

## OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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SERMON TITLE

Strength for the Journey

SERIES

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KEY SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 19

SYNOPSIS

After a spiritual victory, there is often a let-down, but God will strengthen us to carry on.

HIGHLIGHTS



## 👉 STRENGTH FOR THE JOURNEY

### 1 Kings 19:1–9

Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. <sup>2</sup> 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.” <sup>3</sup> Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, <sup>4</sup> while he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, 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.” <sup>5</sup> Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, “Get up and eat.” <sup>6</sup> He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. <sup>7</sup> 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.” <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> There he went into a cave and spent the night.

Have you ever had the wind knocked out of you; not just physically, but spiritually?

You’ve probably heard about or even seen videos of marathon runners reaching a place where their bodies start to give out. They were running steadily, perhaps at the front of the pack, then all at once they hit what runners call *“the wall.”* The body simply gives out. The legs feel like lead, the energy disappears, and everything inside says, *“Quit. Just sit down and don’t get up again.”*

That’s not just a runner’s problem; that’s a life problem. Have you ever hit that wall? You were doing fine for a while, serving faithfully, holding your family together, maybe even coming off a season of great victory, but then, almost out of nowhere, you ran out of strength.

That’s exactly where Elijah found himself in 1 Kings 19. In chapter 18, Elijah had his Mount Carmel moment and we talked about this in my last sermon. With God’s prompting and power, Elijah confronted the people and ignited a national revival. He removed the middle ground, pushing the people to choose one way or the other... either follow and obey God, or not. Elijah also took time to repair the altar of God, challenging the people to return to prayer and die to self, putting God first again. He then reminded the people who they really were... not just nobodies, but children of God; saints; people belonging to God. He followed through with an elaborate, costly sacrifice and



God came through with a blazing fire, demonstrating his power. Then, the people snapped out of their stupor and returned to God, even cutting down the evil which had taken over their land. It was a phenomenal demonstration of God's power to bring revival in spite of a society which was terribly broken.

But then in chapter 19, after Jezebel threatened his life, the same Elijah ran into the wilderness, collapsed under a broom bush, and prayed, *"Lord, I've had enough. Take my life."* Here's a lesson for us all right at the outset. **Often, after a great spiritual victory there comes a letdown:** The enemy threatens – like Jezebel in verse 2. And, fatigue and fear set in – like in verses 3-6.

This is relevant to us today as there has been a variety of revivals happening all around. Universities in various places are seeing students turning to God with thousands being baptized. And, after recent public events, people are reconsidering the way of their lives. Politics aside... in the matter of Charlie Kirk, as a believer, you have to see that God is at work behind the scenes... the Gospel is being shared far and wide as a result of the publicity his death has drawn. God is stirring an awakening and revival in our world today. And, the devil isn't going to like it. There will be push-back, something like we see in Elijah's story.

From the mountaintop to the wilderness. From fire to despair. From boldness to burnout. And maybe you've been there too. The good news of this text is that God doesn't leave Elijah under the broom bush. He restores him, strengthens him, and sends him forward.

#### **Even the Strong Grow Weary** (vv. 1-4)

Elijah just faced down 450 prophets of Baal, prayed for fire, prayed for rain, and watched God answer in dramatic fashion. The people responded to a move of God. Surely even more revival was coming! Surely Jezebel would repent! But instead, Jezebel threatens to kill him.

One threat undoes the prophet. He runs into the wilderness, sits under a broom bush, and prays to die. Let's pause here. This is Elijah... the great prophet, the miracle worker, the bold voice of God's truth. And yet he is exhausted, afraid, and ready to quit.

Any one of us can have a similar experience... running strong with the Lord, but then an abrupt interruption puts us in a tailspin and we begin to crash.



*Have you ever had that "check engine" light pop up on your car? You can ignore it for a while, but eventually the car will stall. Elijah's breakdown is like that. It didn't mean he was useless, and it didn't mean he was a failure. It meant he was human and in desperate need of personal renewal.*

☞ Here's the deal: if Elijah could grow weary, so can we. **Sometimes we think tiredness is weakness, but it's really humanity.** You may feel like quitting today or sometime in the near future, but being weary does not mean you're finished.

☞ **God Meets Us in Our Weakness** (vv. 5–7)

Now notice how God responds. If we were writing the story, maybe God would give Elijah a lecture: *"Where's your faith, Elijah? Didn't you just see My power?"* In fact, I have thought those exact things about Elijah when I've read his story in the past. But God didn't rebuke Elijah, He restored him.

While Elijah slept, an angel touched him and said, *"Arise and eat."* Beside him was bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water. He ate, drank, and fell asleep again. A second time, the angel woke him: *"Arise and eat, for the journey is too great for you."* Do you see the tenderness here? God doesn't demand; He provides. He doesn't scold; He serves.

*Think of a tired toddler melting down at the end of the day. What does a loving parent do? They don't say, "Stop crying and pull yourself together." They give them food, water, and rest. That's exactly what God does for Elijah. He meets his most basic needs before addressing anything else.*

☞ Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is rest. Take a nap. Eat a meal. Be refreshed. **God often works through the ordinary: a good night's sleep, a word of encouragement, a simple meal.** It's what Jesus offered his disciples in Mark 6:30–32... "The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place." God meets us in our weakness.

☞ **Go to God** (vv. 4; 8)

Elijah went to where he knew God was... Mt. Horeb = solitude. This is part of the Sinai where Moses had his Burning Bush encounter. It is also where Moses received the Ten Commandments. We don't know if Elijah had ever been here before, but he knew about Moses. So he went to God.



Please note that it's a mountain. It will take effort to get to this place, especially in our fast-paced, noisy society. You are very accustomed to noise and activity in your life. But you need a time to simply **get quiet and get alone with God**. That's what Elijah did; it's what Jesus invited his disciples to do; and he's still inviting us to the same today. And, he will help us get there.

Maybe God is saying to you today: *"The journey is too great for you on your own. Let Me strengthen you."* Go to God.

### ☞ **God Gives Strength for the Journey** (v. 8)

After that second meal, Scripture says Elijah *"went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mount of God."* This wasn't just about surviving another day. It was about preparing Elijah for the journey ahead. God still had plans for him.

☞ And in the same way, **God's provision in your life isn't just to get you through the moment. It's to give you strength for the mission He has for you.**

I think it's also of note that Elijah went into a cave when he got to the mountain. Even after making his way to the mountain of God, he was still hiding out in a deep, dark place. He was still depressed and afraid. I think we do that same kind of thing. We know enough to turn to God in our troubles, but we aren't quite ready to listen to him, and we wallow in our despair. But, if we'll be quiet and listen, we can hear God speak into our situation.

### ☞ **God Speaks in our Silence** (vv. 9 – 18)

We all know the rest of this story. There was a great wind, an earthquake and a blazing fire. But it was in that gentle whisper that God spoke. **Elijah had to quiet himself and listen carefully.**

*--Frederick William Faber... There is hardly ever a complete silence in our soul. God is whispering to us. Whenever the sounds of the world die out in the soul, or sink low, then we hear these whisperings of God. He is always whispering to us, only we do not always hear because of the noise, hurry, and distraction which life causes as it rushes on.*

God does speak, but we have to listen. He comes in a gentle whisper, so quiet yourself to hear.

Let's circle back to Elijah at the beginning of today's scripture. He thought he was finished. He thought his story was over. But God had more for him. And maybe that's you. Maybe you've said,



"Lord, I've had enough." Maybe you've been living under your own broom bush... tired, discouraged, ready to quit.

☞ But hear this: **God is not finished with you. He will meet you in your weakness, and He will give you strength for the journey.**

- If you're weary—rest in Him.
- If you're empty—be filled with His Spirit.
- If you feel like quitting—rise, consume the Word, and go forward, listening for God.

☞ When you're worried and weary, **Go to God. Make the effort to find that place of solitude and silence. He will strengthen you, speak to you, and send you out again.**

So today, I invite you: Let God refresh your soul because the journey is not over, and He will give you strength to continue on and finish well.

I'm Listening

*When You speak, confusion fades  
Just a word and suddenly I'm not afraid  
'Cause You speak and freedom reigns  
There is hope in every single word You say*

*When sorrows roar and troubles rage You whisper peace  
When I don't have the words to say I won't lose hope  
When storms won't break You keep Your word  
Oh, and Your promises will keep me safe*

*I don't wanna miss one word You speak  
'Cause everything You say is life to me  
I don't wanna miss one word You speak  
Quiet my heart, I'm listening*