

INTRODUCTION

Do you think you are a patient person? Let us do a little quiz to find out. I will ask you a few questions. You just respond in your heart with a yes or no. Here we go. You are driving and you stop at a red light. You are the first car in line. Do you gently raise your foot off the brake pedal uncontrollably so that your car can slide forward, while you wait for the light to turn green? You are re-heating some food in a microwave oven. If you key in 1:30, would you abort the program by opening the door at 1:28? When you are talking to others do you habitually cut people off and cannot wait to express your opinion? How do you do in this test? We live in a fast-pace world. We like to take short-cut and expect instant results. Thankfully, our God does not treat us like that, because spiritual growth is a life-long pursuit and change takes time. In 1 Kings 19 God patiently restored Elijah a defeated prophet named Elijah.

The story of Elijah begins in 1 Kings 17. God called Elijah to convict king Ahab of Israel for forsaking Jehovah. Ahab married a Gentile woman named Jezebel, who introduced idol worship into Israel. Listen to how the Bible describes Ahab in [1 King 16:32-33](#) - 32 He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. 33 Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than did all the kings of Israel before him. Baal and Asherah are the names of popular false gods in those times. As we fast forward to chapter 18, we find the most well-known event in Elijah's ministry when he and 450 prophets of Baal had a contest on Mount Carmel. Elijah and the group of false prophets each prepared animal sacrifice on an altar, then prayed to their God/god. Whoever sent fire to consume the sacrifice would be a true God/god. The prophets of Baal prayed, danced and even cut their bodies with swords and spears. But nothing happened. Elijah ridiculed them that their god must have gone elsewhere or was asleep. Then it was Elijah's turn. He rebuilt the Lord's altar with 12 stones, which represented the 12 tribes of Israel. After Elijah put the sacrifice on the altar he asked people to pour water on the altar three times. Elijah then prayed that God would manifest His mighty power. What happened next? [Verse 38](#) recorded: Then 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. The Israelites witnessed the power of God. Elijah seized the opportunity and asked the people to kill all the 450 false prophets. We may think that the spectacle on Mount Carmel would create a domino effect to sweep across Israel with a great revival. People would forsake their idols and turn back to Jehovah. But that did not happen. Instead, when we come to today's story in chapter 19 we are told that Elijah quickly fled the scene because Queen Jezebel was looking for his head. [Verse 2](#) tells us: So Jezebel 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." How come a great spiritual victory quickly turned to despair? Have you ever had the same feeling Elijah experienced? You spent months in preparing for a church ministry, perhaps it was a church-wide meeting or a Sunday school class, etc. You expected a great turn-out, people being edified and compliments for your effort. After some initial success the momentum did not sustain and you were criticized for things went wrong. You slipped into a spiritual depression. From Elijah's experience we shall see that God cares about us, the workers, as much as the effect of our work. In our defeat God patiently restores us.

EXPLANATION

1. 神使祂的僕人重新得力 God Rejuvenates His Servant

God was patient with Elijah. Elijah had important lessons to learn. But first God used His means to rejuvenate His servant. **Verse 3** tells us where Elijah went: Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there. That was about a distance of 100 miles, which may take about 1.5 hours' drive. The verse tells us that Elijah left his servant and continued to walk alone. Perhaps Elijah has decided to quit his ministry and he did not want to burden his servant anymore. **Verse 4** continues to read: 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." Beersheba is more or less the southern tip of the whole nation. As Elijah went further south he stepped into the wilderness. Elijah rested under a broom tree and asked God to take his life. He felt that he was "no better than my ancestors." Elijah was probably comparing himself to other servants of God before him. Noah built an ark and survived the flood. Moses parted the Red Sea and led the Israelites out from Egypt. Joshua fought the Canaanites and conquered the Promised Land. Elijah wondered: "Who am I?" As humans we all like to compare our resumes with others – which school we graduated from, how many degrees we hold, which companies we worked for, and so on. Such comparison can easily lead to jealous, pride and despair. Paul helped us put things in proper perspective when he encouraged us in **Romans 12:3** by saying: ...Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. In the context, Paul was talking about spiritual gifts. He reminded us not to be shaped by the value system of the secular world. Instead, we should look at ourselves according to the faith God has given us. It is God who gives each of us unique talents and gifts. No one is better than others. We are simply different. God's heart is to put all of us in the same faith community so that we can edify and serve each other. Going back to the story of Elijah. He prayed that God would take his life. Elijah was not alone in his "dying wish." Moses, Job and Jonah did so too. Naturally, we would think that if a person does not want to live he may as well just commit suicide. Elijah could have jumped off a cliff or into a river. Therefore, wanting to end his life might not be Elijah's wish. Rather, he was grumbling and was trying to catch God's attention. It is like when your girl-friend or wife tells you that she does not want to live, a proper response should be "how can I show more love to you?" Did God grant Elijah's wish? No! While Elijah was waiting for God's response he felt asleep. Elijah needed a good rest from the fatigue of ministry and walking. A pastor once said: "Often when our hearts are troubled the most pious thing to do may not be reading the Bible or prayer. It is simply a good rest." **Psalms 3:5-6** tell us: 5 I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. 6 I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me on every side. God rejuvenated Elijah by giving him rest. Elijah did not have to worry about the soldiers from Jezebel pursuing after him. When you are feeling burdened in your heart, leave your anxiety to the Lord and just go to bed. God not only rejuvenated Elijah by giving him a good sleep He also rejuvenated Elijah by providing him physical nourishment. The passage tells us that on two consecutive occasions God gave Elijah bread and water. For a person feeling defeated though he may be hungry he does not want to eat. Without food he will feel even weaker. I am a very routine guy. When it is time to eat and sleep I will do so, because I know without both needs met I cannot function normally. I

do not know what insomnia or a lack of appetite feels like. I consider myself blessed by the Lord in these areas. If you remember the story of Elijah this was not the first time God provided food for him. God sent ravens to bring bread and meat to Elijah. God also led Elijah to a widow's home where she prepared bread for Elijah despite the height of famine. By providing bread and water to Elijah God was reminding Elijah that He would continue to watch over him. We can encourage people who are troubled at heart the same way. Just cook something, add a simple note that you are praying for him, then present the food. It does not have to be some fancy delicacy. Don't know how to cook? Just take this suffering brother and sister for a meal, sit there, remain silent and bear a listening ear to allow this person to pour out his/her grievance. Anyone can be used as God's agent to use practical ways to rejuvenate the brothers and sisters in need.

2. 神要重新任命祂的僕人 God Reinstates His Servant

Our God is a patient God. He cares about His workers as much as our work. He patiently restores us in our defeat. God rejuvenated Elijah to show him that He cared about him. Next, God had to reinstate Elijah. **Verse 8** to the first half of **verse 9** tell us that Elijah continued his journey: 8 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. 9 There he went into a cave and spent the night... Mount Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai. It is the place where Moses received the Ten Commandments and the whole Law from God. To the Israelites the Law was more than a collection of rules to abide by. It signifies the birth of their nation similar to the Declaration of Independence to the United States. Keeping the Law becomes meaningful only because God established a covenant with Israel. Therefore, when traveling back to Mount Horeb, Elijah returned to the foundation of his faith. For over 500 years before Elijah and since the Law was given God had been faithful to His people. Over and again it was Israel who betrayed God and was unfaithful in the covenant. If God had exercised His justice Israel would have been wiped out many times already. Brothers and sisters: when you felt dejected, where do you fled to in order to rekindle your faith? The cross of Jesus Christ is like our Mount Horeb. Through the cross our sins were forgiven, we were given new names as sons and daughters of God, and we find strength for today and hope for tomorrow. When Elijah came to that cave on Mount Horeb, God asked him the same question twice, as recorded in verses 9 and 13. Let us look at the end of **verse 9**: "...What are you doing here, Elijah?" Obviously, God was not asking about what Elijah planned to do in a cave. God wanted Elijah to examine his calling from God. On both occasions when God posed the question Elijah gave exactly the same answer in **verses 10** and 14: He replied, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too." Elijah's answer was full of self-righteousness and self-pity. "I am the good guy and I did all the right thing in God's name. The other Israelites are all traitors and they are now chasing after me." When you try to exaggerate your accomplishment and pain, and magnify others' fault you will fall into the trap of pride. Was Elijah the only prophet of Jehovah left in the whole country? Perhaps he had forgotten what Obadiah tell him back in **18:13** - Haven't you heard, my lord, what I did while Jezebel was killing the prophets of the Lord? I hid a hundred of the Lord's prophets in two caves, fifty in each, and supplied them with food and water. Then later on God also assured Elijah that there were 7,000 more people who were faithful to Him. Next, God asked Elijah to step forward because He would be passing by. God caused a strong wind to level the mountains, He caused an earthquake

to shake the ground, then He sent out fire but He was not in any of those three elements. Instead, God appeared to Elijah in a gentle whisper. Our God is the mighty God. He manifests His power through miracles and wonders. However, those are not the usual ways God gets our attention in daily life. God could have yelled to us via audible sound, but He rather chooses to whisper in a tender voice. Many of us can testify that God speaks to our hearts with very familiar Bible verses that we may have read hundred times before. That is why the Bible is called God's Word! Just when Elijah was about to give up, thinking that he was the last man standing for Jehovah, God disclosed His plan to Elijah. In **verses 15 to 16** God reinstated Elijah by giving him new assignments: 15 The Lord said to him, "Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. 16 Also, anoint Jehu son of Nimshi king over Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah to succeed you as prophet. God told Elijah to anoint three successors. Hazael would become king of a gentile nation, Aram. Aram later became God's external force to judge Israel for her idolatry. First, king Ahab of Israel was killed in a battle when he led his army in a joint force with Judah to fight against Aram (1 Kings 22:35). Later, Hazael king of Aram wounded Ahab's son Joram in a similar battle (2 Kings 8:28). God went on to use Jehu as a means of internal force to condemn Ahab. Joram finally died in the hands of Jehu when he was dethroned (2 Kings 9:24). Jehu subsequently killed Ahab's wife Jezebel (2 Kings 9:33), his family and all the priests of Baal and destroyed the temple of Baal (2 Kings 10:25-27). **2 Kings 10:11** gives us this summary: So Jehu killed everyone in Jezreel who remained of the house of Ahab, as well as all his chief men, his close friends and his priests, leaving him no survivor. God judged His people for their idolatry. Also, Elijah would be passing his baton to Elisha. Even though Elijah might think that he was important in God's ministry he was not irreplaceable.

CONCLUSION

God cares about His workers as much as our work. In our defeat God patiently restores us. If God is patient with us despite our failure and frustration then we should be patient with God's continual handiwork on us. On Mount Carmel Elijah established his identity through his ministry. However, on Mount Horeb Elijah reestablished his faith by God. Elijah was just an ordinary like you and I. Soon or later we will experience the same spiritual depression like him. Don't quit! God is on our side. Run to Him and rest in Him, for it is in Him that we can be restored. In closing we will listen to a song named "Valley of Peace." The lyrics aptly summarize our study today.