

Despair

Elijah was triumphant at the battle on Mount Carmel. It was a great spiritual victory over Baal and his prophets. Elijah was surely buzzing from such a spectacular display of YHWH's greatness and the spiritual depravity of Baal. However, not long after that, Elijah was threatened by Jezebel and he very quickly sunk into a pit of despair – even despairing of his own life.

The Bible doesn't present to its readers an idyllic picture of the spiritual life. It is brutally honest about the realities of living in this sinful world. One moment we can all enjoy our communion with God, but in the next moment, because of life circumstances, we can be hit with great despair. How does YHWH handle Elijah's despair? Let's turn to the passage and read.

Launch

- 1) Describe the time when you have hit a "spiritual low".

IN GREAT DESPAIR

Read 1 Kings 19:1-18

- 2) What message did Jezebel deliver to Elijah? (v2)
 - a. Why do you think Elijah was afraid for his life when he just witnessed a miracle from YHWH? (v3)
- 3) Where did Elijah escape to and what did he pray? (v3-5)
 - a. What does that show you about his current spiritual condition?
- 4) What did the angel ask Elijah to do? (v5-8)
 - a. What do you think that shows about his physical condition?
- 5) What do you think is the connection between our physical condition and our spiritual condition?
- 6) Where did Elijah end up? (v8) What other significant event happened there? (cf. Exodus 19:1-7)
- 7) Describe Elijah's prayer at Mount Horeb. (v10, 14)

- 8) Where was the presence of YHWH found and *not* found? (v11-13)
- a. What do you think YHWH was trying to show Elijah by these examples?
 - b. What do you think are modern day examples of this?
- 9) How many people did Elijah think were still zealous for YHWH? (v10, 14) According to Elijah, what did the rest do about YHWH?
- a. What was the reality according to YHWH? (v18)
- 10) Where can we find the presence of YHWH today? (cf. Matt 18:20, Eph 2:19-22)
- 11) What are some physical conditions that can affect our spiritual conditions? What can you do to improve it?

Conclusion

After defeating the prophets of Baal, Elijah's life was threatened, and he ran for his life. He despaired of his life and even asked YHWH to take his life. However, instead of dealing with his despair directly, he slept, and the angel of YHWH told him to "get up and eat", and then he slept again. When he woke up, he was told to "get up and eat" again. It was only after he was "strengthened by that food", that he travelled to Horeb. Whether we realise it or not, our spiritual condition can be affected by our physical conditions. If we are not well physically, we tend to be more cynical, pessimistic, and easily discouraged. Instead of viewing ourselves as merely spiritual beings, we need to realise that we are both spiritual and physical beings, and each affects the other.

When Elijah arrives at Horeb, once again YHWH's word comes to his people, just like Moses' day. They received YHWH's law at Mount Sinai (same place), and here we see that Elijah experienced YHWH's presence through his word. It was not in the powerful wind, or earthquake, or the fire, but rather it came via a gentle whisper – through YHWH's word. Despite his pessimism, he was encouraged by YHWH that there were 7000 left who still worshipped YHWH. Let us be encouraged today to look for YHWH's presence through his Word, and know that we are not alone in our worship of Jesus Christ, even though it might not feel like that at times.