ...whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.

Psalm 119:97, 105

97 Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

105 Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

2. PREPARE for a JOURNEY not a jaunt

7 The angel of the Lord came back a second time and touched him and said, “Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.” 8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God.

In other words, overcoming the battle within is not accomplished with a single step, but a series of continued steps walked out in faith one after the other

3. We need to get QUIET in the PRESENCE of God

2 After the earthquake came a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. 13 When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave.

Psalm 46:10

10 ...“Be still, and know that I am God...”

The testimony that God was not in the wind, earthquake and fire reminds us that we are to keep our eyes on him not the storms that surround us or are in us.

Isaiah 26:3-4

3 You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. 4 Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord himself, is the Rock eternal.

Notice how the turmoil and power of the wind, earthquake and fire are juxtaposed with the quiet whisper of God. God is reminding us that His power is much greater than the power of the things we are battling with. His power brings stillness, calmness and stability, assurance, hope, peace, healing and comfort.

4. It's good for us to remember that WE ARE NOT ALONE in our struggles

14 He replied, “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.”

18 Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.”

1 Peter 4:12 (NLT)

12 Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you.

When we realize that others are fighting the same battles we are strengthened to continue to fight, we are encouraged by knowing that we are not alone

Deuteronomy 31:6

6 Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Hebrews 13:5-6

5 Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,

“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” So we say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”

5. God's PURPOSES keep us GOING

15 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. **16** Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. **17** Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu.

Colossians 3:23-24

23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, **24** since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Matthew 24:45-46

45 “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? **46** It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.

6. FELLOWSHIP with other believers is KEY

3 **Elijah was afraid and ran for his life.** (fear) When he came to Beersheba in Judah, **he left his servant there** (Isolation),

19 So Elijah went from there and found Elisha son of Shaphat. He was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. **20** Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. “Let me kiss my father and mother goodbye,” he said, “and then I will come with you.”

“Go back,” Elijah replied. “What have I done to you?”

21 So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the plowing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant.

I've always been somewhat troubled by this part of the story. I felt like it represented the end of Elijah's ministry - like he just couldn't hack it anymore, so God found someone else to do the job. For me it always seemed that things ended on a sad note for Elijah at this point. And the phrase "what have I done to you" made it sound like Elijah really didn't care if Elisha responded or not.

But a few days ago God woke me up and began to speak to my heart about what was happening here.

Let me share a couple of translation possibilities that might help...

Elijah replied, “Go on back, but think about what I have done to you.” (NLT)

“You can go,” Elijah said. “But remember what I’ve done for you.” (CEV)

And he said to him: Go, and return back: for that which was my part, I have done to thee. (DRA)

In other words, *I have done what God told me to do, I am inviting you to return and do what God wants you to do. We will do it together.*

To fully understand we have to go back to the first verse of the chapter. "he left his servant there" and then look at the last verse "Elijah became his servant"

What God showed me is that He was restoring Elijah's fellowship with other believers which in turn brings encouragement and strength. We need each other

Proverbs 27:17

17 As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

I think it also teaches us something in that Elisha was younger than Elijah. We need the younger generation's enthusiasm and energy, they need our wisdom and experience

Hebrews 10:24-25

24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, **25** not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.