

18PENT12SBO (August 12, 2018)

1 Kings 19:3-8

SPIRITUAL SIGHT CHANGES YOUR OUTLOOK

1. Focusing on the current experience can mislead
2. Focusing on the power of God makes the future look amazing

Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep.

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.

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.

Intro: The other day I was reading an article about the vacation that a person by the name of Peter had taken to Cape Town. Peter had apparently been obsessed with visiting Cape Town since he was 17 years old. For years he had heard how much he was going to love Cape Town if he ever got a chance to go there. Finally, 25 years later he was able to embark on his dream vacation. He carefully planned out his days and even booked a hotel room that would give him an overlook of the beauty of Table Mountain. Do you know what the article was entitled? "When a Vacation Disappoints!" It rained the whole time he was there. Not a gentle drizzle to add to the majestic setting but the constant driving rain of a squall. Everywhere shops and attractions were closed and shuttered because of a holiday weekend. Determined to salvage what he could he set out to walk to some of the geographic attractions only to come home in soggy loafers and soaking socks. Every attempt he made to view the beauty of the mountains was nixed by the dark clouds which engulfed them leaving only a memory similar to flying through the clouds in an airplane. And it never let up so that eventually he wanted to just get back to the comforts of home.

Do you think that is what Elijah is feeling right now in heaven? Do you think he's disappointed? Not a chance. There's not a hint of that when we see him on the Mount of Transfiguration. What you see when he is there

with his LORD is joy. Joy over what the Savior's mission and what it has done for him. In fact, it was quite the opposite for Elijah. Living on earth was what almost did him in. Were it not for the Lord, his God, coming through for him and directing his sight where it needed to be, he might not have made it.

1. Focusing on the current experience can mislead

That's why it is helpful for us to look at some of these people of faith from the past. There is nothing mythical about them though sometimes we think there is. In reality, people like Elijah had lives much like ours, were sinful and had bouts of weakness like we do. Most of all, they NEEDED their God. You will find that in your life too because their stories are glimpses of ours. Here's one example of that.

Elijah had just come off the heels of one of the happiest days of his life. On Mount Carmel he had gone nose to nose with the one of the most powerful threats to the future of God's chosen people. The northern kingdom of Israel had always take the spiritual low road but it reached new depths with King Ahab and his notorious Phoenician bride. She had been behind the murder of Naboth and now she was tirelessly working on exterminating the faith of the true God. (killing prophets). The nature god, Baal, was her god and so the cult of Baal was the religious and political power in northern Israel at the time.

Then came the victory of the Lord on Mt. Carmel when the fire from the true God devoured the offering of Elijah at Elijah's prayerful request. What guts and determination Elijah showed. This day he was on top of the world. And the next were completely the opposite. Jezebel replied to his efforts by swearing to hunt him down till she found him and then take his life. And he knew she meant it, because she had done it to so many before him. Now, this bold man of faith turns into something completely different. It's like he forgets the Lord's mighty display of power on Mt. Carmel and what that showed about the invisible might and rule of the Savior God. All he can think of now is what's in front of his nose. He's fearful for his life. He's slumped into what I will call a "smallness of soul." And he has become a victim to his thoughts and all of the scenarios of woe and gloom that they can dream up.

Life up. Life down. Up again and then down again. You've been there and you are going to be there again. At the time you are at the bottom, its so like us to think that there is no hope for any goodness and joy and normality in our lives ever again. Our thoughts make us prisoners in a

dark dungeon that seems inescapable. We are sure of that. And if anyone tries to tell us different we're pretty sure they don't get how bad we have it and we tell them that – maybe even driving them away in the process. We feel like one wave comes crashing over us and before we can recover, another, and another come until we can't get up anymore. And then we feel we have let the Lord down too, because we haven't trusted in him.

That's Elijah here. **“I have had enough, LORD,” he said. “Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.”**(4) He's focusing on the experience of the moment instead of reality of God.

2. Focusing on the power of God makes the future look amazing
May I ask you to do something right now? Take your thoughts off this page of Elijah's life and now go to that page some 900 years later on the Mount of Transfiguration. There is Jesus shining in glory with the brightness of the sun displaying his deity and then the scripture adds this: **Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.**” (Mt 17:3) Now you know that Jesus was getting the disciples ready for the low times, the frightening times they were about to go through surrounding his suffering and death. It was going to seem like even God could not stand up to the power of evil when they saw Jesus being crucified and then go limp in death. So they were to remember the reality of his glory, his deity. On that dark day on Calvary behind it was the glorious plan of the glorious God who is always ruling and always ultimately victorious. And Elijah is there talking with Jesus about that upcoming death. He's alive and well and happy as can be. And with spiritual sight he has learned that God is always victorious and so are those who are his children by faith. Jesus' glory is proof of that and he knows Jesus will prove that once again on the day of His resurrection.

When I think of Elijah, I don't think of him sitting under the broom tree wishing to die. I think of Elijah taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire. I think of him on that Mount of Transfiguration. I think of the victory he ultimately had and still has in Christ Jesus his Lord. I think of how the Lord delivered him, strengthened him and cleansed him from his sins, finally taking him to heaven. He thought he was so right under that broom tree when he determined that there was no hope for him to ever have anything good come in his existence and that there was no hope for him to be forgiven by the Lord. His lack of focus on the spiritual completely robbed him of joy and hope.

Now, I want you to see yourself standing next to Jesus, talking to him of all that he did for you. You are besides yourself with joy because you are in heaven. You can't stop thanking him. That's you as a child of faith. The times you are feeling trapped and hopeless are the times your earth centered (not spiritual centered) thinking is deceiving you. The Lord reigns, brothers and sisters. You have a future, an amazing one. What's more, look at how patiently and lovingly the Lord eased Elijah out of his sadness. He made his divine presence known and strengthened him to service and normality again. **Strengthened by that ... he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb the mountain of God.**(8) God's tenderness is there for you in His Word also. Nursing you back to a whole spirit again and strengthening you with his promises. (cf. also Isaiah 41:10)

Concl: A lot of damage is done to our spirits when we focus solely on the current experience of LIFE rather than the spiritual reality of who our God is and what that ultimately means for us. Keep those eyes on your Lord and Savior and His promises. Amen.