

Someone once said: "Man can live about 40 days without food, about three days without water, about eight minutes without air but only for one second without hope."

The world can offer us so much-financial security, temporary fulfillment, etc, but nothing this world has to offer can give us hope apart from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

I read this quote and thought it was spot on. "Hope as the world typically defines it is a desire for some future occurrence of which one is not assured of attaining."

We as Christians are able to be assured because our hope is in Christ and the promises in His Word. And we are assured because His a Word tells us For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. 2 Corinthians 2:20

Numbers 23:19 "God is not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should repent.
Has He said, and will He not do?"

And what is Hope-

HOPE=

a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.

Hope in Scripture is not the world's definition of "I hope so", Hope is defined as a desire for some future good with the expectation of obtaining it. Hope is confident expectancy.

Biblical hope is not "finger crossing", but is alive and certain because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

I love that our Bible is real-that the Holy Spirit not only inspired the authors to write about the great events, the moments of victory and success, but also inspired the not so great moments to be recorded. Records of defeat, weakness, and yes, even hopelessness are recorded. And we find that it wasn't only the weak who had these moments, but many times they were the men that God used greatly to perform miracles and bring glory to His Name.

Tonight I would like us to take a look at one of the great prophets of the Old Testament.

In 1 Kings we are introduced to Elijah.

Now Elijah, the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word."
1 Kings 17:1

Elijah prayed to God that there would be no rain and God answered his prayer. For three years no rain fell upon the land.

Then in Chapter 18 he prays the drought would end and God would send rain.

After an entire day of chanting and praying and penance, these pagan prophets were unable to call down fire from their "gods." Then Elijah called on the Lord to prove Himself, and immediately fire flashed down from heaven. At this, all the people fell down and proclaimed,

“The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God” (1 Kings 18:39). Then Elijah seized the prophets of Baal, “brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there” (18:40). It was a massive victory for Elijah—a literal mountaintop experience with God.

And then, it began to rain.

James puts it this way in James 5:17-18

-Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for over three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

Don't you love that? James makes it a point to remind us that Elijah was a man just like us....and why is this so comforting? Because during our study tonight we are going to see how Elijah was greatly used by the Lord one moment and then fear and hopelessness step in.

1 Kings 19:1-4

When Ahab got home, he told Jezebel everything Elijah had done, including the way he had killed all the prophets of Baal. So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah: “May the gods strike me and even kill me if by this time tomorrow I have not killed you just as you killed them.” Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. Then he went on alone into the wilderness, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. “I have had enough, Lord,” he said. “Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors who have already died.”

We go from seeing Elijah at his best, putting his hope completely in what he knows His God will do. Chapter 18 ends with verse 46 saying the hand of the Lord was upon Elijah.

And then we get to chapter 19 and we read how Jezebel wanted Elijah dead. And Elijah's response to the messenger was.....I'm not afraid of her...you go back and tell Jezebel that she has already witnessed how mighty and powerful my God is. Who is Jezebel that I should be afraid of her and her threats? No, we read in verse 3 he ran for his life!

He went from being strong in his faith, trusting in God to perform a miracle and now he is filled with fear. In the previous chapters he stood up to the 450 who served Baal and the 400 who served Asherah, but now he is on the run from a woman...Jezebel

Have you been there dear sister? Have you been on the mountaintop where the promises of God came flowing into your life? Where you prayed with such great hope and you saw God work miracles? And not only you saw them but those around you saw the greatness of your God? Have you thought there is nothing that my God cannot do and then suddenly, without warning something happens to shatter that faith, shatter your hope and you, like Elijah want to just run away from it all.

Most of us have that one thing that one area of life, particular circumstances ..or even that a person that causes us to forget every truth we know about God. We, like Elijah, can easily go

from the mountain top and suddenly find ourselves sitting under a tree begging God to take our very life.

How is this possible? To go from this place of great victory to a state of hopelessness and despair? What are some things we can learn from Elijah?

He wasn't listening for God's voice. Once the message came to him we don't even read of him taking this concern to the Lord. 1 Peter 5:7 tells us to cast ALL of our cares upon Him because he cares for us. Elijah heard these threatening words and got scared. There's nothing wrong in the fact that he became afraid, it's what he did with that fear. He didn't take it to the Lord. Rather, he mulls it around in his head and let it get the best of him. There are real life issues in each of our lives and yes, some are very frightening. But we make them worse by not trusting them to the Lord and instead, trying to deal with them in our own wisdom apart from the Lord. We don't need to give these things or this person power over us or over our thoughts. Our thoughts, when left unprotected, can take us to a dark place in our minds. When we experience something so unexpected and difficult we have to make a choice. Trust our own ways or trust God. Lean into Him or lean upon our own understanding. Not everything is going to make sense. Sometimes others will come against us and we are dumbfounded

Proverbs 3:5-7. Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct your paths.
Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the Lord and depart from evil

He lost hope. Why? Because he listened to the threats of Jezebel rather than the truth of God. Elijah failed to hear and see what God was doing. He no longer saw what God could do, only what Jezebel could do. He lost hope because he no longer saw God. It's easy to lack hope when you can't see.

Because he lost hope, he wanted to die. 1 Kings 19:4 He sat down under a broom tree and prayed that he might die. He said, "I have had enough! Lord, take my life.

Haven't we all been there a time or two. Maybe it wasn't under a broom tree. Perhaps we ran into the bathroom, locked the door and just cried out to God- I can't take it anymore. I can't do this. I don't even have one more prayer left in me Lord. Just take me home right now.

We want to quit doing what we do when we are physically exhausted, drained emotionally and feel alone. When we feel we have nothing left spiritually to hold onto.

When we lose all hope everything in our lives starts to seem like a failure. And like Elijah we can easily find ourselves having a little pity party. A woe is me type of party.

But notice in verse 5 an angel of the Lord appears and has food for him and tells him to eat and to be strengthened. Isn't this comforting to read. The Lord knew where Elijah was. He knew he was scared, hopeless and in a state of defeat. He knows too, when we are in those places. He wants to strengthen us, to give us the necessary nourishment we need to continue along this

journey. He provides food....the Word of God and water, the Holy Spirit to enable us to press on. So Elijah ate and drank and then.....got up refreshed and ready to take on the world again right? No, he ate and drank and then laid back down. He wasn't quite ready to give up his woe is me moment. And so an angel came and brought nourishment again. This time Elijah went on a 40 day journey to Horeb. The mountain of God. And went inside a cave to sleep. And God spoke to him and asked him in verse 9 "what are you doing here Elijah? He said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of hosts. For the people of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life, to take it away."

By now, Elijah was strengthened physically, but spiritually we see in his response that he is still in a place of hopelessness. And so the Lord speaks to him and says,

"Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke 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 the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Sometimes we lose our hope in God when we look to Him to speak to us according to how we want Him to speak. We want the earth shattering voice, the mighty strong hand of God to make everything right. And we lose all hope because He didn't act the way we had hoped. He didn't speak to us so loudly that all could hear. He often speaks to us in the same way He spoke to Elijah, in that still small voice. But in order for us to hear, we need to be still ourselves. We can't have the cares and worries taking over our thought life. When they do, there isn't room for anything else.

And Gods still small voice asks 'what are you doing here Elijah?' Oh the tenderness of our God. I love that God spoke Elijah's name. God spoke it in a whisper. He didn't yell at Elijah in disgust. He knew what Elijah was doing there but I think God asks each of us that same questions at times in our lives.

That still small voice of the Lord will at times ask us, "What are you doing here?" The voice that wants us to stop for a moment and take inventory of where our thought life has been lately. The voice that asks us, "Why have you lost all hope?" "Why are you paralyzed with fear and doubt?"

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation. Psalm 42:5

"Let us hold fast to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful." Hebrews 10:23

What is it to hold fast- unwavering, unflinching, steadfast, unshakable, firm, resolute, without reservation, dedicated, committed, constant

In this story of Elijah we are given great hope. We see a mighty man of God who at one time was discouraged and hopeless. Who despaired of his very life, hiding and yes, even whining. The

great news is that God didn't see him as a failure. Temporary setbacks, yes, but when Jesus took Peter, James and John up to the Mount of Transfiguration, who appeared? Moses and Elijah. What hope there is for us to know that God doesn't see us in our failures but in His Son. He sees us whole and complete in His Son. He no longer sees our imperfections; He sees the righteousness of His own Son instead.

A good practice is to write scripture verses around our homes-why? To remind us of the hope that is within us-to remind us of the truth of God's Word when we find ourselves beginning to doubt or lose hope. It not only becomes a reminder to us, but to those in our household and all who may enter. We never know how one verse may restore hope to the broken-hearted.

“Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint” Isaiah 40:31

Tonight, if you find yourself in a place like Elijah, get alone with the Lord before we head back. Be still and spend some quiet time just you and the Lord. Have a time of honest prayer with the Lord and then spend time waiting to hear what He wants to say to you. He is so tender hearted, so loving, gentle and kind.