

Woe Is Me

Taken From 1 Kings 19

Foundation

Spend some time in prayer before you begin today's reading. Tell God about some of the disappointments you've been feeling lately. Ask Him to renew your heart and give you a fresh perspective on your circumstances—and on who He is.



Have you ever felt like the whole world is against you?

"Elijah did *what!*" Queen Jezebel screeched, unable to contain her anger. With a hostile heart, Jezebel impatiently listened to the details as King Ahab explained what had happened.

"There was a contest between Baal and Israel's god on Mount Carmel today," Ahab began. "A sacrifice was prepared on each altar, but no fire was lit. It was left to the gods to light the fire and prove who was stronger. All morning our prophets called out to Baal, begging him to hear," Ahab stated. "All morning and even until the afternoon they tried—but to no avail."

Jezebel narrowed her eyes and gave Ahab her full attention. "And?" she demanded.

Ahab looked away uncomfortably. He knew the next words he had to say would anger the queen all the more.

“And then it was Elijah’s turn. He rebuilt the altar of the Lord, and then said a simple prayer that his God answered. Fire immediately fell from heaven and burnt up not only the sacrifice, but also the wood, stones, and dirt surrounding it.” Ahab thought it best not to rub in the defeat by telling Jezebel how Elijah drenched his altar with water, making the task all the harder.

“And?!” Jezebel asked, raising her voice to a fevered pitch.

Ahab swallowed hard and finished, “All the people fell to their faces when they saw this and began saying, “The Lord—He is God! The Lord—He is—”

“Enough!” snapped Jezebel.

But Ahab was not finished. “Then Elijah had all the prophets of Baal taken to the valley of Kishon and slaughtered,” he added.

Silence filled the room. *No one—absolutely no one—is going to make a fool of me!* Jezebel fumed. She would have Elijah’s head, if it were the last thing she did.

Meanwhile, Elijah received word of Jezebel’s threats that very day and became afraid. Although he had called down fire from heaven, stood up to the prophets of Baal, and prayed for God to send rain, Elijah still lost his courage.

Lord! What have I done wrong? I did as You commanded and saw You act mightily and victoriously against Your enemies! There is now no doubt among Israel that You alone are God! Elijah sighed. Everything within him was drained, and he felt empty—and alone. *Why, why then, am I suffering so? My very life is in danger, for Queen Jezebel will not stop hunting me until I have been killed—just as her prophets were slain....*

Elijah sat in silence, his fists drawn up tightly against his body, and his teeth clenched. He had gone from a very high point to a very low one all in a matter of hours. Elijah felt there was nothing left to do but run for his

The broom tree offered Elijah very little protection or comfort from the sun’s rays. It was actually a large, leafless shrub—the roots of which were used as a source of fuel and charcoal.

life. And run he did—not stopping until he reached the southernmost town in the land of Judah.

Leaving his servant in Beersheba, Elijah then traveled straight into the desert for an entire day. He wearily sat beneath a broom tree and wished he were dead. “O Lord,” he sighed heavily, “I can’t bear anymore. End my life now; I’m no better than anyone else before me.”

Full of discouragement, Elijah lay down under the tree and fell into an exhausted sleep...

Mount Horeb was part of Mount Sinai—the place where God showed His awesome power to Moses and the Israelites centuries before. Since no one can look upon God’s glory and live, Elijah put his cloak over his face before meeting with God.

Not long after, the angel of the Lord appeared before Elijah. “Rise and have something to eat,” he instructed.

Elijah looked around. Close by was a jug of water as well as delicious-smelling bread baking over a warm fire. Elijah ate, drank, and then slept some more. The angel returned, encouraging him to eat once more.

“Rise and eat; you have a long journey ahead of you,” the angel insisted.

Elijah did as instructed and felt strengthened from the meal. He then traveled for forty days and forty nights to reach Mount Horeb—the mountain of God. Finally reaching his destination, the exhausted prophet found a cave and slept again.

“Why are you here, Elijah?” the Lord asked him.

“I have been zealously serving you, Lord. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with You, torn down Your altars, and killed every one of Your prophets. Now there is only me and they are after my life as well!” Elijah moaned, full of distress.

God listened patiently to Elijah’s woes, then redirected his attention. He gave instructions for Elijah to stand at the entrance of the cave, for He would pass by. Elijah did as he was told. Just then, a great and powerful wind ripped through the mountains, sending shattered rocks and fragments everywhere—but the Lord wasn’t there. God then sent a powerful earthquake followed by a fire—but He chose not to reveal Himself in those spectacular things either. Then he heard a

gentle whisper. Elijah protected his face with his cloak and went out to meet with God. There, he received comfort, encouragement, and marching orders for what to do next. Elijah found God's care—not just in the spectacular “highs” of life, but in the low and quiet points as well.

Footwork

Turn to 1 Kings 19 and read verse 14. Take note of the last part of this verse, then drop down and read God's response to this in verse 18. Was Elijah's perspective on his problems accurate?



It's very easy to get caught up in the “woe is me” syndrome (sin-drome), which causes us to focus on ourselves instead of the Lord. Elijah fell into this trap. It is a very easy thing to get so caught up with the spectacular that we feel let down and can't see God's hand in the ordinary. The greatest danger of this happening is usually after an important victory or seeing God work mightily in and through your life. Be careful!