Elijah Under the Juniper Tree

Bible Stories Anthology — 1 Kings 19

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Author: John Lobota

Research Assistant: Claude Cowork

papertiq@bellsouth.net

> **Romans 15:4** *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

Why These Stories Were Written — Romans 15:4

Paul had just quoted a thousand-year-old psalm and applied it to Christ (Romans 15:3, quoting Psalm 69:9), and then he explained why he could: *whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning*. **Written aforetime** — the scriptures that already stood before this present age of grace opened at Pentecost: the record God gave through Moses, the prophets and the writings, along with the Gospel accounts of Christ's earthly ministry, which belong to that same time before Pentecost. (When Paul wrote these words, the scriptures he had in hand were the Hebrew scriptures; the Gospels had not yet been written down.) **Written for our learning** — "learning" is the Greek word for *teaching*, the very word rendered "doctrine" in 2 Timothy 3:16. These are not quaint tales; they are doctrine in narrative form. Adam, Ruth and David never knew us, but God did, and He had their lives recorded with us in mind — written *for* us, though not all of it written *to* us, which is why we read Israel's history as our instruction and not as our marching orders. **Through patience and comfort of the scriptures** — "patience" is literally *remaining under*, the staying power we gain from watching men and women stay under a load; "comfort" is a *calling alongside*, the strength God brings when He meets them there, which is why Paul calls Him "the God of patience and consolation" in the very next verse. **That we might have hope** — not a wish, but confident expectation: the return of Jesus Christ and everlasting life with Him. That is why these accounts exist, and it is how they should be read.

It Is Enough

One day Elijah stood on Mount Carmel before the whole nation and called down fire from heaven. He faced eight hundred and fifty false prophets and did not flinch. He prayed, and the drought of three and a half years ended in a roaring storm. Then, with the power of God on him, he outran the king's chariot seventeen miles through the rain.

A day or so later, he was lying under a desert bush a hundred miles to the south, alone, asking God to let him die.

What happened in between was one message from one woman. Queen Jezebel swore that by this time tomorrow Elijah would be as dead as her prophets. And the man who had not been afraid of eight hundred and fifty prophets ran for his life.

The Bible does not hide this. It does not explain it away or scold him for it. It simply tells us what happened — and then tells us what God did about it. God did not send a lecture. He sent an angel with hot bread and a jar of water, and let him sleep. Then He fed him again. Then He took him on a long journey to the mountain where He had once met Moses, and asked him a question, twice. And when the wind and the earthquake and the fire had passed, God spoke to him in a quiet voice, gave him new work to do, told him the truth about how many faithful people were left, and gave him a friend.

This is one of the gentlest stories in the Bible. It is the story of how God cares for a servant who has come to the end of himself.

The Setting

When. Immediately after the contest on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18), during the reign of **Ahab** over the northern kingdom of Israel, about 874–853 B.C. by the reckoning most often used.

Where. The story moves across the whole land, from north to south and back again:

- **Jezreel**, Ahab's royal city in the north, where Jezebel received the news.
- **Beer-sheba**, the southernmost town of Judah — the other kingdom — about a hundred miles from Jezreel. "From Dan to Beer-sheba" was the old way of saying "from one end of the land to the other."
- **The wilderness** south of Beer-sheba, the dry Negev, where Elijah sat under a **juniper tree**. The Hebrew *rotem* is the **broom tree**, a desert shrub that can grow ten feet tall and gives thin but welcome shade.
- **Horeb, the mount of God** — another name for **Mount Sinai**, where God gave Moses the Law and spoke to him face to face. Its traditional location is in the south of the Sinai peninsula, a journey of some two hundred miles or more from Beer-sheba.
- **Abel-meholah**, in the Jordan valley, where Elisha was ploughing.

Who.

- **Elijah the Tishbite**, the prophet of Carmel, now exhausted and afraid.
- **Jezebel**, Ahab's Phoenician queen, the power behind the throne. Scripture says of Ahab that he **"did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up"** (1 Kings 21:25).
- **Ahab**, who saw the fire fall on Carmel and went home to tell his wife.
- **Elijah's servant**, left behind at Beer-sheba.
- **The angel of the LORD**, sent to feed him.
- **Elisha the son of Shaphat**, a farmer God chose to be Elijah's successor.

The administration. The **Mosaic Law**. Israel was still under the covenant made at Horeb, the very mountain Elijah fled to.

The Story, Told Faithfully

The Queen's Message

> **1 Kings 19:1** *And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.*
>
> **1 Kings 19:2** *Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time.*

"Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done." Notice what Ahab told her. Not what *God* had done — the fire, the confession of the people, the rain. He told her what *Elijah* had done, and especially about the prophets killed with the sword. Ahab had seen the fire of the LORD with his own eyes and still did not turn. He ran home and reported to his wife.

“So let the gods do to me, and more also.” A solemn oath, the kind used in Israel too (1 Samuel 3:17): *may the gods do the same to me, and worse, if I don’t do this.* Jezebel swore by her gods — the gods who had just failed to answer by fire.

“By to morrow about this time.” She gave Elijah twenty-four hours. It is worth noticing that she did not simply have him killed. She *sent a messenger*. If she had truly wanted him dead that moment, she could have sent soldiers instead. As this series understands it, the message itself was the weapon. The people had just turned back to the LORD, and Jezebel could not safely kill the prophet the whole nation had watched call down fire. But she could frighten him away. And it worked.

He Ran

> **1 Kings 19:3** *And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there.*

“When he saw that.” The Hebrew consonants here can be read two ways: *he saw* or *he was afraid*. The KJV follows the traditional Hebrew vowels, “he saw.” The ancient Greek and Latin translations read “he was afraid.” Either way, the result was the same.

“He arose, and went for his life.” An idiom — he ran to save his life. The man who had stood before the king without fear now ran from the queen.

Why? Scripture does not give a reason, but the story gives clues. Elijah had just come through three and a half years of hiding, a day-long contest on the mountain, the execution of the prophets, hours of intense prayer on his knees for rain, and a seventeen-mile run in a storm. He was physically spent. And he had surely hoped that Carmel would change everything — that the king would repent, the queen would be silenced, the nation would come home. Instead, one day later, nothing at the top had changed. Jezebel was still in power, and she wanted him dead.

“And came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah.” He ran the length of the country and crossed into the southern kingdom, out of Ahab’s reach.

“And left his servant there.” He went on alone. Discouraged people often withdraw from others. Elijah cut himself off from the one person who was with him.

Under the Juniper Tree

> **1 Kings 19:4** *But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.*

“A day’s journey into the wilderness.” Another full day of walking, into the empty desert.

“And sat down under a juniper tree.” A broom bush in the wilderness. Thin shade, alone, at the end of his strength.

“He requested for himself that he might die.” This is not a man planning to take his own life. It is a man asking *God* to take it. He brought his despair to God — which is itself a kind of faith. He did not stop praying. He prayed from the bottom.

“It is enough.” In Hebrew, one short word: *rav*. *Enough. I’ve had enough. I can’t do any more.*

“For I am not better than my fathers.” As this series understands it, Elijah had hoped to be the one who finally turned Israel back to God for good — to succeed where the prophets before him had failed. Carmel was supposed to be the turning point. Now he felt he had failed just like all the rest. His sense of worth had become tied to results.

Elijah was not the only servant of God to reach this point. Moses once said, **“I am not able to bear all this people alone … kill me, I pray thee”** (Numbers 11:14-15). Jonah said, **“take, I beseech thee, my life from me”** (Jonah 4:3). Jeremiah cursed the day he was born (Jeremiah 20:14). Paul wrote that in Asia **“we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life”** (2 Corinthians 1:8). And the Lord Jesus himself said in Gethsemane, **“My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death”** (Matthew 26:38).

Deep discouragement is not a sign that a person is faithless or that God has left them. Some of the greatest believers in scripture went there. What matters is what God does next.

> *A word to any reader who is in Elijah’s place right now: God did not leave him under that tree, and He does not leave you. In this story, God’s care came through very ordinary means — food, water, sleep, time, honest talk, and another person to walk with. If you are thinking of death, please do not stay alone with it. Tell someone you trust today — a friend, a pastor, a doctor, or a crisis line. Reaching out is not a failure of faith. It is exactly the kind of help God sent Elijah.*

“Arise and Eat”

> **1 Kings 19:5** *And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat.*
>
> **1 Kings 19:6** *And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again.*

“As he lay and slept.” The first thing Elijah needed was sleep, and God let him have it. **“He giveth his beloved sleep”** (Psalm 127:2).

“An angel touched him.” Not a rebuke. A touch. God’s messenger woke him gently.

“Arise and eat.” The first words from heaven were not *What is wrong with you?* or *Where is your faith?* They were *Get up and eat.* God met the body first. A man who has not slept or eaten properly for days cannot think clearly about anything.

“A cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water.” Fresh bread, still warm from hot stones — the way bread was baked in the desert — and a small jug of water, right by his head. The same God who had fed Elijah by ravens at the brook Cherith and by a widow’s endless flour at Zarephath fed him again in the wilderness.

“And laid him down again.” He ate, drank, and went back to sleep. No one hurried him.

“The Journey Is Too Great for Thee”

> **1 Kings 19:7** *And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee.*
>
> **1 Kings 19:8** *And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God.*

“The angel of the LORD.” In verse 5 he is “an angel”; now he is named as **the angel of the LORD** — God’s own messenger, sent with God’s authority. God had told Israel of such an angel, **“my name is in him”** (Exodus 23:21). He was not God Himself, but he came with God’s word and did God’s work. As the psalm says, **“The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them”** (Psalm 34:7).

“Came again the second time.” God’s care was not a one-time gesture. He came back.

“Because the journey is too great for thee.” This is one of the tenderest sentences in the Old Testament. God did not say *You should be stronger than this.* He said, *This is too much for you.* God knew exactly how weak Elijah was, and He made provision for it. **“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust”** (Psalm 103:14).

“In the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights.” “Meat” in the KJV means food in general. On the strength of those two meals, Elijah travelled forty days and nights to Horeb. The number is significant. Moses had been on this same mountain **“forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water”** (Exodus 34:28). Jesus would later fast **“forty days and forty nights”** in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2). The prophet who stood for the Law was being brought back to where the Law began.

“Unto Horeb the mount of God.” Elijah had fled from Jezebel. God turned his flight into a pilgrimage. He was going back to the place where God had first made His covenant with Israel — back to the beginning.

“What Doest Thou Here, Elijah?”

> **1 Kings 19:9** *And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?*

“He came thither unto a cave.” The Hebrew has *the* cave. As this series understands it, this may well be the very cleft in the rock where God placed Moses when His glory passed by (Exodus 33:21-23). Scripture does not say so directly, but the parallels are strong: the same mountain, a cave or cleft, and the LORD passing by.

“What doest thou here, Elijah?” God’s first words at the mountain were a question. God knew the answer. The question was for Elijah — to let him speak, to let him say what was in his heart. Good help often begins not with an answer, but with a question.

And the question has two edges. *What are you doing here?* — far from Israel, far from the work, hiding in a cave. But also: *What are you doing here?* — at My mountain, where I met Moses. God was not only asking why Elijah had run away. He was inviting him to meet Him.

Elijah’s Complaint

> **1 Kings 19:10** *And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.*

Elijah poured it all out.

“I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts.” In Hebrew, *jealous, I have been jealous* — a doubled word for emphasis. *Jealous* here means zealous, burning with concern for God’s honour. *I have given everything for You.*

“The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets.” All true. Israel had done all of this.

“And I, even I only, am left.” This was not true. Obadiah had hidden a hundred prophets of the LORD in caves (1 Kings 18:4, 13). And God was about to tell him of seven thousand more. But this is what discouragement does: it shrinks the world down to one lonely person. It makes us feel that we are the only one who cares, the only one who is faithful, the only one left.

“And they seek my life, to take it away.” Here was the fear under all the rest.

God did not argue with him. He let him finish.

Wind, Earthquake, Fire

> **1 Kings 19:11** *And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake:*
>
> **1 Kings 19:12** *And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.*

“The LORD passed by.” Just as He had passed by Moses on this same mountain.

Then came three tremendous displays of power:

- **A great and strong wind** that tore the mountains and shattered the rocks.
- **An earthquake.**
- **A fire.**

These were the signs of God’s power that Israel knew. When God gave the Law at Sinai, **“mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire … and the whole mount quaked greatly”** (Exodus 19:18). Elijah himself had just seen fire fall on Carmel.

“But the LORD was not in the wind … not in the earthquake … not in the fire.” Three times. God was showing Elijah something. The fire on Carmel had been real, and it had been from God. But fire alone had not changed Ahab’s heart or Jezebel’s. God’s work is not always done by the spectacular. Elijah may have been waiting for more fire — for God to strike Jezebel down in one blazing moment. God showed him that His way was different.

“And after the fire a still small voice.” The Hebrew is striking: *qol demamah daqqah* — literally, **“a sound of thin silence,”** or *a gentle whisper, a soft murmur of stillness.* After all the noise, a quiet so deep it could be heard.

This is where God was. Not in the storm, but in the quiet. As Isaiah would later write, **“in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength”** (Isaiah 30:15). Zechariah would hear, **“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts”** (Zechariah 4:6).

The Same Question Again

> **1 Kings 19:13** *And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?*

"He wrapped his face in his mantle." Elijah knew he was in the presence of God. Like Moses, who hid his face at the burning bush on this same mountain (Exodus 3:6), he covered his face in reverence. The *mantle* — a prophet's cloak, probably of hair or skin — will appear again at the end of the story.

"What doest thou here, Elijah?" The same question, word for word. God asked it again.

> **1 Kings 19:14** *And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.*

And Elijah gave the same answer, word for word. The wind, the earthquake, the fire and the still small voice had not changed his answer. He was still stuck in the same place.

This is honest. Deep discouragement is not usually fixed by one experience, however powerful. Elijah had just stood in the presence of God and was still saying *I only am left.* God did not scold him for it. He did something different: He gave Elijah something to do, the truth about the situation, and someone to do it with.

New Work

> **1 Kings 19:15** *And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria:*
>
> **1 Kings 19:16** *And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.*

"Go, return on thy way." The answer to *What are you doing here?* was *Go back*. Elijah's work was not finished. God had more for him to do.

God gave him three tasks:

- **Anoint Hazael to be king over Syria**, the nation to the north.
- **Anoint Jehu to be king over Israel**, to replace the house of Ahab.
- **Anoint Elisha to be prophet in thy room** — in your place.

This answered Elijah's deeper fear. He thought Carmel had failed and Jezebel had won. God showed him that He had a plan far larger than one day on a mountain. Ahab's house would fall. Baal worship would be cut down. It would not come by one bolt of fire, but through people God would raise up over years. In fact Elijah himself called only Elisha. The other two commissions were carried out later through Elisha: he told Hazael that he would be king over Syria (2 Kings 8:7-15), and he sent one of the sons of the prophets to anoint Jehu (2 Kings 9:1-10). Elijah's commission was passed on and completed through the man he trained.

"Prophet in thy room." Elijah would have a successor. He was not the last, and he did not have to carry the work alone forever.

> **1 Kings 19:17** *And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay.*

These were judgments on the house of Ahab and the Baal worshippers of Israel, which came to pass years later (2 Kings 9–10). In the Hebrew way of speaking, God is said to do what He permits. Hazael's cruelty against Israel was his own (2 Kings 8:12-13); God allowed Israel's enemies to prevail when Israel had rejected Him. As this series understands it, Elisha's "sword" was his word of judgment as a prophet, not a literal blade.

Seven Thousand

> **1 Kings 19:18** *Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.*

Here is the truth that answered *I only am left.*

"Yet I have left me seven thousand." Elijah was wrong. He was not alone. God had seven thousand people in Israel who had never bowed to Baal. Elijah did not know them. He had never met most of them. But God knew every one.

"All the knees which have not bowed … every mouth which hath not kissed him." Worshippers of Baal would bow before his image and kiss it. Hosea describes the same thing with the golden calves: **"Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves"** (Hosea 13:2). Seven thousand had refused.

Paul picked up this very verse centuries later, when some wondered whether God had abandoned Israel:

> **Romans 11:2** *God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying,*
>
> **Romans 11:3** *Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life.*
>
> **Romans 11:4** *But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.*
>
> **Romans 11:5** *Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*

"I have reserved to myself." God keeps His own. No one who serves God is ever as alone as he feels.

A Friend Called Elisha

> **1 Kings 19:19** *So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.*

"So he departed thence." Elijah obeyed. He came out of the cave, left the mountain, and went back north to do what God had said.

"Plowing with twelve yoke of oxen." Twelve pairs of oxen — Elisha's family was well off. He was driving the last pair himself. He was a working man, doing ordinary work, when God called him.

“Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him.” No speech is recorded. Elijah simply threw his prophet’s cloak over Elisha’s shoulders as he walked by. Everyone would have understood what it meant: *You are being called to take up my work.* The same mantle Elijah had wrapped his face in at Horeb was now given to another.

> **1 Kings 19:20** *And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee?*

“He left the oxen, and ran after Elijah.” Elisha understood immediately.

“Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother.” A proper farewell to his family.

“Go back again: for what have I done to thee?” An idiom that means something like: *Go ahead — I’m not forcing you. Think about what I have just done to you.* Elijah did not pressure him. The call had to be Elisha’s own choice.

> **1 Kings 19:21** *And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.*

“Took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen.” Elisha killed his own pair of oxen and burned the wooden plough and yoke to cook them. He threw a farewell feast for his neighbours. There was no going back to farming. He burned his bridges — literally, his plough.

Jesus later told a man who wanted to say goodbye at home first, **“No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God”** (Luke 9:62). Elisha took his hand off the plough and burned it.

“Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.” Elisha became Elijah’s servant and companion. The man who had left his servant behind at Beer-sheba and gone into the desert alone was given a new companion by God. Elijah was no longer alone.

Some years later, when Elijah was taken up by the whirlwind, Elisha picked up the same mantle, struck the Jordan with it, and asked, **“Where is the LORD God of Elijah?”** — and the waters parted (2 Kings 2:13-14). The work went on.

What God Did

Look back over the whole story and see how God cared for His discouraged servant:

1. **He let him sleep.**
2. **He fed him** — twice, with fresh bread and water.
3. **He acknowledged his weakness** — “the journey is too great for thee.”
4. **He brought him to a place of meeting** — the mountain of God.
5. **He asked him questions** and let him speak honestly, twice.
6. **He showed him His presence** — not in the storm, but in the still small voice.
7. **He gave him new work** — his calling was not over.
8. **He told him the truth** — seven thousand had not bowed to Baal.

9. **He gave him a friend** — Elisha, to walk with him and carry on after him.

There was not one word of condemnation.

Where the Story Leads

To the Messiah

Forty days in the wilderness, and angels who ministered. Elijah went forty days and nights in the wilderness on food an angel brought him. Jesus was led into the wilderness and fasted forty days and nights, and at the end, **"angels came and ministered unto him"** (Matthew 4:11). The Messiah walked the same hard road.

He knows our weakness. In Gethsemane Jesus said, **"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death"** (Matthew 26:38). He **"offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard"** (Hebrews 5:7). So **"we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities"** (Hebrews 4:15). The Lord Jesus Christ knows what it is to be crushed with sorrow.

He did not run. Elijah ran from Jezebel. Jesus, when his hour came, **"stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem"** (Luke 9:51) — toward the cross, where he died for us. God raised him from the dead and exalted him to His right hand. Where Elijah was the servant who faltered, Jesus Christ was the servant who never did.

The gentle Messiah. God did not break Elijah when he was bruised. Isaiah foretold that the Messiah would be the same: **"A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench"** (Isaiah 42:3; Matthew 12:20). And Jesus invited the worn out: **"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"** (Matthew 11:28).

To the Grace Administration

The remnant of grace. Paul used this very story to show that God has never abandoned His purposes: **"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace"** (Romans 11:5). No believer is ever the only faithful one left.

Paul also despaired — and was comforted. The great apostle of grace wrote honestly about his own darkest days: **"we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead"** (2 Corinthians 1:8-9). And he described how God met him: **"Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus"** (2 Corinthians 7:6). Just as God sent Elisha to Elijah, He sent Titus to Paul. God's comfort often comes through a person.

Troubled, but not destroyed. "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9). **"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day"** (2 Corinthians 4:16).

Never alone. Paul, too, was abandoned by people: **"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me … Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me"** (2 Timothy 4:16-17). And every believer in this administration has received the gift of holy spirit within — **"sealed with**

that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance" (Ephesians 1:13-14). **"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"** (Romans 8:16).

How God speaks now. Elijah heard God in a still small voice at Horeb. God **"at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son"** (Hebrews 1:1-2). Believers today have the written word, **"given by inspiration of God"** (2 Timothy 3:16), and **"the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God"** (1 Corinthians 2:12). God still does not usually shout. He speaks quietly, through His word and by His spirit within.

Care for one another. God cared for Elijah through food, rest and a companion. Believers are told to do the same for each other: **"Bear ye one another's burdens"** (Galatians 6:2); **"comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men"** (1 Thessalonians 5:14); **"weep with them that weep"** (Romans 12:15).

Strength in weakness. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). The journey is too great for us, and God knows it. That is where His strength comes in.

To the Topic of Discouragement and Renewal

- **Great victories can be followed by deep lows.** Carmel was one day; the juniper tree was the next.
- **Discouragement distorts the truth** — "I only am left" was false.
- **Being worn out is not the same as being faithless.** Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, Paul and the Lord Jesus all knew deep sorrow.
- **Care for the body matters** — sleep, food and water came first.
- **God is not angry at our weakness** — "the journey is too great for thee."
- **Say it honestly to God** — He asked, and He listened.
- **God is often in the quiet,** not the spectacular.
- **Purpose restores** — "Go, return on thy way."
- **You are not alone** — seven thousand, and a friend named Elisha.
- **Don't isolate** — Elijah left his servant; God gave him a companion.
- **Hope in God** — **"Why art thou cast down, O my soul? ... hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him"** (Psalm 42:5).
- **Waiting renews strength** — **"they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength"** (Isaiah 40:31).

The Main Takeaway

The day after the fire fell on Carmel, one threat from Jezebel sent Elijah running a hundred miles south to Beer-sheba and a day beyond into the wilderness, where he sat under a juniper tree and asked God to take his life — "It is enough ... I am not better than my fathers"; God did not rebuke him but let him sleep, sent His angel twice with warm bread and water because "the journey is too great for thee," and brought him forty days to Horeb, the mountain of God, where He asked, "What doest thou here, Elijah?"; after a wind, an earthquake and a fire in which the LORD was not, God came in "a still small voice," heard Elijah's complaint that "I, even I only, am left," and answered with new work — anoint Hazael, Jehu and Elisha — with the truth that seven thousand in Israel had never bowed to

Baal, and with a companion, Elisha, who left his plough to follow him; God cares for His worn-out servants gently and completely, and no one who serves Him is ever as alone as they feel.

- **Even the strongest believers can be brought low.**
- **God meets the whole person** — body, mind and spirit.
- **God does not condemn the discouraged;** He cares for them.
- **God speaks in the quiet** as well as in the fire.
- **Discouragement lies;** God tells the truth.
- **God has more work for you to do.**
- **God gives companions for the journey.**

For Our Learning — The People

- **Elijah.** Prophet of Carmel; fled Jezebel's threat, asked to die, was fed by an angel, met God at Horeb, and was sent back with new work and a companion.
- **Jezebel.** Queen of Israel, daughter of the king of the Zidonians; swore by her gods to kill Elijah within a day.
- **Ahab.** King of Israel; saw the fire on Carmel but reported to Jezebel only what Elijah had done.
- **Elijah's servant.** Left behind at Beer-sheba.
- **The angel of the LORD.** God's messenger, who touched Elijah, fed him twice, and told him the journey was too great for him.
- **Hazael.** Future king of Syria, named for anointing; later told by Elisha that he would be king (2 Kings 8).
- **Jehu the son of Nimshi.** Future king of Israel, named for anointing; later anointed by Elisha's servant (2 Kings 9) and used to end the house of Ahab.
- **Elisha the son of Shaphat.** A farmer from Abel-meholah, called by Elijah's mantle; left his oxen, followed Elijah, ministered to him, and succeeded him.
- **The seven thousand.** Israelites unknown to Elijah who had never bowed to Baal.

For Our Learning — Customs and Orientalisms

- **Oaths by the gods** — "So let the gods do to me, and more also."
- **Royal messengers** carrying a king's or queen's word.
- **Crossing a border** into another kingdom for safety.
- **The broom tree** as desert shade.
- **Bread baked on hot stones or coals** in the wilderness.
- **A cruse** — a small jar or jug for water or oil.
- **Journeys counted in days.**
- **Caves** as shelter in the mountains.
- **Covering the face** in the presence of God.
- **The prophet's mantle** — a cloak that marked the prophet's office.
- **Anointing with oil** to set apart a king or prophet.

- **Bowing to and kissing idols** in pagan worship.
- **Ploughing with yokes of oxen** in teams.
- **Casting a mantle on someone** as a sign of calling and succession.
- **Kissing parents farewell.**
- **A farewell feast** for the community.
- **A disciple "ministering" to his master** — serving him as he learned from him.

For Our Learning — Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is a deliberate departure from the plain, ordinary way of saying something, used by God to add emphasis and feeling. These are the ones in this story:

- **Ellipsis (oath formula)** — "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if …" (19:2), leaving the curse unspoken.
- **Idiom** — "went for his life" (19:3), fled to save his life; "in thy room" (19:16), in your place.
- **Metonymy** — "thy life as the life of one of them" (19:2), the fate of the dead prophets.
- **Tapeinosis (understatement)** — "I am not better than my fathers" (19:4).
- **Polyptoton** — "I have been very jealous" (19:10, 14), in Hebrew *jealous I have been jealous*.
- **Hyperbole of despair** — "I, even I only, am left" (19:10, 14).
- **Erotesis (rhetorical question)** — "What doest thou here, Elijah?" (19:9, 13).
- **Repetition** — the same question and the same answer, twice (19:9-10, 13-14).
- **Anthropopatheia** — "the LORD passed by" (19:11).
- **Polysyndeton and repetition** — "not in the wind … not in the earthquake … not in the fire" (19:11-12).
- **Oxymoron** — "a still small voice" (19:12), literally *a sound of thin silence*.
- **Synecdoche** — "all the knees … every mouth" (19:18), the parts put for the whole person.
- **Idiom of permission** — "him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay" (19:17); God is said to do what He allows.
- **Idiom** — "what have I done to thee?" (19:20), go, I am not forcing you.
- **Symbolic action** — casting the mantle (19:19); burning the plough (19:21).

What the Bible Actually Says

- **Ahab told Jezebel what Elijah had done,** not what God had done.
- **Jezebel sent a messenger with a threat,** not soldiers.
- **Elijah ran to Beer-sheba** and left his servant there.
- **He asked God to take his life;** he did not try to take it himself.
- **God's messenger fed him twice** and let him sleep.
- **"The journey is too great for thee."**
- **He travelled forty days and nights to Horeb.**
- **God asked the same question twice,** and Elijah gave the same answer twice.

- **The LORD was not in the wind, the earthquake or the fire.**
- **God spoke in "a still small voice."**
- **God gave Elijah three people to anoint;** Elijah personally called Elisha, and the other two commissions were carried out later through Elisha.
- **Seven thousand had not bowed to Baal.**
- **Elisha burned his plough** and followed Elijah.
- **There is no word of condemnation** from God in the whole chapter.
- **Paul uses this story** to show that God keeps a remnant (Romans 11:2-5).

God's Will and Intent

- **God cares for the whole person** — body, mind and spirit.
- **God knows our limits** and provides for them.
- **God is patient** with His discouraged servants.
- **God speaks gently** and invites honesty.
- **God tells the truth** that answers the lies of despair.
- **God gives new purpose** when we think we are finished.
- **God never leaves His people alone,** and He gives them one another.
- **God was preparing the Servant who would not falter,** Jesus Christ — crucified, raised, and ascended — who knows our sorrows and gives rest to all who come to him.