Fear Not – Part 3

# The Lord Will Help You When You’ve Given Up

## (1 Kings 18:21-19:4)

Today, as we continue in part three of our series Fear Not, would you open your Bibles to first Kings chapter 18, because I want to encourage you today if you are fearful, weary, and exhausted. We’re going to look at the life and ministry of the prophet Elijah and I believe God has sent a word just for you. The title of today’s message is, The Lord Will Help You When You’ve Given Up.

The Scripture says that “Elijah was a man just like us,” he was human just like you and I, and yet he was used by God in a major way. When you consider the ministry of the prophet Elijah, you can hardly imagine the burden on him to accomplish the purpose of God. For those of you who are students of Scripture, you know the mighty things that Elijah did, and you recognize God’s willingness and ability to work through a human vessel for his glory.

In fact, the Lord said, “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit” (Zechariah 4:6). And so, as you consider the Scriptures, God has always used someone that he has specifically chosen to be his representative. We see this demonstrated time and time again throughout history, from Adam to Abraham, Moses to Joshua, Samuel to David, and on and on and on. The Bible says it this way in Hebrews chapter 1,

“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son…” (Hebrews 1:1-2).

As we turn to first Kings, chapter 18, we find God speaking through the prophet, tearing down kingdoms, and destroying idolatry in an attempt to bring his people into a right relationship with himself. That’s what he’s been doing through the prophet, and so when Elijah speaks, he’s speaking the infallible word of God. And I’m not just talking about the Bible, because the word of God was before pens and paper, the word of God was before printing presses and all of that stuff. In fact, the Bible says,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning” (John 1:1-2).

And so, when we talk about the prophet speaking the word of God, we’re talking about the integrity of God, that what he said will come to pass, because whatever God speaks is true. He is the way, the truth, and the life; and he will use whomever he wants, whether man, woman, or donkey, because he is God, he is sovereign, and therefore he can use whomever he wants to use for his glory.

We’re introduced to Elijah suddenly in chapter 17, where he abruptly appears like Melchizedek, without father or mother named, in contrast to the detailed genealogy of Samuel, Elisha, and other prophets. But whenever you speak of the prophets, you can’t forget about Elijah, because he was a powerhouse for God. He’s brought to our attention in first Kings with a divine mandate to overthrow Baal and Asherah worship in Israel. And so, when Elijah prayed stuff happened, in fact the Bible says,

“He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years” (James 5:17).

And so, that’s a powerful prayer, that kind of notoriety can cause confusion, that kind of exposure will bring about a certain amount of conflict. Because of the expectations of people, the pressure to be what everybody wants you to be will drive you crazy. Even the pressure we put on ourselves because we don’t want to disappoint the people that we love, is unreasonable. And so, you could just imagine the pressure Elijah feels to live up to the expectations of the people. And yet, at least for the time being, Elijah doesn’t fall prey to other people’s expectations, he had the courage to be himself, but that set him in opposition to King Ahab.

In fact, Ahab called Elijah, the troubler of Israel, because he had the courage to represent the Lord God, Jehovah, declaring the judgment of God on these idolatrous people. It was Elijah who had declared this drought on the land, and so, not only was he in conflict with the king, but he was also in conflict with his environment, because he threw off the predictable pattern of rainfall in Israel. The Bible says that after three years of drought Elijah once again confronts the idolatrous and rebellious people of God, saying to them,

“How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him” (1 Kings 18:21).

It hasn’t rained for three years, and so the people had seen the environment in which they lived, their environment which had been so predictable, no longer living up to their expectations.

Now Elijah says, “Let’s see if these false gods of yours can live up to your expectations?” You see, Elijah was courageous, he was confrontational, and I believe that we could learn a lot from him. Some of us have been stuck in one place, imprisoned by expectations, in bondage to our own fears, because we will do anything to keep the peace. In fact, some of you have twisted yourself into a mere caricature of who God called you to be because you lack the courage to be yourself. But that was not the case with Elijah, he confronts the king, he puts a stop to the predictable patterns of rain in Israel, and then he picks a fight with the prophets of Baal and Asherah.

We read about this in first Kings chapter 18, verse 23, where he sets the stage for a showdown. Elijah tells the people,

“Get two bulls for us. Let them choose one for themselves and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by fire — he is God" (1 Kings 18:23-24).

Now, I don’t think that is a very good example of how to solve differences of opinion, but this is a demonstration of the boldness of the prophet Elijah.

The Bible says, the people agree and so they prepare the sacrifice, building this altar, and these 850 false prophets pray all morning. By noon Elijah starts to make fun of them and he says,

"Shout louder! Surely, he is a god! Maybe he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened." So, they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention” (1 Kings 18:27-29).

Finally, these false prophets gave up, and so Elijah turned to the people and said, “Come here to me,” and together they repaired the altar of the Lord which was in ruins. The Bible says in verse 32,

“He built an altar in the name of the Lord, and he dug a trench around it… He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, "Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood” (1 Kings 18:32-33).

Elijah takes the water and pours it out on the sacrifice and on the wood. Then in verse 34 he tells them,

“Do it again,” and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he ordered, and they did it the third time. The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench” (1 Kings 18:34-35).

And so, he pours out the water on the sacrifice, he pours it on the wood, he pours it on the altar, and he just lets it pour out on the ground until it filled the trench around the altar. Elijah completely saturates the sacrifice, pouring out the water, and pouring out the anointing.

In the same way, today as I am serving you, I am pouring out the word of God, pouring out water on you as the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 5, this is a…

“Washing with water through the word” (Ephesians 5:26).

And so, if you’re willing to receive it, as I pour out water on your dreams, water on your prophecy, water on your potential, there is a transference of the anointing of God.

What’s amazing is that I never realized I was doing that, I never thought about it that way, but the apostle Paul said to the church in Corinth,

“I planted, Apollo’s watered, but God gave the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6).

And so, in a spiritual sense, we are all water pourers, watering our dreams, our visions, and our future. Today I am watering those seeds planted in your life, seeds that you didn’t even recognize their potential, because they have been buried and lifeless, but I am watering them right now through my preaching. I’m watering them through my serving, and I believe the anointing is here, because the water is flowing.

I believe all of that is pouring water on you, because on the night of his betrayal, Jesus said in the upper room,

“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:14-15).

In other words, it’s as you serve, pouring out the water, that the anointing begins to flow, and that is the anointing that you will receive. The secret to leadership is always serving and I know some of you will not respond to this invitation, some of you will complain like Peter, but Jesus told him, unless you are washed, you cannot be my disciple. In other words, you can’t be the leader I have called you to be unless you are willing to be a servant.

Today, we’ve got to look at life and ministry differently, we’re going to have to serve our way up, and it’s going to require sacrifice. The Bible says, “At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah steps forward and prayed:

“O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again" (1 Kings 18:36-37).

The Bible tells us, the Lord God didn’t need to be awakened, Elijah’s God wasn’t too busy, and even while Elijah was still praying, God answered.

“The fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench" (1 Kings 18:38).

With a great supernatural outpouring, the Lord demonstrates that this is no ordinary fire, and just as he had at other times in the Old Testament, the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the sacrifice as a sign of his acceptance of the offering. This fire from heaven consumed the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, the soil, and even licked up the water in the trench, inhaling it, drawing it up as a vapor.

When all the people saw this, the Bible says in verse 39, they fell prostrate and cried

“The Lord, he is God! The Lord, he is God!" (1 Kings 18:39).

Elijah turns to the people and commands them with all the authority of the living God,

“Seize the prophets of Baal. Don't let anyone get away!" They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there” (1 Kings 18:40).

Elijah then goes to Ahab and says, “You better get ready to ride because it’s getting ready to rain.” He climbs to the top of Mount Carmel, where the prophet got down on the ground and bent over with his face between his knees. The Bible says that he prayed not once, not twice, but seven times until his servant reported,

“A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea." So, Elijah said, "Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you” (1 Kings 18:44).

Elijah continued to pray as the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, and the rain began to fall. The Bible says that then, “The power of the Lord came upon Elijah and tucking his cloak into his belt,” he turned and ran so fast that he outran the chariot and “ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel” (1 Kings 18:46).

Now, when he got back to the palace, Ahab told his wife Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets. The Bible says when Jezebel heard this she was infuriated and 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" (1 Kings 19:2).

Now, you would think that this mighty prophet of God who had just stood up to 850 false prophets calling down fire from heaven, wouldn’t be overly concerned about the threats of this lady. But I want you to notice how he responded in verse three, the Bible says,

“Elijah was afraid and ran for his life” (1 Kings 19:3).

Instead of praying and trusting God, Elijah responds with fear and runs for his life “When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there” and verse four says,

“While he himself went a day's journey into the desert…" (1 Kings 19:4).

In other words, he did the worst thing that he could do right now, because the first thing that God said was not good in the Bible, was when he created Adam and looking at him, he said,

“It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18).

But here we find Elijah leaving his servant and going alone a day’s journey into the wilderness. He went on by himself until the Bible says,

“He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die…" (1 Kings 19:4).

I want you to notice that this is the first time it is recorded that he prayed since he was praying for rain on the mountain. Now, finally he’s praying again, but the nature of his prayers has changed dramatically. Jezebel threatens his life and instead of praying great prayers of faith, instead of praying with the power of God as before, now he prays,

“I have had enough, Lord, take my life; I am no better than my ancestors" (1 Kings 19:4).

This is absolutely amazing, because here’s this prophet who was praying such powerful prayers. Elijah confronts Ahab and says it’s not going to rain, and it doesn’t rain for three years. He challenges the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, and he prays, and the Bible says,

“The fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice” (1 Kings 18:38).

And yet, now he’s gone off alone, he’s running, he’s afraid, he’s struggling with suicidal depression, and says, “I’m no better than my ancestors.”

Now, I’m reading this, I’m trying to process all of this, I’m studying the Scriptures trying to discover what changed, trying to figure out what happened to Elijah, and the only difference I can see between the threats of Ahab, the threats from the false prophets, or this current threat from Jezebel, is that it came from a woman. I don’t know why Elijah felt that this threat was greater, maybe it was because he was all alone with his thoughts, maybe it was because he was just tired from running after Ahab, or maybe it was because it was from this lady, but whatever it was, when Jezebel said, “Elijah, you are going to die.” Whatever it was, I don’t know why, I don’t know what happened, but Elijah snapped and took off running for his life.

And you know, in a way, I can get that, I can relate, because the Bible says,

“Elijah was a man just like us” (James 5:17).

And I know in so many ways it is so much different, but you all know that when mom raises her voice, when she gets that tone of voice, you start stepping backwards, and when she begins threatening, everybody scatters. I don’t know, maybe that was just my mom, but when she started yelling everybody was afraid and that’s the truth.

But I wonder if maybe there are some things about this story that are intended to show us a bigger picture of what God is doing in our lives today, because the Bible says it this way,

“These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age” (1 Corinthians 10:11, NLT).

And so, here we are at the end of the age, and it’s important that we learn from Elijah so that we don’t become like him, afraid and running, fearful of the threats of our enemies, fearful of our culture, just exhausted and hiding all alone.

I believe that even though Elijah is living in a different time and culture, even though it may look different, he is still struggling with the same stuff we deal with today. In fact, it’s the exact same stuff, we have the same three enemies, the Bible says our struggle is not against flesh and blood, is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It’s the same enemy, it’s just packaged differently, and it dresses up in different disguises in different seasons. When you were younger it was much less expensive, but today is coming at you at an entirely different level, and the stakes are so much higher.

It’s complicated and Elijah had gotten so far by fighting, but now he’s afraid and running for his life. He’s alone, he’s fearful and exhausted, he’s lost his will to fight. Verse four says, he sat down by himself under a broom tree and prayed that he might die. He said,

“I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors" (1 Kings 19:4).

There are some of you today who have been running, because you’ve been battling, struggling with the enemy, and right now you’re exhausted, and you’ve had enough. Like Elijah you’re ready to throw in the towel, not because you’ve been fighting for a few days, but you’ve been fighting for most of your life.

I want to assure you today that the Lord will answer when you’ve had enough, he will help you when you’ve given up, and my prayer for you is that you would start seeing clearly so that you would know what to do in this season. The prophet Zechariah testified to his experience saying,

“The angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me, as a man who is awakened from his sleep. He said to me, "What do you see?" (Zechariah 4:1-2, NASU).

And today, God is going to send an angel, his comforter to open the door for you, to help you reestablish yourself, to show you how to reinvent yourself, and give you your life back.

God will help you when you’ve given up, he will come to you, but you’ve got to stand firm believing, you can’t give up, you’ve got to keep fighting those same battles. But now you’ve got to fight them on a higher level, the Bible tells us in Hebrews chapter one,

“Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14).

I want to encourage you to fear not, because God will help you, but some of you keep lowering yourself and you wonder why you’re discouraged, depressed, and feeling defeated.

You see, our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. There are some of you today who need to make a decision, you’ve got to decide to fight your way back up, and start fighting on a higher level, because we’re not fighting for victory, we’re fighting from victory. And so, you can’t fight the way you used to, you don’t have to do this all alone, because God will help you.

Elijah laid down under this tree and fell asleep, but the Bible says in verse five,

“All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again” (1 Kings 19:5-6).

“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." 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” (1 Kings 19:7-8).

Elijah was exhausted, alone, and sleeping when the angel of the Lord awakened him, giving him food and drink, strengthening him for the journey. Empowered by the angel he climbed the mountain to consider life from God’s perspective. This was a season of refreshment, making some adjustments, so that he could step into ministry with confidence. God gave him the anointing to reach new levels, the divine leverage Elijah needed, and he sent him back saying, “Go back to where you came.”

Elijah had been exhausted and vulnerable to the threats of Jezebel because he’d been trying to fight this battle in his own strength, trying to go about it alone, but he’s got it right now, because he discovered that God’s power is made perfect in weakness.

I don’t know what somebody has said to you that discouraged you and caused you to give up. I don’t know what it is that you’re facing that has caused fear in your life, but I want to encourage you that God will help you and he has sent his angel. In fact, you’ve got the presence of the Holy Spirit, you’ve got the anointing, you’ve got the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation. God has given you a new wardrobe, you’re not dressed in filthy rags any longer, but you’ve come into the presence of God, and he has clothed you with the righteousness of his son Jesus Christ.

I wish there was somebody here who would declare their victory, because we have the blood of Jesus. We have the righteousness of Christ, we have a new mind, we have a new heart, and we are new creations. The truth is that God meets us here on the mountain, he raises us up, and we have been seated with him in heavenly realms. And so, you don’t have to be afraid, you have the full armor of God, you can stand firm in him, because the Lord will help you when you’ve given up.

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