

Elijah's Experience under the Juniper Tree - finding hope in hopeless times

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[0:00] Elijah. Elijah under the juniper tree.! Elijah was a mighty prophet, and yet he was very human.

! And he suffered a real time of deep depression and discouragement.! His story speaks to us today about our own human frailty and how we can find God's help in such a time.

And we see Elijah here, and maybe you can relate to his story as we unfold it. Elijah under the juniper tree. He got overwhelmed at what was going on in his life, and he ran.

And he went and sat under this juniper tree, which was a plant, this bushy plant that grew in the wilderness. He fled into this desert place as far away as he could flee.

And why? Because he was downhearted. And the stats tell us that one in five Australians experienced a mental disorder in the last 12 months.

[1:05] One in five. So that's a few of us, if this is the number amongst us today. And the Australian Bureau of Statistics tell us that 2.1 million Australians, or 9.3% of our population, were suffering from some form of depression.

So it hits most of us from time to time through our lives. On average, around one in six people, one in five women, one in eight men will experience what they call MDD, major depressive disorder.

Now, I'm no doctor or anything, but these are what the stats are telling us. At some point in our life, we can face this specter, this black dog, as Churchill called it. Elijah knew what depression was.

And we can learn from the story of his life how to handle discouragement and such things. Like the psalmist in Psalm 42, it tells of him how he felt overwhelmed.

And in verse 7 of Psalm 42, he says, It's like he was drowning in this deluge, in this flood of feeling.

[2:10] And Elijah was a man who had seen the mighty work of God, the power of God. He'd been through a lot. Look back at where he was. He'd been through the dry brook, the empty barrel, the dead boy, the prophets of Baal, the lack of rain.

And he'd seen the Lord do wonders along the journey as God closed the heavens. He replenished the barrel of oil. He raised the boy, consumed the sacrifice, and enabled the prophets to flee, to destroy the false prophets firstly, but then to run to Jezreel.

And in 1 Kings 19, we pick up the story. So 1 Kings 19 is where we're going to go. And this is right after the big showdown of Mount Carmel, where we know that Elijah confronted the false prophets.

And 850 of them were killed. Elijah had acted in faith. He'd boldly confronted the idolatry of the nation. And he called for this contest to prove the true God.

And Elijah had seen this stunning display of God's great power and intervention. And the Lord had showed up. He showed his power and his authority over the false prophets.

[3:28] So he saw on Mount Carmel, the fire came down from heaven, and it consumed Elijah's sacrifice. And now we pick up the story in 1 Kings 19. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel were outraged that the false prophets were slain.

So we're going to go to 1 Kings 19 verse 1. And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done. And with all how he had slain all the prophets with the sword.

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 tomorrow about this time.

So Jezebel, this wicked, evil queen, was angry. She was filled with this hatred and hostility.

And she herself was a devout priestess of Baal. So Baal meant a lot to her, and she was outraged. And then we see the great prophet Elijah's faith tested as Queen Jezebel threatens his life.

[4:41] She said, You're going to be dead within 24 hours. And Jezebel's word triggered in Elijah this anxiety.

He was overwhelmed. Despite all that he had seen God do, the threats of Jezebel made him turn tail and filled him with fear. After that great victory on Mount Carmel, Elijah now came to this period of deep discouragement and despair.

And friends, every one of us faces such times through life. We're human, all of us, and we can face discouragement at times in our life. And we can expect attack. This was right after the great victory. Suddenly there's this great challenge. And Elijah would have felt this fear and doubt. His heart was troubled. His faith was shaken. And we can all have such discouragement at times.

We can face it. Opposition, threats, especially fear. He just wanted to run away from it all. And actually, Elijah had been on the run some three and a half years as a fugitive from King Ahab.

[5:54] So he was used to running and hiding. And here he was now, consumed by this fear, fearing for his life, running for his life. Abandoning his post and his servant, and then fearing for his safety, Elijah flees into the wilderness and finds himself in this state of misery and despair.

And through Elijah's story, we can see some answers for us. Through Elijah's story, we can see how we can learn to combat fear with faith.

And meditate on God's word, his promises for us. And we can find courage and strength, even when humanly we feel like it's too hard.

Verse 3, we read on. And when he, Elijah, saw that, he saw, he heard that, and he saw the threat as the message came to him.

When he saw that, he arose and went for his life. He came to Beersheba, which belonged to Judah, and left his servant there.

[6:59] He saw, it says. He took his eyes off the Lord, and he saw with his human vision. He started focusing on other things, on himself. Instead of focusing on the Lord, he saw that, that message of fear, of threat.

And Jezebel's threat unsettled Elijah. One woman. He'd seen great victories. He'd seen 850 of these false prophets saying, now, one woman was enough to unsettle him.

And he ran. He ran away. He ran south. 125 miles south. The account shows how discouragement can come. It's the lives of even God's faithful servants.

And discouragement, my friends, discouragement can be powerful. Amen? Discouragement can be a powerful thing. Discouragement often follows moments of triumph. Even the strongest believers, the most faithful, can face moments of doubt and despair.

So believer this morning, if you're feeling those times, pressing times, discouragement, doubt, despair, you're not alone. It's in the Word. It's in the Word.

[8:10] Warts and all, it tells us about people like David, like Job. They experience discouragement. You could call it emotion sickness. Instead of motion sickness, it's emotion sickness, isn't it?

Where our feelings overwhelm and we get discouragement, answer in. Even despite significant victories. Even knowing God's moving in your life. You're saved. You're heaven bound.

Yet we can still humanly have those down times. So, friends, be encouraged that you're not alone in this. And we can prepare to face such times with faith.

We see it reads on verse 4. Elijah, but he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He went into the wilderness and he came and he sat, it says, down under a juniper tree.

And he requested for himself that he might die. He said, it's enough. It's enough now, O Lord. Take away my life for I am not better than my father's.

[9:10] Here's Elijah. He'd seen the mighty works of God on Mount Carmel. Now his faith wavers in the face of this test. And Elijah, here he is sitting under this juniper tree.

This kind of desert bush. And he was broken, grief stricken. Burnt out. And he cries out. I've had enough.

He was scared. Finished. Alone. He felt like a failure. He wanted to quit. He cries out.

Take my life. He wanted to curl up in a ball and give up. Here he was, sat under this bush in the desert. Have you had a juniper tree moment?

I feel like giving up. Elijah's response to discouragement was to flee into the wilderness, into isolation, into loneliness, to go into hiding.

[10:10] Just wanted to hide himself from it all. And it's natural to feel isolated, to feel alone when you face a struggle. You just can't face people. And even though solitude can give some temporary relief, isolation can actually make it worse.

It can make discouragement worse. Those feelings. Often isolation deepens discouragement. It makes it worse. Here was Elijah. Just wanted to go and have some me time.

Elijah's isolation in the wilderness, it shows this tendency to withdraw. And people can be like that. They withdraw. They withdraw from fellowship. They withdraw during times of discouragement. They run and hide. It's best to resist that urge to isolate yourself when you're facing discouragement. Don't be afraid. Rather than isolate yourself, reach out.

Reach out to others. Share your burden. That burden. That burden, you can share it. Reach out to trusted friends, to family, to mentors, to people who can support and encourage you and pray for you.

[11:20] Don't isolate yourself when you're feeling like that. Rather, seek out community and support from your fellow believers. In difficult times, that's when we should hang together and find that mutual support.

Because we need one another. Exhort one another. It's two-way, isn't it? I'll exhort you. You exhort me. We'll exhort each other. And notice Elijah, it says he cries out to God.

His cry, it sounds desperate, doesn't it? He's reached the bottom of the barrel here. He's reached the bottom. The dregs. And he's crying out to God. He's expressing his weariness.

He's longing for death even. How can we learn from this? What can we learn from this? You know, I've had a couple of dear friends who have committed suicide and they were believers.

It's shocking. Please, if you ever feel like that, reach out. Reach out. Please, please, please.

Whoever you are. And these ones that I knew, they seemed like they had it all together.

[12:19] They were firm, Bible-believing Christians. But who knows? Something came out of left field and bang. It's enough. Take my life. It's enough.

Take my life. You know, friends, this is real, isn't it? I'm not making light of this. Let's be authentic. Let's be real with God. This can happen to real people, even Christians. Even Christians can have such, such, such down, down times.

And friends, I want to urge you today that we can trust in the Lord. We can know that our Lord understands and he cares for us deeply. And reach out. Don't isolate yourself.

Tell him how you feel. Tell him your emotions, your doubts, your struggles. At least that's one thing Elijah did. He did call out to God. That's who you can turn to especially, isn't it?

And know that your God-given purpose is greater than your current circumstances. You've got a purpose. You've got a calling. You've got a mission. You've got an assignment. And that's greater than all your contrary circumstances.

[13:20] So God's plans are bigger than our problems. And Elijah shows us authentic prayer. So we see James 5.17. Elias, Elijah, was a man subject to like passions as we are.

So we see Elijah's very personal, isn't he? He's very human. He's very real. And have you ever had a juniper tree moment? You shout out, I've had enough. God hears you.

We can get to that point where it comes to the end of our strength. He listens to our prayer. He's always there to hear our prayer. And Elijah would have an encounter now with God. And he saw God answer with nourishment and guidance.

So let's walk this journey through with Elijah as he now comes to this place, this juniper tree moment. We see from verse 5. And as he, Elijah, lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him and said unto him, arise and eat.

And he, Elijah, looked, and behold, there was a cake, bacon on the coals, and a cruise of water at his head. And he did eat and drink and laid him down again.

[14:35] So here's Elijah in this time of discouragement in the depths of it. He seeks this refuge in the wilderness. And God graciously ministers to him. He was tired.

He fell asleep. Elijah was exhausted. Who can identify with that? Elijah was weary. And what happens?

He gets some nourishment and rest. You know, in Jeremiah 31, 25, it says, in effect, God says, I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint.

God will refresh the weary. Think of it, weary saint. You might feel weary by the, in a couple of hours when I finish this sermon.

There's weary times, isn't there? God sustains us, doesn't he? And he leads us forward one step at a time. When you're weary, don't give up. When you're weary, don't give in to despair. God will give you rest.

[15:33] You know, feel free to sleep if you feel the need this morning. God gives us sleep sometimes. We need that, don't we? We need rest. And then we see God provides this food, this water.

It was a picture of his care, of his sustenance. In times of physical and spiritual hunger. And what happened? Think of it. When you actually read this, an angel cooked a meal for him.

Now, I don't know if you've got someone that cooks nice meals for you, but Elijah had an angel cook this meal for him. Amen. Wow. That's something, isn't it? Something special. God refreshed him. It's actually, he woke up and there's this cake. There's this food, this drink provided by the angel, by God's sustaining power. You can trust him. God's encounter with Elijah then unfolds this powerful sequence of events.

We see this angel provided food and water, strengthened him. We need that. Sometimes you've just got to lie down under the juniper tree and then we'll see the angel touch.

[16:29] We'll see God's touch of our life. And then the next one we see, 1 Kings 19, 7 through 8, it says, So here we see Elijah under the juniper tree.

God touches him and he gives him direction. I'm sending you somewhere. And when we think of ourselves, when we're under the juniper tree, as it were, in the wilderness, we've got this time of despair, this place of discouragement, a time of weakness and doubt.

Don't stay there. Don't stay under the juniper tree. And God speaks to Elijah in this gentle whisper. He demonstrates his presence and reassurance. He says, the journey is too great for thee.

And we think of our own lives, sometimes the journey of life is too great for us in our own strength, isn't it? We need spiritual meat and drink for the journey.

We think of it for yourself, believer, that God meets you in your lowest moments and lifts you up. You can know that God meets you there under the juniper tree.

[17:46] And then at Mount Horeb, Elijah takes refuge in a cave. So he goes on this journey. It's some 200-mile journey to Mount Horeb or Mount Sinai. God met Elijah there in this powerful display of wind, earthquake and fire.

And he reveals his presence and his power. Take that up in verse 9. It reads, And he came thither unto a cave and lodged there. And behold, the word of the Lord came to him and said unto him, What doest thou hear, Elijah?

Elijah. Elijah needed to hear the word of God. He needed to hear from God. He'd been listening to the word of discouragement. He'd been listening to the message of Jezebel, the death threat of Jezebel.

He needed to hear the word of the Lord. Behold, the word of the Lord came to him.

The Lord speaks to us, doesn't he? Gently, tenderly. God looks at you and he says, What doest thou hear, Elijah?

[18:55] What doest thou hear? Verse 10, it reads, 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. Believers seek God.

He will meet with you. We can have an encounter with God. Even in time of discouragement and depression. Even though things seem hopeless.

So God meets with us under the juniper tree, at the cave. Even while we're in the midst of our own pity party. Amen. God is here for you.

Think of depression. I don't mean to make light of it, because it's a real thing. Depression can paralyze people. Trust in God's provision, in his guidance, his direction, to lead you through.

[20:03] Poor me! When we want to withdraw and give up. God says, I will handle Jezebel. I will handle your fears.

Sometimes the Lord calms the storm. And then some say, sometimes he lets the storm raid. He calms his child. We can know a stillness within. God's presence was there.

In the stillness and silence of Mount Horeb. It shows us the need to hear God's voice. When all the distractions are happening, just tune in.

That still, small voice. Set time aside. Create sacred spaces, where you can encounter God's presence, and hear his voice. So God reassures Elijah of his purpose, of his calling, even though he's feeling inadequate, and in despair.

We read verse 11. Verse 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.

[21:05] This great wind. And then, it break 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. And after the earthquake, a fire.

But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, a still, small voice. Notice it says there, verse 11, it says he stood.

And we didn't need to stand in the presence of God, and get hold of God. Here he was, he was on the mountain. He was on the mountaintop. And it gave him opportunity to see. He stood before the Lord.

He got this new perspective. He'd been focused on, the message of Jezebel, the discouragement. And God got his attention, and he stood on top of the mountain.

He saw things differently. And God manifests himself to Elijah. Notice, it wasn't the, fire, the wind, the earthquake. It was, still, small voice.

[22:05] That gentle whisper. And we get that with the word, don't we? As we open it, don't we hear that, you know, as the pages turn, as the pages turn, we can hear the gentle whisper, the still, small voice.

Just got to listen to it, don't you? And sometimes we miss that. There was a story about a man who lost his watch in a pile of hay.

It was like searching for a needle in a haystack to find that watch. And people were searching frantically and lots of commotion and nobody could find it. And someone just lay down in the hay when everything was quiet.

They could hear the tick, tick, tick, tick. They could hear it. And they could find it. Sometimes it's like that with God's voice, isn't it? We just need to tune out and tune in. You know, take time.

That's why it's called a quiet time, isn't it? Have a quiet time with the Lord. And we can hear his voice in the quiet time, can't we? Can we? The still, small voice, the gentle whisper of your Lord.

[23:08] It's in his word. He wants to speak to us, doesn't he? Some make the wrong impression of, oh, you've got to have a word from the Lord with some Latter-day prophet saying some word that they would manufacture.

But no, this is the word. This is the audible voice of God. When we read it, it's audible. It's the word of God. Amen. The gentle whisper. And so Elijah found God's presence and we can too.

It's about having that posture of listening, isn't it? And God speaks to us in those quiet whispers and he reassures us of his presence, of his love. And he brings comfort by his word.

We see the word is really a resource for us, isn't it? The word of God is a source of spiritual comfort. In other words, encouragement.

It says, Romans 15, for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

[24:13] It's an interesting word study. I should really minister on it sometime. This word encouragement and how it's elsewhere translated through the King James, edify, exhorting. This word comfort, the paracletos.

It's God's comfort. It's his encouragement for us, isn't it? And there's a whole lot of verses that tell us about that. You might want to do a word study through the strong, through the connotations of

the word comfort.

It's huge. It's a whole ministry, encouragement. I like to think that I'm such a minister. That we can minister encouragement. And that's for all of us.

We can exhort one another. Amen. Comfort one another. It's the same word. Here's what we get when we get spiritual guidance, consolation. It's in the times of difficulty that his still small voice is all the more needful, isn't it?

And the word of God is instruction on all matters of faith and practice. We've got the whole box and dice here. We've got the whole lot. We read on. Elijah complains and then God responds.

[25:16] From verse 13, it reads, 1 Kings 19, 13, And it was so when Elijah heard it, that still small voice, he wrapped his face in his mantle and he went out and stood in the entering in of the cave and behold, there came a voice unto him and said, What doest thou hear, Elijah?

And he said, I have been very jealous. He said, I have been very jealous for the Lord God of his hosts because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars and slain the prophets with the sword and I, even I, only am left and they seek my life to take it away.

God says, What doest thou hear? Why are you here? Why are you here when you should be there in Israel?

He was away from the place that he was meant to be. Elijah says, I've done this, I've done that. Saying, the Lord hears your prayer.

Elijah was on about what he had done or where he was but God's interested in where you are now, isn't he? What are you doing now? What are you doing?

[26:35] Elijah was chosen by God and this context here of discouragement, it doesn't stop your worth or your calling.

Don't you quit. The Lord says, I will handle Jezebel. You do what you're supposed to be doing. Keep your hand to the plough. Verse 14, I have been.

I was. I was jealous, I was zealous, I was full of zeal. It was all about where he had been but it wasn't where he was right now.

What are you doing now? He was living in the past, telling of his past zeal. He had some fervor, some zeal for God. He used to. We can be like that.

Many times we glory in the past accomplishments rather than our daily walk. Well, I was saved. I was gloriously saved. God transformed my life. I was zealous for the Lord, my God.

[27:47] Where are you now? Amen. What are you doing now? What are you doing here? What are you doing? It's a good question to think about, isn't it?

We can think about where we used to be, the zeal that we used to have but God's interested in who you are now, where you are now. And the daily walk, the daily victory he wants for you now in the present.

And so we see Elijah, he felt all alone. And we can have those times when, and Elijah thought he was the only one, he was the last man standing, wasn't he? That's his kind of feeling.

It's Custer's last stand. It's Elijah's last stand. He felt all alone. And we can feel alone. We can feel lonely. Discouraged.

Pour out your heart then, saying, pour out your heart in prayer when you're feeling discouraged.

There's a quote here, Satan watches for those vessels that sail without a convoy. It's a thought, isn't it?

[28:48] The vessels that sail without a convoy. You know, when the enemy wants to pick off some target, he looks for the ones away from the crowd, doesn't he?

He looks for the ones away from the rest because he can pick them off. Got to get in the convoy. Amen. And so being isolated from other believers, it's not good for us, really.

And God reveals to Elijah that he's not alone. Actually, he's not alone. It's not true. There's still faithful servants who remain committed to God's cause. And for you, dear saint today, you are not alone.

There's others just like you. And what's more, they're experiencing the same things that you are. The same fears and hurts and disappointments, discouragement, pain.

There's people who can help you and actually you can help them. You're not alone. Think of that. Sometimes it's all in the context of poor me, I'm on my own, nobody cares.

[29:56] Actually, there's other people around you feeling the same way. So get together and encourage each other. You know, God says, trust me, trust my plan. And another thing he says, verse 15, he says, go back.

Go back to work. Verse 15. 1 Kings 19, 15. And the Lord said unto him, go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when they comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria.

And Jehu, the son of Nimshi, shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel. And Elisha, the son of Japhat, of Abel-Mehollah, shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

I should have practiced that one. He says, anoint these kings, anoint this prophet, he says, verse 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.

Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which have not kissed him. So God's reminding him, here's Elijah, woe is me, I'm on my own.

[31:02] Actually there's loads of other people just like you and they're all around you, you're not alone. And he tells Elijah, go back, go, return. He says, go back.

God made Elijah walk that 300 mile trip from Mount Horeb back to Beersheba and then to Jezreel. He did a lot of walking, a lot of travelling. He had wandered away from God's chosen path for him. And really verse 15 jumps out at me, go back to work. Well I was zealous, I was jealous for the Lord my God, I was doing something and now, but where are you now?

What are you doing? Here, Elijah. He says, go back. Go back where you used to be. Go back, face the challenge.

I've got some work for you to do. You're not alone. So Elijah's experience shows us how we can overcome discouragement.

[32:07] Whether we're running scared, we're feeling overwhelmed, sitting under the juniper tree, feeling sorry for ourselves, whether we're hiding in a cave, what happens? The word of the Lord comes to us. Don't we need that?

Still, small voice. The word of the Lord comes to us and he says, what are you doing here, Elijah? Why are you in this place?

This sorry place. Someone has said, you can't believe Romans 8, 28 and be depressed. What does it say? All things work together for the good. Trust him.

You might not feel like it. You might not feel like things are, they might feel hopeless and hard. All things, it says, all things work together for good, for your good.

Paul's attitude of life was for me to live as Christ to die as gain. Here's a great truth. It's not the problem that is the problem, it's your attitude about the problem that is the problem.

[33:05] Look, we're all in this together. It's a mess sometimes, isn't it? We can trust him, trust him to show his way through. Even when the, when we feel overwhelmed, when the circumstances seem uncertain, we can give him our fears, our doubts and trust, and trust our worries to him.

Know that he's surely in control. He's working all things for his glory and your good. And you're not alone. You've got a whole family, brothers and sisters struggling too.

The Bible talks about God's hidden ones. One preacher picked that up, Psalm 83 verse 3. God's hidden ones. Sometimes we don't realise, actually there's a lot of, a lot of fellow believers all around me.

They might be out of this circle here too. Others that know the Lord and love him. But maybe you haven't noticed them. The 7,000 who haven't bowed the knee to Baal.

There's others who stand with you and there's others who stand with you. It's called the church. The people of God, you don't have to go it alone. You've got the still, small voice, just got to denoise your life, don't you?

[34:21] Shut up everything else and just lie down and listen for the tick, tick, tick, still, small voice. Maybe you've just got to clear out the noise sometimes.

Denoise our life so we can tune in and hear that still, small voice and know that you've got a church. It's a family. We're not alone. Don't go it alone. And we see verse 9, it reads, Behold, the word of the Lord came to him and he said, Answer him, What doest thou hear, Elijah?

Elijah was not where he was supposed to be. That was the problem. Like David, 2 Samuel 11 verse 1, When the kings go out to battle, where was David?

He didn't go out to battle like a king should have done, was meant to do. He stayed home. He wasn't where he was supposed to be.

2 Kings Samuel 11, 1. 2 times God asked Elijah, What are you doing here, Elijah? Maybe God speaks to us too in those moments when we're not where we're meant to be.

[35:37] And he wants to provoke us to be where he wants us to be, to renew our faith and hope. And what happens next is that Elijah is given a new mission, a fresh hope.

How about you? What will you do in time of discouragement? Are you under the juniper tree like Elijah? God can meet you there. Pour out your heart to him in prayer.

Now sometimes God won't answer your prayer how you prayed it. What did Elijah pray? Take my life. It was never God's plan to take Elijah's life, was it?

The thing he prayed for was not God's will. The Lord planned that Elijah would never die.

Interesting, isn't it?

Instead this chariot of fire takes him heavenwards. He's the first to go up in the rapture. He had an early start on the rest of us. Amen.

[36:39] Elijah was taken up in a whirlwind to heaven. 2 Kings 2.11 Hear his voice, the still, small voice. You have to listen.

Trust him in the circumstances, in those juniper tree moments, in the cave. Overcome the discouragement, the depression. Being like Elijah. I've had enough.

He wasn't immune to discouragement. But he found God's strength there, didn't he? And he found rest in the shade of the juniper tree.

Had a bit of a lie down. Now you might want to do that this afternoon. I'll give you permission. It's okay to lie down. It's okay. Sometimes that does us good, doesn't it?

And you can get a restoration in God's presence. Listen for God's voice like Elijah. It wasn't in the mighty wind, the earthquake, the fire. It was the gentle whisper.

[37:45] It's the same for you and me, isn't it? Do we tune in? Just got to open the pages and listen. Listen. Quieten your hearts. Hear his voice of comfort and care.

And remember God's faithfulness. God had been faithful to Elijah. He'd worked wonders in Elijah's life. And yet Elijah's throwing in the towel, throwing a tantrum.

Remember God's faithfulness, what he's done. And he meets you in the weakness of the juniper tree. And he reassures you, God has a plan. And he entrusts Elijah with new tasks.

Discouragement is not the end of your journey. We see Elijah, he wanted to throw in the towel, but God says, actually I've got some more work for you to do. There's a new task for you. And Elijah was stronger for it.

Elijah was stronger for that discouragement. Our disappointment may be his appointment. Amen. God is not through with us.

[38:49] And a good thing for us when we're feeling down is when God gives you a new assignment. Actually, there's something more. I've got something more for you to do.

Here's a new task, a new challenge. And you can trust God to work. Because friends, there's no power shortage with God, is there? It's the same yesterday, today, and forever.

There's no power shortage. Just got to plug in, don't we? Let God work in you. So, discouragement, when you think about it, discouragement is where our courage gets taken away.

I was zealous, I was jealous, I was full of zeal. Where are you now? What are you doing, Elijah? God can give you that courage back.

Maybe you had a boldness once and it's kind of gone a bit lacking. discouragement, that's what it is. God can give you your courage back. And the Lord used Elijah to anoint two men to be kings, another to be a prophet in his place.

[39:59] And we see Elijah found this new purpose as he disciplined Elisha. And Elisha is the one that Elijah passed that mantle onto. What about you and me?

Are we investing in the next generation? Elijah? That's why we want to have some up and coming preachers come and preach for us. Amen? Young men. Younger than me.

I don't know. Who's younger than me? Probably most of you. We need to invest in the next generation. Amen? Don't we? The next generation. We need some Elishas that we can pass the baton onto.

Elisha was such a one. God wanted Elijah to invest in the next generation. So, friends, what about you?

Older saints, let's invest in the younger ones amongst us. Let's encourage them. Disciple them. And I've got a heart for discipleship amongst us here. That's a great thing.

[40:58] So important. And so, God uses us to encourage others and equip others. because one day we're going to be gone. And I had a bit of a scare, but I'm still here.

No, really, it was just a bit of a precautionary thing. But who knows? How long we got? Bam, you're gone. Amen? Let's invest in others.

We've all got a divine assignment to fulfil, haven't we? I was jealous. I was zealous for the Lord. What are you doing, Elijah?

What are you doing now? Discouragement, overwhelms, we feel like we want to pack it in, but it's valuable lessons, isn't it?

God is faithful and he remains faithful and he'll provide guidance and sustain us for the path ahead. He'll give you new work to do, more challenges, more Jezebels, more trials, but more power.

[42:01] Amen? Hallelujah. By faith, you can face discouragement. You can know God's presence and sustaining power, God's purpose. What about you? Can we identify our own Jezebels in our life, the things that would drain and discourage sources of fear, of doubt?

Face them by faith. Will you listen for his still, small voice? Find his guidance to walk in renewed courage, that discouragement. He can give you the courage back.

He can re-courage you, if there's such a word. Amen? What are you doing here? Think of it for yourself. Where am I in my spiritual journey? I was jealous, I was zealous, I was bold for God, but where are you now?

Get the courage back. Go back. Go back where you were. Get it again, that refreshed faith. Like Elijah, if you hear the word of the Lord, get up out of your cave and go.

Go. Go to work. Go back to work. Get back to work. And the power of God will come upon you again. Let us pray.

[43:13] Lord, we thank you that Elijah tells us of the human story, of the real life, the real world that we all live in. Lord, of discouragement, of depression, downtimes.

We all get loaded down, wearied. Yet, you give us rest. You help us to lie down. You help us to find new courage, to refresh our zeal.

Where are we now? Lord, we can all ask that question. Are we where you want us to be? Give us a fresh love, a fresh spiritual life.

Refresh our hearts, Lord. Pray if there's any yet to trust you, that they might even by faith say, Lord, I want to be saved. I want to know salvation and walk in that truth of your saving love for me, that all of my sin, every bit of my sin was paid for and you can forgive all of my sin and all the ugliness of it as you paid for it at the cross and we can know your great saving power.

Lord, and help us to walk in newness of life such that we'll find that refreshing of strength. Lord, we'll hear that still, small voice. We'll get that courage back. We'll encourage ourselves in the Lord.

[44:27] We'll pray, Lord, for each one. We know depression, discouragement, such things that are common and we're still human. Help us, Lord, to find your strength and to get through to victory, we pray.

In Jesus' name. Amen.