

Distress of Elijah

by W.F. Anderson

The sermon explores Elijah's distress and God's compassionate response, highlighting the reality of depression in the Christian life and the importance of listening for God's voice amidst struggles.

Duration: 42:42

Scripture: Genesis 24:14, Ruth 1:16, 1 Kings 18:21, 1 Kings 19:18, 1 Corinthians 2:3, Galatians 6:2, James 5:17

Topics: "Faith And Obedience", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of leaving biblical history as it is and not spiritualizing it. He encourages listeners to see the working of God in ordinary, everyday human life. The speaker also mentions the Mount of Transfiguration as a mountaintop experience that disciples had only once, but emphasizes the importance of obeying what was learned there. The sermon also references a story from the Bible about a servant looking for a wife and highlights the qualities he was seeking, including a hard-working and courteous woman.

Transcript

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had slain all the prophets with his sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, So may the gods do to me and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by this time tomorrow. Then he was afraid, and he arose and went for his light, and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servants there.

But he himself, on a day's journey into the wilderness, came and sat down under a bloom tree, and he asked that he might die, saying, See not, now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my father. And he lay down and slept under a bloom tree, and, behold, an angel touched him and said to him, Arise and eat. And he looked, and, behold, there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water.

And he ate and drank and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, Arise and eat, or else this journey will be too great for you. And he arose and ate and drank, and went from the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God.

And there he came to a cave and lodged there. Behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and he said to him, What are you doing here, Elijah? He said, I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken thy coven, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with a sword.

And I, even I, own thee of them, and they seek my life, Hagar. And he said, Go forth and stand at the mount before the Lord. Behold, the Lord passed by in a great and strong wind, wrenched the mountains and broken pieces of rocks before the Lord.

The Lord was not in the wind, and after the wind an earthquake, and the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire. The Lord was not in the fire, and after the fire, still a small voice.

And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and split the entrance of the cave. Behold, there came a voice to him and said, What are you doing here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have broken thy covenant, thrown down thy altars, and slain thy prophets with a sword.

And I, even I, own thee of them, and they seek my life, Hagar. And the Lord said to him, Go and return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.

And Jehu, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, you shall anoint to be king over Israel. And Elisha, the son of Shaphat, of Abel Meholah, you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. And him who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay, and him who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.

Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mount that has not kissed him. Let me say a word about studying the Old Testament, at least some of these historical sections, before I look at this for a moment. I'm throwing this in free.

When you go to the Old Testament and you read the stories of these great characters of the Old Testament, please don't treat them as history. Don't spiritualize them. Don't try to make them say what they don't say.

One of our difficulties is trying to read the whole Bible as if it were all the Gospel of John, and it isn't. We read the book of Ruth, for instance, as if it were the Gospel of John. We read the book of Judges as if it were the Gospel of John.

We read the books of Kings and Chronicles as if they were the Gospel of John, and they're not. And what we end up doing is spiritualizing everything in the Old Testament to make it sound like the truth of the Gospel of John. And we do ourselves a great disservice when we do that.

What we miss is the everyday life situation of people with whom God works, and we lose the idea that God can work in our everyday life situation. We miss the ordinariness of a great deal of Christianity. We want to put everything on a mountaintop, and most of life is not on a mountaintop.

Most of life is just the ordinary routine. There are times we slip into valleys, and there are times we are up on the mountains, but most of the time we are in a very, very ordinary routine of life. And unless we see that, we'll wonder what in the world is wrong with our lives, and there's nothing wrong with it, maybe.

And when you read those historical sections, just leave them as historical sections. When Jacob crosses the brook Javit with his staff in his hand, what that means is Jacob crossed the brook Javit with his staff in his hand. That's what it means.

Don't make it mean something else. If Jacob meets Rachel at the well, that does not mean the believer has to find Christ in the Scriptures. That means Jacob met Rachel at the well.

That's what it means. Leave it there. And I don't know where all the other fellows are, hunting wives, but when Abraham sends out the servants to find a bride for Isaac, don't spiritualize that.

That's not the Spirit of God trying to find a bride for Christ. That's a good, hard lesson of an ordinary, everyday--well, maybe it's not the ordinary, but an everyday situation in which God worked through the circumstances of life to bring blessing to his people. And it was interesting to me in talking with, particularly, the Memphis students, the Mayas, how they liked to spiritualize certain parts of that story, but how there were certain parts they didn't want to spiritualize.

And they thought this is what God would do to get them a wife, that they would just sit there and God would go out and find this one right girl for them, because that's what the story taught. That's not what the story teaches at all. And so it's very interesting to me, the parts you want to spiritualize and the parts you don't want to spiritualize.

You want to spiritualize Isaac, you want to spiritualize the Elder Servant, you want to spiritualize Abraham and make him God, and you want to make you Isaac, and you want to make the Elder Servant the Spirit of God. I guarantee you one thing, you sure don't want to spiritualize Rachel, do you? You want a good, flesh-and-blood girl. And you don't even read the kind of prayer that the Elder Servant prayed before he picked out the girl.

It was Rebecca, wasn't it? Did I say Rachel? Oh, well. Rachel would object to that, and I guess Rebecca would, too. But that Elder Servant prayed, now look, Lord, when I get down here to this well, and I ask a girl for a drink, and then she offers to water the camels, let that be the girl.

Well, he was a good, hard-headed, sensible servant. He knew the kind of wife to look for. First of all, she was a courteous woman.

She would give him water, hospitable, as a semite would have to be to live in that culture. But man, he was looking for a girl who knew how to work. Can you imagine how much water it would take to water those camels? Do you know how much water a camel can drink? And all he was saying was, Lord, I want a good, hard-working girl.

And that's all he was saying. And you just leave the thing the way it is, and God works through those circumstances, or else you are not going to be able to see that God works in our circumstances, and you leave biblical history as biblical history. And you don't have to spiritualize it to get the message of God out of it.

You just leave it as it is, and see the working of God in ordinary, everyday moonlight. Now, we don't have a great number of mountaintop experiences, but as Oswald Chambers says somewhere in his book, Biopmos, or his highest, that one of those disciples, for instance, was on the Mount of Transfiguration. They only had that experience once.

But you can always obey what you have learned on the mountaintop. You can't always be on the mountaintop, but you can always obey what you learned there. So leave history as history.

Now, that's all free, and then we'll come to 1 Kings chapter 19. I want to talk about this great prophet Elijah. Elijah was suffering from depression, and he had thoughts of death, and I would say suicidal tendencies.

Something impossible that a valued Christian should get in a situation where he's depressed. It doesn't. Hickley Marie and I were planning a course in Christian living for our students the year he died, and as we went through the kind of things we wanted to share with our students, just about practical Christianity, he said, Bill, we've got to put in a section on depression.

He had just finished a whole series of studies with the student nurses over at West Suburban School of Nursing, in the hospital there, and he had asked them what subject would be most helpful for them, and by a large majority, they wanted him to spend several nights talking about depression, not just because they saw it in the patient they had to work with, but because they experienced it in their own lives. Christian girls, who at times became severely depressed, and wanted him to handle the whole subject of depression. And as I thought about my own life and many of the people I knew, I saw the relevance of the whole thing, that we do get suppressed, as Elijah got suppressed here in 1 Kings chapter 19.

Now, Elijah's not the only man who got that way. Jonah, for different reasons, sitting on a hillside looking over the city of Nineveh, hoping for one great holocaust that never came, and he rather suspected wouldn't come, thought it would be better to die. Job wanted to die.

He expressed that wish more than once throughout his book. And then I think of the Apostle Paul, and don't make a superhuman people out of these men and women in the Bible. They were not superhuman.

Elijah, as James reminds us, was a man subject to like passions as we are. Don't make them superhuman. I think of the Apostle Paul.

He could write in his first letter to the Corinthians that on that second missionary's journey, when he came to Corinth, having come down through that Greek peninsula, he said, I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. And I think of the account of that visit in the 18th chapter of Acts. And I take it our Lord Jesus does not do anything unnecessary.

He doesn't just fling miracles around for the fun of throwing miracles around. And I read in the 18th chapter of Acts that the Lord came to Paul in a vision. Now, if the Lord did that, I take it there was a good reason for it.

There was a need. And what the Lord said to Paul while he was there in Corinth was, don't be afraid. Nobody is going to set on you to hurt you.

I have many people in this city. Now, I take it that message was necessary. He knew his experiences on the first missionary journey, meaning you want to get gone through already, on the second missionary journey, having come down that Greek peninsula, having suffered persecution after persecution, already having been jailed and beaten, been driven out of city after city, and now he comes to Corinth and he's at the end of his rope.

He's had all he can take. And it's necessary for the Lord to come to him and say, Paul, don't be afraid. Nobody's going to set on you here.

You're not going to have that physical persecution here in Corinth. Go ahead and preach. And even Paul needed something like that.

I think we are totally... I shouldn't say totally. That's unfair. We are very often unrealistic in our approach to Christianity.

We cannot distinguish between God's ideal and God's realistic approach to us. God has his ideal. He has his standards.

Those are the goals towards which we are moving. It wasn't Emerson who said that our reach should always exceed our grasp. What I have achieved is always less than the goal.

And God's ideals are the goal. And we are moving toward that goal. God has his ideals, but God isn't hung up on his ideals.

I like the expression of G. H. Wang in an article he wrote years ago. And he said, God is the supreme realist. And he is.

He has his ideals, but he deals with us realistically. He doesn't refuse to deal with us if we haven't achieved the ideals. He knows those are goals, not achievements.

And he works with us where we are. And if we Christians could get God's perspective, we'd save ourselves and each other a lot of grief. And I think sometimes with some of the hymns we sing, it's a good thing that we're so used to the words we don't pay any attention to them.

I go into absolute depression when we sing that song, If we trust and never doubt, he will surely bring us out. If God is going to wait until I never doubt, he'll never bring me out. If we trust and never doubt.

Or I want to give up when we sing that chorus, Lord of all. Lord of all, or not Lord at all. I quit.

There are whole areas of my life I'm not even aware of that the Lordship of Christ still has to be expressed in. And if he's not going to be my Lord at all, unless he's Lord of all, I might as well quit. God doesn't work in that either-or situation.

That's his ideal. But God is a supreme realist, and he works where we are. And we can say, if you trust, you don't worry.

And if you worry, you don't trust. And that's the ideal. It's true, but it's never true in our experience.

Truth is that the psalmist says, I will trust and not be afraid. I haven't achieved that. I like the verse that says, what time I am afraid, I will trust.

Now that doesn't say, what time I am afraid, I will trust and stop being afraid. It simply says, what time I am afraid, I will trust in you. And I think most of us discover we do both.

We fear and trust at the same time. And that's one of the reasons I like Tocqueville's Psalms of My Life. His poems are so realistic, and he talks about that.

One of the poems written, I forget the title, but it was in a hospital waiting room while his infant son was going to have to undergo major surgery. And he looked through the glass of his kid's truck full of tubes, just a little English. And in that poem, he said, I fear and I trust.

I don't fear you. I trust you, but I fear my circumstances. I fear the outcome.

And in the midst of my fear, I am trusting God. And I think that's closer to reality than the idea if we trust, we don't fear. If we fear or worry, whatever it is, we don't trust.

We do both. And God will work with us where we are. You give God a half a chance to work with you, and he'll do it.

And that's why I like C.S. Lewis's statement. I'm meandering this morning, but that's the privilege of preachers that we don't finish this all right. I like C.S. Lewis's statement, but he really got from George Osama.

But his statement is this. God is very easy to please and very hard to satisfy. You got that? God is very easy to please and very hard to satisfy.

Any little step we take for him pleases him, but it never satisfies him. It's like a father teaching his infant son to walk. That first little step pleases him infinitely, but it does not satisfy him.

He's not going to be satisfied until that boy is up walking as a boy ought to walk. And every little step we take pleases God, but he's not going to be satisfied until we are exactly like his son. He is easy to please and very hard to satisfy.

So, I want to look at Elijah just as it stands, rather realistically, and see what help we can get from it this morning. I don't suppose I have to define depression. That's a disorder that's marked by sadness and inactivity and self-appreciation.

Probably most of us as scholars could define it ourselves. But Elijah was a man who was depressed, and I want to look first of all at the causes that I see in this section for Elijah's depression, and then the way the Lord handled it, and maybe give us some help for our own depression or working with other people who are in depression. You're aware of the background of this whole story.

Elijah lived in the days of one of the, well, not one of the, the most wicked king in the northern kingdom of Israel, a man by the name of Ahab. One of the reasons Ahab was so wicked was because of an alliance that had been made with Phoenicia by Amasai, his predecessor, and he had married his son Ahab to Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Phoenicia. And Jezebel, when she came... And then that, of course, was customary.

You formed economic and military alliances with other nations by marrying sons and daughters, and that way you formed the alliance. And this is what had happened in the northern kingdom of Israel. Amasai, the Amasai dynasty, was one of the strongest in that northern kingdom, and that was one of the reasons for it.

And when Jezebel came from Phoenicia into the northern kingdom of Israel as the wife of Ahab, she brought with her all her moral and religious baggage, and she was a thorough devotee of the god Baal. And, through her, Baal worship was introduced into this northern kingdom of Israel, and through her Ahab himself became a worshiper of Baal. And, as you read the history of Ahab, you recognize that the real strong, dominating force in that kingdom was not Ahab, but Jezebel.

Jezebel was a strong character. Ahab was a rather weak character, largely dominated by his wife and her sisters. That shows up in the whole account of the vineyard of Naboth, for instance.

When Naboth refused to surrender his heritage, Ahab went up to his room and laid down on the bed and cried like a big baby. Jezebel came and said, what's the matter with you? Oh, I want a Naboth vineyard. I want to straighten out a little crook in my garden back there, and I need to get his vineyard.

And he won't give it. He won't sell it to me, because it's part of his fair heritage. And Jezebel, who knew how to handle those things from a pagan background, said, that's no problem, leave it to me.

And then you know the story of how she had Naboth accused of apostasy, stoned to death, and she came back from that bloody deed and said, okay, now go ahead and take his vineyard. The trouble is, this guy Elijah kept popping up. And when Ahab went down there to inspect this newly acquired property, there was a guy leaning on the fence, waiting for him.

Turned out to be Elijah. And Elijah had a few unchoice things to say to this man. But anyhow, these were the days in which Elijah lived.

Total apostasy in this northern kingdom of Israel. It had started out badly under Jeroboam I. It had gotten worse under Ahab. And in days of absolute apostasy, when it seemed that he was standing alone, Elijah was prophesying in this northern kingdom of Israel.

And Elijah was one of the greatest prophets of the Old Testament, though he was not a writing prophet. And there are some basic ideas that come out of the ministry of Elijah that stand through the rest of the Old Testament. Maybe we'll get time to touch on one or two of those.

But those were the days in which Elijah lived. And Baalism had totally captured this northern kingdom. And in judgment, the word of Elijah, the prayer of Elijah, a three-year drought came on this northern kingdom.

And at the climax of it, Elijah set up a deliberate confrontation with the prophets of Baal. And you know the story of what happened on Mount Carmel, when Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal, one man against 500, and the representatives of the people of Israel there to decide whether Baal is God or Jehovah is God, one or the other. And this was going to be the determining concept.

And you talk about humor in the Bible. I don't know whether I better tell you what Elijah really said or not, but when the prophets of Baal are dancing around the altar, old Elijah gets up to poke fun at them. He's a holler a little louder.

Maybe he's sleeping. Now, wake him up! You know, Baal. He had no fear of Baal.

He knew Baal didn't exist. Wake him up! Maybe he's on a journey. Or then, as the King James says, maybe he has turned aside.

And that's an old testament expression for going to the bathroom. And what Elijah says is, hey, maybe Baal has gone to the bathroom. You're going to have to wait for him when he gets back.

These are by humor. So he really mocks these men. And then he gets into that contest where he calls on God to consume the sacrifice.

And when all that is over, here are the representatives of Israel saying, The Lord Jehovah, He is God. Jehovah, He is God. And after that tremendous victory, you've got in chapter 19, Elijah running for his life.

What happens? You've got him way down there in the wilderness, sitting under that bloom tree, asking that he might die. What's happened to this man? Let me suggest three causes, and many of these are overlapping, but let me suggest three causes for this man's suppression. The first of these is physical.

When he left Carmel after that contest, and before that rain was coming, you've got to get back to Jezreel, you've got to get your chariot bogged down in this gully washer that's coming. Elijah took the place of a slave, and he ran in front of that chariot from Carmel to Jezreel, which is roughly 20 miles. And he ran that whole distance in front of the chariot.

Now, I hope Ahab didn't have that chariot in high gear, but it was the work of a slave with those kings that he ran in front of the chariot, and Elijah took the place of that slave and ran that 20 miles back to Jezreel. And then we've got this word from Jezebel he forgot. Now, remember he was in the northern kingdom of Israel, and when he left he was walking.

And he walked all the way through that northern kingdom of Israel and all the way down through the southern kingdom of Judah to Beersheba, and Beersheba is the southernmost point in the southern kingdom of Judah on the edge of the wilderness. And if he didn't stop, which I don't think he did, it took him three days and nights of steady walking to get there. His servant obviously was all worn out by this time, so he leaves the servant of Beersheba, and he goes another day's journey down into the wilderness.

He has run 20 miles, he's walked day and night for four days and nights. The man is simply exhausted physically. Would that depress a man? Of course it will.

Now, distinctions in the Word of God may be helpful if we properly understand them. We talk about a man's body, soul, and spirit, and those are helpful distinctions as long as we don't divide them. The biblical view of man is a holistic view, particularly in the Old Testament.

I don't think any Jew in the Old Testament would think of splitting up man the way we do. They saw man as a spiritual, physical being, but a unity, and when we start to think about it, we realize that. You cannot divorce the physical from the spiritual, for instance.

No way you can do that. John Cole was already hinting at that, and when he was talking, I was thinking of an experience I had. For a time in World War II, I was on a little patrol boat, a little wooden patrol boat that had been designed by an idiot when he was having a nightmare.

He designed it with a tremendously high bow that dropped off toward the stern, and all that bow he had sitting up there would catch everything in the blue. If a whale 30 miles off came up and spouted, this thing tilted over 30 degrees, and I remember the first time we went out on patrol into the Atlantic, and we got a little rough weather. I was as sick as a dog.

I don't know how sick a dog gets, but I knew how sick I got, and as every sailor knows, it's first you're afraid you're going to die, and then you're afraid you're not. Now, when I was hanging over that rail, physically sick, if you had come to me to discuss Daniel's 70 weeks, I'd have thrown you overboard. If you had said, let's kneel and pray, you better not.

And we are so integrated, you cannot divorce one from the other. It is possible so to suffer that it is absolutely meaningless. Let's not be foolish and talk about what a Christian learns from everything he suffers.

Some suffering is so severe there's no way to learn from it. A person can be in such intense pain, for instance, all his circuits are jammed. He can't learn anything.

That intense pain has totally dominated everything. No problem unspiritual. It's the total integration of our being, the way God made us.

And, of course, your physical condition is going to affect your emotional and your spiritual condition. Of course it is. That's the way God made us.

And I'm suggesting that the first factor in his depression was physical. Let me hurry through and suggest that the second factor was emotional. After all, if you had been in that tremendous contest on Mount Carmel, you're standing against 500 false prophets.

By the way, you end up killing those 500, some of whom were Jezebel's personal prophets who sat in the palace and were fed by her at the table. And you've gone through that tremendous emotional experience of that intense contest, you've killed those prophets, and you realize you're standing alone. And there's a tremendous emotional drain.

But I think there's more than that. I think part of the emotional drain on this man, Elijah, is the realization that he was alone. In that whole northern kingdom, as far as he knew, he was the only true worshiper of God.

God had the only true worshiper of God. Oh boy, poor Elijah's in apostate already. And that shows up in why he fled from Jezebel.

Now, don't say that he was just afraid of a woman. He wasn't just afraid of any woman. He was afraid of Jezebel, and so would you be.

Didn't he know that God could handle Jezebel? Yes, he knew that, but God hadn't handled Jezebel. Now, think of the message that Jezebel sent to Elijah. God do so to me, and more also, if by this time tomorrow you're not dead.

If you want to kill a man, and he's free in your country, you tell him that 24 hours he's going to be dead, and you haven't put him in jail? By that very statement, Jezebel knew there wasn't a place in that northern kingdom where he could hide. I'll get you within 24 hours. And he knew it.

He fled for his life. What she was saying is, there isn't a single family in this northern kingdom that will hide you. Why not? Hadn't they, representatives of Israel, stood at Mount Carmel and said, Jehovah is God, Jehovah is God.

Well, let me ask you if you were there. And fire had come down out of heaven so severe that it burned up the sacrifice, the water in the trench, and the dust in the trench as well. What would you say if you were standing there? Are you going to say, Natzam, Jehovah, when he does send down fire like that? Do you want to be the next sacrifice? Of course you're going to say, Jehovah is God.

That doesn't mean you believe it, but you're going to say it. And that, by the way, is a distinction our Lord makes. We talk about the distinction between what we believe with our head and what we believe with our heart.

That's not a biblical distinction. The biblical distinction is between what we say and what we believe in our heart. That's the distinction.

The distinction is between what we say and what we really believe, and those are often cross-purposed. That was the case with the Pharisees. What they said and what they really believed contradicted each other.

What these people said and what they really believed contradicted each other. They said, Jehovah is God. What they really believed is Baal is God.

They were more afraid of Jezebel than they were of Jehovah, really. And so when Jezebel says, I'll get you in 24 hours, she knew and Elijah knew there wasn't a family in that northern kingdom who would hide him. And it was part of his difficulty that Elijah felt his isolation.

There was no one to stand with him. That emotional isolation. One of the things that leads to depression is that emotional isolation.

The feeling, even if you're in a crowd, of being absolutely alone. Nobody really understands and stands with you. Nobody shares your viewpoints.

Nobody shares your interests. Nobody shares your joys, and nobody shares your sorrows. You're standing absolutely alone.

That's one of the factors that leads to depression. A third factor is spiritual, and that's the sense of failure. Spiritual failure.

There is any question that Elijah's attempt on Mount Carmel was to turn this nation back to God. That was always the prophet's attempt, and he had utterly failed. That nation had not turned back to God.

They were still thoroughly committed to the God veil. And that senseless failure ate away at him, and he ran. Don't be hard on Elijah.

So, as I stated, there are three of the physical causes. Three of the causes, physical, emotional, and spiritual, for his depression. I want to look very briefly at how God handles those, and maybe we'll get some help.

Going down that day's journey into the wilderness after he'd gotten to Beersheba, he got under a juniper tree and fell asleep. And that's exactly what he needed. I remember reading in Louis Gray Schaeffer's book, He Did It Spiritual, years ago.

It's amazing what things you remember and what things you don't remember. All the tremendous spiritual lessons of the ministry of the Spirit of God in a Christian's life, I have forgotten. But one thing he said in that book I have always remembered.

He said that sometimes the most spiritual thing a Christian can do is go to bed. And that's what Elijah needed, was to get to sleep. The second thing he needed was something to eat.

And while he was sleeping... How would you like to have this kind of room, sir? While he was sleeping, an angel came down and built a fire. There were hot stones there. Built a fire and baked him a cake.

And one of my smart aleck students in the mayor said, Aha, angel food cake. I flunked him immediately. But the angel prepared the food for him to eat.

He needed two things. He needed physical rest, he needed to sleep, and he needed food. And that's what God provided.

Now, I sometimes think that this angel is like a nurse in a hospital. You've ever been in a hospital? They wake you up at night to see if you need your sleeping pills. And then when the doctor says this patient needs rest, five o'clock in the morning, there they are rattling.

They still have those metal pitchers of water, and those jelly carts that come down where the wheels haven't been greased in 90 years. And here you need rest, and they wake you up. And what this guy needed was rest, and here's this angel twice waking him up.

Hey, you need something to eat. Sounds like a nurse in a hospital. But he needed those physical needs.

Now, let me suggest this. For deep depression, if anybody goes into deep depression, the first thing I suggest is a thorough physical examination, because there are some forms of depression that are caused physically. A hormonal imbalance in the body is found to be a cause of very deep depression.

And if there's a persistent deep depression, I would suggest right off the bat, not reading the Bible and praying, but getting to a doctor and getting a thorough physical examination to see if there are physical causes for it. The second thing I would suggest is getting a look at the whole-of-one's-life structure. When I sit down with people and I get sheets of paper, blank paper, and I start talking, I say, Tell me what happens during your typical day, from the time you get up to the time you go to bed.

I want to know the time you get up, I want to know what you do, everything you do during a typical day, and I want to know all of that until it's time for you to go to bed. And we'll go through a whole week like that. What do you do on Sunday? What do you do on Saturday, which is supposed to be your day off? What are you doing Monday through Friday? What happens when you come home from work? And you get a picture of how they're living, and very often the whole thing jumps out at you.

They're simply stretching themselves out too thin. At least in part, there are good physical causes for being depressed. You've got it on yourself.

And then God meets that physical need. There are certain writers I like, because they tanned into my flesh. But the late Dr. A.C. Schofield of England, who was a Christian physician, and I don't remember the book now.

Mr. Willing, maybe you can remember it. Did you hear him preach? Well, I'm trying to think of this book, and he talks about Christian living or living a Christian life. It only called the title of the book, but in it he suggests that every Christian, to maintain health, ought to have one day off a week, one week off a month, and one month off a year.

I like that. Now, if I could just afford it, sometimes Christians will call me on the phone and just jockey and say, what have you been doing? I say, I've done nothing. I've just been sitting around with my feet up.

And I make no apologies for it. And when I go on vacation, don't ask me to take meetings. This is no vacation.

I'm not going to take meetings. If you're an architect, when you go on vacation, you design houses, and there is a need for rest. Sometimes I play golf.

Those I play with question whether I am playing golf. Anyhow, we go out there. And I come back, and a spiritual Christian says, I suppose you had good fellowship.

I say, I don't go out there for fellowship. I go out there for golf. No, we didn't have any fellowship.

I play golf. And I make no apologies for that. There is a need to rejuvenate the body.

There may be physical causes for depression, and God has made us physical beings as well as spiritual beings. Don't despise the body. Second God deals with him emotionally.

It's not in that order, but I just wanted to suggest this to you. And he tells Elijah, look, you go on back up towards Damascus. And one of the things I want you to do on the way is get hold of Elisha.

He one day, of course, will be in your place. There's going to be a succession of prophets to this northern kingdom of Israel. And I'm glad God said that.

He said, I'm not through with his people. I'm not through with them. I've got another prophet coming along after you're gone.

I'm not through with these people. So don't despair. But he gets hold of Elisha.

Now, please don't see that as a condemnation of Elijah. Elijah, you messed up. You ran away from Jezebel.

I'm through with you. You had your one chance. You blew it.

Now you've got to settle for God's second best. Who ever heard of such an expression, biblically? God is not saying that to Elijah. He's saying, I know what your needs are.

And there's a fellow you don't even know about who shares your concern and your viewpoint and your love for me. And I'm going to send you to him. And he's going to go with you from now on.

You're not going to be alone anymore. You need a companion who understands you, who shares your viewpoint, who wants to serve me the way you do, who is just as horrified at the worship of Baal as you are. I'm going to give you a companion so you won't be alone anymore.

Isn't God enough? No, God isn't enough. God looks down at Adam in a perfect setting. Adam in perfect fellowship with God.

No sin. With a responsible position. Worthwhile occupation.

He said it isn't good for man to be alone. Never see yourself as an isolated Christian that you and God can make it. You and God can't make it because God didn't build you that way.

That's a denial of the truth of the body of Christ to say God and me can make it. Then God made a big mistake in designing the body of Christ. I need other believers.

I need Christians who understand me. I need Christians who share my viewpoint. I need Christians who have my aspirations and desires and goals.

I need Christians with whom I can interact and share my life. And that's what God gave to Elijah. One of the tremendous needs of fellowship.

Not meeting, fellowship. We don't need more meetings in our local assemblies. We need more fellowship.

And fellowship isn't necessarily coffee and cake. That may provide the occasion. I feel another sermon coming on.

But the early church had the love feast which some people who were more righteous than God eliminated. All Paul did was tidy the thing up. The love feast was not designed to satisfy hunger, but to set up fellowship.

If you're hungry, eat at home and then come and have this love feast. And the love feast was designed to set up fellowship. What we need is that openness of heart to each other, fellowship.

And we can meet in the same assembly for 900 years. I'm not suggesting some of you look that old, but we can meet in the same assembly for 900 years and never know what fellowship is. And we come to the Lord's Supper and we're a little isolated unit talking to God, but not to each other.

We might as well stay home in our closets and talk to God. I hear you recite, that's true. I can turn the tape on and do that.

And I hear this one recite. And we go home like little isolated units. We do not really share each other's lives, and we desperately need it.

I almost went to Galatians chapter 6 this morning instead of this very one-another sermon. And so fulfill the law of Christ. The final thing that God did for this man was in the spiritual realm.

Now note, by the way, that God ignored his self-pity. I only I am left, poor little me, and that was Elijah. God just totally ignored that.

The way to help a person over self-pity is just ignore it. I wish my wife had never learned that. But if he's down in that shell of self-pity, leave him there.

After a while, he can't stand it. God just ignored Elijah's self-pity, poor little me attitude. What he did say is, Elijah, I'm not through with you.

I am not through with you. God did two things. He came to him.

Not in the fire, in the earthquake, in the wind. That's a characteristic of Elijah's ministry. He was a man, when he started telling his story, everybody got nervous.

He didn't know whether it was going to be an earthquake, a fire was coming down from heaven, or a wind was going to blow the whole thing away. Distinguish between the work of God and fellowship with God. It's possible to work for God and see great results and know very little of fellowship with God.

And when that happens, you're going to come apart. God is so anxious to bless people and use his words that he will do it. And there is some truth to the Roman Catholic idea that the moral condition of a priest is

not...

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